

**THE PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSITY
NAMED AFTER THE COMMISSION OF NATIONAL EDUCATION
IN KRAKOW**

DOCTORAL SCHOOL

DISCIPLINE OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION



Bardh Lipa

**Party Politics in Post-Independence Kosovo: Implications for
Peacebuilding and Statebuilding**

Supervisor: Dr hab. prof. Łukasz Zweifel
Associate supervisor: Prof. Assoc. Dr. Adem Beha

Kraków, 2024

**UNIWERSYTET PEDAGOGICZNY
IM. KOMISJI EDUKACJI NARODOWEJ
W KRAKOWIE**

SZKOŁA DOKTORSKA

DYSCYPLINA: NAUKI O POLITYCE I ADMINISTRACJI



Bardh Lipa

**Polityka partyjna w Kosowie po uzyskaniu niepodległości: implikacje dla
budowania pokoju i budowania państwa**

**Promotor: Dr hab. prof. Łukasz Zweifel
Promotor pomocniczy: Prof. Asoc. Dr. Adem Beha**

Kraków, 2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My dissertation journey began in 2012 when I embarked on a Bachelor's degree in Political Science and Public Administration at the University of Prishtina in Kosovo. Transitioning from my village of Temal to the capital was a significant challenge, but it ignited my passion for critical thinking and research. This foundational step would not have been possible without my mother's unwavering support and emphasis on the value of education.

Building upon this newfound interest, I pursued a Master's degree in Baltic Sea Region Studies at the University of Tartu in Estonia. As the program's first Kosovan student, I faced personal and academic challenges that ultimately fueled my growth. A six-month exchange program at the University of Leuphana in Lüneburg, Germany, deeply influenced my research trajectory, sparking a passion for exploring under-researched areas and unconventional topics.

Continuing my academic journey, I became an international doctoral student in Poland, where I have been deeply touched by the genuine warmth and hospitality of the Polish people. Their welcoming nature has made my transition to life and studies here remarkably smooth, allowing me to embrace this beautiful country as my second home. This welcoming environment extends to academia, where I am sincerely thankful for the efforts of the Ministry of Education and Science in their innovative Doctoral Schools reform. This visionary initiative has opened doors for countless international researchers, especially those from areas with limited resources, providing us with unparalleled opportunities to pursue our academic dreams.

In conclusion, this dissertation, with its strengths and weaknesses, stands as a testament to more than just my personal achievements or my parents' hopes. It embodies the transformative power of international education and reflects the incredible support network that guided me through challenges of solitude, loneliness, doubt, and uncertainty – my friends, supervisors, family, and the hospitable Polish society.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the role of local actors, specifically the Vetëvendosje party, in shaping Kosovo's post-independence peacebuilding and statebuilding processes within a hybrid peace environment. Employing Mac Ginty's (2011) four-part hybrid peace model as an analytical framework (Compliance Power; Incentivizing Power; Resistance of Local Actors; Alternatives Provided by Local Actors), the study investigates Vetëvendosje's engagement with two critical case studies: the Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities (ASM) and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo.

The research reveals the significant influence of international actors' compliance power in Kosovo, highlighting the challenges faced by local actors in asserting their agency and priorities. The study demonstrates how external actors, particularly the United States and the European Union, leverage their economic, political, and diplomatic resources to pressure Kosovo into aligning with their preferred vision of post-conflict reconstruction. This is evident in the case of the ASM, where international actors have consistently pressured the Kosovo government to implement the agreement despite significant local opposition and concerns about its impact on Kosovo's sovereignty.

However, the dissertation also highlights the resilience and adaptability of local actors, exemplified by Vetëvendosje's strategic engagement with international incentives and its resistance to externally imposed agendas. The analysis shows how Vetëvendosje has selectively utilized incentives offered by international actors, such as the prospect of EU membership, to advance its domestic agenda while resisting pressures that it perceives as compromising Kosovo's sovereignty and interests. In the case of the northern Kosovo crisis, Vetëvendosje has adopted a more assertive approach, challenging the status quo and advocating for Kosovo's sovereignty and the integration of Serb-majority areas into the national political and legal framework.

Furthermore, the study identifies the emergence of context-specific, locally resonant alternatives to the international actors' approach to peacebuilding in Kosovo. Vetëvendosje's proposals for a decentralized, community-based approach to minority rights protection and a more holistic and inclusive strategy for addressing the challenges in northern Kosovo underscore the party's commitment to articulating and promoting peacebuilding solutions that are grounded in the specific realities and aspirations of Kosovo's communities.

The dissertation makes significant theoretical and practical contributions to the field of peacebuilding and statebuilding. On a theoretical level, the study refines and adapts Mac Ginty's hybrid peace model, proposing enhancements to better capture the nuances of Kosovo's post-conflict context. These refinements include a more dynamic and processual perspective on the interactions between international and local actors, a greater attention to issue-specific dynamics, and a more explicit engagement with the normative and critical dimensions of hybrid peace. In terms of policy and practice, the research highlights the importance of fostering a more context-sensitive, locally responsive, and adaptive approach to peacebuilding interventions, emphasizing the need for genuine dialogue, partnership, and co-creation with local stakeholders.

Keywords: hybrid peacebuilding, local agency, post-conflict transitions, Kosovo, Vetëvendosje, Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities (ASM), North Kosovo crisis, liberal peacebuilding, Mac Ginty's four-part model, bottom-up peacebuilding

STRESZCZENIE

Niniejsza rozprawa doktorska analizuje rolę lokalnych aktorów, a konkretnie partii Vetëvendosje, w kształtowaniu procesów budowania pokoju i państwa w Kosowie po odzyskaniu niepodległości, w ramach środowiska hybrydowego pokoju. Wykorzystują czteroelementowy model hybrydowego pokoju Mac Ginty'ego (2011) jako ramę analityczną (Compliance Power - siła podporządkowania; Incentivizing Power - siła zachęty; Resistance of Local Actors - opór lokalnych aktorów; Alternatives Provided by Local Actors - alternatywny wysuwane przez lokalnych aktorów), badanie analizuje zaangażowanie Vetëvendosje w dwa kluczowe studia przypadków: Związek Gmin Serbskich (ang. Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities, dalej jako ASM) i trwający kryzys w północnym Kosowie.

Badanie ujawnia znaczący wpływ siły perswazji aktorów międzynarodowych w Kosowie, równocześnie uwypuklając wyzwania, przed którymi stoją lokalni aktorzy w egzekwowaniu swojej sprawczości i priorytetów. Studium pokazuje, jak aktorzy zewnętrzni, zwłaszcza Stany Zjednoczone i Unia Europejska, wykorzystują swoje zasoby ekonomiczne, polityczne i dyplomatyczne, aby wywierać presję na Kosowo, aby dostosowało się do ich preferowanej wizji odbudowy po konflikcie. Jest to widoczne w przypadku ASM, gdzie aktorzy międzynarodowi konsekwentnie naciskają na rząd Kosowa, aby wdrożył porozumienie, pomimo znacznego sprzeciwu lokalnego i obaw o jego wpływ na suwerenność Kosowa.

Rozprawa podkreśla również odporność i zdolność adaptacji lokalnych aktorów, czego przykładem jest strategiczne zaangażowanie Vetëvendosje w międzynarodowe zachęty i jej opór wobec narzucanych z zewnątrz agend. Analiza pokazuje, jak Vetëvendosje selektywnie wykorzystywała zachęty oferowane przez aktorów międzynarodowych, takie jak perspektywa członkostwa w UE, do promowania swojej własnej agendy krajowej, jednocześnie opierając się presji, którą postrzega jako zagrażającą suwerenności i interesom Kosowa. W przypadku kryzysu w północnym Kosowie Vetëvendosje przyjęła bardziej asertywne podejście, kwestionując status quo i opowiadając się za suwerennością Kosowa oraz integracją obszarów zamieszkałych przez Serbów z krajowymi ramami politycznymi i prawnymi.

Ponadto badanie identyfikuje pojawienie się specyficznych dla kontekstu, lokalnie rezonujących alternatyw dla podejścia aktorów międzynarodowych do budowania pokoju w Kosowie. Propozycje Vetëvendosje dotyczące zdecentralizowanego, opartego na społecznościach podejścia do ochrony praw mniejszości oraz bardziej holistycznej i

integracyjnej strategii rozwiązywania problemów w północnym Kosowie podkreślają zaangażowanie partii w formułowanie i promowanie rozwiązań w zakresie budowania pokoju, które są zakorzenione w specyficznych realiach i aspiracjach społeczności Kosowa.

Rozprawa wnosi znaczący wkład teoretyczny i praktyczny do dziedziny budowania pokoju i państwa. Na poziomie teoretycznym badanie udoskonala i adaptuje model hybrydowego pokoju Mac Ginty'ego, proponując ulepszenia, aby lepiej uchwycić niuanse kontekstu powojennego w Kosowie. Udoskonalenia te obejmują bardziej dynamiczną i procesową perspektywę interakcji między aktorami międzynarodowymi i lokalnymi, większą uwagę na dynamikę specyficzną dla danego problemu oraz bardziej wyraźne zaangażowanie w normatywne i krytyczne wymiary hybrydowego pokoju. Jeśli chodzi o politykę i praktykę, badania podkreślają znaczenie promowania bardziej wrażliwego na kontekst, lokalnie responsywnego i adaptacyjnego podejścia do interwencji w budowanie pokoju, podkreślając potrzebę autentycznego dialogu, partnerstwa i współtworzenia z lokalnymi interesariuszami.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	11
CHAPTER 1: FROM CONFLICT TO AMBIGUOUS STATEHOOD	12
1.1. INTRODUCTION	12
1.2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND POST-CONFLICT CHALLENGES	13
1.3. POLITICAL LANDSCAPE AND KEY ACTORS	14
1.4. THE RISE OF VETËVENDOSJE	16
1.4.1. <i>Vetëvendosje's Transformation and Electoral Success</i>	16
1.5. SCOPE, AIM, AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	18
1.6. CASE STUDIES.....	20
1.6.1. <i>The Stalled Implementation of the ASM</i>	20
1.6.2. <i>The Ongoing Crisis in Northern Kosovo</i>	21
1.7. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES	21
1.8. DATA SELECTION AND CASE STUDY ANALYSIS.....	23
1.10. KEY FINDINGS.....	24
1.11. LIMITATIONS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	26
1.12. STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION	27
CHAPTER 2: FROM CONFLICT TO FRAGILITY: KOSOVO'S PURSUIT OF PEACE.....	29
2.1. INTRODUCTION.....	29
2.2. KOSOVO: AN OVERVIEW OF DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOPOLITICAL STATISTICS	29
2.3. 1990S: THE RESHAPING OF THE BALKANS	31
2.4. NAVIGATING NEGOTIATIONS PRE AND DURING THE NATO BOMBING CAMPAIGN.....	37
2.5. POST-CONFLICT CHALLENGES	44
2.6. KOSOVO'S CONTESTED PEACE: LOCAL ASPIRATIONS AND EXTERNAL AGENDAS	45
2.7. ETHNIC TENSIONS AND THE FRAGILITY OF PEACE: THE 2004 CLASHES.....	46
2.8. VETOES AND MARGINALIZATION: LIMITATIONS OF TOP-DOWN PEACEBUILDING.....	49
2.9. KOSOVO'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.....	52
2.10. POST-INDEPENDENCE	54
2.11. PATTERNS IN KOSOVO-SERBIA ACCORDS	56
CHAPTER 3: THE EVOLUTION OF PEACEBUILDING: FROM LIBERAL FRAMEWORKS TO HYBRID APPROACHES.....	61
3.1. INTRODUCTION.....	61
3.2. HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF PEACEBUILDING APPROACHES	61
3.2.1. <i>The "Victor's Peace" Paradigm: Coercive Power, Instability, and the Illusion of Sustainable Peacebuilding</i>	65
3.2.2. <i>Institutional and Constitutional Peace Paradigms: Interconnectedness, Critiques, and the Quest for Inclusive Peacebuilding</i>	67
3.2.3. <i>The Emancipatory-Transformative Model: Empowering Local Actors and Navigating the Challenges of Inclusive Peacebuilding</i>	70
3.2.4. <i>Conclusion: Navigating the Complexities of Peacebuilding Paradigms</i>	73
3.3. THE CONSOLIDATION OF A NEW PARADIGM: INSTITUTIONALIZATION BEFORE LIBERALIZATION	74
3.4. BEYOND LIBERAL PEACEBUILDING: UNVEILING DISSENT AND DEBATE.....	77
3.5. THE PEACEBUILDING PARADOX: UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF INTERVENTION	79
3.6. "NEGATIVE" AND "VIRTUAL" PEACE: CRITIQUING THE OUTCOMES OF LIBERAL PEACEBUILDING.....	81
3.7. THE FALLACY OF STANDARDIZED PEACEBUILDING: CONFRONTING THE LIMITATIONS OF THE ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL APPROACH	82
3.8. HEGEMONIC AGENDAS AND CRITICAL DISSENT IN LIBERAL PEACEBUILDING	88
3.9. RESISTANCE AND REFRAMING LIBERAL PEACEBUILDING	91
3.10. THE EVOLVING CRITICAL CONSENSUS WITHIN PEACEBUILDING DISCOURSE.....	92
3.11. SOCIAL/EMANCIPATORY AND MULTICULTURAL FRAMEWORKS: PRIORITIZING LOCAL AGENCY.....	95

3.12. THE THEORETICAL CONVERGENCE OF PEACEBUILDING AND STATEBUILDING	98
3.13. POST-LIBERAL PEACE: CRITIQUE, CONTESTATION, AND CONTEXT-DRIVEN TRANSFORMATION	104
3.14. LOCAL OWNERSHIP: BRIDGING THEORETICAL CRITIQUE AND PRACTICE IN POST-CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING.....	105
3.15. CONTESTED TERRAIN: SOCIOCULTURAL DISJUNCTURE, STRUCTURAL IMPEDIMENTS, AND THE FRAGILITY OF LOCAL OWNERSHIP IN PEACEBUILDING	107
3.16. REEVALUATING LIBERAL PEACEBUILDING IN KOSOVO: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF NEOLIBERAL ECONOMIC POLICIES, TOP-DOWN INTERVENTIONS, AND THE MARGINALIZATION OF LOCAL VOICES	108
3.17. BEYOND GOOD INTENTIONS: THE NEED FOR A HYBRID APPROACH	112
3.18. HYBRID PEACEBUILDING: THE CASE OF VETËVENDOSJE IN KOSOVO	114
3.19. SUMMARY OF THE MAIN POINTS AND ARGUMENTS PRESENTED IN THE LITERATURE REVIEW	119
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	121
4.1. INTRODUCTION	121
4.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES	122
4.3. RESEARCH DESIGN	123
4.4. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK.....	124
4.5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH	126
4.6. CASE SELECTION	128
4.7. DATA SELECTION METHODS.....	130
4.8. DATA ANALYSIS: THEMATIC ANALYSIS	132
4.8.1. <i>Generating Initial Codes</i>	133
4.8.2 <i>Searching for Themes</i>	134
4.8.3 <i>Reviewing and Refining Themes</i>	135
4.8.4. <i>Defining and Naming Themes</i>	136
4.8.5. <i>Producing the Report</i>	136
4.9. LIMITATIONS	138
4.10. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	140
4.11. EVOLUTION OF FOCUS: APPLYING A HYBRID PEACE LENS TO PARTY POLITICS AND STATEBUILDING ..	141
4.12. CONCLUSION	142
CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	145
5.1. INTRODUCTION.....	145
5.2. CONTESTING THE PEACEBUILDING PARADIGM: VETËVENDOSJE'S CHALLENGE	148
5.2.1. <i>Challenging the Status Quo: Vetëvendosje's Nationalist Stance</i>	150
5.2.2. <i>Vetëvendosje in Power: Between Ideological Stance and Governance Realities</i>	152
5.3. CASE STUDY 1: ASSOCIATION OF SERB-MAJORITY MUNICIPALITIES (ASM).....	153
5.3.1. <i>Historical background and context of the ASM</i>	153
5.3.2. <i>The August 2015 Agreement: A Step Towards Autonomy</i>	154
5.3.3. <i>Stalemate and Stumbling Blocks (2016-2018)</i>	156
5.3.4. <i>Revival and Renewed Stasis (2019-2020)</i>	159
5.3.5. <i>Vetëvendosje in Power: A New Approach?</i>	160
5.3.6 <i>Analysis of international actors' use of compliance power in relation to the ASM</i>	161
5.4. CASE STUDY 2: ONGOING CRISIS IN NORTHERN KOSOVO	165
5.4.1. <i>Historical background and context of the ongoing northern Kosovo crisis</i>	165
5.4.2. <i>Key Developmental Phases in Northern Kosovo (2011-2019)</i>	167
5.4.3. <i>Tariffs, Reciprocity Measures, and Shifting Political Dynamics (2019-2021)</i>	168
5.4.4. <i>Tensions Escalate over Identity Documents and License Plates (2022-2023)</i>	169
5.4.5. <i>Local Elections Boycott and Ensuing Protests (2023)</i>	172
5.4.6 <i>International Actors' Compliance Power in northern Kosovo ongoing Crisis</i>	173
5.4.7. <i>Findings in Relation to Hypothesis 1</i>	175
5.5. INCENTIVIZING POWER OF INTERNATIONAL ACTORS	177
5.5.1. <i>Discussion on definition of incentivizing power</i>	177
5.5.2. <i>Incentives, the ASM, and the North Kosovo Crisis</i>	177
5.5.3. <i>Findings in relation to Hypothesis 2</i>	179
5.6. VETËVENDOSJE'S NAVIGATION AND RESISTANCE.....	181

5.6.1. Discussion on local agency and resistance.....	181
5.6.2. Vetëvendosje's engagement with compliance power on the case of the ASM	182
5.6.3. Vetëvendosje's engagement with the compliance power on the case of the ongoing crisis in the north	184
5.6.4. Vetëvendosje's responses to incentives on the case of the case of the ASM and the ongoing Crisis in northern Kosovo	186
5.6.5. Findings in relation to Hypothesis 3.....	188
5.7. ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES BY VETËVENDOSJE	190
5.7.1. Discussion on local agency and alternative peacebuilding approaches.....	190
5.7.2. Alternative approaches proposed by Vetëvendosje for the ASM.....	191
5.7.3. The ongoing Crisis in north Kosovo: Alternative Approaches by Vetëvendosje.....	193
5.7.4. Findings in relation to Hypothesis 4.....	195
5.8. REFINING MAC GINTY'S HYBRID PEACE MODEL	197
5.8.1. Conclusion: Hypothesis 5	199
5.9. DISCUSSION.....	200
5.9.1 Conclusion	206
5.10. SUMMARY OF THE KEY FINDINGS AND INSIGHTS FROM THE ANALYSIS	208
5.10.1. Reflection on the research questions and hypotheses	208
5.10.2 Contributions to the understanding of hybrid peace dynamics in Kosovo and beyond	209
5.10.3. Limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.....	209
5.10.4. Concluding Remarks.....	210
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION - TRANSFORMING PEACEBUILDING THROUGH LOCAL AGENCY AND HYBRID APPROACHES	212
REFERENCE LIST	215

List of abbreviations

UN: United Nations

EU: European Union

US: United States

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

OSCE: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

ICJ: International Court of Justice

KFOR: Kosovo Force

UNMIK: United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

EULEX: European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo

ICO: International Civilian Office

SAA: Stabilization and Association Agreement

ASM: Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities (also referred to as "Community")

KLA: Kosovo Liberation Army

LDK: Democratic League of Kosovo

PDK: Democratic Party of Kosovo

AAK: Alliance for the Future of Kosovo

LVV: Vetëvendosje (Self-Determination Movement)

Chapter 1: FROM CONFLICT TO AMBIGUOUS STATEHOOD

1.1. Introduction

Post-conflict landscapes present a stark paradox: the urgent need for peace and reconstruction exists alongside the profound challenge of reconciling externally imposed frameworks with the complex realities of local experiences, aspirations, and, at times, resistance (Newman et al., 2009, pp. 26-51). This tension transforms such landscapes into dynamic testing grounds where liberal peacebuilding models, which aim to foster sustainable peace in post-conflict societies through promoting democracy, free markets, rule of law, and human rights, often reflecting Western ideals, confront the complex realities of local history, memory, and agency (Visoka & Richmond, 2016). Critics argue that these models often overlook local contexts, perpetuate power imbalances, and prioritize external interests over local needs, leading to a dissonance between idealized visions and intricate local requirements. This dissonance between idealized visions and intricate local needs frequently leads to unintended consequences and suboptimal outcomes (Paris, 2010: 337-365). Kosovo exemplifies these tensions. Its journey, from a marginalized position within Yugoslavia marked by a struggle for autonomy, through the 1999 NATO intervention and its 2008 declaration of independence to its ongoing challenges in securing sustainable peace, full international recognition, and normalized relations with Serbia, underscores the complex interplay of historical circumstances, conflict legacies, external involvement, co-option, resistance quest for self-determination (van Willigen, 2013)

Amidst the intricate post-conflict landscape of Kosovo, where the pursuit of sustainable peace and self-determination intersects with the legacies of external intervention and contested sovereignty, the emergence of Vetëvendosje (LVV) marks a pivotal moment. Born in the early post-conflict era as a grassroots movement advocating for self-determination and opposing international supervision, Vetëvendosje has transformed into a dominant political force, challenging the narratives and practices of both international actors and the established local political elite (Visoka, 2011 & 2012 & 2020; Schwandner-Sievers, 2013; Yabancı, 2016; Landau, 2017; Distler, 2020).

Vetëvendosje's broad support, particularly among young voters (Distler, 2020, pp. 375-384), propelled its rise to power in 2021. This marked a turning point, as the party demonstrated its intent to fundamentally reshape Kosovo's relationship with international actors. Its actions aimed to deviate from established practices and chart a more independent path towards peace,

stability, and development. This approach has brought Vetëvendosje into direct conflict with international actors over issues such as the implementation of the Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities (ASM) and the legacies of liberal peacebuilding in northern Kosovo – a region where Kosovo's sovereignty was historically limited (Peterson, 2009; Mahr, 2022; Björkdahl & Gusic, 2013; Krasniqi, 2018; Gjoni et al., 2010). This dissertation delves into the heart of this dynamic by examining the multifaceted ways in which Vetëvendosje, as a powerful local actor, navigates and challenges the complexities of peacebuilding in Kosovo.

1.2. Historical Context and Post-Conflict Challenges

The breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s fueled nationalist tensions in Kosovo. Slobodan Milošević's policies revoked Kosovo's autonomy and targeted ethnic Albanians, leading to escalating oppression (Malcolm, 1998, pp. 334-356). This fueled the formation of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and their armed struggle for independence (Judah, 2008, pp. 64-93). Serbia's refusal to compromise hindered diplomatic solutions. NATO's controversial 1999 intervention, aimed at halting ethnic cleansing, ultimately led to Kosovo's liberation, though its complex aftermath continues to raise questions about intervention and sovereignty (Cottey, 2009; Weller, 2008).

Kosovo emerged from conflict deeply scarred, with refugees returning, its communities fractured, and infrastructure severely damaged. Ongoing insecurity and retaliatory violence, disproportionately targeting minorities, persisted, severely hindering any potential return to normalcy and reconciliation. The need for stability and governance became paramount (Lemay-Hébert, 2011). In response, the international community established the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). This unprecedented mission combined UNMIK with a multi-dimensional mandate that included maintaining law and order, promoting human rights, overseeing the return of refugees and displaced persons, and supporting the establishment of provisional institutions of self-government (Kelmendi & Radin, 2016).

Historical attempts at peacebuilding by international actors in post-conflict scenarios often exhibit a problematic tendency to marginalize local leadership in favor of international expertise (Chesterman, 2004; 236-25). This dynamic engenders a fundamental tension that profoundly shapes post-conflict societies. Kosovo represents a stark example, where the protracted reliance on external guidance has conflicted with the growing aspirations of local

political actors to chart their own course (Lemay-Hébert, 2009). This highlights the urgent need to understand the complex interplay between external intervention and the struggle of post-conflict societies to attain self-determination and sustainable development (Barnett & Zürcher, 2009; Zaum, 2007, 127-168).

Indeed, international efforts to build capacity in Kosovo frequently sidelined local actors and diminished the value of their knowledge and contextual understanding (Chandler, 2006, pp. 48-70; Bargués-Pedreny & Mathieu, 2018; Buçaj, 2019). The United Nations Interim Mission in Kosovo's (UNMIK) "standards before status" approach emphasized democratic institution-building without resolving Kosovo's political future. This created an extended period of uncertainty that fueled widespread frustration (King & Mason, 2006, pp. 127-188). Calls for self-determination grew louder, and with continued deadlock in negotiations, Kosovo declared independence in 2008. Though recognized by many Western states, the move was contested by Serbia and its allies, leaving Kosovo's sovereignty unresolved (Ker-Lindsay, 2009, pp. 1-24).

Despite its 2008 declaration of independence, Kosovo's continued reliance on international support is notable (Skendaj, 2014, pp. 61-97). This dependence is illustrated by initiating the European Rule of Law Mission (EULEX), which aims to enhance the rule of law and cultivate solid and accountable institutions. However, the narrative of Kosovo since 2008 extends beyond institutional frameworks and policy initiatives, embodying the quintessential challenges post-conflict societies face (Lemay-Hébert, 2011). Here, the lofty ideals of international peacebuilding and state-building efforts meet Kosovo's citizens' complex, lived realities and aspirations, set against a backdrop of rich historical legacies (Visoka, 2017).

1.3. Political Landscape and Key Actors

In Kosovo's post-conflict political tapestry, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), and the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) emerge as principal actors, each charting distinct paths toward national recovery and governance. The LDK, established in 1989 as a bastion of peaceful resistance, later faced criticism for its perceived elitism, partly due to internal conflicts such as the leadership dispute following Rugova's death, which exposed deep rifts and a detachment from grassroots activism (Gashi & Musliu, 2017). This period underscored the party's struggle to balance its foundational ideals with the realities of political leadership.

In a contrasting trajectory, the PDK's evolution from a guerrilla force to a governing party under Thaçi's leadership spotlighted its focus on state-building and international legitimacy. Nonetheless, the PDK's consolidation of power, mainly through the controversial awarding of lucrative contracts and positions to former combatants and loyalists, raised alarms about the erosion of democratic processes and the entrenchment of a patronage system, reflecting a critical challenge to Kosovo's democratic integrity (Prelec & Rashiti, 2015).

The AAK, led by Haradinaj and rallying behind war veterans, championed economic and social reforms while weaving nationalist rhetoric into its agenda. Its advocacy for Euro-Atlantic integration was juxtaposed with a cautious, sometimes critical stance toward international institutions, reflecting the party's balancing act between espousing global standards and asserting Kosovo's autonomy. The AAK's sporadic participation in governance, unlike the more consistent involvement of the LDK and PDK, highlights the fluctuating dynamics of power and influence in Kosovo's political landscape, particularly in light of its ambivalent engagement with international mandates (Economides & Ker-Lindsay, 2015).

The convergence of political agendas among major coalitions in Kosovo during the governance period preceding the 2019 parliamentary elections, despite their diverse historical roots and nuanced ideological distinctions, was a significant phenomenon shaped by the enduring impact of the Kosovo conflict and the influence of international actors (Krasniqi, 2019; Visoka, 2017). This alignment centered on shared objectives crucial for consolidating Kosovo's contested independence, fostering economic development, advancing Euro-Atlantic integration, and ensuring compliance with international auspices' requests and expectations (Beha & Gëzim Selaci, 2018). The coalitions emphasized the need for institutional reforms, anti-corruption measures, and contributions to regional cooperation and stability, highlighting the post-conflict environment in which priorities were shaped by the pursuit of international legitimacy (Elbasani & Šelo Šabić, 2017). However, this convergence also presented challenges to Kosovo's democratic consolidation, as the lack of clearly delineated political visions and policy platforms, coupled with entrenched corruption, high unemployment rates, and nepotism, reflected a critical juncture in the nation's democratic trajectory, with an electorate seeking a more comprehensive range of policy options and solutions to persistent challenges (Beha & Hajrullahu, 2020).

1.4. The Rise of Vetëvendosje

Amidst the dynamic interplay of political forces within Kosovo's post-conflict landscape, dominated by parties like the LDK, PDK, and AAK, Vetëvendosje emerges as a compelling counterpoint. Founded on the fervent activism of students led by Albin Kurti in 2004-2005, this movement distinguished itself through a campaign of civil disobedience against the prevailing international administration post-1999 conflict. Vetëvendosje, advocating as a beacon of radical reform, sharply critiqued the inefficacies inherent in the internationally-driven state-building efforts, openly challenged the legitimacy of UNMIK, and championed the cause of Kosovo's unfettered independence. Furthermore, flawed institutions, clientelist parties, and favoritism within the political system further enhanced the climate conducive to the rise of Vetëvendosje (Freitag et al., 2017). This positioned the movement in stark contrast to the conditional autonomy envisaged by the Ahtisaari Plan, underlining Vetëvendosje's pivotal role in advocating for sovereignty, self-determination, and critiquing the status quo of Kosovo's political evolution (Economides & Ker-Lindsay, 2015; Visoka, 2016). Beyond its focus on sovereignty, Vetëvendosje's embrace of leftist populism advocates for anti-corruption and anti-privatization reforms within an anti-neoliberal critique, broadening its appeal. To confront UNMIK's authority, the movement utilized direct actions such as protests and civil disobedience, which, while raising its profile, also sparked controversy over their potential to destabilize Kosovo (Mahr, 2017; Vardari-Kesler, 2012).

1.4.1. Vetëvendosje's Transformation and Electoral Success

Following Kosovo's 2008 declaration of independence, Vetëvendosje embarked on a significant transformation, evolving from a vibrant grassroots movement into a leading opposition force within the political establishment. This shift, characterized by the moderation of its previously radical agenda, signified a strategic recalibration of its ideological stance, as noted by Visoka (2016). With the 2019 elections on the horizon, Vetëvendosje executed a strategic shift, reflecting a profound reassessment of its political engagement strategy. This evolution from confrontational tactics towards a more nuanced public discourse was not just tactical; it was a strategic adaptation aimed at realigning with the electorate's shifting sentiments and the practicalities of forming coalitions, thereby broadening its appeal.

The transition to a more measured tone, moving away from its traditionally combative rhetoric, underscored Vetëvendosje's skillful navigation of Kosovo's intricate political landscape. The

election victory, driven by a campaign against corruption and the critique of entrenched power structures, significantly reshaped Kosovo's political narrative. Vetëvendosje's ascension from grassroots activism to a dominant political entity illustrates the compelling force of popular dissent. Their continuous critique of international oversight by UNMIK and EULEX, coupled with their controversial advocacy for potential unification with Albania, has cemented their anti-establishment identity. These actions underscore Vetëvendosje's break from traditional political paths and highlight its influential role in redefining discussions on governance, sovereignty, and democracy in Kosovo's post-independence era (Bieber, 2020, pp. 13-30).

Vetëvendosje has attracted some scholarly attention, with most studies conducted before the movement's ascent to power as a governing force. The existing literature on Vetëvendosje has primarily focused on its populist discourse, anti-establishment stance, and role as a resistance movement against the international presence in the country. Yabancı (2016) has explored the populist and anti-establishment politics of Vetëvendosje, highlighting its critique of the international community's involvement in Kosovo and its challenge to the political status quo. Vardari-Kesler (2012) and Lemay-Hébert (2013) have analyzed the movement's strategic choices and its resistance against the "new protectorate" status of Kosovo, emphasizing the erosion of citizenship in the context of co-shared governance. These studies have provided valuable insights into the political dynamics of Vetëvendosje and its impact on the domestic political landscape in Kosovo.

However, there is a notable gap in the literature regarding Vetëvendosje's interaction with international actors and its impact on peacebuilding efforts in Kosovo. At the same time, Hehir (2006) and Visoka (2011) have investigated the dynamics of international state-building and local resistance in Kosovo, with Vetëvendosje being a prominent example of the latter. Furthermore, there is a striking paucity of research on the party's navigation of specific complexities inherent to the ASM and the legacies of liberal peacebuilding in northern Kosovo, where Kosovo's sovereignty was largely absent. This dearth of analysis is particularly consequential since Vetëvendosje assumed power in 2021.

Amid the global crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, Kosovo found itself navigating tumultuous political waters. This scenario intensified scrutiny of the resilience of its political institutions and the ongoing dialectic between domestic ambitions and international diplomatic pressures. The focal point of this political impasse was the stance taken by the newly-elected Prime Minister (PM) from Vetëvendosje, who unequivocally challenged the U.S. envoy over the

contentious issue of a land swap with Serbia, a critical component of the Serbia-Kosovo peace talks. Far from a mere diplomatic dispute, this defiance catalyzed a political crisis, culminating in a no-confidence vote by party MPs and the subsequent collapse of the government (Balkan Insight, 2020). This incident served as a testament to the fragility of Kosovo's political framework and a vivid illustration of the intricate ballet between the pursuit of national interests and the complexities of engaging with the international community.

The aftermath of this upheaval set the stage for the 2021 elections, which proved to be a watershed in Kosovo's political narrative. The coalition led by Vetëvendosje, now enhanced by its partnership with GUXO!, witnessed a remarkable swell in electoral support, almost doubling its previous vote share. This electoral landslide reaffirmed Vetëvendosje's ascending political trajectory. It mirrored the Kosovar public's endorsement of the party's assertive approach to sovereignty, governance, and resilience in the face of external diplomatic challenges. This significant electoral shift underscores a critical juncture in Kosovo's democratic evolution, marking a moment of redefined political engagement and a reassertion of the electorate's voice in shaping the future direction of Kosovo.

1.5. Scope, Aim, and Theoretical Framework

This dissertation, titled "Party Politics in Post-Independence Kosovo: Implications for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding," employs a comprehensive analytical framework that acknowledges the intrinsic connection between ongoing state-building efforts and foundational peacebuilding endeavors. The study of Kosovo's post-independence political landscape, focusing on party politics' pivotal role, critically incorporates a peacebuilding theoretical lens. This integration stems from the understanding that sustainable state-building relies on successfully navigating structural conflicts, empowering local agency, and reconciling societal divisions (Paris, 2004; Mac Ginty, 2008; Richmond, 2005). The research emphasizes the necessity for participatory politics, enhanced social cohesion, and rectified power imbalances, aligning with the growing academic discourse advocating for a unified peacebuilding and state-building perspective (Call, 2008, pp. 25-48).

By situating the research at the critical intersection of peacebuilding and state-building, collectively referred to as peacebuilding (see more in chapter 3) throughout this dissertation, this study provides a nuanced understanding of their interconnected outcomes in Kosovo's post-independence development. It explores the hybrid peace environment's dynamics, focusing on

Vetëvendosje's role as a crucial local actor amidst complex post-conflict power relations and the strategic outcomes of peacebuilding efforts.

This research addresses critical gaps in applying the hybrid peace framework to Kosovo's specific context. Focusing on Vetëvendosje as a governing entity brings an innovative perspective to hybrid peace research, exposing flaws in liberal frameworks and revealing the agential capacity of influential local actors to forge context-specific peacebuilding pathways (Freitag et al., 2017). Kosovo faces ongoing challenges in state formation and peacebuilding amidst complex post-conflict dynamics. International peacebuilding initiatives based on liberal frameworks have intersected with local visions, priorities, and agencies, creating a hybrid peace environment (Mac Ginty, 2011; Richmond, 2015). Recent scholarship acknowledges the constraints imposed by external actors but also recognizes the agency of local entities in strategically navigating these dynamics (Björkdahl & Gusic, 2013; Kurowska, 2018; Mac Ginty, 2011).

This study draws upon critical peacebuilding theories and the concept of hybrid peace, understood as a dynamic interplay between global norms and local agencies (Richmond, 2015; Mac Ginty, 2010). Central to this theoretical framework is the notion of hybridization, which refers to the process whereby diverse entities, practices, ideas, norms, and agencies are combined, mixed, or adapted to create context-specific forms of peace shaped by the complex interaction of global and local forces (Mac Ginty, 2010; 2011). To operationalize this concept, the study employs Mac Ginty's (2011) four-part model, encompassing compliance, incentives, resistance, and alternatives, to systematically analyze Vetëvendosje's multifaceted engagement with international peacebuilding efforts. This analytical approach is grounded in the hybrid peacebuilding framework, which emphasizes the inherent complexity, dynamism, and multidimensionality of peacebuilding processes and the critical role of multiple actors, agendas, and power structures in shaping these processes .

Leveraging Mac Ginty's (2011) comprehensive four-part model, this dissertation delves into the complex power dynamics at play in enforcing liberal peace agendas, articulating the multifaceted interactions between international peacebuilding efforts and local responses. This model, structured around compliance power, incentivization, local resistance, and the creation of alternative peacebuilding frameworks by local actors, serves as the analytical lens for examining the chosen case studies:

- The compliance dimension explores the strategies international actors employ to enforce their preferred vision of post-conflict reconstruction, often through economic, political, and military leverage.
- The incentivizing dimension examines the use of inducements, such as financial assistance, political support, and the prospect of international integration, to encourage local cooperation with the liberal peace agenda.
- The resistance and adaptation dimension focuses on the agency of local actors in navigating, contesting, and reshaping external interventions to align with their own priorities and interests.
- The alternatives dimension highlights the capacity of local actors to articulate and pursue their visions of peace and development that may diverge from or challenge the dominant liberal peace paradigm.

1.6. Case Studies

The dissertation focuses on two case studies to dissect Vetëvendosje's interactions with external influences and local dynamics, as well as to critique the limitations of the liberal peacebuilding paradigm and underscore the significance of local agency: the halted execution of the ASM agreement and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo (2021-2023), particularly the local elections in Serbian-majority municipalities, and the reciprocity measures against Serbia regarding vehicle license plates and official documents. These case studies expose the friction between the promotion of liberal peacebuilding by external entities and Kosovo's pursuit of autonomy, the dissonance between incentivization strategies and local preferences, and the capacity of local actors like Vetëvendosje to redefine the contours of imposed peacebuilding models.

1.6.1. The Stalled Implementation of the ASM

The contested establishment of the Association of Serb Majority Municipalities (ASM) epitomizes the discord between external prescriptions and local preferences. Conceived through the EU-mediated 2013 Brussels Agreement between Kosovo and Serbia, the ASM was envisioned as a mechanism to coordinate municipal policy, deliver services, and foster cultural ties within Kosovo's 10 Serb-majority municipalities (Bieber, 2015).

However, the ASM ignited intense controversy within Kosovo. Its potential autonomy and powers were seen by many as a threat to Kosovo's sovereignty and territorial integrity

(Demjaha, 2017). Vetëvendosje spearheaded the opposition, arguing that the ASM would effectively create a de facto Republika Srpska-like statelet within Kosovo. This disconnect between the EU's model and local concerns fueled gridlock, even as incentives were offered for compliance. The complex dynamics surrounding the ASM's non-implementation highlight growing tensions between external visions, local actors exercising agency, and competing notions of appropriate peacebuilding approaches (Visoka, 2017).

1.6.2. The Ongoing Crisis in Northern Kosovo

The complex crisis in northern Kosovo stems from a contestation of authority between external and internal actors. A locus of tension since the 1990s (Bieber, 2015), northern Kosovo experienced direct UNMIK control from 1999-2008, fostering resentment among local Serbs (Visoka & Beha, 2011). Following Kosovo's declaration of independence, Serbia upheld its influence in the region, deepening divisions with the central government (Economides & Ker-Lindsay, 2015).

International actors have sought to integrate northern Kosovo through centralized frameworks, dispatching police and other missions (Guzina & Marijan, 2014). Yet, these efforts have clashed with alternative power structures supported by local Serb leaders and Serbia (Beha, 2015). Heavy-handed approaches have triggered violent escalations, disregarding the complex communal dynamics that shape local realities (Björkdahl & Gusic, 2013).

This protracted struggle, punctuated by a multitude of proposed external solutions ranging from partition to power-sharing, highlights the challenges of reconciling top-down prescriptions with local agency and context-specific concerns (Visoka, 2017). Northern Kosovo epitomizes the clash of priorities among intervening actors, leading to patterns of coerced local compliance, deliberate resistance, and the emergence of grassroots peacebuilding paradigms (Lemay-Hébert, 2013).

1.7. Research Questions and Hypotheses

Informed by the hybrid peacebuilding framework and Mac Ginty's (2011) four-part model, this study examined the role of Vetëvendosje as a critical local actor in shaping Kosovo's hybrid peace environment. Within the context of post-conflict power dynamics and ongoing peacebuilding efforts, the research analyzed Vetëvendosje's impact. The following research questions and hypotheses served as the foundation for this investigation:

RQ1: How do international actors employ compliance power in relation to the ASM and the Ongoing Crisis in northern Kosovo in Kosovo's post-independence peacebuilding process?

- **Hypothesis 1:** International actors leverage their economic, political, and diplomatic resources to exert coercive pressure on Kosovo, shaping the peacebuilding process and the outcomes of the ASM and the Ongoing Crisis in northern Kosovo according to their preferred vision.

RQ2: How do international actors utilize incentives to promote the resolution of the ASM and the Ongoing Crisis in northern Kosovo in post-conflict Kosovo?

- **Hypothesis 2:** International actors employ incentives such as economic assistance, political support, and the prospect of integration into international institutions to encourage cooperation from local actors in implementing their agenda in the case of to the ASM and the Ongoing Crisis in northern Kosovo.

RQ3: How does Vetëvendosje, as a local actor, navigate and respond to the compliance and incentivizing powers exerted by international actors in Kosovo's peacebuilding process, specifically in relation to the ASM and the Ongoing Crisis in northern Kosovo?

- **Hypothesis 3:** Despite power imbalances, Vetëvendosje actively engages with international actors using strategies ranging from negotiation to subversion and resistance, aiming to shape the outcomes of the ASM issue and the Ongoing Crisis in northern Kosovo in alignment with their own priorities and vision.

RQ4: What alternative approaches to the ASM and the Ongoing Crisis in northern Kosovo does Vetëvendosje, as a local actor, develop and promote within Kosovo's peacebuilding process?

- **Hypothesis 4:** Vetëvendosje's engagement as a local actor in Kosovo's context reveals the emergence of context-specific, locally resonant alternatives to the international community's approach to the ASM and the Ongoing Crisis in northern Kosovo.

RQ5: How can the analysis of Vetëvendosje's engagement with the ASM and the Ongoing Crisis in northern Kosovo contribute to refining and adapting Mac Ginty's hybrid peace model to better capture the dynamics of Kosovo's post-conflict context?

- **Hypothesis 5:** An examination of Vetëvendosje's strategies and experiences in navigating the compliance power and incentivizing power of international actors, while

simultaneously promoting alternative, locally-driven approaches to address the ASM and the Ongoing Crisis in northern Kosovo, will reveal distinct patterns of interaction, contestation, and hybridization that necessitate targeted refinements to Mac Ginty's hybrid peace model along its four key dimensions. By incorporating these adaptations, the model will achieve a more nuanced understanding of the intricate relationship between international and local actors within Kosovo's post-independence environment. This will enable the model to capture the specific challenges, opportunities, and power dynamics at play, enhancing its applicability and explanatory power in this context.

1.8.Data Selection and Case Study Analysis

This dissertation employs a qualitative case study approach to investigate Vetëvendosje's influence on Kosovo's post-independence peacebuilding trajectory. Data selection emphasized diverse perspectives, including UN reports and peer-reviewed publications, for a comprehensive understanding of Vetëvendosje's actions within the peacebuilding environment. Primary sources, including official Vetëvendosje's documents (policy statements, press releases, public communications), offered insights into the party's ideological foundations, its strategies of resistance or cooperation with international efforts, and its proposals for addressing the core challenges highlighted within the selected case studies. These sources were triangulated with governmental and non-governmental reports, international policy documents, academic literature, and media coverage for broader context and analysis.

A two-tiered case selection process was employed. The first tier identified cases that illustrate the challenges faced by post-conflict states under international peacebuilding efforts, highlighting instances where international actors exert both coercive and persuasive power. The second tier focused on how local actors, particularly Vetëvendosje, respond to these strategies, including instances of resistance or the development of alternative approaches. This approach led to the selection of two critical cases: the stalled implementation of the Association of Serb-majority Municipalities (ASM) agreement and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo (particularly local elections in Serbian-majority municipalities and reciprocity measures against Serbia).

Thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke (2006), was used to analyze data and address research questions. Mac Ginty's (2011) hybrid peacebuilding model, focusing on Compliance

Power, Incentivizing Power, Resistance of Local Actors, and Alternatives Provided by Local Actors, served as the analytical framework. NVivo facilitated coding and theme development, with themes explored across the case studies and within Mac Ginty's model. The dissertation's findings and discussion chapters present and interpret these themes in relation to the research questions, the theoretical framework, and relevant literature.

This methodology enabled a nuanced, theory-driven examination of local agency's impact on peacebuilding in Kosovo. While context-specific, the findings contribute to broader debates on the role of local actors in peacebuilding and offer insights into contemporary peacebuilding dynamics within post-conflict settings.

1.9. Significance of the Research

This dissertation makes several significant contributions to the field of peacebuilding and statebuilding. First and foremost, it addresses a critical lacuna in the existing literature by providing an in-depth analysis of the role of local actors in navigating the complex landscape of hybrid peace and interacting with international actors. By focusing on the case of Vetëvendosje in post-independence Kosovo, the study offers a nuanced and contextualized understanding of how local actors shape the outcomes of critical issues, such as the Association of Serb Municipalities (ASM) and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo.

Second, the dissertation critically examines the limitations of the liberal peacebuilding paradigm in addressing the specific needs and aspirations of post-conflict societies. By highlighting Vetëvendosje's resistance strategies and alternative approaches, the study challenges the notion that peacebuilding can be effectively imposed from the outside and underscores the importance of incorporating local perspectives and knowledge.

Finally, the dissertation contributes to the ongoing debate about the adaptability of existing peacebuilding models to diverse post-conflict contexts. By analyzing Vetëvendosje's engagement through the lens of Mac Ginty's hybrid peace model, the study assesses the model's applicability to the Kosovo case and suggests refinements to enhance its explanatory power.

1.10. Key Findings

The conducted analysis of Vetëvendosje's engagement with the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo uncovers the intricate tapestry of power, resistance, and transformation that

characterizes the dynamics of hybrid peace and the agency of local political parties in shaping the trajectory of post-conflict reconstruction.

The study reveals the pervasive influence of international actors' compliance power in shaping Kosovo's peacebuilding process according to their preferred vision. The United States and the European Union have exerted significant pressure on Kosovo through a combination of economic, political, and diplomatic levers, as evidenced by the linkage of the ASM's implementation to Kosovo's European integration prospects and the imposition of sanctions in response to Vetëvendosje's assertive approach in northern Kosovo. This finding underscores the asymmetry of power between international and local actors, and the challenges faced by political parties like Vetëvendosje in asserting their own agency and priorities.

However, the analysis also highlights the strategic and selective engagement of Vetëvendosje with international incentives. Rather than passively accepting the carrots and sticks offered by external actors, the party has demonstrated a remarkable ability to leverage these incentives to advance its own priorities while resisting external pressures that threaten Kosovo's sovereignty and territorial integrity. This finding challenges simplistic narratives of local actors as mere recipients of international peacebuilding efforts, and highlights the resourcefulness and adaptability of political parties like Vetëvendosje in navigating the complex landscape of hybrid peace.

The study further reveals the multifaceted strategies employed by Vetëvendosje in navigating and responding to the compliance and incentivizing powers of international actors. From strategic negotiation to subversion and resistance, the party has demonstrated a remarkable ability to balance its commitment to self-determination with the pragmatic necessities of engaging with international actors. Vetëvendosje's evolving stance on the ASM, from strong opposition to partial compliance and strategic adaptation, reflects the party's capacity to adapt to changing political circumstances and to forge a path that aligns with its vision of Kosovo's future.

In the case of northern Kosovo, Vetëvendosje has adopted a more assertive approach, challenged the status quo and advocated for Kosovo's sovereignty and the integration of Serb-majority areas into the national political and legal framework. This finding highlights the transformative potential of local political actors in reshaping the contours of hybrid peace and challenging the dominance of external peacebuilding agendas.

Moreover, the analysis uncovers the emergence of context-specific, locally resonant alternatives to the international community's approach to the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo. Vetëvendosje's proposals for a decentralized, community-based approach to minority rights protection and a more holistic and inclusive strategy for addressing the challenges in northern Kosovo underscore the party's commitment to articulating and promoting peacebuilding solutions that are grounded in the specific realities and aspirations of Kosovo's communities. These alternative visions challenge the top-down imposition of externally crafted frameworks and highlight the potential for locally-driven initiatives to contribute to more sustainable and legitimate peacebuilding outcomes.

The examination of Vetëvendosje's strategies and experiences also reveals distinct patterns of interaction, contestation, and hybridization that necessitate targeted refinements to Mac Ginty's (2011) hybrid peace model. The study proposes enhancements to the model's four dimensions, incorporating a more dynamic and processual perspective on the interactions between international and local actors, a greater attention to issue-specific dynamics, and a more explicit engagement with the normative and critical dimensions of hybrid peace. These refinements strengthen the model's explanatory power and applicability to Kosovo's post-conflict context, and contribute to the broader theoretical development of the field.

1.11. Limitations and Ethical Considerations

This dissertation, while employing a rigorous qualitative methodology to analyze Vetëvendosje's impact on Kosovo's post-independence peacebuilding, acknowledged inherent limitations that warrant discussion. The study's focus on Kosovo's unique context potentially limited the direct generalizability of findings to other post-conflict settings. Additionally, the emphasis on Vetëvendosje risked overlooking the contributions of other local actors, especially that of minority groups, and the chosen case studies, while pivotal, did not encompass the entirety of local-international interactions throughout Kosovo's post-independence years. Further, the focus on this specific period may not have fully captured the long-term evolution of peacebuilding dynamics. Despite these acknowledged limitations, the study's design, underpinned by Mac Ginty's model, provided valuable insights into hybrid peacebuilding processes and the role of local agency within the Kosovo context.

My personal background, deeply connected to Kosovo and marked by experiences of displacement, loss, and firsthand exposure to the complexities of liberal peacebuilding, profoundly influenced my approach to this research. On the other hand, this background

enabled me to develop a unique perspective with increased sensitivity towards contexts and topics. This, combined with my native language skills, allowed me to delve deeper into complex subjects. Nonetheless, acknowledging the potential for bias stemming from these formative experiences, I prioritized objectivity and sought to mitigate that bias through a rigorous methodological framework. I critically evaluated multiple perspectives from diverse sources, including primary documents and analyses from local actors, consciously interrogating my own assumptions and positionality to foster a balanced and nuanced analysis.

This research prioritized meticulous adherence to intellectual property standards, attributing all ideas and data to their original sources. Mindful of Kosovo's complex socio-political landscape, I consciously tried to avoid any potentially offensive or divisive language. This sensitivity extended to the elaboration of the historical context. To facilitate critical evaluation and potential replication, I upheld transparency regarding methodology, data sources, and limitations.

1.12. Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is structured into six chapters, each addressing a specific aspect of the research and building upon the insights and arguments developed in the preceding sections.

This introductory chapter sets the stage for the study, providing a comprehensive introduction that outlines the background and problem statement, research aim and objectives, research questions and hypotheses, theoretical framework, research methodology, contribution and significance, and key findings

Chapter 2 offers a rich contextual overview of Kosovo's historical background, tracing the complex trajectory of the conflict, the international intervention, and the post-independence peacebuilding and statebuilding processes. This chapter provides the necessary foundation for understanding the specificities of Kosovo's post-conflict landscape and the challenges and opportunities faced by local actors like Vetëvendosje.

Chapter 3 of the dissertation engages with the existing literature on peacebuilding. It provides a comprehensive review of the evolution of peacebuilding approaches, from liberal frameworks to hybrid models that emphasize local agency and context-specific solutions. It introduces Mac Ginty's (2011) hybrid peace model and situates the study within the broader scholarly debates on peacebuilding. This chapter lays the theoretical groundwork for the analysis and highlights the gaps in the existing literature that this dissertation addresses.

Chapter 4 offers a detailed account of the research methodology, justifying the selection of a qualitative case study approach and outlining the data collection and analysis methods employed in the study. This chapter provides a transparent and rigorous explanation of the research process, ensuring the credibility and reliability of the findings.

Chapter 5 forms the empirical core of the dissertation, presenting a nuanced and in-depth analysis of Vetëvendosje's engagement with the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo through the lens of Mac Ginty's (2011) hybrid peace model. It examines the party's navigation of compliance power, incentivizing power, resistance and adaptation strategies, and the promotion of alternative approaches.

Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation by summarizing the key findings, discussing their implications for theory and practice, and highlighting the study's contributions to the understanding of hybrid peace dynamics in Kosovo and beyond. It also reflects critically on the limitations of the research and offers recommendations for future research.

In conclusion, this dissertation makes a significant and original contribution to the field of peacebuilding by offering a theoretically-informed and empirically-grounded analysis of the role of local actors in shaping Kosovo's post-independence trajectory. By shedding light on the complex dynamics of compliance, incentivization, resistance, and the promotion of alternative approaches that characterize the interactions between international and local actors in hybrid peace environments, the study challenges dominant assumptions and paradigms in the field and opens up new avenues for understanding and supporting the transformative potential of local agency in post-conflict societies.

Chapter 2: FROM CONFLICT TO FRAGILITY: KOSOVO'S PURSUIT OF PEACE

2.1. Introduction

While a comprehensive historical analysis exceeds this study's scope, a targeted overview of pivotal events provides vital context for examining Kosovo's conflict and post-conflict peacebuilding pathways. This background chapter focuses selectively on key junctures judged most salient for situating the research aims, guided by the study's conceptual framework and engagement with existing scholarship. The condensed narrative centers on the following: the Yugoslav era backdrop; escalation of the Kosovo conflict; NATO's contested intervention; the UNMIK mission; and Kosovo's contested independence. Attention is concentrated on dynamics most relevant to the research goals of assessing local agency in reshaping peacebuilding in Kosovo's complex hybrid environment. Discussion of sociopolitical forces, contested identities, and local-global power asymmetries underpinning these events illuminates continuation and rupture between the conflict and post-conflict periods. By tracing this focused historical arc, the chapter provides sharpened context for analyzing how local actors engage with internationally-led peacebuilding efforts and envision alternative paths aligned with local aspirations. While condensed, this targeted overview distills key historical insights needed to situate the study's investigation of local agency in navigating and contesting external interventions after conflict.

2.2. Kosovo: An Overview of Demographic and Sociopolitical Statistics

Kosovo, located in Southeastern Europe (see Figure 1), declared independence in 2008 after years under Serbian rule. While recognized by over 100 UN member states, Kosovo's sovereignty remains disputed by Serbia (Economides & Ker-Lindsay, 2015). With a population of approximately 1.7 million, Kosovo features a predominant ethnic Albanian majority (over 90%), with ethnic Serbs constituting the largest minority group (around 5%). Other minority communities include Bosnians, Turks, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians and Gorani (OSCE, 2018). Pristina is the capital.

Kosovo's constitution enshrines principles of ethnic inclusion and gender equality (Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, 2008). The unicameral 120-seat Parliament reserves 20 seats for minority representatives, including 10 for Serbs. Additional quotas guarantee representation for smaller communities (Wise & Agarin, 2017). Furthermore, electoral laws require 30% of candidate lists from each political entity to feature the underrepresented gender (Law No. 03/L-073 on General Elections in the Republic of Kosovo, 2008). This proportional inclusion acknowledges Kosovo's multi-ethnic foundations declared in its independence statement (Kosovo Declaration of Independence, 2008). The quotas aim to prevent domination of the majority and ensure all communities have voice in governance (Wise & Agarin, 2017). Kosovo's political system balances power across branches. The indirectly elected President proposes the Prime Minister, who must be approved by Parliament (Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, 2008). Either branch can issue no-confidence motions leading to dissolution of the other (Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, 2008). This constraints-based structure seeks to foster good governance and social cohesion.



Figure 1. Map of Kosovo. Retrieved from Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024.

2.3. 1990s: The Reshaping of the Balkans

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was established on the foundational principles of unity and non-alignment amid the geopolitical tensions of the Cold War era. It pursued a decentralized form of socialism distinct from the Soviet model, characterized by worker self-management and a non-aligned foreign policy stance (Singh et al., 2007). This system contributed to a period of economic growth and relative prosperity until the political and economic crises of the 1980s (Kukić, 2018). The economic downturn, precipitated by the global oil crisis, catalyzed widespread disaffection with the federal governance structure throughout the constituent republics. This economic deterioration engendered demands for augmented economic self-governance from certain republics, thereby exacerbating pre-existing ethnic and nationalist cleavages. Following the demise of Josip Broz Tito, the charismatic figurehead pivotal in Yugoslavia's quest for independence, the federation's unity began to erode incrementally.

While Tito's leadership ostensibly aimed to sustain Yugoslavia's unity through diplomatic persuasion and, when deemed necessary, the suppression of secessionist and nationalist ambitions, this approach effectively obfuscated the burgeoning ethnic and regional tensions simmering beneath the surface. Recognizing these strains, the 1974 Constitution, promulgated under Tito's auspices, attempted to mitigate growing discord by conferring expanded autonomy to the federation's constituent units - the republics and autonomous provinces. Specifically, this decentralization measure delegated authority over economic planning and cultural policy to these sub-federal units (Swift, 2003). However, this endeavor to assuage centrifugal forces through devolution ultimately proved ineffective. The re-emergence of long-standing grievances and intensifying centrifugal dynamics could not be forestalled, and in fact, the period following Tito's death in 1980 marked a pronounced intensification of Yugoslavia's internal contradictions.

Emblematic of these underlying fissures was the situation in Kosovo. Driven by a legacy of historical marginalization and escalating disaffection under Yugoslav rule, the path towards Kosovo's independence bid was seemingly inexorable (Judah, 2008, pp. 42-74). As the poorest region with an overwhelmingly ethnic Albanian population, Kosovo experienced systemic underdevelopment, political repression, and cultural subjugation over decades. Starkly illustrating the depths of this inequality, in 1988 Kosovo's per capita income languished at a mere quarter of the Yugoslav national average (Bellamy, 2002, pp.1-15). Repeated protests in

1968 and 1981 laid bare the long-simmering discontent among Kosovar Albanians, who increasingly clamored for greater autonomy - a movement that gained precipitous momentum as centrifugal forces catalyzed Yugoslavia's very fracturing (Mertus, 1999, pp. 17-54; Vickers, 1998, pp. 289-313). It was this crucible of discontent that ultimately catalyzed Kosovo's explosive bid for self-determination. The unilateral declarations of independence by Slovenia and Croatia in June 1991, viewed through this lens, can be understood as the critical rupture precipitating Yugoslavia's descent into armed conflict and fragmentation, most notably the brutal Bosnian War (1992-1995). Even the establishment of the truncated Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1992, comprising Serbia and Montenegro, could not ameliorate the internecine unrest, as the simmering question over Kosovo's status remained an intractable point of contention (Critchley, 1993).

In March 1981, Albanian student protests fueled by Kosovo's chronic underdevelopment and lack of opportunities ignited widespread demonstrations demanding republic status for Kosovo within Yugoslavia (Magaš, 1993, pp. 3-15). This unrest heightened anxieties among Kosovo's Serb minority, already concerned by Albanian calls for greater autonomy within the federation (Dragović-Soso, 2002, pp. 115-145). Amidst escalating tensions, a number of Serbs chose to flee, a movement that significantly contributed to the growing dissatisfaction within the Serbian population itself (Anzulović, 1999, pp. 99-146). This sentiment stemmed from a prevailing perception that their government was failing to adequately safeguard the interests and well-being of their compatriots in Kosovo (Bieber & Daskalovski, 2003, pp. 11-22).

In the midst of this volatile context, Slobodan Milošević, then the leader of the Serbian Communist Party, adeptly tapped into the pervasive fears among the Serb population. His proclamation, "no one will beat you again", initially intended to assuage a fearful crowd, resonated profoundly (Sell, 2002, p.22). By tapping into the rising tide of nationalist sentiment, Milošević transformed his image into that of a guardian for Serbs everywhere, thereby securing substantial popular support (Judah, 2008, pp. 64-93). This strategic repositioning marked the beginning of a significant shift in the political landscape of the region, as Milošević's actions laid the groundwork for further escalations in tension and conflict (Ramet, 2002, pp. 306-336).

The historical backdrop against which Kosovo's struggle for independence unfolds is deeply entwined with the collective memory and identity of the Serbian people. Central to this narrative is the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, a defining moment against the Ottoman Empire, which, despite being a military defeat, has been enshrined in Serbian lore as a symbol of

ultimate sacrifice, resilience, and the perpetual connection to their ancestral land. This enduring narrative has ignited demands for the defense and subsequent reclamation of Kosovo, positioning it as an essential element of Serbian national identity (Anzulovic, 1999, pp. 1-10). Such narratives of historical entitlement were later leveraged by nationalist figures like Slobodan Milošević amidst the disintegration of Yugoslavia, playing a pivotal role in his ascension to power (Lampe, 2000, pp. 365-415). By exploiting these deep-seated sentiments, Milošević intensified existing divisions and precipitated further conflict (Benson, 2001, pp. 1-20).

As Yugoslavia unraveled, declarations of independence by Slovenia and Croatia in June 1991 heralded the onset of a series of conflicts, most notably the Bosnian War (1992-95) (Lampe, 2000, pp. 365-415). Despite the establishment of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which included Serbia and Montenegro, in 1992, the unrest persisted, with Kosovo remaining a significant flashpoint. This ongoing strife underscored the deep-seated historical grievances and nationalist fervor that Milošević had manipulated to his advantage, setting the stage for a prolonged period of instability and conflict in the region (Bieber, 2002).

In contrast, the Albanian narrative offers a different perspective on historical claims to the land. Albanians trace their ancestry back to the Illyrians, an ancient civilization that inhabited 'Dardania,' an area that pre-dates Roman conquest and encompasses present-day Kosovo (Malcolm, 1998, pp. 22-40). This era, regarded by Albanians as a 'Golden Age,' is celebrated for its cultural and historical significance, positioning Albanians as a dominant ethnic group in a vast European territory (Vickers, 1998). This claim is often presented as a counter-narrative to 'Greater Serbian Nationalism,' embodying the principles of 'Greater Albanian Nationalism' (Pula, 2004). The contrasting historical narratives between Serbs and Albanians illustrate the complex layers of identity, memory, and nationalism that continue to date.

Upon reinforcing his grip over Serbia and, by extension, its influence within the broader Yugoslav federation, Slobodan Milošević, in March 1989 and September 1990, constitutional amendments in Serbia resulted in the reduction of autonomy for Kosovo and Vojvodina (Ramet, 2002, pp. 206-336). Following these amendments, the Serbian government undertook actions that included the prohibition of the use of Albanian in public spaces, the removal of Albanians from positions within governmental institutions in Kosovo, the restriction of their participation in local governance, the dissolution of the Kosovo parliament, and the enactment of oppressive measures infringing upon human rights (Human Rights Watch, 1994).

In a direct challenge to the oppressive regime of Milošević and in pursuit of self-determination, Consequently, on July 2, 1990, Albanian representatives in the Kosovo provincial assembly proclaimed independence from Serbia, and on October 18, 1991, they further declared independence from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), highlighting a significant escalation in their quest for self-determination and autonomy (Weller, 2009, pp. 25-40). This bold step was a clear defiance against Milošević's policies, yet Serbia, under the guise of Yugoslav federal authority, swiftly rejected this declaration, leading to the dissolution of the Kosovo Assembly (Bellamy, 2002, pp. 1-15). The situation rapidly deteriorated, with widespread strikes spreading across Kosovo, climaxing in a general strike in September (Clark, 2000, pp. 70-92). Despite its formal dissolution, the Assembly members reconvened to ratify a constitution for the Republic of Kosovo, a testament to their commitment to self-governance and independence.

During the early 1990s, as the Yugoslav federation began to unravel, several of its republics, including Slovenia, Macedonia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, declared their independence, setting a precedent within the region (Weller, 2009, pp. 25-40). Kosovo, motivated by similar aspirations, sought to carve out its own path toward independence. A referendum held in 1991 revealed strong support among Kosovars for this move, yet Serbia, under Milošević's leadership, strongly opposed Kosovo's bid for independence (Bellamy, 2002, pp.1-15). This occurred against the backdrop of the wider disintegration of Yugoslavia and amidst evolving policies of the European Community (EC) on the recognition of new states emerging from the crisis (Caplan, 2005, pp. 15-48).

The EC, in its attempts to address the unfolding situation, relied on the advice of the Badinter Arbitration Commission, a legal advisory panel it had established. The Commission was clear in its stance that the right to self-determination, leading to international recognition as a state, was reserved exclusively for the six original republics of Yugoslavia (Pellet, 1992). This ruling effectively meant that Kosovo, being a province within Serbia, did not qualify for unilateral secession or independent statehood under the criteria set forth by the Commission. Consequently, while the EC moved forward with recognizing the independence of the other Yugoslav republics based on the Commission's recommendations, Kosovo's status remained in limbo (Muharremi, 2008).

The referendum was followed by the decisive May 1992 elections, which saw Ibrahim Rugova's Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) emerge victorious. Rugova's presidency

marked the creation of a de facto Kosovar state, recognized only by Albania. Rugova's strategy focused on international diplomacy to challenge Serbian control, emphasizing Kosovo's right to self-determination. However, the effectiveness of this moderate approach soon came into question, especially as the international community showed reluctance to endorse Kosovo's cause. This hesitation was partly due to concerns over setting a precedent that might destabilize other multi-ethnic states.

Rugova's reliance on potential United States intervention, while understandable, was undermined by the international community's prioritization of the Bosnian War. The Albanian-American diaspora's determined attempts to advocate for Kosovo's inclusion in the 1995 Dayton Agreement were ultimately thwarted by chief negotiator Richard Holbrooke's assessment of the situation as overly complex and potentially destabilizing for the delicate Bosnian peace process (Perritt, 2008, pp. 1-24). The exclusion of Kosovo from the Dayton negotiations, coupled with the perceived futility of Rugova's diplomatic strategies, fostered a sense of powerlessness and disillusionment within the Kosovar Albanian community (Judah, 2008, pp. 64-93). This set the stage for the emergence of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), whose advocacy for armed resistance filled the void and reflected a shift towards a more violent phase of the conflict (Mulaj, 2008). The rise of the KLA highlighted the mounting frustration with diplomacy's limitations and the international community's reluctance to actively address the Kosovo issue, serving as a watershed moment in the trajectory of Kosovo's fight for independence (Weller, 2009, pp. 66-75). It is crucial to note that despite a shared goal, tension existed between the KLA and the Democratic League of Kosovo, who favored a peaceful resolution (Pula, 2004).

The KLA began guerrilla operations around 1996, targeting Serbian police, government officials, and civilians perceived as collaborators within Kosovo (Judah, 2008). Their capabilities were significantly enhanced by an influx of weapons from Albania following its 1997 unrest (Bekaj, 2010). In early 1998, the KLA formally declared armed struggle, prompting a severe crackdown by Slobodan Milošević's regime (Mulaj, 2008). A pivotal moment occurred in March 1998 with the Drenica massacres, a series of brutal attacks by Serbian forces on Kosovo Albanian communities, largely targeting civilians, in a disproportionate and brutal response to KLA activities. These included the Prekaz massacre (58 killed, including KLA founder Adem Jashari and 29 women and children), the Likoshan massacre (24 killed, including 11 women and children), and the Çirez massacre (14 killed, including 4 women and children) (Human Rights Watch, 1999). These events galvanized the

KLA, contributing to a surge in recruitment and organizational strengthening. In response, Serbian forces intensified their campaign, leading to widespread violence and substantial civilian casualties (Waller et al., 2014).

Initially, Western powers, notably the United States, exhibited caution towards the Kosovo Liberation Army's (KLA) armed struggle, labeling it a terrorist organization (Perritt, 2008, pp. 88-99). This designation significantly hampered diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis in Kosovo, reflecting a fundamental misunderstanding of the conflict's dynamics. By casting the KLA in this light, the legitimacy of the Kosovar Albanians' grievances against the Milošević regime's escalating repression was inadvertently undermined, inadvertently aligning with Serbia's narrative (Judah, 2008, pp. 75-92). Despite this, the primary focus of these powers shifted towards the concerning actions of Serbia, leading to repeated international demands for Milosevic to cease his repressive tactics and withdraw from Kosovo. The Drenica massacres, horrific for their targeting of civilians, exposed the consequences of this policy and forced a reassessment. Though the UN arms embargo (Resolution 1160) sought to curtail violence, it did little to address the power imbalance at the heart of the conflict (Clark, 2001, pp. 345-374). Ultimately, the U.S. reversed its stance on the KLA, recognizing the necessity of engaging them to achieve a diplomatic breakthrough.

In March 1998, US envoy Robert Gelbard forcefully cited President George H.W. Bush's "Christmas Warning" of 1992 – a stark reminder of potential military intervention (Binder, 1992). Britain's Foreign Secretary Robin Cook echoed this demand for a negotiated solution during talks with Milosevic (Weller, 1999). Yet, despite this mounting international pressure and even bombing threats, Milosevic defied these calls for over a year, deepening the crisis (Daalder & O'Hanlon, 2000, pp. 22-62).

The Yugoslav government's actions in 1998 were deliberately masked as a counterinsurgency operation to quell the KLA. However, the brutal reality, fully exposed during NATO's 1999 intervention, was a campaign of ethnic cleansing (Human Rights Watch, 2001). The systematic expulsion and massacres perpetrated against Albanians exposed the heart of the so-called 'political conflict' as a deliberate ethnic cleansing campaign, transforming it into a humanitarian crisis demanding international attention (Roberts, 1999).

2.4. Navigating Negotiations Pre and During the NATO Bombing Campaign

The Contact Group, an informal diplomatic forum established in 1994 to address the Bosnian conflict, played a pivotal role in attempts to resolve the escalating crisis in Kosovo (Weller, 1999). Comprising major powers including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, and Russia, the group sought to coordinate diplomatic efforts and shape international responses (Daalder & O'Hanlon, 2000, pp. 63-100). The Contact Group issued statements, facilitated negotiations, and liaised closely with international organizations such as the UN Security Council and NATO (Bellamy, 2002, pp. 76-93). Its informal structure, while lacking a formal mandate, allowed for flexibility while maintaining significant influence over events unfolding in Kosovo (Roberts, 1999).

The escalating violence and humanitarian crisis in Kosovo prompted urgent international attention. This led the Contact Group, a key diplomatic forum comprised of major powers, to convene a meeting on June 12th (Guicherd, 1999). During this meeting, the potential for military intervention was discussed. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright suggested that a new Security Council resolution might be unnecessary, implying that existing measures, such as Resolution 1160 (primarily an arms embargo on Yugoslavia), could be interpreted as providing authorization for the use of force. However, this interpretation was disputed, as Resolution 1160 lacked an explicit mandate.

The deteriorating situation prompted the UN Security Council to adopt Resolution 1199 on September 23rd (S/RES/1199, 1998). This resolution formally acknowledged the imminent humanitarian crisis in Kosovo, deeming it a 'threat to peace and security' in the region (Greenwood, 2000). This marked a crucial shift, as it was the first resolution to explicitly recognize this danger, despite the prior existence of Resolution 1160 (Wheeler, 2000). Consequently, Resolution 1199 provided a stronger legal and political basis for potential military action, particularly by NATO (Falk, 1999). The Security Council demanded a ceasefire, Yugoslav troop withdrawals, conditions for an international monitoring mission, and the safe return of refugees. The resolution's concluding threat of further action represented a more explicit escalation than prior diplomatic signals (Wedgwood, 1999).

The revelation of ongoing massacres targeting ethnic Albanians ignited international outrage, fueling demands for military intervention. Prominent U.S. officials, including Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Defense Secretary William Cohen, issued explicit threats of airstrikes should the Yugoslav government defy the Security Council's resolutions (Daalder &

O'Hanlon, 2000, pp. 22-62). Russia, a vital member of both the Security Council and the Contact Group, staunchly opposed this course of action (Norris, 2005, PP. 25-56). Recognizing the difficulty of changing Russia's stance, Albright focused on securing support from European allies, aiming to legitimize the use of force within NATO (Albright, 2003, pp. 481-544). This shift highlights the primacy of maintaining NATO cohesion, even if it meant foregoing broader international consensus.

Despite mounting international pressure and threats of military intervention, a diplomatic breakthrough seemed possible when Slobodan Milošević and American diplomat Richard Holbrooke reached an agreement on October 13th. Known as the Milošević-Holbrooke Agreement, it aimed to de-escalate the crisis by establishing an OSCE monitoring mission within Kosovo (Holbrooke, 1998). However, the situation remained highly volatile, with reports of continued violence against ethnic Albanians casting doubt on Yugoslav compliance (Human Rights Watch, 1998).

The agreement was criticized for prioritizing immediate compliance over lasting resolutions, revealing significant strategic and substantive flaws. Ivo H. Daalder, former U.S. ambassador to NATO, raised doubts about the long-term viability of relying on Milosevic's cooperation without addressing the root causes of the conflict (Daalder, 1998). The deployment of 2,000 unarmed OSCE observers was considered insufficient given the intensity and scope of the conflict (Caplan, 1998). Concerns arose about their effectiveness and safety compared to the better-equipped, armed U.N. force in Bosnia. Furthermore, the agreement's modest concessions regarding Kosovo's autonomy were seen as insufficient to progress towards genuine self-determination discussions or satisfy the expectations of communities affected by considerable hardship and displacement. Doubts about Milosevic's trustworthiness and the absence of binding mechanisms for his accountability further weakened the agreement as a viable path to peace. Moreover, reliance on an unarmed observation team risked undermining NATO's ability to ensure compliance, a critical negotiating error (Daalder, 1998a).

Later, on October 24, the Security Council passed Resolution 1203, endorsing the agreements established between the Yugoslav government, OSCE, and NATO as per the Milosevic-Holbrooke Agreement (S/RES/1203, 1998). The resolution urged the Yugoslav government to comply with these terms but stopped short of explicitly authorizing force. During Security Council discussions, the U.S. delegate hinted at potential military action by referencing NATO member states' readiness to address the matter. In contrast, the Russian delegate firmly opposed the use of force, stating that the draft resolution contained no clause granting authorization for

such action. Despite Russia's steadfast resistance to military intervention, NATO's inclination towards aerial bombing strengthened as the situation in Kosovo evolved.

The Milošević-Holbrooke Agreement, mandating Yugoslav troop withdrawal and the deployment of an OSCE monitoring mission, resulted in a temporary reduction in overt violence (Weller, 1999). However, instability persisted. This was tragically exemplified by the December 15, 1998, Panda Café killings in Peja, where six young Serbs were murdered (Human Rights Watch, 1999). While initially attributed to Albanian insurgents, the KLA denied responsibility (Judah, 2002, 164-196). Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić's 2013 admission that Albanians were not involved suggests the attack may have been a false flag operation by Yugoslav authorities to undermine the KLA's reputation (Stojanovic, 2023).

Despite agreements that ostensibly indicated a commitment to reducing tensions, the actions of the Yugoslav government, notably its non-compliance with these accords and its intensification of military operations, hinted at an inherent disposition contrary to the pursuit of peace (Bellamy, 2002, pp. 95-118). The situation in Kosovo escalated alarmingly in January 1999, marked by the harrowing finding by an OSCE monitoring team of 45 Kosovar Albanian bodies in the village of Reçak (OSCE, 1999). Yugoslav authorities maintained that the “KLA had faked a massacre scene” (Judah, 2002, p. 194). Yet, this assertion was strongly contested by Western nations and the monitoring team, who concluded that the occurrence was a civilian massacre (Human Rights Watch, 1999). This tragic event, alongside subsequent developments, precipitated a further deterioration in relations. The steadfast refusal of the Yugoslav government to honor international agreements, coupled with its increased militarization, led to the OSCE mission's withdrawal from Kosovo in March 1999 (Weller, 1999). This withdrawal underscored the profound failure of diplomatic efforts to ameliorate the conflict.

The massacre at Reçak served as a critical catalyst, intensifying the conflict and significantly advancing the international momentum towards aerial intervention (Power, 2002, pp. 443-474). This harrowing event constituted a decisive moment, particularly influencing the Clinton administration to adopt a more assertive stance (Daalder & O'Hanlon, 2000, pp. 63-100). This strategic shift marked a clear departure from the previously more cautious approach upheld by the U.S. and NATO following the October Agreement (Sperling & Webber, 2009).

On January 19, General Wesley Clark and NATO Military Committee Chairman Klaus Naumann conveyed to Milosevic in unequivocal terms that NATO was prepared to launch aerial operations as outlined in the 'Activation Orders' (Clark, 2001, pp. 192-220). Despite this

confrontation, Milosevic maintained a stance of defiance. Following this, on January 20, the foreign ministers of the Contact Group resolved to enhance preparations for aerial bombardment as a means to exert pressure on Milosevic (Weller, 1999). The Contact Group, charged with diplomatic initiatives, together with NATO, poised for military action, issued a 'final ultimatum' to the Yugoslav-Serbian leadership and the Kosovo Albanian representatives. They were urged to partake in peace negotiations in Rambouillet, France, while NATO readied itself to commence bombing should the parties fail to meet the conditions set by the international community for resolving the conflict.

A peace conference was convened on February 6, 1999, at the Château de Rambouillet in France, with the threat of airstrikes looming ever larger (Weller, 1999). Delegations from the Yugoslav-Serbian government and the Albanians were brought together, with France's Foreign Minister and Britain's Foreign Secretary co-chairing (Bellamy, 2002, pp. 120-153). The Yugoslav government's delegation included high-ranking officials, such as the Deputy PM, though Milosevic himself did not attend. The Albanian delegation comprised diverse members, including political figures like Rugova and representatives from the KLA. The Contact Group proposed a peace plan for Kosovo that included key measures such as Kosovo's autonomy, the deployment of 28,000 NATO troops for peacekeeping, a reassessment of Kosovo's status after three years based on public sentiment, and internationally supervised elections to establish democratic governance (Weller, 1999). The Yugoslav government opposed the presence of NATO troops, viewing it as tantamount to occupation (Sperling & Webber, 2009). The Albanian representatives objected to the provisional status review, advocating instead for a definitive referendum on independence (Bellamy, 2002, pp. 120-153). Negotiations, facilitated by mediators from the U.S., EU, and Russia in a historic castle, underscored the challenges: Yugoslavia's non-committal posture, indicated by Milosevic's absence, and the Albanians' unwavering demand for independence revealed deeply rooted barriers to consensus (Power, 2002, pp. 443-474).

In the critical stages of the negotiations, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright intensified her involvement, particularly seeking to sway the Albanian representatives (Daalder & O'Hanlon, 2000, pp. 63-100). Her strategy hinged on the notion that winning over the Albanians would create greater leverage to pressure the Yugoslav government to meet diplomatic goals. To address the Albanians' insistence on a referendum, Albright assured them that the "expressed will of the people" would play a central role in determining Kosovo's eventual status, subtly suggesting U.S. support for Kosovo's right to a referendum (Weller,

1999). Nonetheless, she underscored that other factors would shape Kosovo's status, implying that a pro-independence vote wouldn't automatically guarantee sovereignty (Caplan, 1998).

The U.S. made strategic concessions to gain Albanian cooperation during crucial negotiations but refrained from promising independence (Judah, 2002, pp. 197-226). The Rambouillet talks faced challenges and ended on February 23 with the Albanians prepared to support the revised peace plan known as the "Rambouillet Agreement" put forth by the Contact Group (Bellamy, 2002, pp. 120-153). Milosevic, however, remained opposed despite efforts in Paris to persuade him otherwise (Daalder & O'Hanlon, 2000, pp. 63-100).

The peace conference in Paris on March 15 saw the Albanian delegation endorsing the Rambouillet Agreement, while the Yugoslav government continued to refuse (Perritt, 2008, pp. 46-60). Negotiations ended without compromise on March 19, with only one party signing the agreement (Judah, 2002, pp. 197-226). This stalemate led NATO to consider force as the only remaining option, exacerbated by escalating violence and oppression in Kosovo (Caplan, 1998; Daalder & O'Hanlon, 2000, pp. 101-136).

Following an extended period of unsuccessful diplomatic negotiations, NATO initiated a decisive aerial campaign against Yugoslavia on March 24, 1999, marking a significant shift in the international approach to the Kosovo crisis. This military action, known as Operation Allied Force, represented a strategic pivot from dialogue to the use of force, emerging from a consensus among NATO members on the necessity of military intervention to effectuate a change in Milosevic's policies (Lambeth, 2001, pp. 1-16). The operation, carefully planned, unfolded in phases: it began with strikes on Yugoslavia's air defense systems, proceeded to target military assets and infrastructure within Kosovo, and ultimately expanded to strategic cities in Belgrade (Cordesman, 2001, pp. 89-123). The lack of a United Nations Security Council resolution endorsing NATO's military involvement in Kosovo stemmed primarily from anticipated opposition from permanent members Russia and China (Roberts, 1999). Russia, in particular, showed strong resistance. This was highlighted by PM Yevgeny Primakov's decision to redirect his flight to Moscow in protest against the start of NATO's campaign and President Boris Yeltsin's stark warning about the risk of a third world war (Yeltsin's war warning, 1999).

By April 12, the alliance reaffirmed its commitment to the aerial campaign, outlining specific demands for President Milosevic, including a verifiable cessation of hostilities, withdrawal of Yugoslav forces, acceptance of an international military presence, and the safe return of

refugees and displaced persons, coupled with unhindered humanitarian access (NATO, 1999). These demands also called for a commitment to a political framework for Kosovo in alignment with the Rambouillet accords and international law (Weller, 1999). The onset of Operation Allied Force, against the backdrop of stalled negotiations, aimed not just at coercion but at catalyzing a resumption of diplomatic talks, with military action employed as a lever to enhance the prospects for dialogue (Freedman, 2000). This strategic calculus presupposed that the bombardment would act as a catalyst for diplomatic engagement, a hypothesis that was validated as negotiations were renewed amidst the military campaign, illustrating the utility of military force in facilitating diplomatic breakthroughs (Posen, 2000).

Contrary to the outcomes anticipated by international observers, Milosevic's reaction to the NATO bombing campaign was not one of conciliation but rather an escalation of oppressive measures against the Albanian population in Kosovo. His regime systematically pursued a strategy of ethnic cleansing, exacerbating the violence and persecution faced by the civilian population (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Far from achieving its intended objectives of mitigating the refugee crisis and minimizing civilian casualties, the aerial bombardment inadvertently contributed to an increase in both, including causing a significant number of unintended casualties as a direct result of the military action (Roberts, 1999). During this tumultuous period, the exodus of approximately 900,000 Albanians from Kosovo, coupled with the internal displacement of around 600,000 individuals—amounting to nearly 90% of the Kosovo Albanian population being uprooted from their homes—underscored the severity of the unfolding humanitarian crisis (UNHCR, 1999).

The conflict in Kosovo exerted a profound and brutal impact, resulting in approximately 13,500 fatalities (Kruger & Ball, 2014). While estimates vary across different sources, the data compiled by the Humanitarian Law Centre offers a particularly detailed and compelling account of the casualties. According to their records, the Kosovo Albanian community suffered the most, with 10,812 reported deaths. The Serb population experienced 2,197 losses, followed by the Roma, Bosniak, Montenegrin, and other non-Albanian groups, which collectively accounted for 526 fatalities (Kruger & Ball, 2014). Regarding civilian casualties, the records indicate that out of 10,305 civilian deaths, 8,661 (84.0%) were Albanians, 1,187 (11.6%) were Serbs, and 151 (1.5%) were Roma, with the remainder belonging to other ethnicities. The conflict also claimed the lives of 2,123 members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), 718 Yugoslav Army soldiers, and 364 Serbian police officers (Kruger & Ball, 2014).

In conclusion, the NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999, driven by a moral imperative to halt atrocities, was characterized by an initial belief in the effectiveness of aerial strikes for rapid conflict resolution. However, this belief inadvertently exacerbated the humanitarian crisis it sought to alleviate (Daalder & O'Hanlon, 2000, pp. 101-136). The operation, which unexpectedly lasted 78 days, exposed a significant underestimation of Milosevic's resolve and the inherent complexities of military interventions aimed at conflict resolution (Lambeth, 2001, pp. 219-234). Despite its intentions, the campaign's progression intensified violence against Kosovar Albanians and contributed to a destabilizing refugee exodus, challenging the assumption that military power alone could achieve a peaceful resolution (Wheeler, 2000). Moreover, the intervention tested NATO's credibility, particularly through its strategic decision-making processes, such as circumventing the UN Security Council, raising ethical questions about the legitimacy of unilateral military actions (Chomsky, 1999, pp. 1-23; Simma, 1999).

NATO articulated the legitimacy of its intervention through three main arguments. First, NATO cited a series of Security Council resolutions (1160, 1199, 1203), arguing that Yugoslavia's non-compliance under Chapter VII of the UN Charter necessitated a military response (Guicherd, 1999; Wedgwood, 1999). Second, NATO maintained that international customary law sanctions interventions in severe humanitarian crises, even without explicit Security Council resolutions (Teson, 2009). Finally, NATO emphasized the exhaustive pursuit and ultimate failure of diplomatic negotiations, particularly at Rambouillet and Paris, demonstrating that military intervention emerged as the only viable option to address the crisis (Bellamy, 2002, pp. 120-153).

The credible threat of force, combined with intensified diplomatic efforts, ultimately led to Milosevic agreeing to peace terms (Sperling & Webber, 2009). However, the intervention's objective of restoring autonomy within Yugoslavia, rather than granting full independence to Kosovo, reflected a cautious approach to international interventions, aimed at preventing violence and facilitating negotiations without fundamentally altering sovereign boundaries (Caplan, 2005, pp. 95-145). This nuanced objective, along with the challenges encountered and the outcomes achieved, highlights the complexities of employing military force in international conflict resolution, emphasizing the delicate balance between achieving immediate humanitarian goals and considering long-term regional and international stability (Booth, 2001, pp. 1-23; Kuperman, 2008).

2.5. Post-Conflict Challenges

Following 78 days of NATO airstrikes initiated on March 24, 1999, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) acquiesced to a ceasefire on June 3, a decisive turn in the conflict (Weller, 1999). This cessation of hostilities led to the United Nations Security Council's adoption of Resolution 1244 on June 10, laying down the foundational principles for resolving Kosovo's political impasse (RES/1244, 1999). Although the resolution did not determine Kosovo's final status, it underscored the commitment to the FRY's sovereignty and territorial integrity as per the Helsinki Final Act (Weller, 2009, pp. 1-24). Crucially, it advocated for "substantial autonomy and meaningful self-administration" in Kosovo, aiming to balance territorial integrity with self-determination rights. This approach underscored the international community's endeavor to navigate the complexities of the Kosovo crisis thoughtfully and equitably (Ker-Lindsay, 2009, pp. 8-24).

Under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244, a comprehensive governance framework for Kosovo was established, mandating the withdrawal of all Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) military, police, and paramilitary forces from the region. Concurrently, it called for the deployment of the Kosovo Force (KFOR), an international security force, and the establishment of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), a civilian presence tasked with facilitating Kosovo's autonomous governance and performing essential civil administrative functions pending Kosovo's final status determination (Yannis, 2001).

UNMIK's responsibilities were articulated to include fostering a political process aimed at achieving substantial autonomy and self-government in Kosovo, with due consideration to the Rambouillet Agreement's stipulations during the interim. This framework also encompassed the gradual transfer of administrative authority from Kosovo's provisional entities to democratically established institutions as part of a definitive political settlement (Stahn, 2001).

In the United Nations Security Council's discussions leading to Resolution 1244, detailed proposals or explicit considerations regarding the final status of Kosovo were conspicuously absent, and the principle of self-determination was notably sidestepped (Weller, 2009, pp. 179-190). In the aftermath, the United Nations, alongside the Contact Group, facilitated negotiations between the disputing parties on Kosovo's status, encountering fundamentally irreconcilable positions (Perritt, 2009). In November 2005, the Contact Group set forth negotiation guidelines which precluded the return of Kosovo to pre-1999 Serbian sovereignty, rejected the division of Kosovo's territory, dismissed the prospect of immediate, unconditional

independence, and opposed any amalgamation with Albanian-populated regions (Weller, 2009, pp. 191-219).

Negotiations over Kosovo's future starkly illuminated the irreconcilable positions held by Serbia and Kosovo. Despite UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's proposal for a state union – a potential compromise – Serbia's resolute claim to Kosovo as part of its sovereign territory was fundamentally incompatible with Kosovo's categorical rejection of any form of Serbian rule (Weller, 2009, pp. 191-219). Montenegro's 2006 declaration of independence further altered the regional landscape, yet Serbia's stance remained unyielding. Its newly adopted constitution in September 2006 formalized this position, declaring Kosovo an autonomous region within Serbia, granting it a defined level of self-governance (Republic of Serbia, 2006).

2.6. Kosovo's Contested Peace: Local Aspirations and External Agendas

The establishment of UNMIK as an interim governing body in Kosovo, through Security Council Resolution 1244 in 1999, introduced the international community to a complex conflict defined by deep ethnic divisions and contested visions for the future. UNMIK's mandate to stabilize a post-war society and promote reconciliation between Kosovar Albanians desiring independence and a Serbian minority concerned about its status represented an immense challenge (Visoka, 2017, pp. 1-32). This section will utilize select examples to analyze how the historical and political context of Kosovo, marked by competing narratives and legacies of repression, shaped the interactions between local actors and international entities. These interactions significantly influenced the success of UNMIK's top-down peacebuilding efforts. While acknowledging the extensive body of existing research on Kosovo, this analysis will offer a focused examination of this dynamic, specifically exploring how local perspectives and responses interacted with external peacebuilding initiatives.

The mission of UNMIK, as outlined in Security Council Resolution 1244, encompassed a vast array of responsibilities, from immediate administrative tasks to fostering long-term political autonomy and supporting reconstruction (RES/1244, 1999). This ambitious mandate reflected the core principles of liberal peacebuilding, with its emphasis on UN-led institution-building and gradual progress towards self-governance (Paris, 2004, pp. 212-234). UNMIK was granted extraordinary authority over Kosovo's legislative, executive, and judicial functions, with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) wielding substantial power (Lemay-Hébert, 2009). However, this highly centralized structure set the stage for future tensions with

those seeking greater local ownership and a faster path to resolving Kosovo's final status (Visoka, 2017, pp. 33-112).

The way international actors perceive and frame a conflict significantly shapes their analysis of its root causes and influences the solutions they propose (Autesserre, 2014). In Kosovo, competing narratives – portraying the conflict as a struggle for national liberation, a defense of territorial sovereignty, or a humanitarian crisis – profoundly shaped how external actors like the UN approached the task of peacebuilding. Reliance on standardized frameworks, while providing a starting point, may not fully account for the intricate interplay of historical grievances, cultural dynamics, and power struggles unique to Kosovo. Biases and assumptions held by international actors can further complicate efforts to understand the conflict from multiple perspectives and design interventions that resonate with all involved (Autesserre, 2014).

Despite the absence of full-scale war following UNMIK's deployment in 1999, persistent ethno-political tensions between Albanians and Serbians continued to destabilize Kosovo. Targeted violence against Serbians in the aftermath of the NATO campaign, along with the deadly 2004 clashes, exposed the limitations of UNMIK's security guarantees for vulnerable communities (Human Rights Watch, 2004). The enduring segregation of many remaining Serbians, and their reliance on KFOR for protection, underscored the mission's failure to foster a genuinely multi-ethnic society (Dahlman & Williams, 2010). This persistent insecurity challenges the core premise of liberal peacebuilding – that institutions alone can create the conditions for lasting peace without fully addressing the legacies of violence (Paris, 2004).

2.7. Ethnic Tensions and the Fragility of Peace: The 2004 Clashes

The 2004 clashes exposed the persistent fragility of Kosovo's post-conflict environment and represented a significant setback for UNMIK's efforts (Honzak, 2006). Ignited by unverified reports of the drowning of Albanian children, these events revealed deep-seated inter-ethnic tensions exacerbated by slow progress towards genuine reconciliation (Welch, 2006). The horrific violence targeting the Serbian minority, including the destruction of Serbian cultural and religious sites, underscored the profound challenges of establishing a secure and inclusive society in Kosovo (Yannis, 2001). While Kosovo Albanian politicians swiftly condemned these attacks to maintain international legitimacy, their response highlighted the tension between political expediency and the complex social and historical realities hindering inter-ethnic trust and cooperation (Hehir, 2006). These events raised critical questions about whether UNMIK's

institution-building approach, without adequately addressing the trauma and grievances on both sides, could truly foster lasting peace in the region.

Kosovo Albanians actively shaped the Kosovo conflict narrative, framing their struggle as one of national liberation after enduring a history of marginalization and repression (Mertus, 1999, pp. 1-16). This powerful narrative, emphasizing their inherent right to self-determination, resonated deeply across the Albanian community, uniting diverse factions behind the demand for full independence. The decisive victory of Rugova's Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) in the 2001 elections, and his subsequent plea for international recognition, underscored the Albanian view of UNMIK's interim governance as a mere stepping-stone to sovereignty, not a viable long-term solution (Tansey, 2009). This deep yearning for independence highlights a core challenge for the UN's mission – the potential incompatibility between a gradualist, institution-building approach and the urgent desire of a historically oppressed people to take control of their own destiny (Zaum, 2007, pp. 127-168).

In stark contrast, many Serbians and the Serbian government vehemently opposed Kosovo's independence. This opposition stemmed from a deeply rooted historical narrative positioning Kosovo as the inviolable heartland of the Serbian nation (Bieber, 2002; Djokić, 2009). This view, reinforced by the mythologized legacy of the Battle of Kosovo (1389), fostered a profound sense of loss and vulnerability (Anzulović, 1999, pp. 11-33). Fears for the safety of the Serbian minority within Kosovo, fueled by retaliatory attacks following the conflict, further entrenched this resistance (Human Rights Watch, 2004). For many Serbians, an Albanian-led independent Kosovo was unimaginable, threatening both their historical identity and the physical security of their community (Djokić, 2009).

The widespread instances of ethnic cleansing and other egregious human rights violations in the Kosovo conflict propelled the international community, particularly Western nations, to frame the crisis in primarily humanitarian terms (Bellamy, 2002, pp. 156-179). The forced displacement of Kosovar Albanians and reports of massacres resonated strongly with an international audience increasingly sensitized to preventing ethnic cleansing (Power, 2002, pp. 443-474). This humanitarian framing justified NATO's controversial intervention, despite it lacking explicit UN Security Council authorization (Chomsky, 1999, 38-72; Wheeler, 2000). Though the legitimacy of NATO's unilateral action was contested, both the UN and NATO shared a sense of urgency in mitigating the immediate suffering. This focus, as evidenced by Security Council Resolutions 1160, 1199, 1203, and 1239, prioritized the cessation of violence

over resolving the underlying political conflict. While aligned with the protection of Kosovo Albanian civilians at immediate risk, this approach potentially sidelined their broader aspirations for national self-determination.

The focus on mitigating the humanitarian crisis significantly influenced UNMIK's subsequent mission, shaped by core principles of liberal peacebuilding (Paris, 2004, pp. 212-234). Its primary aims were to prevent the recurrence of ethnic violence and foster a peaceful, multi-ethnic Kosovo (Visoka & Bolton, 2011). UNMIK sought to achieve this by building robust governance structures, with an emphasis on inclusivity and the protection of minority rights (Tansey, 2009). While deliberately avoiding a stance on Kosovo's final status, Security Council Resolution 1244 clearly signaled the UN's opposition to any premature declaration of independence. This position reflected the belief, central to liberal peacebuilding, that prioritizing societal stability and inclusive institutions were necessary prerequisites before addressing sovereignty (Paris, 2004).

For instance, while referendums can be legitimate tools for self-determination, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General denied the Albanian majority's request. This decision reflected concerns that a referendum, likely resulting in support for independence, could ignite renewed ethnic conflict before adequate minority protections, especially for Serbians, were established (Weller, 2008). By prioritizing institutional reforms over addressing Kosovo's final status, UNMIK effectively sidelined the issue of self-determination – a core source of the conflict from the Albanian perspective (Narten, 2008). As Richmond (2005) argues, overlooking deeply held local aspirations in favor of externally-defined priorities can undermine the legitimacy of peacebuilding efforts.

UNMIK's prioritization of establishing inclusive political institutions and multi-ethnic governance in Kosovo reflects the dominance of liberal peacebuilding approaches in the post-Cold War period. This agenda stems from the belief that promoting democratization, rule of law, human rights, and market reforms can address the root causes of conflict by creating participatory structures that empower marginalized groups and encourage the resolution of ethnic tensions through compromise rather than violence (Paris, 2002; Richmond & Franks, 2009). As former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1992) articulated, democratic systems can transform competing interests into peaceful forums for discussion and protect minority rights, thus minimizing the risk of disputes escalating into armed conflict.

2.8. Vetoes and Marginalization: Limitations of Top-Down Peacebuilding

Underpinned by liberal principles, UNMIK's comprehensive peacebuilding mission sought to establish enduring inter-ethnic peace within Kosovo. Central to this initiative were the 2001 "Constitutional Framework for Provisional Self-Government in Kosovo" and the 2003 "Standards Before Status" plan (UNMIK, 2001; UNMIK, 2003). These documents collectively outlined provisional democratic structures designed to gradually empower local governance over time, with a strong emphasis on ensuring minority rights protections and mechanisms for inclusion within governance structures, consistent with the liberal peacebuilding approach (Paris, 2004, pp. 40-54). However, UNMIK's strategy, which envisioned a multi-ethnic Kosovo under continued international supervision, arguably failed to fully address the immediate political aspirations for independence held by a substantial segment of the population (Beha, 2023).

The Constitutional Framework, ratified in 2001, aimed to create a governance structure capable of navigating the complexities of post-conflict Kosovo. Despite involving consultation with local stakeholders during its formulation, the Framework faced criticism for effectively postponing a decisive answer to the question of Kosovo's sovereign status (Strategic Comments, 2001). This perceived ambiguity stemmed from the Framework's alignment with Security Council Resolution 1244, which sought to balance Kosovo's interim status within Serbia with substantial autonomy under United Nations administration. The inherent tension between Albanian aspirations for independence and UNMIK's mandate resulted in a challenging negotiation process, which ultimately deadlocked over conflicting demands, leading UNMIK to unilaterally impose the Framework (Strategic Comments, 2001).

Although the Constitutional Framework outlined democratic structures and enshrined principles of human rights protection and minority representation, its top-down nature undermined its legitimacy in the eyes of many Kosovar Albanians (Beha, 2023). Adem Beha argues that the lack of a clear path towards self-determination undermined the very notion of "we, the people" as the authors of Kosovo's future, suggesting that the Framework's content had been largely imposed (Beha, 2023). This perceived imposition fueled resentment among Albanian leaders, who criticized the Framework for restricting their aspirations for independence (Strategic Comments, 2007). Consequently, while the Constitutional Framework represented a significant step in establishing provisional governance structures, its limitations

in addressing the fundamental question of Kosovo's sovereign status hindered its ability to garner widespread support and legitimacy among the Kosovar Albanian population.

This top-down approach was particularly evident in the way UNMIK handled the competing demands of Kosovo's communities. As *Strategic Comments (2007)* outlines, the Albanians sought specific clauses guaranteeing a future path towards independence, while the Serbs pushed for provisions that would fully preclude this possibility. UNMIK's resolution of this deadlock by imposing the Framework without either side's full consent significantly exacerbated tensions. Notably, the Albanians were denied their central demand for an eventual referendum on independence. Similarly, Serbian anxieties about their future within Kosovo were not fully assuaged by the Framework. As highlighted by *Strategic Comments*, the Serbs sought veto power within the assembly over issues impacting their community, a demand UNMIK dismissed. This rejection fueled fears of marginalization, leading some Serbian leaders to advocate for boycotting the upcoming elections (*Strategic Comments, 2007*).

These Serbian objections, however, lacked a clear alternative vision for Kosovo's future. *Strategic Comments* notes that while few Serbs were willing to accept the loss of Kosovo, there was a growing recognition, even within Belgrade, that a return to Serbian rule was unrealistic. Some Serbian leaders began advocating for forms of autonomy or even partition, hoping to salvage at least some control over Serbian-dominated areas, particularly in the north of Kosovo. However, this clashed with UNMIK's adamant opposition to any solution that might imply a division of Kosovo, fueled by fears that it could ignite separatist ambitions in neighboring Macedonia (*Strategic Comments, 2007*).

Notwithstanding, the Constitutional Framework, while explicitly delineating the parameters for Kosovo's provisional governance, reserved the determination of its final status to the United Nations. This reservation engendered a palpable tension between the aspirations of the Albanian-dominated Assembly and UNMIK's international mandate. The Assembly's recurrent endeavors to assert Kosovo's sovereignty and its veneration of the Kosovo Liberation Army's legacy were at odds with the United Nations' envisaged trajectory towards a multi-ethnic state, achieved through a gradual, externally-guided process (Knoll, 2005). Michael Steiner's vetoes and the marginalization of Kosovo's leaders from international discourse starkly highlighted the constraints placed on local self-determination within the liberal peacebuilding framework (Narten, 2008). In 2005, the Kosovo Parliament passed a significant resolution recognizing the roles of both the KLA and the preceding non-violent resistance movement in the struggle for

liberation from Serbian oppression (Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 2005). This resolution aimed to address deep-seated divisions within the Kosovar Albanian society and foster a shared historical understanding, a vital component of post-conflict reconciliation (Lederach, 1997, pp. 23-36). However, Steiner denounced the resolution on several grounds. He argued its emphasis on independence, along with provisions for social benefits to conflict participants, contradicted UN Resolution 1244 and the established constitutional framework. Steiner further expressed concern that the resolution could be seen as legitimizing violence, leading to Serbian members of parliament withdrawing in protest. Crucially, he vetoed the resolution and barred Kosovo's institutions from participating in key international forums (Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 2005). This marginalization extended beyond the Assembly's resolutions. As Adam Balcer notes, Albanians opposed any agreements between Belgrade and other regional actors that impacted Kosovo without their direct consultation (Balcer, 2003, pp. 48-61). The 2001 rejection of the Serbia-Macedonia border agreement exemplifies this determination to be central to the decision-making process. While Steiner vetoed the Assembly's resolution declaring the agreement void, UNMIK's emphasis on negotiating the border's final shape with Macedonia implicitly acknowledged the limitations of a purely top-down approach (Narten, 2008).

Steiner's actions, in unilaterally vetoing a resolution passed with broad support in Kosovo's democratically elected Parliament and barring Kosovo's institutions from international forums, exposed a core contradiction within the liberal peacebuilding framework. Heathershaw (2008) argues that the "liberal peace" is not monolithic but rather a complex discursive environment emphasizing technical solutions that may overlook the root causes of conflict. In the Kosovo case, Steiner's focus on upholding UN Resolution 1244 and externally imposed frameworks, without fully acknowledging the resolution's significance in addressing internal Albanian divisions and historical grievances, exemplifies this problematic tendency. This incident highlights how the liberal peacebuilding model, as Richmond (2005) argues, can prioritize externally-defined priorities over locally-driven reconciliation and self-determination, hindering the achievement of sustainable peace. Thus, the discrepancy between externally imposed peacebuilding agendas and intrinsic local aspirations significantly complicated UNMIK's mission to establish an inclusive and sustainable political system (Tansey, 2009). This conundrum underscores the inherent challenges of pursuing democratization efforts without directly addressing the core issues of self-determination and ethnic conflict.

The frictions within Kosovo's post-conflict reconstruction underscore the pitfalls of applying uniform governance frameworks without adequately accounting for the local historical narratives and power dynamics. The Kosovo Liberation Army's (KLA) armed resistance, despite its condemnation by UNMIK, embodied significant symbolic value for many Kosovar Albanians. Disregarding these locally salient interpretations of the conflict not only fuels mistrust but also undermines the legitimacy of the peacebuilding initiative (Mac Ginty, 2010). A hybrid approach would instead recognize and validate these narratives, while simultaneously creating avenues for peaceful political discourse and trust-building reconciliation efforts across ethnic divides (Lederach, 1997, pp. 97-99).

This perspective aligns with Richmond's (2005) critique that effective peacebuilding requires more than establishing institutional structures; it demands deep engagement with historical injustices and local realities. UNMIK's democratization agenda in Kosovo exemplifies this critique. While aiming to address the legacy of the conflict, it insufficiently acknowledged the profound historical grievances that fueled it (Visoka & Richmond, 2016). For the Kosovar Albanian majority, self-determination and independence were essential responses to historical oppression and safeguards against future marginalization (Weller, 2009, pp. 179-190). Conversely, for many Serbs, Kosovo represents a deeply significant element of their national identity. This fundamental divergence in perspectives highlights the inherent complexity of peacebuilding in contexts where historical grievances remain unresolved.

2.9. Kosovo's Declaration of Independence

The Secretary-General's appointment of Kai Eide to assess the situation in Kosovo marked a crucial step. Eide's report galvanized Security Council consensus on the necessity of a final status process (Eide, 2005). The subsequent appointment of Martti Ahtisaari as Special Envoy facilitated negotiations aimed at bridging the chasm between Serbian and Kosovo Albanian positions. Despite protracted talks, fundamental disagreements persisted, particularly regarding sovereignty and autonomy (Weller, 2008). While Serbia favored a high degree of autonomy within its borders, the Kosovo Albanian leadership remained committed to full independence (Perritt, 2009).

Faced with an intractable deadlock, Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari unveiled his Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement in early 2007. This landmark document advocated for 'supervised independence' as the only tenable solution (Ahtisaari, 2007). This envisioned a phased transition to full sovereignty, with robust international

safeguards for minority rights and decentralized power structures (Weller, 2008). The document deliberately avoided the terms "state" or "statehood" when referring to Kosovo, opting instead for the term "society," yet it incorporated provisions that implicitly endowed Kosovo with characteristics of statehood (Ahtisaari, 2007). These included the right to negotiate international treaties and pursue membership in international organizations, actions typically associated with sovereign entities. Moreover, it assigned to the Kosovo government autonomous decision-making authority, unencumbered by external influence, and established multi-ethnic police, security forces, and intelligence agencies under Kosovo's exclusive control, alongside full sovereignty over its airspace (Ahtisaari, 2007). These provisions collectively conferred upon Kosovo the essential elements of statehood, delineating a governance structure equipped for effective territorial control and aligning with the criteria of sovereign state capacity within the international community, thus subtly navigating the complex terrain between formal statehood recognition and practical autonomy (Weller, 2008).

The final round of Belgrade-Pristina negotiations in March 2007 failed to yield a breakthrough. Serbia vehemently rejected the proposal, deeming it a violation of its territorial integrity, while the Kosovo Albanian leadership endorsed it as the culmination of their long struggle for self-determination (Weller, 2008; Perritt, 2009).

Ahtisaari's report to the Security Council starkly outlined the futility of further negotiations (Ahtisaari, 2007). He contended that supervised independence represented the only viable path toward a sustainable resolution of Kosovo's status (Ahtisaari, 2007). While the Secretary-General supported this position, divisions within the Security Council persisted, and the UN Security Council ultimately did not adopt it (Perritt, 2009). Russia's staunch opposition, influenced by its traditional alignment with Serbia, emerged as a major obstacle to consensus (Antonenko, 2007). This impasse highlighted the constraints of international diplomacy when confronted with deeply entrenched geopolitical rifts.

The Troika (comprising the European Union, Russia, and the United States) made a concerted effort to revitalize stalled negotiations over Kosovo's status (Perritt, 2009). Their proposals explored a wide spectrum of potential solutions, including full independence, supervised independence, territorial division, various forms of union, and extensive autonomy (Weller, 2008). However, these negotiations ultimately reached an impasse. During Kosovo's November 2007 parliamentary elections, the Serbian population in north Kosovo, a region where Pristina's authority was contested, engaged in a widespread boycott (Prelec & Rashiti,

2015). This action underscored their determined opposition to the autonomous Kosovar government. Under such circumstances, and after a prolonged diplomatic deadlock, the Kosovo Assembly adopted a declaration of independence from Serbia on February 17, 2008 (Bieber, 2015).

Serbia swiftly responded to Kosovo's declaration of independence. The Constitutional Court condemned the declaration as illegal, highlighting violations of Serbia's constitution, international agreements, and established legal precedents (Vidmar, 2009). Serbia further challenged the declaration's legitimacy by seeking an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (Orakhelashvili, 2017).

In 2010, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued an advisory opinion finding that Kosovo's declaration of independence did not violate general international law (ICJ, 2010). The Court argued that international law holds no explicit prohibition on such declarations (ICJ, 2010, para. 84). Additionally, the ICJ found the declaration compliant with UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (ICJ, 2010, para. 119). However, the Court declined to rule on Kosovo's statehood, emphasizing that this remains a matter for individual states to determine (ICJ, 2010, para. 51).

The subsequent international response, including Serbia's rejection of the declaration and the convening of a Security Council meeting at Serbia's request (UN Security Council, 2010), highlighted the divisive nature of Kosovo's independence and the complex legal and political challenges it posed. The journey towards Kosovo's current status has been characterized by a delicate interplay of local aspirations and international diplomacy (Visoka, 2018), underscoring the enduring challenges of conflict resolution and peacebuilding and statebuilding in the contemporary world (Paris & Sisk, 2009).

2.10. Post-Independence

The Ahtisaari Proposal, spearheaded by UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari, presented a roadmap for Kosovo's independence under international supervision. A key element of this plan was the establishment of the International Civilian Office (ICO), tasked with the specific mandate to oversee implementation, guide Kosovo's institutional development, and reinforce its sovereignty (Visoka, 2011). The ICO's actions, including decentralization, minority rights protection, and counteracting Serbia's influence, were instrumental in consolidating Kosovo's path towards self-governance. In contrast, other international entities like UNMIK, OSCE, and

EULEX maintained neutrality on Kosovo's status due to a lack of consensus within their respective organizations (Visoka, 2011). This neutrality reflected the ongoing geopolitical tensions and lack of international unanimity surrounding Kosovo's declaration of independence.

By 2012, Kosovo had substantially fulfilled its obligations under the Ahtisaari Plan, leading to the conclusion of the ICO's oversight (Visoka & Doyle, 2016). Nonetheless, a residual UN mission (UNMIK) continues to operate in Kosovo under Resolution 1244, highlighting the ongoing complexities of the situation and the unresolved nature of Kosovo's status in the eyes of some nations (RES/1244, 1999).

EULEX, established with a comprehensive mandate to bolster Kosovo's justice system, adopted a tripartite. It was also granted executive powers to directly address serious and politicized crimes, aiming to strengthen Kosovo's legal infrastructure (Cierco & Reis, 2014). Central to EULEX's objectives was stabilizing peace and security, particularly in the Serb-dominated northern territories that historically resisted Kosovo's governance due to their allegiance to Serbia (Troncotă, 2018). EULEX also tackled politicized crimes, including war crimes and corruption, addressing the critical issue of organized crime (Elbasani, 2018; Grilj & Zupančič, 2016).

While EULEX is not the primary subject of this analysis, the volume of scholarly and critical discourse surrounding its operations merits attention. EULEX has been the target of significant scrutiny from academics, policy analysts, and political leaders within both Kosovo and Serbia (Zupančič, 2018). The sequence of events surrounding EULEX underscores a narrative marked by allegations of corruption (Radin, 2014), systemic inefficiencies (PPIO, 2015), and the imperative for reform (Cierco & Reis, 2014).

The episode commencing in 2012 with the accusations by prosecutor Maria Bamieh against Judge Florence Florit for allegedly accepting a bribe highlighted early signs of integrity and accountability issues within the mission (Radin, 2014). This incident prefaced more serious allegations in 2014, where Bamieh's revelations of corruption within EULEX brought the mission's ethical standards and efficacy into question (PPIO, 2015). Despite attempts to discredit her, Bamieh's allegations resonated with a Kosovar populace disillusioned with EULEX's promise of societal reform, viewing the mission increasingly as a complicating factor rather than a solution (Borger, 2014; Kursani, 2013).

The revelations led to public demonstrations demanding the termination of EULEX's mandate in Kosovo. The public backlash and demands for the termination of EULEX's mandate led the European Union to undertake an independent review in 2015 (Jacque, 2015).

This report scrutinized the mandate implementation of EULEX Kosovo, with a specific emphasis on the mission's approach to the corruption allegations that had been highlighted in the media (Jacque, 2015). While dismissing the notion of a corruption cover-up, the report acknowledged the mission's critical administrative and communicative shortcomings (Jacque, 2015). It stressed the need for preemptive measures to forestall emerging issues and called for significant reforms for the mission's future operations (PPIO, 2015). In the Official Journal of the European Union, specifically in document L 146/22, the COUNCIL DECISION (CFSP) 2023/1095 dated 5 June 2023, announced the extension of the mission's duration until 14 June 2025 (Decision - 2023/1095 - EN - EUR-Lex, 2023).

2.11. Patterns in Kosovo-Serbia Accords

Since Kosovo's declaration of independence from Serbia on February 17, 2008, the path towards normalized relations between the two entities has been marked by a series of complex negotiations and agreements (Bergmann, 2018). These efforts, frequently facilitated by international actors – primarily the European Union (EU) and the United States – seek to address unresolved disputes and establish a framework for coexistence (Bieber, 2015). In 2012, direct talks between then-Serbian PM Tadić and Kosovo PM Thaçi resulted in the 2013 agreement aimed at normalizing relations (Visoka & Doyle, 2016). This agreement included provisions for integrating the police force in north Mitrovica into Kosovo's administrative structures while preserving a degree of autonomy (Troncotă, 2018). This represented a significant shift, extending Kosovo's policing jurisdiction across its territory without resorting to force, a previously unattainable goal (Emini & Stakic, 2018). This section provides an overview of key negotiations and agreements between Kosovo and Serbia up to April 2023:

The Brussels Agreement (2013), facilitated by the European Union, marked a significant attempt to normalize relations between Kosovo and Serbia (Bieber, 2015). Key provisions included the establishment of an Association/Community of Serb Municipalities for self-governance within Kosovo, integration of Serb police and judiciary into Kosovo's structures, organization of elections in northern Kosovo, discussions on energy and telecommunications, and a commitment by both parties not to hinder each other's EU integration paths (Emini & Stakic, 2018; Gashi et al., 2017). However, the agreement faces challenges in its

implementation (Troncotă, 2018). The Association of Serb Municipalities remains a major source of contention (Demjaha, 2017). Sporadic tensions underscore the delicate nature of the agreement and highlight the ongoing complexities of forging fully normalized Kosovo-Serbia relations (Bergmann, 2018; Subotić, 2017).

The Berlin Process (2014-onwards), a diplomatic initiative led by Germany and France, sought to revitalize the Western Balkans' path towards EU integration, including that of Kosovo and Serbia. The process emphasized regional connectivity through infrastructure development, trade facilitation, and youth exchange programs (Emini & Stakic, 2018). While providing a space for bilateral discussions between Kosovo and Serbia, its impact on resolving their core disputes has been limited (Bieber, 2018). The Berlin Process has received mixed evaluations; some praise its contribution to regional cooperation (Lilyanova, 2016), while others criticize its de-emphasis on fundamental political issues that remain key obstacles to lasting stability and EU accession for the region (Richter & Wunsch, 2020).

The Energy Agreement (2015), brokered within the EU-mediated dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, sought to address longstanding disputes over grid management, energy trading, and the status of Serbian energy infrastructure in northern Kosovo (Emini & Stakic, 2018). Key provisions included the creation of Elektrosever, a Serbian-owned distribution company operating under Kosovar law, the recognition of KOSTT as Kosovo's sole transmission system operator, and the facilitation of a regulated energy trading regime (Emini & Stakic, 2018). While the agreement contributed to improved energy security and partial normalization in the sector, unresolved issues persist: ownership of key assets remains contested, full market integration is yet to be achieved, and implementation is complicated by the broader political tensions that continue to define the Kosovo-Serbia relationship.

The Justice Agreement (2015), part of the Brussels Agreement (2013), aimed to integrate Serbian judicial structures in northern Kosovo into the broader Kosovo legal system, seeking to establish the rule of law and a unified judiciary (Troncotă, 2018). Key provisions outlined the EU-supervised transfer of personnel and caseloads, the creation of a dedicated appellate panel within Pristina's Court of Appeals with a majority of Serb judges, and safeguards for legal autonomy (Troncotă, 2018; Gashi et al., 2019). However, implementation has been limited, hampered by deeply rooted mistrust between Kosovo and Serbia, particularly evident in the north (Gashi et al., 2019). This highlights the persistent challenges of establishing unified institutions in the post-conflict environment (Troncotă, 2018).

Mitrovica Bridge Agreement (2016) aimed to ease tensions within the ethnically divided city through the revitalization of the Ibar River bridge (Troncotă, 2018). Long a symbol of separation, the agreement sought to transform the bridge into a shared public space through renovation and pedestrianization, coupled with security provisions to address residual concerns (Zupančič, 2019). While the bridge's modernization carries symbolic weight in promoting coexistence, its impact on true integration remains limited. The bridge continues to signify the ethno-political divisions that characterize the Kosovo-Serbia context, underscoring the enduring challenges of reconciliation in post-conflict societies (Björkdahl & Kappler, 2017, pp.52-73).

The Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) (2016) established a comprehensive framework for Kosovo's political and economic integration with the European Union (European Commission, 2016). It includes provisions establishing a free trade area, aligning Kosovo's domestic structures with EU standards, fostering political dialogue on justice, security, and foreign policy, and reinforcing Kosovo's adherence to democratic values and the rule of law (Emini & Stakic, 2018). While the SAA provides a roadmap for Kosovo's progress towards potential EU membership, challenges persist – including uneven implementation of reforms, ongoing corruption, and the unresolved relationship with Serbia. Additionally, while incentives for normalizing relations were included for Serbia, the agreement was met with resistance, particularly in the Serb-dominated northern region of Mitrovica (Bieber, 2015). The Ibar River starkly divides Mitrovica, with predominantly Albanian communities residing south of it and primarily Serbian, alongside Bosniak and Roma populations, to the north (Krasniqi, 2019).

The US-brokered Washington Agreement (2020) represented a significant shift in the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, demonstrating the potential impact of United States mediation. It focused on economic normalization, including provisions for direct flights, improved border crossings, the mutual recognition of professional diplomas, and potential joint infrastructure projects. Uniquely, the agreement included Serbia's commitment to relocating its embassy to Jerusalem and Kosovo's mutual recognition of Israel, injecting geopolitical considerations into the dialogue (Bislimi & Cvetković, 2021).

The Ohrid Agreement (2023), the product of protracted EU-facilitated negotiations and mounting international pressure, seeks to normalize relations between Kosovo and Serbia. Key provisions include commitments to mutual non-aggression, refraining from obstructing each

other's respective EU accession processes, the establishment of an autonomous association for Kosovo's Serb-majority municipalities, and plans for the exchange of permanent representatives (European Union, 2023). While the agreement's impact hinges on good-faith implementation, considerable uncertainty persists. Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic's refusal to sign the agreement and subsequent contradictory statements cast doubt on Serbia's commitment. Furthermore, Edward P. Joseph, a conflict management expert at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, underscores these concerns: "a cloud of uncertainty hangs over the most important negotiations in the Balkans in more than 20 years" (Joseph, 2023, para. 1). Joseph contends that Belgrade's demand for an Association of Serb majority municipalities undermines Kosovo's sovereignty rather than promoting the welfare of Kosovar Serbs (Joseph, 2023). Kosovo's President, Vjosa Osmani, stated that Western nations pressured her government into accepting Article 7 of the primary agreement, despite Kosovo's reservations about including provisions for the association of Serb-majority municipalities, suggesting it was an unwelcome imposition. In contrast, the Serbian President noted that although there was consensus on certain matters, not all issues were resolved, indicating that the discussions had not culminated in a definitive agreement.

This brief overview of negotiations and agreements between Kosovo and Serbia since 2008 aimed to discern key patterns that provide context in relation to peacebuilding approaches in Kosovo. While not a comprehensive scrutiny of all accords, it reveals salient themes that align with the research goals of assessing local agency in contesting and adapting dominant frameworks (Visoka, 2017; Zupančič, 2019).

Two primary patterns emerge. First, the consistent challenge of implementing externally-driven agreements highlights their inherent limitations in addressing complex inter-ethnic tensions rooted in the disputed Kosovo-Serbia relationship (Bieber, 2015). The stalled or partial execution of various accords suggests that while diplomatic breakthroughs are achieved, underlying contested politics persist. Top-down prescriptions have struggled to construct sustainable peace without genuine buy-in from local stakeholders on both sides (Lemay-Hébert, 2009). Second, North Mitrovica epitomizes broader inter-ethnic contestations defining the Kosovo-Serbia context. Despite North Mitrovica's positioning as the focus of technical initiatives for normalization, from integrating police to rehabilitating infrastructure, stark divisions remain (Zupančič, 2019). Parallel institutions and social structures reinforce separation along ethnic lines (Jenne, 2010). This indicates that policy measures unaccompanied

by reconciliation efforts grounded in inter-ethnic social engagement have minimal impact (Björkdahl & Gusic, 2013).

The stalled implementation of the ASM mirrors these challenges. The ASM represents an externally imposed framework aimed at decentralization that was met with significant local resistance within Kosovo, seen as threatening the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity (Beha, 2015). The ongoing contestation over the ASM, despite its inclusion as a key tenet of the 2013 Brussels Agreement, further highlights the limitations of externally driven solutions that lack genuine buy-in from local stakeholders on both sides (Visoka & Doyle, 2016).

Tensions in North Mitrovica date back to the 1990s and were exacerbated during the war in Kosovo (Jenne, 2010). In the aftermath of the conflict, North Mitrovica became the site of recurring clashes over the implementation of peace agreements. The divisions have also been reinforced by ill-conceived external approaches that relied heavily on coercion over the north's minorities rather than pursuing reconciliation (Zupančič, 2019). Altogether, the overview highlights need to incorporate contextualized local perspectives when crafting peacebuilding solutions. Growing political authority of entities like Vetëvendosje, originating from activist grassroots, shows increasing desire for alternative approaches centered on local agency. Examining how such actors can catalyze locally-resonant hybrid frameworks, integrating top-down and bottom-up efforts, is vital to constructing meaningful, sustainable peace in complex post-conflict environments (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2015).

Chapter 3: THE EVOLUTION OF PEACEBUILDING: FROM LIBERAL FRAMEWORKS TO HYBRID APPROACHES

3.1. Introduction

The evolution of peacebuilding strategies remains a pressing concern within international relations, peace studies, and conflict resolution amidst ongoing conflicts and fragile post-conflict transitions. This chapter delves into a comprehensive and critical analysis of the liberal peacebuilding literature, examining its core principles, limitations, and the rise of alternative approaches that champion local agency and context-specific solutions. This critical review establishes a solid theoretical foundation for analyzing the Vetëvendosje case in post-independence Kosovo.

The chapter traces the historical trajectory of peacebuilding approaches, beginning with Johan Galtung's foundational work emphasizing structural transformation to address the root causes of conflict. It then charts the ascent of the liberal peacebuilding paradigm in the 1990s, emphasizing promoting democracy, market economies, human rights, and the rule of law. Critiques of this model highlight its potential to oversimplify the complexities of post-conflict societies and, at times, exacerbate existing tensions. In response, alternative frameworks – such as social/emancipatory and multicultural approaches – have emerged, prioritizing local ownership, cultural sensitivity, and solutions tailored to specific contexts.

The chapter further examines the interconnectedness of peacebuilding and state-building processes. It critiques top-down, externally driven state-building efforts and stresses the significance of local participation in post-conflict reconstruction. From this emerges the concept of hybrid peacebuilding, which recognizes the dynamic interplay between international norms and local realities and advocates for a nuanced, adaptable, and locally grounded approach. Finally, the chapter introduces Mac Ginty's four-part model as its theoretical framework.

3.2. Historical Evolution of Peacebuilding Approaches

Johan Galtung's seminal work in peace studies revolutionized the field by introducing the concept of peacebuilding, marking a fundamental departure from the traditional emphasis on peacekeeping and peacemaking (Galtung, 1976; Ramsbotham et al., 2016). Galtung's theoretical framework stressed the necessity of transforming societal structures to tackle the

root causes of conflict, which he labeled "structural violence" (Galtung, 1969, p. 171). This groundbreaking concept sheds light on the systemic injustices and inequalities that frequently underpin conflicts, necessitating a proactive approach to building sustainable peace. By illuminating the complex dynamics that perpetuate conflict, Galtung's work paved the way for a more comprehensive understanding of the need for multifaceted strategies to address them (Grewal, 2003; Webel & Galtung, 2007).

Central to Galtung's contribution to peace studies is his triad of violence, which includes direct, structural, and cultural violence (Galtung, 1990). While direct violence refers to visible, physical acts of aggression, structural violence encompasses the often invisible systems and institutions that create and maintain inequalities. Cultural violence, on the other hand, refers to the attitudes, beliefs, and norms that legitimize and justify direct and structural violence (Galtung, 1996). This holistic understanding of violence has been instrumental in shaping contemporary peacebuilding practices, emphasizing the need to address the immediate manifestations of conflict and the underlying structures and cultural narratives that sustain them (Funk, 2012; Lederach, 1997). Galtung's triad of violence serves as a robust framework for analyzing the complexities of conflict and developing comprehensive strategies for building sustainable peace.

Building upon Galtung's foundational work, the publication of "An Agenda for Peace" by then-UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in 1992 further solidified the significance of peacebuilding in the post-Cold War era (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). This seminal document critically analyzed the changing nature of conflict and emphasized the need for comprehensive, long-term peacebuilding strategies. By embedding the principles of liberal peacebuilding within international practices, Boutros-Ghali's work catalyzed collaboration among various actors and led to adopting frameworks aimed at addressing the socioeconomic and political drivers of violence (Barnett et al., 2007; Newman et al., 2009). The influence of Galtung's ideas on Boutros-Ghali's "An Agenda for Peace" is evident in its emphasis on the need for a comprehensive approach to peacebuilding that goes beyond traditional peacekeeping and addresses the structural causes of conflict.

The liberal peacebuilding approach, which gained prominence in the 1990s, is rooted in the belief that promoting democracy, market economics, human rights, and the rule of law are essential for achieving sustainable peace (Paris, 2004; Richmond, 2011). International organizations, such as the United Nations, as well as Western governments, have widely

embraced this paradigm to address the root causes of conflict and foster long-term stability in war-torn societies (Doyle & Sambanis, 2006; pp.1-23). While the liberal peacebuilding approach has been influenced by Galtung's ideas, particularly in its recognition of the need to address structural violence, it has also faced criticism for its top-down, one-size-fits-all approach that may not adequately consider local contexts and agency (Autesserre, 2017; Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015; Mac Ginty, 2011; Tadjbakhsh, 2011). However, despite its influential role in shaping international peacebuilding efforts, the liberal peacebuilding paradigm has faced significant critiques regarding its universal applicability and effectiveness in diverse post-conflict settings (Autesserre, 2017; Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015; Mac Ginty, 2011; Tadjbakhsh, 2011).

The shift from interstate conflicts towards civil wars following the Cold War, as documented by Wallensteen and Sollenberg (2001), highlighted the crucial need for robust post-conflict institution-building. Scholars like Roland Paris (2004) strongly advocate for prioritizing institutional development in societies emerging from conflict, arguing that promoting democratic institutions, market economics, and the rule of law are essential for achieving sustainable peace in post-conflict environments. However, Paris also acknowledges that the process of institutionalization must be gradual and carefully sequenced to avoid the potentially destabilizing effects of rapid political and economic liberalization (Paris, 2004). This perspective aligns with Galtung's emphasis on the need for a comprehensive approach to peacebuilding that addresses both direct and structural violence.

While the need for robust post-conflict institutions is widely recognized, the implementation and effectiveness of such efforts face numerous challenges. Doyle and Sambanis (2006) point out that the United Nations' involvement in post-Cold War civil conflicts exposed a fundamental challenge: its institutional design may not be fully equipped to navigate complex local power dynamics (pp. 1-23). Pre-existing social divisions, economic disparities, or the legacy of colonialism can complicate the establishment of stable and effective institutions (Autesserre, 2010; Richmond, 2011, pp. 1-23). Despite progress in restoring governance, achieving lasting peace remains an ongoing challenge, emphasizing the complex nature of state-building in conflict-affected contexts (Fukuyama, 2004, pp. 3-39). These challenges underscore the importance of Galtung's triad of violence in understanding the multifaceted nature of conflict and the need for peacebuilding strategies that address direct, structural, and cultural violence.

The approach to peacebuilding has evolved substantially since its initial focus on ceasefire monitoring and traditional peacekeeping methods. It currently incorporates multifaceted strategies integrating military, political, humanitarian, and socioeconomic components (Call & Cousens, 2008; Ramsbotham et al., 2016). This evolution reflects a broader recognition of the need to address the root causes of conflict to achieve sustainable peace, a fundamental tenet of Galtung's work. However, as Oliver Richmond (2005) noted, peacebuilding cannot adhere to a rigid formula; it requires flexibility, an in-depth understanding of historical contexts, local power dynamics, and the interplay between global initiatives and local realities. Interventions that fail to respect and involve those most affected by conflict can inadvertently hinder the achievement of sustainable peace (Chandler, 2006, pp. 48-70; Mac Ginty, 2011, pp. 19-45). This critique echoes Galtung's emphasis on the importance of addressing structural and cultural violence and the need for context-specific approaches to peacebuilding.

Despite good intentions, the standardized approach to peacebuilding faces complications inherent to the complex network of actors and their often conflicting agendas. The distinction between internal actors (impacted by conflict) and external actors (providing support) oversimplifies the nuanced power imbalances that influence the peacebuilding process (Mac Ginty, 2011, pp. 19-46). This dichotomy fails to capture the diverse range of actors within affected societies, from political leadership to civil society and directly impacted communities, each possessing distinct needs and objectives that peacebuilding efforts must carefully address. Navigating these competing interests and ensuring that all stakeholders are meaningfully engaged in the peacebuilding process is a significant challenge that requires a context-specific, adaptive approach (Autesserre, 2014; Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015).

External interventions inevitably disrupt existing power dynamics, potentially jeopardizing long-term stability (Autesserre, 2014). The international peacebuilding landscape – involving the United Nations, states, multilateral organizations, regional bodies, NGOs, and private actors – is characterized by diverse priorities that may contradict one another and the developmental needs of nations recovering from conflict. This complex network of actors and their often-conflicting agendas can lead to a fragmented approach to peacebuilding that fails to address the underlying causes of conflict and may even exacerbate existing tensions (Barnett et al., 2007; Paris & Sisk, 2009). Despite efforts at coordination, standardized peacebuilding models may prioritize predetermined structures over respecting violence-affected communities' lived experiences and aspirations (Barnett et al., 2007). This raises concerns about external

agendas being imposed and short-term objectives undermining the empowerment of local stakeholders and the pursuit of sustainable peace.

The complexities and tensions inherent in the standardized approach to peacebuilding are evident in the external dynamics between various actors and are deeply embedded within the liberal peacebuilding paradigm. Oliver Richmond's (2005, 2008) seminal work offers a critical lens through which to examine these internal contradictions and competing objectives. Richmond's analytical framework identifies four distinct paradigms within the liberal peacebuilding approach, each with its own priorities and potential inconsistencies:

1. **Victor's Peace:** This paradigm prioritizes the interests of those who emerge victorious in the conflict, often at the expense of a more inclusive and sustainable peace.
2. **Constitutional Peace:** The constitutional peace paradigm emphasizes the development of legal frameworks and formal institutions as the primary means of achieving stability and order in post-conflict societies.
3. **Institutional Peace:** Focusing on strengthening state capacity and bureaucratic efficiency, the institutional peace paradigm aims to establish a functioning and effective state apparatus as a prerequisite for sustainable peace.
4. **Civil Peace:** Unlike the other state-centric paradigms, the civil peace paradigm centers on societal-level reconciliation, addressing underlying inequalities, and fostering community trust as essential elements of a lasting peace.

3.2.1. The "Victor's Peace" Paradigm: Coercive Power, Instability, and the Illusion of Sustainable Peacebuilding

The "victor's peace" paradigm, deeply rooted in the realist philosophy of international relations, places coercive power at the very foundation of stability. However, the inherent fragility of such arrangements becomes evident when viewed through the lens of history, as their survival remains contingent upon the continuous dominance of the victor. The evolution of these paradigms reveals a cyclical pattern of resistance and shifts in power, reflecting a Darwinian framework of societal conflict and survival (Richmond, 2014, pp. 23-29). The concept of a "Carthaginian peace," originating from Rome's destruction of Carthage, epitomizes the brutality of enforced subjugation. Regimes imposed in such a manner often plant the seeds of resentment, which, in turn, can ignite further conflict (Betts, 2005)

The Treaty of Versailles is a poignant example of this pattern; its punitive treatment of Germany hindered post-war reintegration and contributed to ongoing instability (Betts, 2005). It is worth noting that a harshly imposed Carthaginian peace can destabilize the core realist principle of maintaining a balance of power; the resulting economic burdens, including heavy reparations, further contribute to the perpetuation of violence. This pattern of enforced dominance finds striking parallels in the political philosophies of figures such as Machiavelli and Hobbes. Machiavelli's seminal work, *The Prince* (1513/2005), delves into the justification of strategic immorality and coercion by rulers in the name of survival and the expansion of power. Similarly, Hobbes's influential treatise, *Leviathan* (1651/1996), advocates for absolute control by a central authority to escape a state of nature characterized by brutality. Hobbes's work prioritizes top-down order, even at the expense of individual liberties, in the pursuit of stability.

These texts grapple with the inherent tensions between raw power, societal constraints, and the paradoxical use of violence to establish dominance under the guise of "peace." Francisco de Vitoria, a prominent 16th-century theologian, and jurist, explored the ethical complexities of 'just war' within the context of early colonialism, foreshadowing an era in which exploitative peace agreements enforced through conquest would become tragically commonplace (Koskenniemi, 2012, pp. 33-61). The conservative-realist peacebuilding model embodies this "victor's peace" philosophy, adhering to a Hobbesian vision that focuses on order imposed from above. By prioritizing military intervention, political conditionality, and state-led enforcement, this paradigm risks inadvertently serving the interests of pre-existing elites and external actors seeking to dictate terms (Paris, 2004).

The actors typically involved in this paradigm include foreign and domestic military forces and state agencies operating by an authoritarian doctrine. Examples of this paradigm can be observed in contexts such as Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Haiti (Autesserre, 2010; Doyle & Sambanis, 2006; Paris & Sisk, 2009). Crucially, while Hobbes acknowledged the importance of internal consensus and legitimacy for a regime's long-term viability, this essential component is often overlooked when an unchallenged "victor's peace" is imposed without mechanisms for reconciliation and authentic participation by civil society, thereby undermining any prospect for lasting stability (Barnett et al., 2014; Donais, 2012, pp. 58-77).

The "victor's peace" paradigm, emphasizing coercive power and enforced subjugation, raises critical questions about the sustainability and desirability of such an approach to peacebuilding. While the imposition of order through force may provide a semblance of stability in the short term, it fails to address the underlying causes of conflict and often exacerbates the very issues it seeks to resolve. The cyclical nature of resistance and power shifts that characterize this paradigm highlights the need for a more nuanced and inclusive approach to peacebuilding, considering all stakeholders' legitimate grievances and aspirations.

Moreover, the ethical implications of the "victor's peace" paradigm cannot be ignored. The use of violence and coercion to impose a particular vision of peace, often in the service of external interests, raises serious concerns about the moral legitimacy of such interventions. The historical examples of the Treaty of Versailles and the concept of a "Carthaginian peace" are stark reminders of the potential for such approaches to sow the seeds of future conflict and instability.

As peacebuilding continues to evolve, it is essential to critically examine the assumptions and power dynamics that underlie the "victor's peace" paradigm. While the insights of political philosophers such as Machiavelli and Hobbes may offer valuable perspectives on the nature of power and order, a recognition of the complexity and diversity of post-conflict societies must temper their application to contemporary peacebuilding efforts. Ultimately, the challenge for peacebuilding scholars and practitioners is to develop alternative approaches that prioritize the needs and aspirations of those most affected by conflict while also addressing the structural and systemic factors contributing to violence and instability. This requires a willingness to engage in genuine dialogue, partnership with local actors, and a commitment to long-term, sustainable solutions that promote social justice and inclusive governance.

3.2.2. Institutional and Constitutional Peace Paradigms: Interconnectedness, Critiques, and the Quest for Inclusive Peacebuilding

The interconnectedness between institutional and constitutional models within the liberal peacebuilding framework, as emphasized by Oliver Richmond, is further explored by Heathershaw (2008), who suggests that these models are components of a unified theoretical approach. This approach, rooted in liberal-internationalist thought, seeks to constrain state actions through robust legal frameworks and multilateral institutions. Drawing inspiration from the English School of International Relations theory, this tradition envisions a historical

continuity stretching from the Westphalian system of sovereign states to the creation of the United Nations (Bull, 1977, pp. 3-22; Buzan, 2004, pp. 27-63). It reflects a persistent international ambition to manage conflict through a rules-based global order and institutional safeguards against unrestrained power dynamics (Hurrell, 2007, pp. 25-120).

The institutional peace paradigm finds its intellectual roots in the works of thinkers such as Hugo Grotius, who laid the foundations for international law (Neff, 2005, pp. 83-95), and Immanuel Kant, whose vision of a "perpetual peace" rested on the establishment of a federation of free states bound by common rules and institutions (Kant, 1795/1991). This tradition has evolved, finding expression in the creation of international organizations such as the League of Nations and, later, the United Nations, which seek to promote peace and stability through multilateral cooperation and the development of international norms and standards (Claude, 1966; Kennedy, 2006). The institutional approach to peacebuilding emphasizes the role of these organizations in managing conflicts, promoting dialogue, and providing a framework for collective action (MacQueen, 2008, pp. 43-60).

Constitutional peace, on the other hand, is rooted in Kantian thought and sees enduring peace as inseparable from democratic governance, free markets, and cosmopolitan values that emphasize individual rights (Doyle, 1983; Richmond, 2014, pp. 40-49). This concept finds contemporary expression in projects like European integration, which promotes peace and stability by creating supranational institutions and harmonizing legal and economic systems (Börzel & Risse, 2009; Manners, 2008). Woodrow Wilson's post-WWI vision also championed this ideal, drawing inspiration from Enlightenment thinkers who believed democracies were less prone to conflict. Wilson's efforts to create the League of Nations aimed to enshrine sovereignty and territorial integrity, underscoring the core convergence of institutional and constitutional peace paradigms: the belief that the global expansion of liberal democratic principles lays the foundation for sustainable peace (Ikenberry, 2009; Richmond, 2014).

Building upon these theoretical bases, the orthodox-liberal peacebuilding model envisions peace primarily as a form of "conflict management" (Richmond, 2009, p. 560). This model advocates for external interventions to accelerate the adoption of democratic processes, market economies, and governance structures in post-conflict societies. However, despite superficially acknowledging the importance of local ownership, the orthodox-liberal approach relies disproportionately on transferring expertise from the international community to local actors (Donais, 2009). The implementation of this model blends top-down and bottom-up strategies,

but it leans heavily on the former, frequently involving conditionality frameworks alongside substantial but temporary donor and organizational commitments (Paris & Sisk, 2009).

The orthodox-liberal approach strongly emphasizes the rapid establishment of order, security, and institutions, with external actors often justifying the imposition of international models to create the foundations for peace (Chandler, 2006, pp. 48-70). However, such actions risk prioritizing global standards over addressing specific local needs and contexts (Mac Ginty, 2011). The success of this approach critically depends on the assumption that local actors will eventually accept and internalize the externally-derived vision of liberal peace (Richmond, 2009). Key players in the orthodox-liberal model include state departments, militaries, regional and international organizations, financial institutions, UN agencies, and NGOs (Barnett & Zürcher, 2008). The inherent flaws of this doctrine are most apparent in its conservative, militarized forms, as seen in recent interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq (Dodge, 2013; Suhrke, 2007). However, similar dynamics also exist, albeit to a lesser extent, in more institutionalized liberal peacebuilding examples like Kosovo, East Timor, and Bosnia (Richmond, 2009).

The institutional and constitutional peace paradigms, while offering valuable insights into the role of international organizations and democratic governance in promoting peace, are not without their limitations and critiques. One major criticism is that these approaches often fail to adequately consider the unique cultural, historical, and socioeconomic contexts of the societies in which they are applied (Autesserre, 2014; Mac Ginty, 2011). The imposition of externally derived governance and economic development models can lead to a mismatch between local communities' needs and aspirations and international actors' priorities, potentially undermining the legitimacy and sustainability of peacebuilding efforts (Donais, 2012, pp. 118-138; Paris, 2010).

Furthermore, the emphasis on rapid institution-building and the transfer of expertise from the international community can lead to a neglect of the importance of local actors and participation in the peacebuilding process (Pouliny, 2006, pp. 1-32). This top-down approach risks creating a dependency on external actors and resources rather than fostering the development of local capacities and resilience (Chesterman, 2007; Fukuyama, 2004, pp. 3-39). Critics argue that the institutional and constitutional peace paradigms may not adequately address the underlying causes of conflict, such as economic inequality, social exclusion, and political marginalization (Lederach, 1997; Paris, 2004). The focus on establishing formal

institutions and promoting democratic processes may overshadow the need for more comprehensive efforts to tackle these structural issues and promote social justice (Galtung, 1969).

Despite these limitations, the institutional and constitutional peace paradigms remain influential in shaping contemporary peacebuilding efforts. The challenge for scholars and practitioners is to develop more nuanced and context-sensitive approaches that draw on the strengths of these paradigms while addressing their weaknesses (Autesserre, 2014; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013). This may involve a greater emphasis on local ownership and participation, a more critical examination of the role of external actors, and a more holistic understanding of the complex dynamics that contribute to conflict and instability (Donais, 2012; Paris & Sisk, 2009).

As the field of peacebuilding continues to evolve, it is essential to engage in ongoing critical reflection on the assumptions and practices that underlie these dominant paradigms. By doing so, we can develop more inclusive, sustainable, and transformative approaches to building peace in conflict-affected societies (Björkdahl & Höglund, 2013; Lederach, 1997). This requires a willingness to challenge the status quo, learn from the experiences and perspectives of local actors, and adapt peacebuilding strategies to each situation's specific needs and contexts (Autesserre, 2014; Richmond, 2014). Only by embracing a more flexible, responsive, and locally grounded approach to peacebuilding can we hope to achieve lasting peace and stability in a world still grappling with the complex challenges of conflict and its aftermath.

3.2.3. The Emancipatory-Transformative Model: Empowering Local Actors and Navigating the Challenges of Inclusive Peacebuilding

The emancipatory-transformative model, which emerges from the civil peace paradigm, presents a thought-provoking critique of previous liberal peacebuilding frameworks. This model argues that traditional approaches to peacebuilding carry an inherent risk of coercion and can result in dependency models that rely excessively on foreign security and development structures (Richmond & Franks, 2009). In contrast, the transformative model advocates for a paradigm shift that is grounded in partnerships with local actors, a deep respect for their experiences and cultural specificities, and the empowerment of local communities to own the peacebuilding process from its inception (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015). While a commitment to universal values underpins this perspective, it also emphasizes the need for a contextualized

application of these ideals through collaborative efforts. This raises an important question: Can adaptability be balanced with unwavering principles in pursuing emancipatory peace (Mac Ginty, 2015)?

When subjected to more profound analysis, the "local" concept presents an intriguing challenge for the emancipatory-transformative model. As Mac Ginty (2011) posits, local power structures are not immune to inequalities and conflicting interests, often mirroring those found on the global level. This observation introduces a critical dilemma: How can meaningful community engagement and empowerment be realized while simultaneously adhering to universal values within contexts where those values may clash with local perspectives? Is it possible to facilitate a nuanced negotiation in such fraught territory that remains true to the model's commitment to agency and inclusivity without compromising ethical consistency? This fundamental question defies easy answers and remains crucial for moral and practical reasons.

The emancipatory-transformative model has garnered strong support from a diverse network of non-state actors, including local civil society organizations, international NGOs, and social movements. The vision espoused by this model presents intriguing counterarguments to prevailing realist and state-centric peacebuilding paradigms. Critical peacebuilding research emphasizes these principles, critiquing traditional notions of peace as insufficient and advocating for a refocusing of efforts to prioritize socioeconomic transformation and place local actors at the forefront of all initiatives (Pugh et al., 2008; Randazzo, 2016). The theoretical influences that shape this perspective, such as critical theory, communitarianism, idealism, and pluralism, lend themselves to interrogating conventional systems and envisioning more empowered alternatives (Chandler, 2017, pp. 191-210; Richmond, 2008).

However, it is essential to acknowledge the challenges and limitations of the emancipatory-transformative model. The emphasis on local agency and the rejection of externally imposed frameworks can sometimes lead to a romanticization of the local that overlooks power imbalances and exclusionary dynamics within communities (Kappler, 2015; Paffenholz, 2015). Moreover, the commitment to universal values and the pursuit of social justice may sometimes sit uneasily with the model's call for adaptability and respect for cultural specificities (Mac Ginty, 2015). Navigating these tensions requires a delicate balance and a willingness to engage in ongoing critical reflection and dialogue.

Furthermore, the focus of the emancipatory-transformative model on bottom-up, community-driven processes may face challenges in terms of scalability and the ability to effect broader

structural changes (Donais, 2012, pp. 22-40). While local initiatives are crucial for building sustainable peace, they must also be complemented by efforts to address the broader political, economic, and social factors contributing to conflict (Paris, 2010). This necessitates a multi-level approach that engages both local and international actors and recognizes the complex interconnections between the local and the global (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013).

Despite these challenges, the emancipatory-transformative model represents an essential contribution to the field of peacebuilding, offering a vision of inclusive, locally-driven peace that challenges the assumptions and power dynamics of traditional liberal peacebuilding approaches. By centering the experiences and agency of those most affected by conflict, this model opens up new possibilities for building sustainable and just peace in conflict-affected societies. However, realizing this vision requires a commitment to ongoing critical reflection, dialogue, and a willingness to grapple with the complex realities and tensions inherent in the pursuit of emancipatory peace.

The theoretical foundations of the civil peace discourse, as emphasized by scholars such as Galtung, Azar & Moon, Burton, and Lederach, directly confront the limitations inherent in traditional state-centric, top-down peacebuilding models. Galtung's concept of "positive peace" challenges the narrow definition of peace as merely the absence of war, arguing for a more comprehensive understanding that encompasses social justice and the elimination of structural violence (Galtung, 1969, p. 183). Azar's & Moon work on protracted social conflicts delves into the complexities of deeply rooted communal tensions, illuminating the importance of reconciliation processes that address the underlying causes of conflict (Azar & Moon, 1986). Human needs theory stresses the importance of meeting basic human needs as a fundamental cornerstone of genuine peace, suggesting that failure to do so can perpetuate conflict (Burton, 1990). Lederach's frameworks for multi-level conflict transformation highlight the crucial role of affected communities in building sustainable peace, emphasizing the need for inclusive and participatory processes (Lederach, 1997). Heathershaw's critique of the liberal peacebuilding paradigm reminds us that the pursuit of a just peace requires rectifying historical and present injustices rather than simply imposing externally derived models of governance and development (Heathershaw, 2008).

This perspective aligns with the evolving debate around human security, advocating a move beyond traditional state-centric security concepts to address the core drivers of conflict, such as poverty, inequality, lack of essential services, and environmental instability (Kaldor et al.,

2007; Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, 2007). The civil peace paradigm champions inclusive solutions led by those living within conflict zones, rejecting externally imposed frameworks in favor of genuine local autonomy and agency. Richmond (2011) builds upon these principles, arguing that civil peace challenges established liberal peacebuilding norms by emphasizing individual rights, collective action to dismantle inequality, and broader societal responsibility towards marginalized communities (pp. 186-216). Drawing inspiration from historical rights-based movements and ongoing human rights struggles, this model represents the tangible, action-oriented implementation of liberalism's philosophical ideals at the grassroots level.

The emancipatory-transformative model, rooted in the civil peace paradigm, offers a compelling alternative to the prevailing liberal peacebuilding frameworks. By prioritizing local agency, contextual adaptability, and a commitment to social justice, this model seeks to address the shortcomings of top-down, externally-driven approaches to peacebuilding. However, the pursuit of emancipatory peace has its challenges and tensions, particularly when it comes to balancing universal values with local specificities and navigating the complex power dynamics within and between communities.

3.2.4. Conclusion: Navigating the Complexities of Peacebuilding Paradigms

The evolution of peacebuilding paradigms, from traditional peacekeeping to multifaceted contemporary approaches, reflects a positive shift towards addressing the root causes of conflict. However, a critical analysis of models like Victor's, institutional, constitutional, and civil peace highlights the contradictions and limitations inherent in liberal interventionist strategies (Richmond & Franks, 2009).

While theoretically sound, the implementation of these paradigms faces obstacles. These include remnants of neocolonial attitudes, the marginalization of local actors, external powers co-opting initiatives, and a lack of coordination among international stakeholders (Heathershaw, 2008; Paris & Sisk, 2009). The tension between imposing "security" and fostering community-led reconciliation remains, as does the risk of reinforcing dependency on outside actors (Richmond, 2011, pp. 66.91)

Furthermore, strategically combining peacebuilding models, especially Victor's peace and institutional approaches, risks perpetuating external dominance and undermining social cohesion (Newman, 2009). The potential suppression of individual rights in pursuit of stability further underscores the complexities involved (Richmond & Franks, 2011).

Even the emancipatory-transformative model, which prioritizes local ownership and social justice, faces threats from internal power dynamics and external forces' exploitation (Goodhand & Walton, 2009). A recent resurgence of conservative-realist approaches, which tragically prioritize state-building and security over local initiatives, demonstrates the ongoing evolution and fluctuation of dominant peacebuilding ideas (Richmond & Franks, 2011).

Can peacebuilding overcome such challenges, considering these limitations? The "institutionalization before liberalization" paradigm suggests focusing on internal structural stability before broader democratic interventions (Paris, 2004, p. 179). This approach emphasizes gradual, locally driven processes tailored to a specific context.

As the field evolves, it is imperative to critically analyze the assumptions, power dynamics, and potential consequences of peacebuilding strategies. Ongoing dialogue, prioritizing lessons from local experiences, and developing adaptive, context-sensitive approaches remain crucial for creating inclusive, resilient, and transformative post-conflict environments. The institutionalize before liberalize model offers a framework for addressing the challenges of contemporary peacebuilding efforts, paving the way for sustainable peace and development.

3.3. The Consolidation of a New Paradigm: Institutionalization Before Liberalization

The dominant discourse within peacebuilding has long been shaped by Liberal Peace Theory, which strongly emphasizes democratic processes and free-market ideals (Paris, 2004, pp. 179-211). This theory is rooted in the democratic peace thesis, which posits that democracies are inherently more peaceful and less likely to engage in conflict with one another (Doyle, 1983; Russett, 1993). Proponents of this view argue that elections facilitate internal conflict resolution and reduce societal violence by constraining the power of leaders (Diamond, 1999; Reilly, 2002). However, as this dissertation aims to explore the complex dynamics of peacebuilding and state-building in post-conflict societies, it is crucial to critically examine the assumptions underlying Liberal Peace Theory and consider alternative approaches that may better address the challenges faced by these fragile environments.

Roland Paris (2004) presents a compelling challenge to the orthodoxy of Liberal Peace Theory, arguing that hasty liberalization efforts in post-conflict societies can have destabilizing effects. His empirical analysis of 14 UN peacekeeping missions between 1989 and 1999 reveals a troubling pattern: premature democratization often fails to deliver the promised stability and

instead exacerbates societal tensions. Paris advocates for a sequenced approach, prioritizing building robust governance institutions capable of managing complex social challenges before gradually introducing democratic elements and market reforms. This perspective calls into question the assumption that rapid liberalization is the most effective path to lasting peace.

One of the critical issues highlighted by Paris (2004) is the problematic role of elections in post-conflict peacebuilding. While elections are often celebrated as progress markers, their potential to inflame divisions and provide opportunities for opportunistic leaders to exploit societal vulnerabilities is frequently overlooked (Brancati & Snyder, 2013). Political campaigns can deepen rifts rather than promote reconciliation in fragile post-conflict environments where societal wounds are still raw. Paris argues that institutional strength must be established as a precondition for genuine democratization, challenging the common practice of prioritizing elections above all else.

The case for a more gradual and contextualized approach to peacebuilding is further strengthened by the experiences of countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan, where rapid liberalization has failed to yield the desired outcomes (Ottaway & Lacina, 2003; Suhrke, 2007). These examples underscore the need for peacebuilders to adopt a pragmatic stance, acknowledging the limitations of idealized theories and focusing on building strong governance institutions as a foundation for sustainable peace. The shift towards prioritizing security sector reform, rule of law, and civil service capacity in contemporary peacebuilding efforts reflects a growing recognition of the importance of institutionalization (Chesterman, 2004). However, the question remains whether this shift goes far enough in addressing the fundamental challenges posed by premature democratization.

The international community's fixation on elections as a cornerstone of peacebuilding is particularly problematic in societies emerging from prolonged conflict, where identity-based divisions are often deeply entrenched. Imposing a Western-style representative government can quickly unravel as different groups prioritize their own short-term interests over a shared national vision. External actors pushing for early elections in the name of local ownership may inadvertently undermine the foundations of peace if the necessary prerequisites, such as minority rights protections and public trust in leadership, are lacking (Jarstad & Sisk, 2008, pp. 239-259).

Moreover, the lingering effects of conflict can exacerbate societal fault lines based on ethnicity, religion, or other identity markers, making them seemingly intractable (Horowitz, 1985;

Kaufmann, 1996). Without concerted efforts to promote reconciliation and forge a sense of national unity, attempts to superimpose a Western democratic model can be disastrous (Paris, 2004; Sisk, 2008). In such cases, premature elections may only serve to entrench existing power imbalances and hinder genuine societal healing. Furthermore, holding elections before establishing a minimum level of social cohesion could be a recipe for renewed instability rather than sustainable peace.

These critiques raise fundamental questions about the nature of peacebuilding and the need for a more nuanced, context-sensitive approach. Paris's (2004) "institutionalization before liberalization" paradigm offers a promising alternative. It emphasizes the importance of establishing stable governance structures and addressing the specific needs of post-conflict societies before embarking on broader democratic reforms. This approach recognizes that sustainable peace and successful democratization require a solid institutional foundation, including the rule of law, security, and effective public administration (Barnett, 2006; Fukuyama, 2004).

However, it is essential to acknowledge the potential challenges and criticisms associated with prioritizing institutionalization over rapid liberalization. Some argue that this approach may inadvertently bolster authoritarian tendencies and delay the realization of democratic ideals (Pugh, 2005). Additionally, institutional reform is often complex, time-consuming, and resource-intensive, demanding sustained commitment from local and international actors (Chesterman, 2007; Manning, 2003). Balancing the need for stability with the desire for democratic progress is a delicate task that requires a flexible, context-specific approach attuned to the unique dynamics of each post-conflict setting (Mac Ginty, 2010; Richmond, 2014).

This dissertation explores the complex interplay between international peacebuilding efforts and local aspirations for self-determination and sovereignty in post-conflict environments, making the debate surrounding the "institutionalization before liberalization" paradigm particularly relevant. By examining how local actors navigate this landscape and engage with the dimensions of compliance, incentives, resistance, and alternatives (Mac Ginty, 2010), this study aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of hybrid peacebuilding and the challenges of state-building in contested environments.

In conclusion, the critical examination of Liberal Peace Theory and the emergence of the "institutionalization before liberalization" paradigm underscores the need for a more context-sensitive and adaptive approach to peacebuilding. As the international community grapples

with the complexities of fostering sustainable peace in fragile post-conflict societies, it is crucial to recognize the limitations of top-down, one-size-fits-all solutions and prioritize establishing strong governance institutions that can lay the foundation for gradual democratic progress. By engaging with these debates and exploring the dynamics of peacebuilding and state-building in post-conflict settings, this dissertation seeks to contribute to the ongoing quest for more effective and responsive strategies for achieving lasting stability and genuine self-determination in societies emerging from conflict.

3.4. Beyond Liberal Peacebuilding: Unveiling Dissent and Debate

The discourse surrounding post-conflict peacebuilding reveals a landscape of profound theoretical clashes and persistent internal disagreements among critical theorists. These disputes coalesce around two core critiques: the questionable efficacy, or even counterproductive nature, of liberal peacebuilding interventions (Paris, 2004), alongside a deep-seated skepticism regarding the ideological foundations of the model itself. Critics contend that well-intentioned efforts can paradoxically exacerbate entrenched divisions or rekindle latent hostilities (Mac Ginty, 2011, pp. 19-46). Evidence suggests that, rather than facilitating sustainable progress, such actions may merely impose a "negative peace" (Galtung, 1998, p.190), characterized by superficial stability that obscures the perpetuation of socioeconomic inequities and diminished human security. This raises the crucial question of whether intervention, when reliant upon externally defined goals, ultimately hinders the organic emergence of genuine peace.

Compounding critiques of efficacy, scholars dissect the inherent contradictions within the liberal peacebuilding model (Belloni, 2008, pp. 173-185). Far from a universally applicable solution, its externally driven nature and ethnocentric assumptions prioritize Western-centric definitions of democracy and economic progress (Chandler, 2010). This top-down approach disregards the complex realities, diverse needs, and pre-existing social structures of conflict-affected societies. Cases like Bosnia and Herzegovina, where externally imposed power-sharing agreements exacerbated sectarian tensions, or the ill-conceived interventions in Libya and Iraq, which unleashed destabilizing forces and fueled further violence, exemplify these flaws. The limited involvement of local actors and their relegation to passive roles undermines such interventions' sustainability and ethical foundations (Richmond, 2005, pp. 149-177).

A cornerstone of critical analysis dissects how seemingly altruistic rhetoric masks the perpetuation of power imbalances within liberal peacebuilding. Scholars like Duffield (2007)

uncover neocolonial undercurrents within seemingly benevolent practices. He argues that development initiatives and externally designed stabilization models function as mechanisms of control that prioritize the maintenance of global power structures over genuine conflict resolution (pp. 159-182). These well-intentioned efforts often hinder the progress they purport to advance. Conditionality of aid, the presence of foreign security forces within civilian contexts, and the imposition of top-down institutional reforms can have unintended, yet harmful, consequences. Such actions risk failing to resolve conflict, inflaming latent grievances, and further destabilizing societies under the guise of benevolent intervention (Autesserre, 2014).

Despite acknowledging the potential for limited success in immediate crises, a potent wave of critique challenges the uncritical acceptance of liberal peacebuilding's fundamental precepts (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013). Scholars dissect the ethical dilemmas inherent in practices reliant upon externally imposed definitions of progress. To directly confront the power imbalances perpetuated by liberal peacebuilding, deconstruction entails a profound critique and reevaluation of the universalization of frameworks traditionally rooted in liberal notions of democracy, markets, and justice. Such frameworks carry the potential to reproduce Western power structures, disregarding local contexts and the profound historical legacy of colonialism embedded within peacebuilding practices, policies, and scholarship. The UNMIK administration in Kosovo exemplifies this dynamic. Its imposition of externally devised governance structures, focused on ethnicity as the primary political division, undermined local agency and fueled further tensions. The 2004 outbreak of violence underscores how this approach directly contributed to instability.

Moreover, UNMIK's inability to provide basic security and reluctance to address Kosovo's final status alienated local communities and impeded progress toward reconciliation and peace (Hehir, 2006). The imposition of Enlightenment-era assumptions of rationality and universality demonstrates a failure to grasp how such assumptions can clash with the lived realities of conflict-affected communities. This disconnect undermines the possibility of authentic peacebuilding informed by the needs and aspirations of those most directly impacted.

Foucault's analysis of power as intertwined with knowledge further exposes the insidious nature of liberal peacebuilding discourse, echoing Duffield's prior critique of power dynamics. This discourse, shaped by specific epistemic communities, marginalizes alternative perspectives and forms of knowledge. However, in today's complex international landscape,

Foucault's concepts alone may not fully capture the multitude of actors contesting meanings of peace and conflict. Post-Foucauldian discourse theories offer a more nuanced framework, acknowledging how even illiberal and authoritarian actors shape these very debates (Lewis, 2017). This reveals that the struggle for peace extends beyond dismantling liberal peacebuilding, requiring navigation of a far more complex discursive battlefield.

Critical peacebuilding literature offers invaluable correctives to the liberal peacebuilding model, pinpointing its shortcomings and internal tensions. This work forces us to think deeply about how well-meaning outside interventions can sometimes do more harm than good if they do not respect local realities. It underlines how crucial it is to develop approaches to post-conflict situations that are grounded in each case's specific circumstances. Kosovo reminds us all too vividly that top-down strategies focused on narrow definitions of 'peace' can actually inflame divisions and make true reconciliation harder to achieve.

The challenges of peacebuilding demand that we heed the lessons of critical theorists. Prioritizing the voices of those within affected communities, grappling with the long shadow cast by colonialism, and staying aware of the complexities within peace and conflict studies is vital. Only by doing so can we build genuinely inclusive, lasting peace processes that can bring about positive transformation. This means staying intellectually humble, being receptive to a multitude of perspectives, and always centering the needs and desires of those who live the realities of conflict and its aftermath.

3.5. The Peacebuilding Paradox: Unintended Consequences of Intervention

The aftermath of the Rwandan genocide exposed a troubling contradiction at the heart of peacebuilding: interventions designed to foster peace and stability can themselves become sources of destabilization. Humanitarian aid intended to alleviate suffering inadvertently fueled conflict within refugee camps (Anderson, 2000, pp. 21-25), exposing the double-edged nature of external assistance. This stark example prompted scholars and practitioners to initiate a critical turn in the field, rigorously interrogating long-held assumptions about the inherently positive impact of intervention.

Scholars have since scrutinized not only the economic repercussions of intervention but also the profound social and humanitarian disruptions that peacekeeping forces themselves can perpetuate. The increased incidence of sexual violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and the role of peacekeepers in escalating HIV/AIDS rates underscore how well-

intentioned missions can reproduce power structures that enable abuse (Francis, 2008; Baaz & Stern, 2009). Autesserre's (2014) seminal analysis of peacekeeper-driven social harms in the DRC demonstrates how interveners' focus on technical solutions often leads to the neglect of critical on-the-ground power dynamics. Moreover, the sudden influx of foreign aid, while intended to alleviate suffering, often destabilizes local economies, creating new socioeconomic disparities that exacerbate existing tensions (Goodhand, 2006). These disruptions prove particularly dangerous when reforms prioritize a rapid return to stability over addressing historical grievances and fault lines.

The failure to address the root causes of instability has drawn deep concern from analysts like Keen (2003) and Hanlon (2004), who warn that interventions can inadvertently recreate the very conditions that fueled the original conflict. Autesserre (2010) powerfully illustrates this phenomenon, demonstrating how peacebuilding's focus on national-level reforms in places like the DRC neglects the localized conflicts perpetuating violence cycles. In her book, "The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding," Autesserre argues that the international community's emphasis on national-level solutions overlooks the significance of local disputes and grassroots conflicts as underlying causes of broader violence (pp. 41-83).

Hanlon further highlights how entrenched elites instrumentalize the post-conflict landscape, diverting resources meant for peacebuilding while consolidating their own power at the expense of the broader population. This entrenchment of social grievances creates an environment ripe for a reignition of conflict. The concept of neopatrimonialism illuminates this dynamic, exposing how systems dependent on personal relationships and patronage networks undermine formal institutions. Established elites, adept at preserving these power structures, often strategically exploit peacebuilding efforts to solidify their control further (Hanlon, 2004). These observations resonate with broader political science concepts, including "rentier states" and "extraversion," which underscore how elite consolidation and external reliance on resource extraction undermine sustainable peace. Hanlon's work also parallels Chabal and Daloz's (1999) notion of the "political instrumentalization of disorder," highlighting the incentives some actors have to perpetuate instability for personal gain (pp. 141-163).

This critical line of inquiry reveals the profound challenges of post-conflict reconstruction. For interventions to be genuinely effective, they must be historically informed, prioritize meaningful local engagement, and foster sustainable, locally-led solutions that directly address

entrenched social, political, and economic inequalities. This may necessitate the politically difficult work of dismantling patronage networks and challenging elite capture of resources. Peacebuilding must move beyond technical fixes and prioritize the transformation of unjust and destabilizing power structures to break cycles of violence. Autesserre's (2014) emphasis on understanding and addressing localized dynamics offers a pathway to breaking the cycle of interventions inadvertently fueling the conflicts they seek to resolve.

3.6. "Negative" and "Virtual" Peace: Critiquing the Outcomes of Liberal Peacebuilding

The cessation of open hostilities is often hailed as a triumph of peacebuilding interventions, but critical scholars contend that genuine success demands more profound transformation. They draw a crucial distinction between a superficial "negative peace" (Galtung, 1998, p.190), marked solely by the reduction of overt violence, and the essential but often neglected work of addressing the socioeconomic imbalances that ignite conflict. This distinction underpins a fundamental tension between mere conflict management and transformative change (Pugh, 2006; Heathershaw, 2008).

Critics expose how even societies deemed stabilized post-intervention often fail to improve marginalized communities' lives meaningfully. While direct violence may have diminished, poverty, inequality, and a lack of essential services remain intractable. The term "virtual peace" (Richmond, 2008) encapsulates this dissonance, highlighting how a facade of stability masks persistent injustice and neglect within the liberal peacebuilding model. Such "peace" proves elusive because it fails to establish institutions or frameworks that empower ordinary people to shape their futures and well-being.

Oliver Richmond (2008) expands on this "virtual peace" notion (p.440), underscoring its inherent contradictions and consequences for local sovereignty. He observes that liberal peacebuilding interventions often produce weak, externally dependent states prone to corruption and power struggles. Richmond argues that this focus on surface-level institutional forms creates a "virtual peace," in which internationally induced "conditionality and dependency" (p.458) become the means by which external actors maintain control, overlaying a veneer of liberal governance upon deeply rooted local norms and culture. Richmond's insights underscore how this approach neglects local knowledge and priorities and actively disrupts existing ways of life in post-conflict societies.

Michael Pugh (2010) takes this critique further, asserting that liberal interventions generate not a social dividend of peace but a peace deficit, often, in the form of externally imposed economic policies and top-down governance reforms that disrupt local systems and often exacerbate the very conditions that fuel conflict (262-278). This results in what Cooper (2006) terms "chimeric governance" (p.315): a situation where powerful international actors provide minimal protection from violence while ignoring the lived vulnerabilities of the populations they claim to assist. Duffield (2007) adds that this approach neglects the long-term needs of the uninsured population, those left unprotected and unsupported as the initial humanitarian crisis fades from view (pp.1-29).

Richmond and Franks (2009) offer a sobering comparative analysis of Cambodia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Timor-Leste, Kosovo, and Palestine to bolster this critique. While international organizations highlight formal advancements in democratization, rule of law, and development, the authors expose a counter-narrative: these changes remain superficial, primarily benefiting local elites, while everyday life for the majority remains mired in economic struggle, unresponsive institutions, and a lack of opportunity.

These critiques have sparked crucial debates, especially among scholars who draw upon an anthropology of war framework, such as Paul Richards (2008, pp. 1-21). He challenges the segmentation of 'peace' and 'war,' and instead emphasize concepts like no peace, no war to illuminate a continuum of violence present within societies declared 'peaceful.' This challenges core peacebuilding assumptions by asserting that post-conflict poverty, inequality, and other structural hardships can rival or even surpass the direct violence of the armed conflict phase. This framework is evident in case studies from Mozambique to Central America, highlighting that the end of open war is often merely a transition to a different form of suffering.

In conclusion, the critical examination of liberal peacebuilding interventions reveals a troubling paradox: efforts to foster peace and stability can inadvertently perpetuate the very conditions that fuel conflict. By prioritizing surface-level stability over addressing entrenched inequalities and power imbalances, interventions risk creating a "virtual peace" that masks ongoing injustice and vulnerability. To break this cycle, peacebuilding must adopt a more transformative approach that prioritizes local engagement, addresses the root causes of conflict, and challenges the unjust power structures that hinder sustainable peace.

3.7. The Fallacy of Standardized Peacebuilding: Confronting the Limitations of the One-Size-Fits-All Approach

The notion that a single, standardized model can effectively guide the transformation of conflict-torn societies into stable, peaceful states has come under intense scrutiny from critical peacebuilding scholars (Mac Ginty, 2008; Richmond, 2010). These scholars resoundingly reject this idea, arguing that such a uniform approach fundamentally fails to account for the intricate complexities and unique histories of individual conflict zones (Pugh et al., 2008; Tadjbakhsh, 2011). They delve deeper into this critique, exposing the dangerous illusions perpetuated by the standardized model and laying bare its inherent contradictions (Chandler, 2017; Paris, 2010). They collectively challenge the very foundations upon which the standardized approach to peacebuilding rests.

At the heart of this critique lie two fundamental flaws that undermine the capacity of the standardized model to create enduring peace. The first is its prioritization of top-down, externally imposed solutions disregarding local knowledge and historical context (Mac Ginty, 2010; Richmond, 2011). This approach often leads to the imposition of reforms that are jarringly mismatched with the society in question (Autesserre, 2014). For example, attempts to institute Western-style elections in contexts with clan-based solid or regional power dynamics can backfire, exacerbating divisions rather than fostering genuine representation (Barnett & Zürcher, 2008; Paris, 2004). Furthermore, by ignoring a conflict's historical roots, peacebuilders close their eyes to the deeper grievances and power imbalances that, if left unaddressed, will inevitably fuel renewed instability (Lederach, 1997; Ramsbotham et al., 2016). This failure to engage with the complexities of local realities lies at the core of the standardized model's shortcomings (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013).

The second flaw is the standardized model's simplistic view of power dynamics, which assumes a clear divide between 'legitimate' government and 'illegitimate' rebels while ignoring the complex interplay of formal and informal power structures (Mac Ginty, 2010). Attempts to empower a particular faction without understanding those broader dynamics can inadvertently legitimize abusive actors or create new inequalities, jeopardizing the peace they intend to create (Donais, 2012, pp. 78-96). This critique resonates with the concept of "hybrid political orders," which emphasizes the coexistence of traditional and modern forms of governance in post-conflict societies (Boege et al., 2009). The standardized approach risks undermining its effectiveness by failing to acknowledge and engage with these hybrid realities (Richmond, 2015).

Scholars of hybrid peace forcefully contest that a single, standardized model can adequately address the diverse complexities of post-conflict societies (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2015). They emphasize the tendency of such approaches to impose top-down "solutions" that fundamentally misunderstand local histories, power structures, and cultural norms (Millar, 2015, pp. 11-42). These arguments echo warnings raised within the "local turn" literature, emphasizing the necessity of centering locally-driven practices for sustainable conflict transformation (Paffenholz, 2015). The case of Bosnia serves as a poignant example, where attempts to institute democratic reforms without meaningful engagement with existing power dynamics and historical grievances inadvertently exacerbated ethnic tensions, hindering the establishment of just and inclusive institutions (Kappler & Richmond, 2011). These critiques underscore the importance of grounding peacebuilding efforts in deeply understanding local realities (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015).

The self-presentation of international actors as neutral facilitators within peacebuilding processes has also been scrutinized. Autesserre (2014) and Mac Ginty (2011) offer a powerful critique of this self-depiction, arguing that it serves to justify interventions that prioritize external agendas. By characterizing post-conflict societies as fundamentally dysfunctional, these agencies construct an image of themselves as essential saviors (Sending, 2009). This manufactured 'necessity' allows them to circumvent locally-driven solutions in favor of their pre-packaged templates (Richmond, 2012). When hastily applied within unrealistic timelines, these standardized blueprints create an overwhelming environment for local actors who must rapidly adapt to sweeping change agendas (Paris, 2004). This critique exposes how the discourse of neutrality can mask the imposition of external priorities and undermine local agency (Pugh et al., 2008).

The consequences of the standardized approach extend beyond strained local capacity, fundamentally shifting power and resources away from the very communities it purports to aid and empowering external actors instead (Mac Ginty, 2012). Private consultancies specializing in "peacebuilding expertise" and security firms accumulate outsized influence, profiting from these interventions (Sending, 2009). Meanwhile, NGOs expose the troubling reality of budgetary misallocations – as of a certain point, a staggering percentage of aid funds failed to reach their intended local recipients (Easterly & Pfitze, 2008). For instance, Action Aid revealed the shocking reality that a large portion of aid funds never reach the people they are supposed to help due to budgetary misallocations. In 2005, 61% of aid was lost along the way, leaving intended communities without vital resources (Action Aid, 2006). Such practices raise

fundamental questions about whose interests standardized models truly serve (Pugh et al., 2008). This critique highlights the need for greater transparency and accountability in peacebuilding efforts and a more equitable distribution of resources and decision-making power (Paris, 2010).

The desire to treat peacebuilding as a technical exercise is exemplified by Suhrke's (2007) concept of "systemizing" past interventions into codified "best practices." Nieminen (2006) emphasizes this trend, noting the proliferation of guides and toolkits designed to speed implementation – a focus that neglects the human element of reconciliation. These contradictions expose standardization's dangers, which risk reinforcing inequalities and perpetuating cycles of powerlessness for those most affected by conflict (Suhrke, 2007; Nieminen, 2006; Richmond, 2014). By reducing peacebuilding to a set of technical procedures, the standardized approach fails to engage with conflict transformation's complex social, political, and emotional dimensions (Lederach, 1997; Ramsbotham et al., 2016).

The dominant ideology within standardized peacebuilding often reflects the worldviews and priorities of external powers, imposing predetermined frameworks that neglect the local cosmologies – the lived experiences of the people within the target society (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013). This ethnocentric bias and its historical context are increasingly scrutinized by scholars, who question whether the post-Cold War proliferation of liberal peacebuilding agendas, with their emphasis on democracy, free markets, and externally-driven state-building, truly aligns with the needs of war-affected societies or primarily serves the geopolitical and economic interests of powerful interveners (Chandler, 2010, pp. 22-42). This critique challenges the assumed universality of liberal values and highlights the need for a more context-sensitive approach to peacebuilding (Autesserre, 2014).

Newman (2009) reveals how the promise of balanced, top-down, and bottom-up approaches ultimately conceals a clear bias towards externally crafted agendas, with success indicators defined by outsider benchmarks. This approach potentially undermines subtle signs of reconciliation or evolving local understandings of democracy and ignores the potential harm of rushing political processes for the sake of meeting external timelines (Autesserre, 2014). The ethnocentric bias also extends to aid and NGOs, where a misperception of post-conflict spaces as devoid of any viable social order serves as a pretext for heavy-handed "rebuilding" driven by external actors (Millar, 2015, pp. 43-116). These critiques underscore the importance

of recognizing and building upon existing local capacities and knowledge systems in peacebuilding efforts (Pouligny, 2005, pp. 155-180; Sending, 2009).

As David Chandler (2007) argued, standardized peacebuilding models have the dangerous potential to dismantle existing local governance structures. Ironically, these structures may be crucial coping mechanisms and sources of accountability that communities organically developed in the face of conflict. Furthermore, Chandler reveals the flawed expectation within standardized models that non-Western societies should mirror Western political systems, ignoring centuries of complex evolution specific to their contexts. Jonathan Di John (2008) exposes an additional layer of critique, pointing out how powerful states perpetuate these outdated models to stigmatize alternative forms of governance. This creates justifications for interventions that conveniently prioritize hidden economic interests, such as market deregulation, under the guise of aid and reform – even if the interventions destabilize the very communities they claim to help. Ultimately, these critiques underscore the urgent need for a more nuanced approach to peacebuilding, one that is deeply informed by the history of each region and respects the locally evolved political traditions and processes that already exist (Chandler, 2007; Di John, 2008).

A fundamental limitation of dominant peacebuilding strategies is their inherently state-centric emphasis, which flies in the face of critical perspectives and emerging scholarship. Work by Boege et al., 2009 demonstrates the oversimplification of equating weak central states with disorder, while research reveals systems of order existing even amidst severe disruptions. Cases like Afghanistan or Somalia illustrate non-state centers of local authority capable of maintaining stability (Hagmann & Hoehne, 2009). Imposing externally designed state structures without acknowledging these dynamics further erodes pre-existing coping mechanisms and leadership developed by communities directly affected by conflict (Boege et al., 2009). This critique highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of political order and stability that goes beyond the narrow focus on state institutions.

The standardized peacebuilding approach suffers from a problematic tendency towards depoliticization, often portraying international actors as neutral facilitators (Hughes & Pupavac, 2005). This framing allows external agencies to mask their political agendas and power dynamics under the guise of purely technical assistance (Hughes & Pupavac, 2005). Furthermore, by depicting post-conflict societies as inherently dysfunctional and in need of external intervention (Autesserre, 2014; Sending, 2009), they manufacture a sense of

"necessity" justifying pre-packaged solutions with unrealistic timelines that overwhelm local capacity (Newman, 2009). These solutions often prioritize international interests over local needs (Mac Ginty, 2010), further undermined by a lack of contextual understanding due to the rush for implementation (Donais, 2012, pp. 1-21). This critique exposes the inherently political nature of peacebuilding and the need for transparency and accountability (Sabaratnam, 2017, pp. 57-82). It underscores the importance of critically examining the assumptions, power dynamics, and agendas shaping these practices while centering local ownership and agency in post-conflict reconstruction (Paffenholz, 2015).

Effective peacebuilding demands a critical reassessment of current practices. Formulaic interventions must be replaced with collaborative efforts that prioritize context-specific solutions, nuanced power analyses, and, most importantly, the voices of local communities (Donais, 2012; Lederach, 1997). Transitioning towards a more participatory and contextualized approach presents significant challenges. The international community needs to move beyond the allure of quick fixes and embrace a more patient, adaptive, and humble engagement with the complexities inherent in post-conflict societies (de Coning, 2018).

This shift necessitates a willingness to confront the uncomfortable realities of power and privilege within the international system. Even interventions with the best intentions can inadvertently perpetuate neocolonial dynamics and undermine local agency (Sabaratnam, 2017, pp. 131-146). Furthermore, a critical examination of the assumptions and biases that underpin dominant peacebuilding paradigms and an openness to alternative pathways toward achieving peace are crucial steps in fostering more sustainable outcomes (Jabri, 2013).

Despite these challenges, the critiques against the standardized peacebuilding model offer valuable insights for charting a more effective and ethical way forward. By centering local voices (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013), prioritizing contextual understanding (Autesserre, 2014), and grappling with the complex realities of power and history (Paffenholz, 2015), peacebuilders can begin to move beyond the limitations of one-size-fits-all approaches and towards a more transformative and sustainable vision of peace. This requires a fundamental shift in the way peacebuilding is conceptualized and practiced, moving away from externally imposed templates and towards a more dialogical, adaptive, and locally grounded approach (de Coning, 2018).

In conclusion, critical perspectives expose the flaws of standardized peacebuilding approaches in complex post-conflict settings. By neglecting local knowledge and agency, these approaches

can worsen existing tensions. A fundamental shift is required, prioritizing participation, context, and power dynamics. Centering the voices of those directly affected by conflict is critical. While this shift has challenges, it offers the best path towards genuine and sustainable peace – a peace rooted in the needs of the communities themselves. Critical engagement and embracing alternative approaches are vital for developing effective, ethical, and transformative peacebuilding practices as the field evolves.

3.8. Hegemonic Agendas and Critical Dissent in Liberal Peacebuilding

Critical voices within the peacebuilding field have mounted a forceful challenge to the facade of neutrality that cloaks the liberal peace model in the post-Cold War era (Pugh, 2005; Chandler, 2006). Aligning with postcolonial thought, these critiques dissect the hidden motivations driving international interventions, revealing a stark contrast between their altruistic rhetoric and the realities on the ground (Duffield, 2007). Far from selfless humanitarianism, peacebuilding efforts are often argued to serve as a mask for external actors' geopolitical and economic agendas, prioritizing their own interests at the expense of the communities they claim to assist (Paris, 2002; Mac Ginty, 2011). This exposes deep contradictions within the liberal peace model, calling into question the possibility of 'peacebuilding' that is somehow untainted by power disparities and underlying agendas (Heathershaw, 2008; Sabaratnam, 2017).

The construction of "ungoverned space" is a central mechanism within the liberal peacebuilding paradigm, and neo-Marxist analysis validly critiques its use in preserving Western hegemony. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the complex, often contradictory, motivations driving interventions. The US-led intervention in Afghanistan post-9/11 exemplifies this, propelled by national security concerns, the pursuit of global dominance, and the professed goal of advancing democracy and human rights (Rubin, 2006). Regions labeled as "ungoverned," "conflictual," or "fragile" become targets for transformation, often driven less by genuine concern for improving lives within these societies and more by the global security agendas and domestic political interests of the intervening powers (Duffield, 2007, pp. 159-182).

This perspective, which assumes "ungoverned spaces" are inherently dysfunctional or prone to anarchy, is deeply problematic. Scholars like Acharya (2007) highlight how this view justifies external intervention and the imposition of Western governance models, overlooking the complex social, political, and economic realities within these spaces and the diverse ways in

which local communities adapt and achieve self-governance. Duffield (2007) further critiques how the very categorization of areas as "ungoverned" or "fragile" frequently stems from Eurocentric conceptions of governance and statehood, which may be neither relevant nor aspirational in all contexts (p.165). As Mbembe (2003) argues in his critique of the Eurocentric gaze, these labels often fail to capture the intricate realities on the ground.

Furthermore, development-related discourses emphasizing underdevelopment and state fragility have fueled a dangerous "securitization" of development (Fukuyama, 2004, pp. 92-114). This reorients peacebuilding efforts away from the genuine needs of affected communities and towards external security priorities, with counter-terrorism often taking precedence over long-term stability or the well-being of those within conflict zones (Keen, 2008). Consequently, this external framing positions complex societal issues within these regions as inherently flawed characteristics of the non-Western 'Other,' perpetuating problematic colonial narratives (Darby, 2009).

Neo-Gramscian perspectives offer a nuanced understanding of contemporary peacebuilding interventions. They emphasize the role of cultural hegemony in shaping perceptions of these efforts and influencing their ultimate impact (Pugh, 2005; Richmond, 2011). This framework highlights how powerful actors can maintain influence not just through coercion but also by subtly shaping the ideological and cultural landscape to legitimize their position (Gramsci, 1971). In the context of peacebuilding, this translates to the strategic use of discourses, practices, and institutions that reinforce the legitimacy of the liberal peace model while potentially obscuring inherent power imbalances and potentially serving interests beyond those of the affected communities (Lederach, 1997; Mac Ginty, 2011).

One fundamental way this cultural hegemony operates is by promoting a humanitarian framing that presents interventions as a selfless "responsibility to protect" (Chandler, 2006, p.31; Jabri, 2007, p.130). This discourse positions external actors as benevolent saviors driven by a moral imperative to help those in need. However, it obscures the geopolitical, economic, and strategic interests that often underlie these interventions (Paris, 2002; Bellamy, 2004). For instance, this can mask the pursuit of expanded markets or influence in a region. By presenting themselves as neutral and disinterested parties, interveners maintain a veneer of legitimacy for their actions, making them more palatable to domestic audiences and the international community (Heathershaw, 2008; Pospisil & Kühn, 2016).

However, this strategic reframing of interventions goes beyond simple rhetoric; it is accompanied by a range of practices and mechanisms that can further diminish the agency of affected states while strengthening the influence of external actors (Duffield, 2007). One such mechanism is the deployment of internationalized policy frameworks and governance structures that supersede local decision-making processes and institutions (Chandler, 2006; Ghani & Lockhart, 2009, pp. 198-220). Under the guise of providing technical assistance and capacity building, external actors can exert significant control over key policy areas, from economic reform to security sector governance (Paris, 2004; Richmond & Franks, 2009). This can limit the ability of communities to shape their own recovery trajectories.

Furthermore, decision-making within these interventions frequently gets depoliticized, presented as purely technical matters best handled by external experts (Escobar, 1995, pp. 102-153). This technocratic approach overlooks the inherent political realities of these interventions and the ways they influence power dynamics and resource allocation within war-torn societies (Autesserre, 2010; Hameiri, 2010). By framing intricate social and political issues as simple technical problems solvable by external specialists, interveners risk pushing aside the voices and knowledge of the very people most affected by the conflict. This ultimately reinforces their authority (Millar, 2015, pp. 11-42).

Another crucial aspect of this cultural hegemony is the promotion of "local ownership" in peacebuilding processes (Donais, 2009, p.3). While ostensibly aimed at empowering local actors and ensuring the sustainability of peacebuilding efforts, in practice, the concept of local ownership often risks becoming a superficial and instrumentalized form of participation. This does little to challenge the underlying power dynamics at play and can instead create an illusion of local control (Pouliny, 2006, pp. 189-234; Simons & Zanker, 2014). By co-opting civil society structures and local elites, external actors can create the appearance of consent and legitimacy for their interventions while ultimately retaining control over these efforts' overall aims and trajectory (Kappler, 2015).

Taken together, these dynamics demonstrate how the liberal peace model's claims of neutrality and benevolence are undermined by the very strategies and practices employed in its name (Paris, 2010; Sabaratnam, 2011). By influencing the way interventions are framed and implemented, external actors can perpetuate the conditions they seek to address and present their actions as legitimate and necessary while sidelining alternative approaches and local perspectives (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013; Randazzo, 2016).

Ultimately, Critical theorists employing a Neo-Gramscian lens effectively expose the inherently political nature of interventions framed as neutral peacebuilding and development initiatives. Far from apolitical, these interventions actively reshape existing power structures. Gramscian-inspired analysis compels us to interrogate the veiled political and cultural ambitions driving promises of assistance, ensuring scrutiny of whose interests are genuinely served.

While interventions can occasionally yield short-term positive results, such as a temporary cessation of violence, humanitarian aid delivery, or even genocide prevention in extreme cases, a nuanced critique is essential. This includes recognizing the agency of local actors within conflict zones, who can navigate power dynamics in complex ways. These actors may exacerbate existing tensions or even strategically invite external intervention to advance their own narrow agendas. This intricate interplay of power and motivations necessitates radically rethinking traditional peacebuilding paradigms.

3.9. Resistance and Reframing Liberal Peacebuilding

Local communities' resistance against liberal peacebuilding reveals the model's inherent flaws and contradictions (Richmond, 2010; Mac Ginty, 2011). When externally devised templates centered on human rights, the rule of law, and civil society roles are imposed, they often generate justifiable distrust among local people. These measures appear contextually inappropriate, fail to address local needs, or lack genuine commitment, fueling a perception of disconnect (Autesserre, 2014; Paffenholz, 2015; Donais, 2012; Randazzo, 2016). Furthermore, Richmond (2011) highlights that resistance might not stem from wholesale ideological rejection but rather from frustration with practical shortcomings like lack of resources or cultural insensitivity. This underscores a central tension: the gap between the liberal model's rhetoric of local ownership and the reality that external agendas often take precedence (Mac Ginty, 2015; Ejodus & Juncos, 2018).

Understandably, forms of resistance are just as diverse as the communities affected. Violent, organized counter-movements may directly challenge the legitimacy of interventions (Pugh, 2005; Newman, 2011). However, resistance can also take the form of grassroots actions like protests, the creation of alternative institutions, or subtle, informal reconciliation efforts operating outside official peacebuilding channels (Richmond, 2011; Mitchell, 2016; Mac Ginty, 2008; Kappler, 2015). These varied responses demonstrate local demands for a viable and just peace that may diverge significantly from the externally imposed vision (Richmond,

2009; Nadarajah & Rampton, 2014). Framed through Scott's (1990) concept of "infrapolitics" (p.183), resistance becomes an expression of defiance – either hidden or overt – against dominant power structures and their narratives.

International actors respond to resistance in diverse ways, ranging from coercion aimed at suppressing opposition (Pugh, 2005; Pospisil & Kühn, 2016) to attempts to incorporate local perspectives (Mac Ginty, 2011; Kappler, 2015). However, heavy-handed tactics often prove counterproductive, ultimately fueling further cycles of resistance and adaptation (Richmond, 2015). Ultimately, the collision between top-down agendas and local needs leads to hybrid peace forms. These unique outcomes are shaped by an intricate interplay of power, resistance, and negotiation (Mac Ginty, 2011, pp. 1-47).

Recognizing the liberal peace model's failure to adequately address the social contracts that underpin communities and state formation, critical peacebuilding literature calls for a drastic reframing (Richmond, 2011; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013). This approach must be emancipatory, validating diverse understandings of peace and the localized concepts of well-being that often fall outside Western paradigms (Tadjbakhsh, 2011; Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015). It requires genuine engagement with local knowledge, a willingness to challenge existing power imbalances in interventions (Autesserre, 2014; Paffenholz, 2015), and an emphasis on participatory processes that empower local actors to shape peacebuilding efforts (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013; Randazzo, 2016).

Fundamentally, the resistance encountered by liberal peacebuilding underscores the urgent need for a more reflexive, contextualized, and politically attuned approach to post-conflict transformation (Richmond, 2011; Nadarajah & Rampton, 2014). This involves recognizing local agency and critically examining the complex power dynamics inherent in interventions (Mac Ginty, 2015; Hameiri & Jones, 2015). Only by embracing these complexities and striving for genuinely equitable and inclusive forms of peace can the limitations of the liberal model be overcome, leading to a more sustainable and just approach grounded in the realities of affected communities (Richmond, 2011, pp. 186-216).

3.10. The Evolving Critical Consensus Within Peacebuilding Discourse

The critical turn in peacebuilding scholarship over the past decade has fundamentally challenged the theoretical underpinnings and practical implications of the liberal peace model, exposing its inherent contradictions, limitations, and biases. This intellectual shift represents a

decisive break from the problem-solving approaches that dominated the field in the immediate post-Cold War era, which primarily focused on technical and operational issues without interrogating the normative assumptions and power dynamics that underpin the liberal peacebuilding paradigm (Chandler, 2010, pp. 22-43; Richmond, 2011, pp. 44-65). The emergence of critical perspectives has precipitated a profound crisis within the peacebuilding discourse, prompting scholars and practitioners to engage in a more profound process of self-reflection and to explore alternative approaches to post-conflict transformation that are more contextually sensitive, politically attuned, and attuned to the needs and aspirations of conflict-affected communities (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013).

At the core of this critical re-evaluation lies a trenchant critique of the efficacy, conceptual foundations, and hidden agendas of liberal peacebuilding. Critics argue that the singular focus on achieving negative peace through the rapid implementation of standardized liberal reforms often exacerbates instability by failing to address the structural causes of conflict and the long-term grievances that fuel social and political unrest (Autesserre, 2014; Paffenholz, 2015). This narrow and technocratic conception of peace as the absence of direct violence is seen as prioritizing the interests of international interveners over the genuine needs and aspirations of local communities, thereby eroding the legitimacy and sustainability of peacebuilding efforts (Richmond, 2011; Mac Ginty, 2015).

Moreover, the uncritical embrace of externally imposed, one-size-fits-all formulas that privilege Western state-building models is seen as fundamentally at odds with the rhetorical commitment to local ownership, context-specificity, and inclusivity that has become a hallmark of contemporary peacebuilding discourse (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013; Randazzo, 2016). The top-down, technocratic approach that characterizes the liberal peace model is seen as inherently incompatible with the imperative of fostering community-driven, bottom-up solutions that are grounded in the particular historical, cultural, and political realities of conflict-affected societies (Autesserre, 2014; Paffenholz, 2015).

Perhaps most damningly, critical scholars have argued that liberal peacebuilding, far from being a disinterested or benevolent enterprise, serves to reproduce and entrench existing power asymmetries and advance the geopolitical and economic interests of Western states and institutions (Pugh, 2005; Chandler, 2010, pp. 22-42). From this perspective, peacebuilding interventions are seen as instrumentalizing the language of democracy, human rights, and the

rule of law to extend Western hegemony and neo-colonial control over the Global South, thereby undermining the agency and self-determination of conflict-affected populations.

Taken together, these critiques mount a comprehensive and devastating challenge to the conceptual and normative foundations of the liberal peace model, laying bare its internal contradictions and its complicity in perpetuating structural violence and inequality. The imposition of pre-packaged, universalist solutions is seen as fundamentally at odds with the profoundly contextual and politicized nature of peacebuilding in divided societies, while the hegemonic character of the liberal peace model is seen as reinforcing power imbalances and marginalizing local voices and perspectives (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013; Randazzo, 2016). In contrast to the technocratic and depoliticized problem-solving approaches that previously dominated the field, critical scholars have illuminated the ways in which seemingly neutral and apolitical peacebuilding interventions often serve to mask profoundly ideological and partisan agendas that reproduce and entrench existing inequalities and power structures (Cooper, 2006; Richmond, 2011).

This fundamental crisis within the peacebuilding discourse has catalyzed a profound process of critical introspection and re-evaluation among scholars and practitioners, opening up new spaces for the emergence of alternative approaches to post-conflict transformation that privilege contextual sensitivity, political agency and local ownership (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013; Autesserre, 2014). The critical turn has thus inaugurated a radical rethinking of the ontological assumptions, epistemological frameworks, and praxeological strategies that underpin the theory and practice of peacebuilding, paving the way for the development of more emancipatory, transformative, and sustainable approaches to post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation (Pugh et al., 2008; Randazzo, 2016).

The insights generated by this critical scholarship have far-reaching implications for the study and practice of peacebuilding in diverse contexts worldwide. By exposing the limitations and biases of the liberal peace model and highlighting the centrality of local agency, resistance, and contestation in shaping the dynamics and outcomes of peacebuilding interventions (Mac Ginty, 2011; Richmond, 2015), critical approaches have fundamentally reframed how scholars and practitioners approach the challenges of post-conflict transformation.

3.11. Social/Emancipatory and Multicultural Frameworks: Prioritizing Local Agency

Peacebuilding scholarship has undergone a profound paradigm shift, moving away from the liberal peace model's emphasis on rapid state-building and quantifiable outcomes (Richmond, 2011; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013) towards social/emancipatory and multicultural frameworks that prioritize social justice, local agency, and cultural pluralism. These emerging approaches fundamentally challenge traditional notions of peace, peacebuilding practices, and success metrics in post-conflict societies, presenting complexities that demand critical engagement as we navigate the intricacies of building sustainable peace in diverse contexts (Björkdahl & Höglund, 2013; Millar, 2020).

The liberal peace model's limitations and inadvertent instability perpetuation are central to this transformation. Liberal interventions often neglect underlying socioeconomic issues (Duffield, 2001), pursuing "virtual peace" (Richmond, 2006; Mac Ginty, 2008) centered on external actors and local elites while overlooking marginalized communities. Conversely, social and emancipatory peacebuilding models prioritize local communities' perspectives, needs, and potential (Lidén, Mac Ginty, & Richmond, 2009), asserting that sustainable peace must be rooted in understanding conflicts' root causes, governance structures, and affected populations' priorities (Richmond, 2012).

Central to this approach is John Paul Lederach's (1997) notion of peacebuilding from below, which identifies three interconnected levels of leadership: grassroots initiatives led by those directly impacted by conflict, middle-range leaders with solid community networks, and top-level elites shaping policy (pp.37-61). Galtung (1996) and Belloni (2012) emphasize collaboration across societal tiers, while Autesserre (2014) and Paffenholz (2015) explore local actors' and external agents' complex interplay. Lederach's framework highlights middle-range leaders' vital role in mediating between grassroots and higher-level negotiations (Lederach, 1997). Community-based models value recognizing how traditions and social contexts shape justice, ethics, and legitimacy perceptions, ensuring sustainable transformations (Avruch, 1998, pp. 23-48).

Social peacebuilding prioritizes marginalized groups' inclusion and empowerment (Richmond, 2009), necessitating a gender perspective and disenfranchised communities' engagement. Despite sharing principles like human rights and democracy with the liberal peace model (Lidén, 2009), social peacebuilding recognizes economic growth's lack of transformative power, linking development to security, equity, and inclusive policies.

However, social/emancipatory peacebuilding faces challenges, including difficulty navigating complex post-conflict power dynamics and engaging reform-resistant powerholders (Mac Ginty, 2012; Paris, 2010). Some scholars suggest that emphasizing local ownership may neglect the need for broader coordination and resources from national governments or international bodies (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013). Balancing local agency with strategic external resource use remains a key challenge. However, social peacebuilding's transformative potential extends beyond the local, critiquing an unjust international order that fuels grievances and undermines peace efforts (Richmond, 2011, pp. 151-185). It calls for reforming global institutions and mechanisms to promote "post-liberal" governance prioritizing individual well-being.

Complementing social/emancipatory approaches, multicultural peacebuilding emphasizes cultural relativism, pluralism, and hybridity in post-conflict interventions (Lidén, 2009; Mac Ginty, 2015). It challenges the liberal peace model's universalizing tendencies, recognizing that societies may have different yet valid understandings of peace. This framework stresses respecting diverse cultural practices and social structures as resources for healing and reconciliation. Multicultural peacebuilding highlights the unique dynamics emerging when external peacebuilders interact with local realities, underscoring the "post-liberal peace" (Richmond, 2011, p.143) and the complexity of peacebuilding as a negotiation between multiple actors, interests, and worldviews.

However, the multicultural approach faces critiques, such as the risk of reinforcing divisions and hindering shared norm development (Nadarajah & Rampton, 2014). Without critically engaging with power structures and inequalities within and across cultural groups, multicultural peacebuilding might inadvertently essentialize identities, hindering social justice and inclusive governance efforts (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013). Navigating this tension requires ongoing dialogue, self-reflection, and challenging entrenched power structures disguised as cultural traditions.

Crucially, a critical stance demands questioning assumptions about the "local." Power dynamics at every level are complex, potentially mirroring exclusionary hierarchies that existed pre-conflict. This problematizes the goal of emancipation: How do peacebuilders work with local power structures that might perpetuate inequality? A commitment to social peacebuilding necessitates addressing how dynamics like gender, socioeconomic disparities, or ethnic marginalization might operate within communities without undermining the focus on

local agency. Prioritizing inclusion ensures peace initiatives do not inadvertently perpetuate the very power structures that fueled conflict, creating an active and ongoing struggle (Kappler, 2014, pp. 164-176; Paffenholz, 2015).

Scholars also grapple with the frequently contentious relationship between respecting cultural uniqueness and upholding universal human rights. Strict adherence to cultural relativism risks legitimizing harmful practices that violate fundamental rights principles. Peacebuilding processes rooted in the social and emancipatory model demand adaptation, dynamic negotiation, and a localized reinterpretation of human rights standards, starkly contrasting to the top-down imposition common in liberal peace interventions (Richmond, 2009; Mac Ginty, 2015).

A reorientation towards the 'local' unifies social/emancipatory and multicultural approaches, challenging the 'local' as a passive recipient of external interventions and highlighting local agency in post-conflict reconstruction (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013). However, the 'local' is not a monolith but a complex web of identities, interests, and power relations. Critical engagement with representation, inclusion, and diversity within and across local communities is crucial to avoid romanticizing or simplifying the 'local' (Paffenholz, 2015; Kappler, 2014, pp. 1-16). This requires deep, sustained dialogue with diverse local stakeholders and adaptability in peacebuilding strategies.

Social/emancipatory and multicultural peacebuilding offer compelling alternatives to traditional top-down paradigms. Realizing their potential requires critically examining inherent complexities, moving beyond standardized models, and embracing adaptability, responsiveness, and ongoing engagement with unique post-conflict dynamics. This entails reevaluating peace's core tenets, incorporating ethical, political, and practical complexities in pursuing transformative change.

The social/emancipatory peacebuilding model directly challenges the liberal peace paradigm, emphasizing standardized state-building processes and externally imposed market principles. This critique highlights how the liberal approach, while purporting to foster stability, often perpetuates the structural inequalities that fuel conflict. In contrast, social/emancipatory peacebuilding advocates for interventions that prioritize addressing these underlying injustices, emphasizing local agency and fostering peace built from within affected communities. This model prioritizes human and economic rights and rejects liberal interventions' narrow, state-centric security focus. Superficial stability achieved through the superficial imitation of

institutional forms does little to address the social and economic injustices perpetuating violence. Social peacebuilding compels a broader scrutiny of international systems that contribute to global disparities, highlighting how a focus on stability that fails to challenge economic exploitation risks reinforcing the conditions that undermine peace efforts.

Social peacebuilding insists upon genuine participation and respect for local sovereignty. It rejects paternalistic development models in which external actors dictate intervention strategies without regard for context or cultural realities. Instead, this model demands profound collaboration with local stakeholders, centering their voices and agency to ensure peace and development efforts align with real, context-specific needs and priorities. It necessitates a holistic human security rethinking, encompassing dignity, basic services, and economic agency, acknowledging peace's fragility if these needs remain unfulfilled.

A fundamental social/emancipatory and multicultural peacebuilding principle is the ethical imperative of equitably including conflict-affected stakeholders throughout the peace process. Research indicates potential injustices within any leadership level, necessitating vigilance in mitigating power abuses. True success hinges upon responsiveness to local voices and empowering those most impacted by conflict. While avoiding romanticizing "the local," this framework demands peacebuilders engage deeply with communities' lived experiences, prioritizing peace grounded in justice and built collaboratively with the communities it serves.

3.12. The Theoretical Convergence of Peacebuilding and Statebuilding

The intricate relationship between peacebuilding and state-building in post-conflict reconstruction has been a subject of intense scholarly debate and critical analysis. While these concepts are often used interchangeably, they represent distinct yet interconnected processes that are crucial to achieving sustainable peace and stability in the aftermath of conflict (Call & Cousens, 2008). The conflation of peacebuilding and state-building in both international security studies and conflict resolution disciplines has led to a need for more clarity regarding their unique roles and objectives (Newman, 2009). This section aims to critically examine the complex dynamics between peacebuilding and state-building, drawing upon the seminal work of Roland Paris and Timothy Sisk (2007) and the broader literature on post-conflict reconstruction. By exposing the inherent paradoxes and contradictions within state-building efforts and highlighting the importance of context-specific, locally-driven approaches, this analysis contributes to the ongoing scholarly discourse on effective strategies for building sustainable peace in conflict-affected societies.

To delineate the distinct nature of peacebuilding and state-building, it is essential to examine their definitions and scope. As conceptualized by scholars such as Lederach (1997) and Mitchell (2005), peacebuilding encompasses efforts to repair broken social relations among post-conflict societies experiencing substantial social change. Its primary goal is establishing a peaceful society within the supported nation rather than maintaining international order, thus marking a qualitative difference from state-building (Rigual, 2018). The academic discourse on peacebuilding is characterized by divergent perspectives on its scope and objectives, ranging from narrow definitions focusing on the cessation of armed violence and the maintenance of ceasefires (Newman, 2009) to broader conceptualizations that address the root causes of conflict and incorporate local capacities (Galtung, 1976; Lederach, 1997). This theoretical diversity highlights peacebuilding's complex and multidimensional nature, which extends beyond the mere absence of violence to encompass a wide range of social, political, and economic transformations necessary for sustainable peace (Galtung, 1976; Lederach, 1997).

On the other hand, state-building is a core component of the peacebuilding approach, emphasizing the need to construct and fortify legitimate, functional, and autonomous governmental institutions in post-conflict settings. Call and Cousens (2008) argue that state-building involves actions by international and local actors to establish and strengthen institutions, which may or may not contribute to peacebuilding, depending on the context. The relationship between peacebuilding and state-building is complex and context-dependent (Call, 2012), with some scholars arguing that in extreme cases of state collapse and civil wars, external actors' efforts to establish or reform governmental institutions can be categorized as state-building (Newman, 2009). This conceptual ambiguity underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of the interdependence between peacebuilding and state-building, recognizing their distinct objectives while acknowledging their potential synergies and tensions (Call & Cousens, 2008).

Paris and Sisk's (2007) penetrating critique of post-conflict state-building exposes this complex endeavor's inherent paradoxes and contradictions. At the heart of their argument is the intervention "paradox" (p.4): while state-building interventions may be well-intentioned, the very act of external engagement can undermine the sovereignty and legitimacy it aims to build. This paradox, as explored by scholars like Chandler (2006) and Zaum (2007), stems from the inherent conflict between the transformative ambitions of state-building and the democratic principle of self-determination. Paris and Sisk argue that navigating this paradox requires a delicate balance: providing vital support and capacity-building while avoiding paternalistic

dynamics that stifle local agency. This critical perspective highlights the fundamental tensions between external intervention and local ownership, challenging the assumptions and practices that underpin conventional state-building approaches (Paris & Sisk, 2007; Richmond, 2011; Mac Ginty, 2011).

The authors further challenge simplistic notions of "local ownership" that dominate state-building discourse. They emphasize the vast heterogeneity and complex power dynamics within post-conflict societies (Paris & Sisk, 2007). This focus underscores the need for inclusive processes that address representation deficits and work to prevent the perpetuation of harmful structural inequalities (Donais, 2012; Paffenholz, 2015). Their analysis serves as a sharp rebuke to one-size-fits-all approaches that ignore the unique circumstances of each state-building context. This critique resonates with the growing recognition of the importance of context-specificity and local agency in peacebuilding and state-building efforts (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013; Autesserre, 2014; Millar, 2015).

Paris and Sisk dissect the fundamental missteps of state-building, revealing how the international community has often attempted to impose the model of a modern nation-state upon local societies without an in-depth comprehension of their unique features (Sabaratnam, 2011). This approach can be attributed to two main factors: a technical reason stemming from the international community's unfamiliarity with local communities' historical and societal realities and a cognitivist explanation rooted in the failure to see non-Western perspectives due to the narrow boundaries of Western values (Mac Ginty, 2011, pp. 19-46). Consequently, the international community has instituted a framework heavily influenced by Western liberal values and institutions, often overlooking local customs' nuanced complexities and inherent values. This critical insight highlights the limitations of externally driven, top-down approaches to state-building, which often fail to engage with local communities' diverse realities and aspirations (Mac Ginty, 2011; Richmond, 2011; Sabaratnam, 2011).

The authors also grapple with the enduring tension between promoting universal liberal democratic norms and respecting each post-conflict society's specific socio-political and cultural realities. Their work echoes the critical perspectives of Mac Ginty and Richmond (2013) and Autesserre (2014), who have questioned the limitations of externally imposed models. Paris and Sisk advocate for a nuanced middle ground that upholds principles like human rights and the rule of law while remaining adaptable to local circumstances. This

approach recognizes the importance of striking a balance between international norms and local practices, acknowledging the potential for both synergies and tensions.

Additionally, the authors directly confront the complexities of addressing historical grievances and reforming institutions in divided societies. Their work aligns with scholars like Sriram (2007) and Mayer-Rieckh and Duthie (2009), who emphasize the delicate balance between restorative justice and accountability. Paris and Sisk argue that fostering societal cohesion through inclusive, legitimate governance structures is essential for sustainable state-building. This perspective underscores the importance of integrating transitional justice and reconciliation processes into broader peacebuilding and state-building efforts, recognizing their potential to contribute to long-term stability and social cohesion (Sriram, 2007; Mayer-Rieckh & Duthie, 2009).

The international community's introduction of a modern state system often results in a foreign construct within local societies. This leads to an institutional divide between a modernized central authority and peripheral areas that uphold traditional customs (Mac Ginty, 2011, pp.47-67). Initiatives to bridge these disparities, stemming from the top-down state-building imposed by the international community, often originate from grassroots movements within the local society. The interaction between the international community and local societies is complex and cannot be strictly defined as top-down or bottom-up but rather as an 'outside-in' approach. This nuanced understanding underscores the complexity of the interaction between the international community's state-building efforts and the intricate realities of local societal structures. It highlights the need for more inclusive, participatory approaches that recognize the agency and capacities of local actors in driving peacebuilding and state-building processes (Mac Ginty, 2011; Donais, 2012; Paffenholz, 2015).

A core contribution of Paris and Sisk's work is identifying four persistent dilemmas plaguing state-building interventions: the footprint, duration, participation, and dependency dilemmas (Paris & Sisk, 2007). The footprint dilemma centers on calibrating external engagement without fostering over-reliance and undermining local ownership. This relates to Chesterman's (2004) and Fukuyama's (2004) work on how excessive external involvement can harm legitimacy. The duration dilemma highlights the mismatch between the lengthy timelines of successful state-building and the often short attention spans of external actors.

The participation dilemma grapples with creating inclusive processes in societies marred by conflict, distrust, and competing identities. While essential for lasting peace, operationalizing

broad stakeholder engagement is immensely difficult. Paris and Sisk highlight the complexities of this process, echoing the concerns of scholars like Donais (2012). However, their analysis of the participation dilemma could be more convincing by engaging more deeply with the power dynamics and structural barriers that hinder genuine local participation. The dilemma, as presented, risks oversimplifying the challenges of inclusive peacebuilding and state-building, which are rooted in entrenched inequalities and histories of marginalization (Paffenholz, 2015; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013).

Finally, the dependency dilemma addresses the risk that external aid, while necessary for recovery, can create harmful reliance and suppress local resourcefulness. This concern, also explored by Bräutigam and Knack (2004) and Moss et al. (2006), underscores the need for carefully phased approaches that gradually transition responsibility to local actors. The dependency dilemma is a double-edged sword: while external support is vital for post-conflict reconstruction, it can inadvertently undermine local capacity and ownership if not carefully calibrated (Paris & Sisk, 2007; Bräutigam & Knack, 2004; Moss et al., 2006).

These dilemmas encapsulate the complex trade-offs and challenges inherent in post-conflict state-building efforts. They highlight the limitations of conventional approaches that prioritize external expertise and resources over local ownership and capacity-building (Paris & Sisk, 2007; Chesterman, 2004

approach that fails to challenge the underlying assumptions and power dynamics of liberal peacebuilding. For instance, Chandler (2010) contends that Paris and Sisk's emphasis on the technical challenges of state-building risks depoliticizing the process, obscuring the ideological and normative dimensions of external intervention (pp. 22-42). Similarly, Richmond (2014) argues that their framework insufficiently interrogates the hegemonic nature of liberal peacebuilding, which can marginalize alternative visions of peace and development rooted in local knowledge and practices.

Others have criticized Paris and Sisk's analysis for insufficiently engaging with the agency and resilience of local communities, potentially reproducing a narrative of external intervention as the primary driver of post-conflict reconstruction (Mac Ginty, 2011, pp. 47-67; Millar, 2015). Mac Ginty (2011) emphasizes the importance of recognizing the hybrid forms of peace that emerge from the interaction between international and local actors, challenging the dichotomy between external intervention and local ownership. Millar (2015) argues for a more ethnographic approach to peacebuilding that centers on local communities' lived experiences and perspectives rather than privileging the expertise of international actors (pp. 117-169).

Despite these critiques, Paris and Sisk's contribution remains highly influential and relevant to contemporary post-conflict peacebuilding and state-building debates. Their work has played a pivotal role in highlighting the complexities and challenges of these processes, sparking a critical re-examination of conventional approaches and inspiring new directions for research and practice. As the international community grapples with the enduring challenges of building sustainable peace in conflict-affected societies, engaging with the insights and provocations of Paris and Sisk's analysis remains essential for advancing more nuanced, context-sensitive, and locally-driven approaches to post-conflict reconstruction.

This dissertation argues that while state-building initiatives are an important component of post-conflict reconstruction, prioritizing peacebuilding principles is essential for overcoming the shortcomings of past interventions and fostering enduring peace. Scholars like Paris and Sisk and the broader literature expose inherent tensions and dilemmas facing external actors and underscore how a singular focus on institution-building can fail to address the root causes of conflict. This focus is particularly relevant to the context of Kosovo, where decades of externally-driven interventions centered on formal institution-building (Visoka, 2017; Troncotă, 2018) have had limited success due to persistent divisions that undermine both peace

and the legitimacy of state institutions (Beha & Hajrullahu, 2020; Lemay-Hébert, 2009; Troncotă, 2018).

Therefore, this dissertation adopts a critical peacebuilding lens to examine the dynamics of post-independence peace consolidation in Kosovo, focusing on the interplay between local and international actors. In this dissertation, peacebuilding examines the dynamic interplay between external and locally driven initiatives, prioritizing how local actors navigate power imbalances to shape peacebuilding outcomes. This definition emphasizes the importance of analyzing how they might resist externally imposed frameworks or develop alternative approaches that better reflect local needs and aspirations. It also highlights the potential for context-specific solutions that diverge from standard models to achieve sustainable peace.

For clarity and focus, these processes will be referred to throughout this dissertation as "peacebuilding." This framing emphasizes the interconnectedness of these initiatives while underscoring the centrality of peacebuilding principles – those aimed at addressing underlying social and political tensions – for fostering sustainable peace, even within complex state-building contexts.

3.13. Post-Liberal Peace: Critique, Contestation, and Context-Driven Transformation

Richmond's (2011) critique of liberal peacebuilding centers on its tendency to prioritize externally-driven, top-down solutions that often fail to account for local realities and agency (pp. 44-65). He argues that this approach can lead to superficial reforms and a marginalization of local voices, ultimately undermining the prospects for sustainable peace. In response, Richmond advocates for a more context-sensitive, bottom-up approach that recognizes the value of local knowledge, cultural dynamics, and the generative potential of friction in the peacebuilding process.

However, it is important to acknowledge that Richmond's 'post-liberal peace' model is not without its critics or limitations. Some scholars have questioned the extent to which his framework departs from liberal peacebuilding, arguing that it may still rely on certain liberal assumptions or fail to entirely escape the power dynamics inherent in international interventions (Mac Ginty, 2011). Others have pointed out the challenges of operationalizing 'hybridity' in practice, noting the potential for unintended consequences or the reproduction of local power imbalances (Millar, 2015).

Moreover, while Richmond's emphasis on local agency and context-specificity is valuable, it is important to recognize that the concept of 'the local' is itself contested and heterogeneous (Hughes et al., 2015). Ensuring inclusive representation and navigating competing local interests remains a significant challenge, particularly in post-conflict environments where power relations may be deeply entrenched or where certain groups have been historically marginalized (Paffenholz, 2015).

Despite these challenges, Richmond's 'post-liberal peace' model offers valuable insights into the need for more nuanced, adaptive, and locally grounded approaches to peacebuilding. By highlighting the limitations of top-down, one-size-fits-all solutions and emphasizing the importance of local ownership and participation, Richmond's work has contributed to a broader shift in how scholars and practitioners think about building sustainable peace in post-conflict societies (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015).

Ultimately, engaging with Richmond's ideas requires a critical and empirically grounded approach that is attentive to his framework's strengths and limitations. By situating his arguments within the broader scholarly discourse on peacebuilding and state-building and by remaining attuned to the complex realities of post-conflict environments, we can draw valuable insights from Richmond's work while also acknowledging the need for ongoing refinement and adaptation in the face of ever-evolving challenges.

3.14. Local Ownership: Bridging Theoretical Critique and Practice in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding

The growing emphasis on local ownership in post-conflict peacebuilding reflects a paradigm shift in academic scholarship and policy circles. This highlights the critical role of local actors, institutions, and indigenous peace frameworks in ensuring the sustainability and legitimacy of international interventions (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013; Donais, 2012). This shift has been driven by a shared recognition of the limitations of top-down, externally imposed peace models and the need for more context-sensitive, locally grounded approaches to post-conflict reconstruction (Autesserre, 2014; Pouligny, 2006, pp. 238-259).

However, operationalizing local ownership remains fraught with challenges. The concept risks being reduced to a rhetorical device to mask continued power imbalances and paternalistic dynamics within the liberal peace project (Ejdus, 2017; Kappler, 2014, pp. 16-29). Post-conflict environments often become arenas where the priorities of international actors clash with those

of local communities (Paffenholz, 2015). The presumed lack of local capacity is used to justify ongoing external intervention, undermining genuine local agency (Wilén, 2009).

Furthermore, the liberal peace paradigm, with its focus on transplanting Western-style models, often clashes with the complex realities and knowledge systems of post-conflict societies (Richmond, 2011; Mac Ginty, 2008). Capacity-building initiatives are meant to foster ownership and prioritize external expertise while overlooking power imbalances and sociopolitical tensions (Sending, 2009). As a result, local actors become passive recipients, expected to implement externally designed reforms rather than shape the process (Donais, 2012, pp. 1-21).

Overcoming these limitations requires a fundamental rethinking of local ownership in peacebuilding. Instead of focusing narrowly on building local capacity to implement predetermined models, we must prioritize cultivating critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and adaptability among local stakeholders (de Coning, 2013). This recognizes local actors' agency and situated knowledge, creating space for them to play an active role in defining and driving peacebuilding (Randazzo, 2016). It is essential to be mindful that romanticizing the local also has risks, as local elites or practices might perpetuate exclusion (Paffenholz, 2015; Kappler, 2014, pp. 16-49).

Realizing a more authentic local ownership means confronting deeply entrenched power asymmetries and ideological biases within peacebuilding. The perception of local capacity deficits, coupled with pressure for rapid results, perpetuates reliance on external solutions (Autesserre, 2014; Sending, 2009). Using aid conditionality to enforce compliance erodes local ownership (Ejdus, 2017).

A radical reconfiguration of power dynamics and epistemological frameworks is needed within the liberal peace project. This calls for a decolonial approach that challenges external domination, interrogates imposed models, and centers those most affected by conflict (Sabaratnam, 2017; Lederach, 1997). It entails more horizontal, dialogical, and context-responsive forms of engagement, where local actors are recognized as equal partners (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013). However, even the notion of partnership can obscure the enduring influence of external agendas.

Ultimately, the discourse on local ownership in post-conflict peacebuilding exposes the inherent tensions and contradictions of the liberal peace project. Navigating these tensions requires a sustained commitment to critical reflexivity, a willingness to confront entrenched

power structures, and openness to alternative ways of knowing and being (Sabaratnam, 2017, pp. 131-145). Only by cultivating more inclusive, equitable, and context-responsive approaches to peacebuilding grounded in a deep respect for local agency and knowledge can the emancipatory potential of local ownership be realized (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013).

3.15. Contested Terrain: Sociocultural Disjuncture, Structural Impediments, and the Fragility of Local Ownership in Peacebuilding

The challenges of implementing local ownership in post-conflict peacebuilding extend far beyond mere financial constraints. These contexts reveal profound complexities and structural impediments. Interventions are often plagued by a perceived lack of engagement or even resistance from local actors, a phenomenon Sending (2010) terms 'inertia' rather than dismissing this as malfeasance. Schlichte and Veit (2007) highlight how reforms that appear rational within the liberal peacebuilding paradigm frequently clash with resilient pre-existing local systems. Cultural misunderstandings further exacerbate this dissonance, as external actors often struggle to decipher the cultural nuances essential for meaningful collaboration (MacGinty, 2008; Sending, 2009).

These misalignments permeate every level of peacebuilding. Donors prioritize externally measurable stability and security sector reform, while local authorities, driven by the need for domestic legitimacy, might focus on essential service provision or tangible projects (Donais, 2009). This clash reveals the tensions outlined by Ferguson (1994), as local elites consolidate power while donor agencies seek to justify ongoing expenses and interventionist narratives.

Scholars have made significant advancements in unraveling these complex interactions. Narten (2008) and Goodhand and Walton (2009) emphasize how power dynamics defy simplistic narratives and operate through tactical bargaining. Barnett and Zürcher's (2008) multidimensional framework captures the intricacies of interactions between external actors, state elites, and localized power structures, revealing a negotiated peacebuilding process where compromises are made (pp. 23-52). Within this complex arena, where players wield distinct resources (Goodhand & Walton, 2009), Sending's (2010) notion of "everyday peacebuilding" (p. 1) offers a valuable lens. However, as Narten (2008) cautions, seemingly cooperative scenarios can rapidly devolve into contests for power. Local ownership itself becomes mutable, revealing that the challenges go beyond localized implementation difficulties and point to broader structural conditions hostile to genuine agency.

One prominent factor is the asymmetrical power relationship between donors and recipients, leading to ongoing 'post-conditionalities' that limit autonomy and perpetuate dependency (Chandler, 2010, pp. 43-64). Furthermore, the uncritical promotion of the liberal peace paradigm risks silencing alternate models rooted in local realities, constituting a subtle form of structural violence where projects focus on reforming existing systems rather than transforming them. This epistemic arrogance fundamentally undermines the potential for true reciprocity (Donais, 2009). In extreme cases, 'owning' peace signifies acceptance of externally defined political orders (Richmond, 2012).

The post-9/11 discursive terrain further complicates prospects for authentic local leadership. The securitization of 'fragile states' (Duffield, 2007) diminishes national sovereignty, which becomes conditional. The local is then strategically co-opted as a precondition for further intervention (Chandler, 2006, pp. 1-25). This reveals a cynical dynamic where sovereignty is instrumentalized for external ends. Within this context, as Tschirgi (2004) notes, local 'ownership' risks devolving into mere symbolic adherence, jeopardizing self-determination and undermining prospects for sustainable peacebuilding.

Critical literature compels us to acknowledge the significant limitations constraining genuine local ownership. While limited capacity, donor-driven conditionalities, and historical legacies pose complex challenges, they are linked to broader, systemic inequities within the global order (Pugh et al., 2008). The persistence of the liberal peace paradigm, coupled with the ongoing erosion of sovereign autonomy, maintains dependency structures (Mac Ginty, 2011).

The sobering conclusion is that "local ownership" can readily become a means of relegitimizing existing power imbalances and continued interventionism (Donais, 2012). Without fundamentally rethinking the global order and the underlying power dynamics within peacebuilding, genuine local ownership will remain elusive. Achieving truly transformative peacebuilding processes requires a radical shift towards more equitable, context-sensitive, and locally grounded approaches that prioritize the agency, knowledge, and needs of conflict-affected communities while critically interrogating the structural conditions that perpetuate their marginalization (Pugh et al., 2008; Richmond, 2012).

3.16. Reevaluating Liberal Peacebuilding in Kosovo: A Critical Examination of Neoliberal Economic Policies, Top-Down Interventions, and the Marginalization of Local Voices

The liberal peacebuilding approach in Kosovo has been heavily criticized, with scholars and practitioners highlighting its emphasis on economic liberalization, disregard for local contexts, and marginalization of local actors as critical failures. The prioritization of economic liberalization has been particularly contentious. Scholars such as Pugh (2005), Knudsen (2013), and Bojicic-Dzelilovic (2013) argue that neoliberal policies pushed by international actors worsened social inequalities and hindered inclusive development in Kosovo. These policies, they contend, eroded social welfare, weakened the state's ability to address the needs of its citizens, and contributed to high unemployment and poverty. Hameiri and Jones (2015) also warn that the focus on economic liberalization created a deceptive "virtual peace" in Kosovo that concealed underlying social and economic tensions. This critique offers valuable lessons for future peacebuilding efforts, underlining the importance of addressing structural inequalities, strengthening state capacity to provide for citizens, and prioritizing inclusive development strategies.

Building on these critiques, scholarship has highlighted the broader flaws of the neoliberal economic model when applied to post-conflict environments. Pugh (2011) and Selby (2013) argue that promoting market-oriented reforms and prioritizing economic growth over social welfare and redistribution often solidify economic inequalities and marginalize vulnerable populations. Similarly, Musliu and Orbie (2014) and Visoka and Richmond (2016) contend that focusing on privatization and foreign investment benefits only a small elite. This fails to address the broader population's needs for employment, poverty reduction, and social services. This debate underscores the inherent tensions between economic growth and social justice in post-conflict settings. Pugh (2013) and Richmond (2013) posit that the liberal peacebuilding model, emphasizing market-oriented reforms and economic integration, often fails to dismantle the underlying structural inequalities and power imbalances that fuel conflict and instability.

Continuing the critique of liberal peacebuilding in Kosovo, scholars highlight the disregard for local contexts and needs. Visoka (2017), Mac Ginty (2011), and Kappler (2014) argue that the international community's top-down, technocratic approach often sidelines local voices and capacities. This creates a disconnect between external strategies and the realities experienced by those most affected by conflict (Mac Ginty, 2011). They contend that failing to engage with local knowledge, experiences, and aspirations undermines the legitimacy and ownership of the peacebuilding process. Instead, it is perceived as an imposition of external agendas and priorities (Lemay-Hébert, 2011). Lemay-Hébert (2011), Autesserre (2014), and Ejdus (2017) further criticize the technocratic mindset that prioritizes transferring external expertise over

empowering local actors (Ejdus, 2017). This approach fosters a lack of local ownership and sustainability, hindering efforts to address the root causes of conflict (Autesserre, 2014).

These critiques echo broader concerns about the liberal peacebuilding model's over-reliance on external intervention and top-down solutions. A focus on technical expertise and institutional reform often undermines the agency and capacities of local actors within conflict-affected societies. In Kosovo, I contend that the international community prioritized institution-building and security sector reform, neglecting more holistic and inclusive peacebuilding strategies that center local ownership and involvement.

Persistent marginalization of local voices and capacities in Kosovo has severely hindered peacebuilding efforts, warn scholars. Lemay-Hébert (2011), Mac Ginty (2011), and Simangan (2018) highlight the international community's paternalistic approach, which positions local actors as passive recipients of aid rather than active agents with crucial insights. This, they argue, perpetuates power imbalances between international actors and local communities, fostering dependency and hindering the development of local institutions and civil society. Visoka (2017) and Verkoren and van Leeuwen (2014) powerfully critique the neglect of local perspectives and ownership in Kosovo's peacebuilding. This oversight, they contend, undermines efforts by focusing on technical solutions and liberal norms instead of the transformative approaches needed to address the root causes of conflict.

This critique reflects a broader concern about the liberal peacebuilding model's over-reliance on external expertise and solutions, often neglecting local knowledge and agency. Mac Ginty (2015) and Randazzo (2016) argue that this approach undermines the legitimacy and sustainability of peacebuilding efforts while reinforcing power inequalities. Visoka (2017) and Richmond (2014), further this critique, highlighting how the international focus on technical solutions and liberal norms in Kosovo obscured transformative approaches needed to address conflict's underlying social, economic, and political causes.

This tension is particularly evident in the debate over democratization efforts in Kosovo. The international community's rush to establish a multi-party democratic system and hold elections, despite lingering ethnic tensions and power imbalances, arguably fostered a superficial form of democracy lacking local legitimacy. Tansey (2009) criticizes this as supervised independence where external actors wield undue influence, eroding genuine local ownership and accountability. Conversely, Zürcher (2011) suggests that international efforts to promote democracy have been crucial for long-term stability. He argues that democratic institutions,

like free and fair elections, provide channels for peaceful political competition and reduce the risk of renewed violence. While acknowledging the challenges, Zürcher asserts that the alternative – a lack of democratic governance – would be far worse for Kosovo's future.

The emphasis on formal, procedural aspects of democracy has sparked a demand for deeper, more transformative democratization strategies that confront structural inequalities and promote inclusive governance. Using Kosovo as an example, Jarstad and Sisk (2018) argue that while the liberal peacebuilding approach established elections and institutions, neglecting underlying social, economic, and political conflict drivers diminished its effectiveness (pp. 1-36). They advocate for a democratization process beyond procedures, incorporating social justice, economic equity, and inclusive governance for lasting success.

The imposition of a consociational power-sharing model based on ethnic divides has had unintended consequences in Kosovo, institutionalizing these divisions and hindering a shared civic identity (Murtagh, 2015). Murtagh argues that by entrenching ethnicity as the primary foundation for political representation, this model discourages cross-cutting alliances and reinforces a damaging zero-sum view of politics. However, McGarry and O'Leary (2009) defend consociational models as the most viable option for conflict management in deeply divided societies like Kosovo. They argue that without power-sharing arrangements, ethnic groups lack incentives for peaceful political engagement. While acknowledging its imperfections, McGarry and O'Leary see consociationalism as a necessary framework to ensure minority representation and to foster short-to-medium-term political stability.

These critiques are rooted in a broader critique of the liberal peacebuilding model's assumptions about the nature of conflict and the pathways to sustainable peace. As Richmond (2011) and Mitchell (2011) argue, the liberal peacebuilding model's emphasis on institutions, markets, and individual rights often fails to address the deeper structural and cultural roots of conflict, including issues of identity, inequality, and historical grievances. Scholars such as Franks and Richmond (2009), Heathershaw (2008), and Krampe (2016) further contend that the liberal peacebuilding model's emphasis on external intervention and top-down solutions has led to a "virtual peace" in Kosovo, where the appearance of stability and progress masks underlying tensions and power imbalances. They argue that a more critical approach to peacebuilding is needed, one that interrogates the assumptions and power dynamics of the liberal peacebuilding model and seeks to develop alternative approaches that prioritize local agency, social justice, and transformative change.

The debate over liberal peacebuilding in Kosovo highlights the inherent complexities of post-conflict reconstruction and the challenges of establishing enduring peace following violence. Proponents emphasize the necessity of democratic institutions, market reforms, and the rule of law to ensure stability. Critics, however, argue that this focus disregards the unique context of post-conflict societies and risks exacerbating power imbalances between international actors and local populations. Kosovo serves as a cautionary tale, demonstrating the need for a nuanced, context-specific approach to peacebuilding that emphasizes local ownership, addresses the underlying drivers of conflict, and fosters sustainable, inclusive development. This necessitates a critical appraisal of liberal peacebuilding assumptions alongside openness to alternative forms of knowledge grounded in the experiences of conflict-affected communities (Qehaja & Prezelj, 2017). Such a shift towards transformative approaches prioritizes local agency, dialogue, and the co-creation of knowledge between international and local actors. The lessons of Kosovo demand supporting locally-led initiatives that address root causes like corruption, inequality, and ethnic division. Additionally, they underscore the importance of critically engaging with international actors, challenging their assumptions, and fostering more equitable partnerships with local communities (Mahr, 2017).

3.17. Beyond Good Intentions: The Need for a Hybrid Approach

Critically examining liberal peacebuilding's practical manifestations and theoretical foundations exposes a profound disconnect between its stated principles and their implementation in post-conflict societies. While the liberal peacebuilding framework ostensibly prioritizes human rights, democratic systems, and the inclusion of post-conflict states within the international community, the reality on the ground often diverges significantly from these ideals. Interventions may superficially promote the protection of vulnerable groups, legal accountability, compensation schemes, and reconciliation measures. However, the depth and sincerity of these efforts are frequently questioned, particularly when they clash with the demands of short-term stabilization (Paris, 2004; Richmond, 2011).

Similarly, democratic processes may be initiated through establishing elections, transforming former militant groups into political entities, and bolstering civil society. However, rushed elections or the selective inclusion of former belligerents can lead to fragile democracies that struggle to gain popular legitimacy (Christoph Zürcher et al., 2013, pp. 20-56). Moreover, imposing neoliberal economic models aimed at rapid integration into the global market risks

exacerbating existing inequalities and perpetuating dependency rather than fostering sustainable development and local ownership (Tadjbakhsh, 2011, pp. 1-16).

These practical shortcomings have not gone unnoticed, with critics highlighting both empirical deficiencies in the execution of peacebuilding efforts and fundamental challenges to the very foundations of the liberal peace model. Empirical critiques underscore operational weaknesses within peacebuilding organizations: insufficient resources, a lack of political will, poor coordination, and ambiguous planning (Paris & Sisk, 2009; United Nations, 2015). Furthermore, interventions are often criticized for failing to foster meaningful engagement with local communities, instead prioritizing interaction with elites and neglecting diverse local needs (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013; Paffenholz, 2015).

The United Nations High-level Independent Panel report (2015) encapsulates these concerns, identifying the "seven deficits" of peacebuilding (p.48/104). These include the imposition of homogenized models that disregard local social dynamics; neglect affected countries' priorities, a donor-centric and politically neutral stance, inadequate financial planning, lack of strategic cohesion, a focus on elites, and a failure to support community-level reconciliation adequately. These empirical critiques underscore the gap between the aspirations of liberal peacebuilding and its actual impact on the ground, revealing unintended consequences and missed opportunities.

Building upon these empirical critiques, a more profound theoretical critique questions the presumption that the liberal democratic model holds universal applicability and superiority. This strand of criticism argues that imposing this model by external actors often marginalizes local communities within their own peace processes (Chandler, 2006, pp. 48-70; Duffield, 2007, pp. 32-64). By placing the power to define the efficacy of peacebuilding efforts predominantly in the hands of external actors, the liberal peacebuilding framework perpetuates a form of epistemic violence that silences alternative visions of peace and development rooted in local knowledge, priorities, and aspirations (Mac Ginty, 2008; Jabri, 2013).

This critique exposes the inherent limitations of a one-size-fits-all approach to post-conflict reconstruction. It highlights the need for more context-sensitive, locally grounded, and participatory models of peacebuilding that prioritize the agency and empowerment of conflict-affected communities (Autesserre, 2014; Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015). It is within this context that the concept of hybrid peacebuilding emerges as a potential alternative, offering a more

nuanced and adaptive approach that seeks to bridge the gap between international norms and local realities (Mac Ginty, 2010; Richmond, 2015).

The hybrid peacebuilding framework, as articulated by Mac Ginty (2010), recognizes that peacebuilding processes are complex and dynamic and shaped by the interplay of multiple actors, agendas, and power structures. Rather than imposing a predetermined set of liberal norms and institutions, it emphasizes engaging local actors, knowledge systems, and peacebuilding practices while acknowledging the role of international norms and standards (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2015).

This approach seeks to foster a more inclusive, context-sensitive, and locally grounded form of peacebuilding that attends to conflict-affected communities' specific needs, priorities, and capacities. By embracing a more dialogical and adaptive approach, hybrid peacebuilding aims to create spaces for the co-creation of peace and development strategies that are grounded in local realities and aspirations while also critically engaging with the power dynamics and structural inequalities that shape the peacebuilding landscape (Mac Ginty & Sanghera, 2012; Richmond & Mitchell, 2012). Notably, the hybrid peacebuilding approach offers a path toward developing more inclusive peace processes that are potentially more transformative and sustainable.

In doing so, the hybrid peacebuilding framework offers a valuable lens through which to examine and reimagine the dominant approaches to post-conflict reconstruction critically. However, it is important to acknowledge that the operationalization of hybrid peacebuilding is not without challenges and limitations, as it requires a fundamental rethinking of the power dynamics, epistemological assumptions, and institutional arrangements that underpin contemporary peacebuilding practice (Belloni, 2012; Nadarajah & Rampton, 2014).

3.18. Hybrid Peacebuilding: The Case of Vetëvendosje in Kosovo

In response to the limitations of top-down liberal peacebuilding, hybrid peace theory emerged as a critical conceptual framework for analyzing the complex interplay between external intervention models and local socio-political dynamics in post-conflict contexts. Hybrid peace theory challenges the dichotomous framing that posits international actors as enlightened liberal reformers unidirectionally transforming "non-liberal" recipient societies (Björkdahl & Höglund, 2013; Jarstad & Belloni, 2012). Instead, it reconceptualizes post-conflict spaces as inherently hybrid arenas where diverse normative systems, institutional logics, and power

structures dynamically interact and mutually reshape each other through processes of confrontation, negotiation, and adaptation (Heathershaw, 2013; Mac Ginty, 2011).

The rise of hybrid peace theory reflects a growing critique of traditional liberal peacebuilding efforts, which often proved ineffective in delivering sustainable peace. Despite extensive international interventions, many post-conflict societies continue to experience instability and renewed violence, prompting a reassessment of how peace is conceptualized and pursued (Mac Ginty, 2011). Critics contend that externally imposed models, such as rapid democratization or market liberalization, can be misaligned with the complex power dynamics, historical trajectories, and social institutions present in post-conflict environments (Richmond, 2015). Moreover, the overwhelming focus on international actors in peacebuilding efforts risks fueling resentment and hindering local ownership (Pugh, 2006).

Hybrid peace theory mounts a fundamental critique of prevailing liberal peacebuilding paradigms rooted in technocratic, top-down epistemologies that prescriptively endeavor to transplant idealized Western governance blueprints without sufficient attunement to the distinct contextual complexities and stakeholder perspectives within each society (Mac Ginty, 2010; Richmond, 2009). In contrast, it posits that sustainable, transformative societal progress is more likely to emerge through inclusive engagement with the "hybrid political orders" (Boege et al., 2009, p.14), plural socio-political realities, indigenous conflict resolution capacities, and localized notions of legitimacy and authority already grounded within post-conflict milieus (Jarstad & Belloni, 2012; Roberts, 2013).

Hybrid peacebuilding theory directly challenges two key assumptions prevalent within liberal peacebuilding frameworks. Firstly, it confronts the false dichotomy of 'liberal' external actors seeking to transform 'non-liberal' local societies, obscuring the dynamic and often intertwined historical legacies – including colonization, globalization, and state-formation processes – that give rise to hybrid systems of governance within post-conflict settings (Mac Ginty, 2011). Secondly, it critiques the prescriptive universalism of liberal peacebuilding, emphasizing that conflict contexts harbor unique socio-political structures, power dynamics, and aspirations for the future that defy standardized templates (Richmond, 2015). Hybrid peace prioritizes locally grounded processes, flexible enough to support context-specific visions of sustainable peace, signaling a potential paradigm shift away from rigid ideological templates and toward pragmatic solutions informed by a deep understanding of the society in question (Mac Ginty, 2011).

This core premise catalyzes a paradigm shift in peacebuilding theory and praxis and has generated vigorous theoretical scrutiny and empirical examination across multiple strands. One critical strand interrogates hybrid peace's philosophical underpinnings and normative implications vis-a-vis core liberal values such as democracy, human rights, social justice, and inclusive governance (Björkdahl & Höglund, 2013; Heathershaw, 2013). Skeptical voices caution that hybridized peacebuilding models, in their quest for pragmatic compromises, risk producing mere institutional facades that nominally satisfy liberal criteria while obscuring deeper societal cleavages, perpetuating power asymmetries, and failing to engender substantive transformations towards durable positive peace (Zaum, 2012, pp. 124-129).

Conversely, proponents argue that hybridity's emancipatory potential lies in its explicit repudiation of prescriptive, universalized liberal frameworks. They contend that sustainable progress hinges on engaging the plural sociopolitical epistemologies, resilient coping mechanisms, and contextualized visions for equitable reform already organically present within societies (Richmond, 2015). From this perspective, productive synergies between introduced and indigenous normative frameworks can be forged when approached through pragmatic, inclusive processes carefully attuned to each context's distinct needs, power dynamics, and socio-historical experiences (Bagayoko et al., 2016; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013).

Another pivotal strand examines hybrid peace theory's capacity to systematically account for and elevate the dynamic agencies of diverse local actors as catalysts actively shaping peacebuilding trajectories. While acknowledging the constrained positionality of local entities operating within asymmetric power fields, hybrid lenses recognize them as strategic agents adeptly navigating complex environments through varied stances – strategically leveraging externally-promoted norms and resources, pragmatically co-opting aspects convergent with localized agendas, subtly subverting impositions incommensurate with context-specific priorities, and mounting overt resistance to preserve indigenous interests and worldviews (Jarstad & Belloni, 2012; Nadarajah & Rampton, 2014; Mac Ginty, 2011).

However, critics contend that extant literature has understated and insufficiently theorized this transformative dimension of local agency, often treating it as peripheral or reactive to a unidirectional liberal-local hybridization process dominated by external frameworks and power structures (Heathershaw, 2013; Mac Ginty, 2011). They argue that more empirically grounded scrutiny and theoretical development are imperative to elucidate how diverse societally

embedded groups mobilize their positionality, legitimacy, and grassroots impulses for holistic societal reform to actively redefine the parameters and constitutive dynamics of hybrid peacebuilding (Lemay-Hébert & Kappler, 2016; Mac Ginty, 2011). Such examinations centering localized epistemologies and visions for context-resonant peacebuilding illuminate a core area where Mac Ginty's framework can be expanded through empirical analysis.

To systematically analyze these multifaceted international-local hybridization dynamics across diverse post-conflict contexts, this study employs Mac Ginty's (2011) four-part conceptual framework as an integrative analytical lens. This model delineates key spheres of interaction between external and local forces:

1. **Compliance Power:** This examines how intervening actors strategically leverage diverse coercive tools—spanning economic and diplomatic sanctions to judicious military force applications—to enforce prescribed liberal peace precepts and compliance with externally defined governance benchmarks as the normative "standard" (Mac Ginty, 2011, pp. 1-18).

2. **Incentivization:** Scrutinizing the parallel strategies utilized by international peacebuilders to blend compliance pressures with attractive material and normative inducements to foster local cooperation in advancing externally prioritized reform agendas. This sphere encompasses economic incentives like aid, investment, and institutional capacity-building and ideological incentives promoting liberal values like democratization, empowerment, and equal opportunity as universally desirable ends (Mac Ginty, 2011, pp. 1-18).

3. **Resistance of Local Actors:** Unpacking the diverse modes through which local entities substantively navigate, contest, or pragmatically subvert aspects of externally promoted peacebuilding prescriptions by leveraging their contextual knowledge, territorial positionality, resilient social networks, and resonant cultural capital as sources of legitimacy and counter-narratives (Mac Ginty, 2011, pp. 1-18).

4. **Local Alternatives:** Analyzing locally articulated, autonomously driven visions, initiatives, and practices for building sustainable peace that diverges from or transcends the normative parameters and institutional architectures encompassed within the dominant liberal peacebuilding model. These alternatives often align with indigenous sociopolitical epistemologies, cultural frameworks, and contextually grounded needs (Mac Ginty, 2011, pp. 1-18).

This multidimensional analytical framework collectively enables comparative, empirically grounded examinations across diverse cases to systematically examine the varied modes through which international and local forces interact, collide, and mutually transform conventional peacebuilding paradigms and trajectories. By dissecting spheres of external compliance pressures, incentivization strategies, local resistance tactics, and alternative visions, Mac Ginty's framework illuminates the reciprocal processes shaping "hybrid political orders" and pathways towards positive peace on the ground (Mac Ginty, 2010; Mac Ginty, 2011). Crucially, Mac Ginty's (2011) model acknowledges the limitations of simplification when addressing complex social processes, effectively underscoring the dynamic interplay of forces leading to hybrid outcomes and providing a much-needed shift away from purely state-centric analyses often found in political science and international relations (pp. 68-90). However, while offering a valuable starting point for analyzing the complex dynamics of hybrid peacebuilding, this study seeks to extend its theoretical reach by addressing two key areas that warrant further development.

First, it aims to provide a more nuanced and empirically grounded examination of the transformative role of local agencies in reshaping the contours of hybrid peacebuilding. By centering the experiences and strategies of Vetëvendosje within post-conflict Kosovo, this study will elucidate how an increasingly powerful local actor has catalyzed fundamental shifts in Kosovo's democratic trajectory while reshaping its engagement with and reception of external peacebuilding efforts.

Second, this study will critically interrogate hybrid peacebuilding's power dynamics and potential limitations in perpetuating or transforming asymmetric relations between international and local actors (Chandler, 2010, pp. 1-64; Pugh et al., 2008). By incorporating a power-sensitive lens that examines how Vetëvendosje has navigated asymmetric power fields through nuanced strategies spanning selective compliance, leverage, negotiation, and contestation vis-a-vis international peacebuilding interventions, this study will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between local agency and structural constraints in shaping hybrid peacebuilding outcomes.

The analysis will be structured around Mac Ginty's (2011) four spheres of interaction, with each sphere serving as an analytical lens to examine specific aspects of Vetëvendosje's engagement with hybrid peacebuilding dynamics in Kosovo.

Within each sphere, the study will provide a granular examination of how Vetëvendosje has navigated asymmetric power fields through nuanced strategies spanning selective compliance, leverage, negotiation, and contestation vis-a-vis international peacebuilding interventions. Domains of inquiry will encompass Vetëvendosje's stance regarding issues like the contested ASM and the protracted crisis over Kosovo's contested authority in northern Kosovo's Serb-majority areas. The analysis will also critically probe how Vetëvendosje has actively articulated locally grounded governance alternatives anchored in priorities like sovereignty, anti-corruption efforts, and citizen-centric reform agendas.

In this section, the theoretical framework of hybrid peacebuilding and its application to the case study of Vetëvendosje in Kosovo was discussed. The framework, as outlined by Mac Ginty (2011), challenges traditional liberal peacebuilding approaches and emphasizes the complex interplay between external intervention models and local socio-political dynamics in post-conflict contexts.

The section highlights the limitations of top-down liberal peacebuilding and the emergence of hybrid peace theory as a critical conceptual framework. It outlines the four key spheres of interaction between external and local forces: compliance power, incentivization, resistance of local actors, and local alternatives. The study aims to extend the theoretical reach of Mac Ginty's model by providing a nuanced and empirically grounded examination of the transformative role of local agency, explicitly focusing on the experiences and strategies of Vetëvendosje in Kosovo.

3.19. Summary of the main points and arguments presented in the literature review

This chapter has provided a comprehensive overview of the key concepts, theories, and debates relevant to understanding the dynamics of peacebuilding and party politics in post-conflict settings, specifically focusing on the role of local agency in shaping these processes. The review began by tracing the historical evolution of peacebuilding approaches, from early theories and practices to the emergence of liberal peacebuilding as the dominant paradigm in the post-Cold War era. The review then examined the critiques and limitations of liberal peacebuilding, highlighting its top-down, state-centric nature and its failure to address the underlying structural and systemic causes of conflict. These critiques have led to the emergence of hybrid peacebuilding as a new paradigm that seeks to understand and engage with the complex interplay between international and local actors, norms, and practices in post-conflict

settings. The review also explored the role of local agency and resistance in shaping peacebuilding processes. Particular attention was paid to the role of local actors in post-conflict settings and the potential of political parties to facilitate or hinder peacebuilding efforts. The review introduced Mac Ginty's four-part model as a theoretical framework for examining the role of Vetëvendosje in shaping Kosovo's post-conflict peacebuilding trajectory. Mac Ginty's model provides a comprehensive theoretical framework for examining these dynamics, and its application to the specific case studies of the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo promises to generate new insights into the role of local agencies in shaping peacebuilding processes and outcomes.

Finally, having established the theoretical foundations and identified the gaps in the existing literature, the next chapter will outline the methodology employed in this study. The chapter will discuss the research design, data collection methods, and analytical framework used to examine the specific case studies and address the research questions posed in this dissertation.

Chapter 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology employed to investigate the role of Vetëvendosje as a critical local actor in Kosovo's hybrid peace environment.

The decision to adopt a qualitative research design stems from the need to delve deep into the intricate contextual dynamics and nuanced understandings of Vetëvendosje's evolving strategies and motivations within Kosovo's contested post-conflict peacebuilding terrain. Qualitative approaches are particularly well-suited for examining complex sociopolitical phenomena, as they enable the exploration of multiple perspectives, rich descriptive data, and the elucidation of subtle shifts in discourse and action over time (Creswell, 2013; Fairclough, 2013). By employing a qualitative methodology, this study aims to unravel the multifaceted interactions between Vetëvendosje and international peacebuilding actors, shedding light on the strategic outcomes of these engagements and their implications for Kosovo's hybrid peace environment.

Specifically, the research employs a combination of qualitative techniques, including structured, focused comparisons across carefully selected case studies, in-depth document analysis, and process tracing. The case study approach allows for a comprehensive examination of Vetëvendosje's role in shaping peacebuilding trajectories within the unique context of post-independence Kosovo, while the document analysis and process tracing techniques enable a fine-grained investigation of the party's evolving discourse, strategies, and impacts over time.

By grounding the research in a robust qualitative methodology, this study seeks to generate transferable theoretical insights and refine the understanding of hybrid peacebuilding dynamics in the Kosovo context. The qualitative approach enables the exploration of the capacity of local actors, such as Vetëvendosje, to influence peacebuilding trajectories and the potential for locally-driven alternatives to externally imposed models, reflecting the complex realities of hybrid peacebuilding environments. Through this methodological lens, the dissertation aims to contribute to scholarly debates on hybridity and advance the understanding of contemporary peacebuilding dynamics in post-conflict settings, offering valuable insights for both theory and practice.

4.2. Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research questions and hypotheses, which were presented in the introduction, are briefly summarized here to provide a clear framework for the subsequent discussion of the research methodology employed in this study.

The overarching aim of this research was to investigate the role of Vetëvendosje, a critical local actor, in shaping Kosovo's hybrid peace environment amidst complex post-conflict power dynamics and the strategic outcomes of peacebuilding efforts. The study focused on examining the interplay between international actors' use of compliance power and incentives and Vetëvendosje's navigation of these power dynamics, specifically in relation to the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo.

The research questions addressed the following key aspects:

1. The employment of compliance power by international actors in relation to the ASM and the Ongoing Crisis in northern Kosovo.
2. The utilization of incentives by international actors to promote the resolution of the ASM and the Ongoing Crisis in northern Kosovo.
3. Vetëvendosje's navigation of and response to the compliance and incentivizing powers exerted by international actors.
4. The alternative approaches to the ASM and the Ongoing Crisis in northern Kosovo developed and promoted by Vetëvendosje within Kosovo's peacebuilding process.
5. The potential for refining and adapting Mac Ginty's hybrid peace model based on the analysis of Vetëvendosje's engagement with the ASM and the Ongoing Crisis in northern Kosovo.

The hypotheses proposed that international actors leveraged their resources to exert coercive pressure and offer incentives to shape the peacebuilding process, while Vetëvendosje actively engaged with these actors using various strategies to advance their own priorities and vision. The study also sought to uncover the emergence of context-specific, locally resonant alternatives to the international community's approach, as promoted by Vetëvendosje. Furthermore, the research aimed to explore the potential for refining Mac Ginty's hybrid peace model by examining Vetëvendosje's experiences and strategies, seeking to reveal distinct

patterns of interaction, contestation, and hybridization that would necessitate targeted refinements to the model.

These research questions and hypotheses provided a structured approach to investigating the dynamics of local agency and the potential for locally-driven peacebuilding in post-conflict settings while also exploring the adaptability and refinement of existing theoretical models in light of the unique challenges posed by the Kosovo context.

4.3. Research Design

The research design for this dissertation was grounded in a qualitative methodology, which was deemed the optimal approach for conducting an in-depth inquiry into Vetëvendosje's multifaceted role and impacts within Kosovo's complex post-independence socio-political environment. The qualitative design enables the examination of intricate contextual dynamics through the analysis of perspectives and rich descriptive data, aligning with the study's aim to elucidate nuanced understandings of Vetëvendosje's evolving strategies and motivations within Kosovo's contested post-conflict peacebuilding terrain (Creswell, 2013).

The research methodology incorporates a robust set of qualitative tools to ensure a comprehensive and rigorous investigation. These tools include the application of structured and focused comparisons across meticulously chosen case studies, thorough examination and analysis of relevant documents, and the utilization of process tracing techniques to uncover causal mechanisms and sequences. The structured, focused comparison approach allows for a systematic examination of Vetëvendosje's role in shaping peacebuilding trajectories across different contexts and time periods, enabling the identification of patterns, similarities, and differences in the party's engagement with international actors and local constituencies (George & Bennett, 2005). The in-depth document analysis, involving a rigorous examination of primary and secondary sources, provides a rich and nuanced understanding of Vetëvendosje's evolving discourse, strategies, and impacts over time, capturing subtle shifts in the party's positioning and actions (Fairclough, 2013). Process tracing, a technique that involves the careful reconstruction of causal chains and sequences of events, enables the identification of key junctures and mechanisms through which Vetëvendosje influences peacebuilding trajectories, revealing the complex interplay between the party's actions and the broader socio-political context.

By employing multiple qualitative methods, the research design seeks to enhance the robustness and credibility of the findings, enabling the generation of transferable theoretical insights and the refinement of existing conceptual frameworks in light of the Kosovo case. The qualitative approach, with its emphasis on context-specific analysis and the elucidation of complex causal relationships, is particularly well-suited for exploring the dynamics of local agency and the potential for locally-driven peacebuilding alternatives in post-conflict settings.

While qualitative approaches have limitations regarding objectivity and generalizability, they provide invaluable explanatory depth for exploratory research into multifaceted sociopolitical phenomena (Atieno, 2009). The research design acknowledges these limitations and employs several strategies to enhance methodological rigor, such as triangulation of data sources and methods, reflexivity, peer debriefing, and member checking (Willis, 2007). By employing a rigorous and multi-faceted qualitative approach, the dissertation seeks to contribute to scholarly debates on hybridity and advance the understanding of contemporary peacebuilding dynamics in post-conflict settings, offering valuable insights for both theory and practice.

4.4. Analytical Framework

The analytical framework employed in this dissertation was structured around four pivotal dimensions derived from Mac Ginty's (2011) comprehensive model for addressing the intricate dynamics of peacebuilding efforts. These dimensions—Compliance Power, Incentivizing Power, Resistance of Local Actors, and Alternatives Provided by Local Actors—encapsulated the key factors required to dissect the implementation of liberal peace agendas and their interaction with local responses within post-conflict contexts. Together, these four dimensions provided a multifaceted lens for unraveling the nuanced power relations and strategic interactions shaping peacebuilding landscapes, serving as the cornerstone for examining the complex dynamics within the selected Kosovo case studies.

The first dimension, Compliance Power, recognized the structural power asymmetries that advantaged influential external actors seeking to shape peacebuilding outcomes based on their normative priorities. In the Kosovo context, compliance power manifests through the actions and expectations of international actors such as the European Union, the United States, and the United Nations, who leverage their economic, political, and military resources to promote a particular vision of post-conflict peacebuilding. These actors establish a set of standards,

conditions, and benchmarks that local actors, including Vetëvendosje, must navigate and respond to in their pursuit of peacebuilding objectives,

The second dimension, Incentivizing Power, examined the "carrot" side of external actors' dual strategy, alongside the "stick" of coercive power. In Kosovo, incentivizing power operates through the promise of economic assistance, political support, and integration into international institutions, such as the European Union, which are offered to local actors in exchange for their compliance with the liberal peacebuilding agenda. However, the selective and conditional nature of these incentives can create tensions and challenges for local actors, like Vetëvendosje, who may have alternative visions for Kosovo's future.

The third dimension, Resistance by Local Actors, foregrounded local perspectives by analyzing how local stakeholders interpreted, navigated, resisted, co-opted, subverted, or challenged external peacebuilding agendas. In the case of Vetëvendosje, resistance manifests through a range of strategies, including public protests, political mobilization, and the articulation of alternative peacebuilding narratives that prioritize local ownership, self-determination, and social justice. By examining Vetëvendosje's resistance strategies, the analytical framework sheds light on the agency and capacity of local actors to shape peacebuilding trajectories in the face of structural constraints.

Finally, the fourth dimension, Alternatives Provided by Local Actors, considered locally articulated visions of peace and mechanisms for achieving it that diverged from, hybridized, or presented alternatives to dominant externally-imposed models of peacebuilding. In Kosovo, Vetëvendosje has been at the forefront of promoting alternative peacebuilding approaches that emphasize grassroots participation, socio-economic justice, and the need for a more inclusive and responsive political system. By analyzing these alternative visions and strategies, the analytical framework highlights the potential for locally-driven peacebuilding and the importance of engaging with the diverse perspectives and aspirations of local communities.

This study delineates international actors as entities significantly contributing to post-conflict peacebuilding in Kosovo, with an emphasis on the contributions of the United States and the European Union. Utilizing Visoka's (2016) framework, this analysis positions the United States as a pivotal "liberal peacebuilder," which has been instrumental in fostering democratic institutions and market economies, primarily through its involvement in NATO's intervention and subsequent state-building activities. In parallel, the European Union's role, as articulated

by Perritt (2010), encompasses a broader spectrum of responsibilities. The EU underscores the importance of advancements in governance, the normalization of relations with Serbia, adherence to the rule of law, and the protection of minority rights as prerequisites for its support. This multifaceted approach by the EU is seen as complementing the United States' efforts, thereby outlining a dual strategy that merges liberal peacebuilding with conditional engagement. Such a synthesis underscores the intricate roles played by the United States and the European Union as principal international actors in steering Kosovo towards stability and self-determination.

By employing Mac Ginty's four-dimensional framework, this dissertation offers a comprehensive exploration of the complex interplay between international peacebuilding efforts and local agency in Kosovo. The framework enables a nuanced analysis of Vetëvendosje's strategies and impacts, shedding light on the dynamics of compliance, incentivization, resistance, and the development of alternative approaches within the hybrid peacebuilding landscape. The case studies of the stalled implementation of the ASM agreement and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo provide rich empirical ground for applying and refining the analytical framework, contributing to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities for locally-driven peacebuilding in post-conflict settings.

4.5. Case Study Research

This dissertation examined two pivotal events that shaped Kosovo's post-independence landscape: the halted implementation of the ASM agreement and the 2023 crisis in North Kosovo, particularly concerning local elections in Serbian-majority municipalities, and the reciprocity measures against Serbia regarding vehicle license plates and official documents. At the heart of this study lied the transformative influence of Vetëvendosje—its evolution from a grassroots movement to a dominant political force. Employing Mac Ginty's robust four-dimensional framework, the dissertation delved into the complexities of peacebuilding within Kosovo's unique context.

The case study approach was strategically chosen for its ability to generate in-depth insights into the complex sociopolitical dynamics shaping peacebuilding trajectories in Kosovo. Drawing on the methodological foundations laid by George & Bennett (2005) and Yin (2014), the case studies were designed as exploratory and explanatory inquiries, aimed at unraveling the intricate interplay between Vetëvendosje's actions, international peacebuilding efforts, and the broader socio-political context. The exploratory nature of the case studies allowed for the

identification of key patterns, mechanisms, and challenges in Vetëvendosje's engagement with hybrid peacebuilding, while the explanatory focus enabled the testing and refinement of theoretical propositions derived from Mac Ginty's framework.

While acknowledging Gerring's (2006) critique regarding the potential limitations in generalizing case study findings, this research intentionally focused on the in-depth analysis of Vetëvendosje. This approach was grounded in the recognition that Vetëvendosje represents a critical case – a highly influential local actor whose strategies and impacts have the potential to shed light on broader dynamics of hybrid peacebuilding in post-conflict settings. By examining Vetëvendosje's engagement with the ASM agreement and the crisis in North Kosovo, the case studies aimed to generate transferable insights into the challenges and opportunities for local agency in shaping peacebuilding trajectories, contributing to theory development and refinement in the field of hybrid peacebuilding (Eckstein, 2000).

The qualitative case study methodology, with its emphasis on context-specific analysis and the elucidation of complex causal mechanisms, was particularly well-suited for examining Vetëvendosje's multifaceted role within Kosovo's intricate peacebuilding landscape. The in-depth exploration of Vetëvendosje's strategies, actions, and impacts across the two case studies allowed for a nuanced understanding of how local actors navigate the competing pressures and incentives of international peacebuilding efforts while pursuing their own visions for post-conflict transformation. By tracing the processes and outcomes of Vetëvendosje's engagement, the case studies aimed to illuminate the dynamic interplay between structure and agency, shedding light on the ways in which local actors can challenge, resist, and reshape the trajectory of peacebuilding efforts (Falleti & Lynch, 2009).

In addition to their explanatory value, the case studies also served an important exploratory function, by identifying and examining alternative peacebuilding approaches emerging from Vetëvendosje's engagement with the ASM agreement and the crisis in North Kosovo. By analyzing Vetëvendosje's efforts to articulate and promote locally-driven visions of peace and development, the case studies sought to expand the conceptual boundaries of hybrid peacebuilding, highlighting the potential for innovative, context-specific approaches that challenge and reconfigure the dominant liberal peace framework. This exploratory focus aligned with Eckstein's (2000) emphasis on the value of case studies for theory development, by generating new insights and propositions that can inform future research and practice in the field of peacebuilding.

By integrating Mac Ginty's model with a focused case study approach, the dissertation offered a comprehensive exploration of peacebuilding efforts in Kosovo, with the aim of generating transferable insights and contributing to broader theoretical debates on hybrid peacebuilding and local agency in post-conflict settings. While the specific focus on Vetëvendosje narrowed the scope for comparative analysis, it allowed for a deep and nuanced examination of the party's pivotal role in shaping Kosovo's peacebuilding trajectory, shedding light on the complex dynamics of resistance, adaptation, and innovation that characterize hybrid peacebuilding environments. Through this lens, the research sought to advance academic discussions on peacebuilding, employing a methodology designed to produce insights of wider relevance, while also acknowledging the importance of context-specific analysis and the need for further comparative research to test and refine the findings beyond the Kosovo case.

4.6. Case Selection

This dissertation leveraged the strengths of case study the strengths of case study research to investigate the intricate interplay between international peacebuilding initiatives and local agency in Kosovo. Recognizing the criticality of deliberate case selection, the research adopted a two-tiered approach reflecting the study's aims and Kosovo's unique post-conflict complexities.

The first tier focused on selecting Kosovo as the overarching case, based on its embodiment of the quintessential challenges encountered by post-conflict states amid extensive international peacebuilding efforts. Kosovo's post-conflict trajectory has been characterized by a complex interplay between international actors, who have wielded both coercive and persuasive means to steer peacebuilding outcomes, and local actors, who have navigated, resisted, and adapted to these interventions in pursuit of their own visions for peace and development. The selection of Kosovo as the primary case allowed for an in-depth examination of the power dynamics, tensions, and opportunities that arise when international peacebuilding agendas intersect with local agency and aspirations.

Within the overarching Kosovo case, the second tier of case selection involved identifying specific sub-cases that illuminated the role of Vetëvendosje in shaping the peacebuilding landscape. The selection of the sub-cases was guided by the following criteria:

- **Relevance to the research questions and theoretical framework:** The sub-cases needed to offer rich empirical ground for examining Vetëvendosje's engagement with

the four dimensions of Mac Ginty's hybrid peacebuilding model (compliance power, incentivizing power, resistance of local actors, and alternatives provided by local actors).

- **Significance and impact:** The sub-cases had to represent critical junctures or turning points in Kosovo's peacebuilding trajectory, where Vetëvendosje's actions and strategies had a significant impact on the direction and outcomes of peacebuilding efforts.
- **Diversity and contrast:** The sub-cases were chosen to reflect different aspects of Vetëvendosje's engagement with peacebuilding, including instances of resistance, adaptation, and innovation, as well as varying degrees of interaction with international actors and local constituencies.
- **Accessibility and data richness:** The sub-cases needed to have sufficient documentation and data available, including primary and secondary sources, to enable a comprehensive and rigorous analysis of Vetëvendosje's role and impact.

Based on these criteria, two sub-cases were selected: the stalled implementation of the ASM agreement and the 2023 crisis in North Kosovo, particularly concerning local elections in Serbian-majority municipalities and the reciprocity measures against Serbia regarding vehicle license plates and official documents.

The ASM case represents a critical instance where Vetëvendosje's resistance to externally-imposed peacebuilding frameworks collided with international pressures for compliance. The ASM was conceived through the 2013 Brussels Agreement mediated by the EU between Kosovo and Serbia. While the EU viewed the ASM as a mechanism to promote regional stability, significant controversy emerged within Kosovo regarding the autonomy and powers granted to Serb-majority areas under this framework. Vetëvendosje claimed the ASM threatened Kosovo's sovereignty and territorial integrity. This disconnect between the centralized model advocated by the EU and concerns from local factions generated gridlock despite incentives offered in exchange for compliance. By examining Vetëvendosje's strategies and actions in relation to the ASM agreement, the case study aimed to shed light on the dynamics of resistance and the challenges of reconciling local priorities with international expectations in hybrid peacebuilding environments.

The ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo, on the other hand, showcased Vetëvendosje's efforts to assert local agency and promote alternative approaches to peacebuilding in the face of

heightened tensions and political instability. By analyzing Vetëvendosje's engagement with the ongoing crisis in North Kosovo, the case study sought to illuminate the potential for locally-driven peacebuilding and the obstacles to its realization in contexts of contested sovereignty and competing interests.

While the selection of these two sub-cases provided a focused lens for examining Vetëvendosje's role in shaping Kosovo's peacebuilding landscape, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this approach. The concentration on Vetëvendosje's engagement necessarily excluded other local actors and initiatives that have contributed to peacebuilding efforts in Kosovo. Moreover, the specific focus on the ASM agreement and the ongoing crisis in North Kosovo limited the scope for exploring Vetëvendosje's involvement in other aspects of post-conflict reconstruction and development.

Despite these limitations, the two-tiered case selection strategy offered a robust foundation for investigating the complex dynamics of hybrid peacebuilding in Kosovo, with a particular emphasis on the role of Vetëvendosje as a critical local actor. By combining the overarching Kosovo case with the two carefully selected sub-cases, the research design enabled a deep and contextualized analysis of Vetëvendosje's strategies, actions, and impacts, while also generating transferable insights into the challenges and opportunities for local agency in shaping peacebuilding trajectories in post-conflict settings.

4.7. Data Selection Methods

Given the focus of this dissertation on exploring the influence of Vetëvendosje within Kosovo's peacebuilding framework, the selection of data was critical to achieving depth and rigor in the analysis. The methodology employed centered around an extensive review and analysis of secondary data sources, given the constraints on conducting primary interviews. This approach was tailored to capture the multifaceted nature of Vetëvendosje's engagements, the broader context of hybrid peacebuilding efforts in Kosovo, and the interplay between local and international actors. Articles and reports have been gathered until achieving saturation of data. The analysis drew upon over 100 media sources, 30 government and international organization reports, as well as civil society publications, and over 40 academic sources that were deemed to be the most pertinent and informative in relation to the research objectives.

The data selection strategy was guided by several key criteria to ensure comprehensiveness, relevance, and diversity:

1. **Media sources:** The incorporation of media sources, encompassing local and international news articles, editorials, and opinion pieces, into the study of Vetëvendosje's activities and its impact on peacebuilding efforts in Kosovo is grounded in a multifaceted rationale. This approach not only enriches the research with diverse perspectives and real-time accounts but also provides a structured framework for analyzing the temporal dynamics and unbiased representation of events.
2. **Government and international organization reports:** Documents from the Kosovo government, the European Union, and other relevant international organizations were selected to capture the institutional perspectives on peacebuilding efforts and the engagement of Vetëvendosje as a local actor.
3. **Academic literature:** Scholarly articles, books, and conference papers related to peacebuilding in Kosovo, liberal peace, hybrid peace theory, and the role of local actors in post-conflict settings were reviewed to situate the study within the existing body of knowledge and identify gaps and opportunities for theoretical and empirical contributions.
4. **Civil society and NGO publications:** Reports, analyses, and policy briefs from local and international civil society organizations and NGOs working on peacebuilding, democracy promotion, and human rights issues in Kosovo were included to capture diverse perspectives on Vetëvendosje's role and the broader dynamics of post-conflict reconstruction.

The data collection process aimed to gather a wide range of sources in both Albanian and English to ensure a comprehensive and balanced representation of perspectives. The inclusion of Albanian-language sources was particularly important for capturing the nuances and complexities of local discourse and debates surrounding Vetëvendosje's role in shaping Kosovo's peacebuilding trajectory.

To manage and organize the collected data, a systematic cataloging and coding system was employed. Each source was assigned a unique identifier and categorized based on its type, content, and relevance to the research questions and theoretical framework. This system facilitated the efficient retrieval and analysis of data throughout the research process.

While the reliance on secondary data sources posed certain limitations, such as the potential for bias and the lack of direct access to the perspectives of key actors, several strategies were employed to mitigate these challenges. Firstly, the selection of sources from a diverse range of

stakeholders and perspectives helped to triangulate findings and identify areas of convergence and divergence. Secondly, the use of multiple data types, including official documents, academic literature, civil society reports, and media sources, allowed for a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the phenomena under study. Finally, the systematic coding and analysis process, guided by the theoretical framework and research questions, helped to ensure the rigor and transparency of the findings.

In summary, the data selection methods employed in this dissertation sought to gather a rich and diverse set of secondary sources to enable a comprehensive and rigorous analysis of Vetëvendosje's role in shaping Kosovo's peacebuilding landscape. By carefully selecting and organizing data based on key criteria and employing strategies to mitigate the limitations of secondary data analysis, the research aimed to generate robust and credible findings that contribute to the theoretical and empirical understanding of hybrid peacebuilding and the role of local actors in post-conflict settings.

4.8. Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

To analyze the collected data and address the research questions, this study employed thematic analysis, a widely used qualitative data analysis method that allowed for the systematic identification, organization, and interpretation of patterns of meaning (themes) across the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Thematic analysis was chosen for its flexibility, accessibility, and compatibility with the study's focus on examining the complex dynamics of hybrid peacebuilding and the role of local actors, such as Vetëvendosje, in shaping post-conflict environments (Nowell et al., 2017).

The thematic analysis process followed the six-phase approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. The analysis was guided by the research questions and the analytical framework derived from Mac Ginty's (2011) four-part model, which included Compliance Power, Incentivizing Power, Resistance of Local Actors, and Alternatives Provided by Local Actors. This framework was selected for its ability to capture the multifaceted nature of hybrid peacebuilding and the interactions between international and local actors.

4.8.1. Generating Initial Codes

The first phase of the thematic analysis involved a thorough familiarization with the collected data through repeated reading and noting of initial ideas and observations. Codes are descriptive or interpretive labels assigned to segments of the data, capturing their essence or meaning (Saldaña, 2021). This process helped to develop a deep understanding of the content and context of the data, setting the stage for the subsequent coding and analysis. The coding process began with the generation of initial codes, which involved assigning descriptive or interpretive labels to relevant segments of the data. The coding was guided by the research questions, theoretical framework, and the specific case studies selected for analysis. According framework was developed based on Mac Ginty's four dimensions of hybrid peacebuilding, with additional sub-codes created to capture specific aspects of Vetëvendosje's engagement with peacebuilding efforts in Kosovo (see Table 1).

Compliance Power (CP)	Incentivizing Power (IP)	Resistance of Local Actors (RLA)	Alternatives Provided by Local Actors (APLA)
CP-International Actors	IP-Liberal Values	RLA-Vetëvendosje	APLA-Vetëvendosje
CP-Peacebuilding Norms	IP-Emancipation	RLA-Negotiation	APLA-Context-Specific Approaches
CP-Expectations	IP-Empowerment	RLA-Resistance Strategies	APLA-Locally Resonant Peacebuilding
CP-Coercion	IP-Equal Opportunity	RLA-Subversion	APLA-Challenging Liberal Peace
	IP-Material Incentives	RLA-Selective Compliance	APLA-Complementing Liberal Peace
		RLA-North Kosovo-Resistance	

Table 1. Coding framework along four key dimensions.

Sub-codes were created to capture specific aspects of each dimension in relation to the two case studies, allowing for a more nuanced analysis of Vetëvendosje's engagement with hybrid peacebuilding in different contexts (Saldaña, 2021). For example, under the Resistance of Local Actors (RLA) code, sub-codes such as RLA-ASM-Resistance and RLA-NorthKosovo-Resistance were used to identify instances of Vetëvendosje's resistance in the context of the ASM agreement and the crisis in northern Kosovo, respectively.

The coding process was conducted using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software that facilitated the organization, management, and retrieval of the coded data segments. The software allowed for the efficient application of the coding framework to the selected data sources, as well as the identification of emergent codes and themes that were not initially anticipated. The use of NVivo enhanced the transparency and replicability of the coding process, as it provided a clear audit trail of the analytical decisions made throughout the study

4.8.2 Searching for Themes

Once the initial coding was complete, the next phase involved searching for themes. Themes were identified by collating and analyzing the coded data segments, looking for patterns of meaning that captured significant aspects of Vetëvendosje's engagement with hybrid peacebuilding in Kosovo. The search for themes was conducted at two levels: within each of the four dimensions of Mac Ginty's model and across the two selected case studies.

At the first level, the coded data segments within each dimension were reviewed and analyzed to identify common threads, recurring ideas, and significant patterns. For example, within the Resistance of Local Actors dimension, the analysis revealed several key themes related to Vetëvendosje's strategies and actions, such as "Challenging international authority," "Advocating for local ownership," and "Adapting resistance strategies." These themes were developed by examining the coded data segments related to Vetëvendosje's resistance to the ASM agreement and the ongoing crisis in North Kosovo, as well as the party's broader discourse and actions related to peacebuilding efforts in Kosovo.

At the second level, the analysis focused on identifying overarching themes that cut across the four dimensions and the two case studies. This involved comparing and contrasting the themes identified within each dimension to explore their interconnections, similarities, and differences. For example, the analysis revealed a significant overarching theme related to Vetëvendosje's efforts to challenge the dominant liberal peacebuilding paradigm and promote alternative, locally-driven approaches to post-conflict reconstruction. This theme was evident across multiple dimensions, including Resistance of Local Actors and Alternatives Provided by Local Actors, and was manifested in both the ASM and North Kosovo case studies.

The search for themes was an iterative process, involving multiple rounds of review and refinement to ensure the coherence, consistency, and relevance of the identified patterns. The emergent themes were constantly compared to the coded data segments and the original data sources to ensure their grounding in the empirical evidence. The use of NVivo facilitated this process by allowing for the easy retrieval and comparison of coded data segments across different themes and dimensions.

4.8.3 Reviewing and Refining Themes

The next phase of the thematic analysis involved reviewing and refining the identified themes to ensure their coherence, consistency, and relevance to the research questions and theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process was conducted at two levels: reviewing the coded data segments within each theme and reviewing the themes in relation to the entire dataset.

At the first level, the coded data segments within each theme were carefully examined to ensure they formed a coherent and meaningful pattern. This involved checking for internal homogeneity (the extent to which the data segments within a theme cohere together meaningfully) and external heterogeneity (the extent to which the themes are distinct and distinguishable from each other). Where necessary, themes were refined, split, or merged to ensure their coherence and consistency.

At the second level, the identified themes were reviewed in relation to the entire dataset to ensure they accurately reflected the overall patterns and meanings present in the data. This involved re-reading the original data sources and comparing them to the identified themes to ensure their grounding in the empirical evidence. Where necessary, themes were further refined or additional data was coded to ensure the comprehensiveness and relevance of the analysis.

The reviewing and refining process also involved the creation of thematic maps or matrices to visually represent the relationships between the themes and their relevance to the four dimensions of Mac Ginty's model and the two selected case studies. These visual representations helped to clarify the structure and organization of the themes, as well as their significance for understanding Vetëvendosje's engagement with hybrid peacebuilding in Kosovo.

4.8.4. Defining and Naming Themes

Once the themes had been reviewed and refined, the next step involved defining and naming them. This process involved developing a clear and concise description of each theme, capturing its essence and scope, and assigning it a meaningful and informative name (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The definition of each theme involved specifying its central organizing concept, key characteristics, and boundaries. This involved examining the coded data segments within each theme to identify the core ideas and patterns that underpinned them. The definitions also considered the themes' relationships to the research questions, theoretical framework, and the broader context of hybrid peacebuilding in Kosovo.

The naming of the themes involved assigning concise, memorable, and informative labels that accurately reflected their content and significance. The theme names were carefully chosen to be easily understandable to the intended audience and to clearly communicate the key aspects of Vetëvendosje's engagement with hybrid peacebuilding that they represented.

For example, one of the key themes identified in the analysis was defined as "Contesting international authority and advocating for local ownership" and named "Challenging the liberal peace." This theme captured Vetëvendosje's efforts to resist and challenge the dominant agenda pushed forward by international actors in Kosovo, while promoting alternative, locally-driven approaches to the same issues. The definition and naming of this theme clearly communicated its central organizing concept and its significance for understanding Vetëvendosje's role in shaping Kosovo's hybrid peacebuilding landscape.

4.8.5. Producing the Report

The final phase of the thematic analysis involved producing the report, which took the form of the findings and discussion chapters of the dissertation. The identified themes were presented

and discussed in relation to the research questions, theoretical framework, and the existing literature on hybrid peacebuilding and the role of local actors in post-conflict settings (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The findings were organized around the four dimensions of Mac Ginty's model, with each dimension serving as a main section of the report. Within each section, the identified themes were presented and discussed, using illustrative examples and quotations from the coded data segments to support the analysis. The cross-case analysis was integrated into the discussion, highlighting the similarities and differences in Vetëvendosje's engagement across the two selected case studies.

The discussion of the findings was situated within the broader theoretical and empirical context of hybrid peacebuilding, drawing on the existing literature to interpret and explain the significance of the identified themes. The implications of the findings for understanding the role of local actors, such as Vetëvendosje, in shaping post-conflict environments and the potential for locally-driven peacebuilding approaches were also considered. This contextualization of the findings enhanced the theoretical and practical relevance of the study, contributing to the ongoing discourse on hybrid peacebuilding and local agency in post-conflict settings.

The report also included a critical reflection on the limitations of the study, acknowledging the potential biases and constraints associated with the reliance on secondary data sources and the specific focus on Vetëvendosje and the selected case studies. This transparency regarding the study's limitations helped to situate the findings within their appropriate context and to highlight opportunities for future research to build upon and extend the insights generated by the analysis.

Throughout the report, the use of NVivo was leveraged to provide a clear and transparent audit trail of the analytical process, from the initial coding of the data to the identification and refinement of the themes. This enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, as it allowed for the easy retrieval and verification of the coded data segments and their relationships to the identified themes.

In summary, the thematic analysis employed in this study provided a systematic and rigorous approach to examining the complex dynamics of Vetëvendosje's engagement with hybrid peacebuilding in Kosovo. By following a clear and well-established process, from

familiarization with the data to the production of the final report, the analysis generated a set of coherent and meaningful themes that shed light on the key aspects of Vetëvendosje's role in shaping Kosovo's post-conflict landscape. The integration of the findings with the broader theoretical and empirical context of hybrid peacebuilding helped to situate the study within the existing body of knowledge and to highlight its contributions to understanding the potential and challenges of locally-driven peacebuilding approaches in post-conflict settings.

4.9. Limitations

While this dissertation employed a rigorous methodology to investigate the role of Vetëvendosje in shaping Kosovo's post-independence peacebuilding landscape, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations inherent in the research design and data selection methods.

Firstly, the qualitative nature of the study, while allowing for an in-depth exploration of complex sociopolitical dynamics, may have limited the generalizability of the findings to other post-conflict contexts. The specific historical, political, and social circumstances of Kosovo may not be directly comparable to other cases, and the findings should be interpreted with caution when considering their applicability to different settings. However, the study aimed to generate transferable insights and theoretical propositions that can inform future research and practice in the field of hybrid peacebuilding, rather than claiming universal generalizability.

Secondly, the reliance on secondary data sources, although necessitated by the constraints on conducting primary interviews, may have introduced certain biases and limitations. The available documents and literature may not have fully captured the nuances of internal decision-making processes within Vetëvendosje or the personal perspectives of key actors involved. Moreover, the potential for bias in media coverage and the selective nature of public statements and official documents may have skewed the representation of events and perspectives. To mitigate these limitations, the study employed a diverse range of sources and perspectives, including official documents, academic literature, civil society reports, and media sources, to triangulate findings and identify areas of convergence and divergence.

Thirdly, the focus on Vetëvendosje as the primary local actor in the analysis may have overlooked the roles and contributions of other local stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, community leaders, and grassroots movements, in shaping the peacebuilding landscape. While Vetëvendosje's prominence and impact justified its central position in the study, a more comprehensive examination of the interplay between various local actors could

have provided additional insights into the dynamics of hybrid peacebuilding. Future research could explore the roles and perspectives of other local stakeholders to develop a more holistic understanding of the peacebuilding process in Kosovo.

Fourthly, the selection of specific case studies, while informed by clear criteria and the aim to capture critical junctures in Kosovo's peacebuilding trajectory, may not have exhaustively represented the full spectrum of Vetëvendosje's engagement with international actors in Kosovo. The focus on the ASM agreement and the ongoing crisis in North Kosovo provided valuable insights into Vetëvendosje's strategies and impacts, but other instances of resistance, cooperation, or alternative peacebuilding approaches may have been omitted. Further research could examine additional case studies or adopt a longitudinal approach to trace the evolution of Vetëvendosje's engagement over an extended period.

Lastly, the temporal scope of the study, focusing primarily on the post-independence period, may not have fully captured the historical roots and long-term trajectories of the peacebuilding processes in Kosovo. While the dissertation situated the analysis within the broader historical context, a more extended temporal framework could have offered additional insights into the evolution of local-international dynamics and the long-term implications of Vetëvendosje's actions. Future research could adopt a longer-term perspective to examine the enduring impacts of hybrid peacebuilding efforts and the role of local actors in shaping post-conflict trajectories.

Despite these limitations, the dissertation's methodology remained well-suited to the research objectives and offered valuable contributions to the understanding of hybrid dynamics in Kosovo. The in-depth qualitative analysis, the application of Mac Ginty's theoretical framework, and the critical examination of Vetëvendosje's role provided a nuanced and theoretically informed perspective on the challenges and opportunities of local agency in shaping peacebuilding outcomes. The study's findings, while specific to the Kosovo context, can inform broader theoretical debates and policy discussions on the role of local actors in peacebuilding efforts, contributing to the ongoing development of more context-sensitive and locally-responsive approaches to post-conflict reconstruction.

4.10. Ethical Considerations

Conducting research in post-conflict settings, such as Kosovo, requires a heightened awareness of the ethical implications and potential sensitivities involved. As a researcher with a personal background deeply connected to Kosovo, including experiences of displacement, loss, and firsthand exposure to the complexities of liberal peacebuilding efforts, it was crucial to address the potential for bias and to adhere to rigorous ethical guidelines throughout the research process.

One of the primary ethical considerations in this study was the protection of individuals and communities potentially affected by the research. Although the study relied primarily on secondary data sources, it was essential to ensure that the analysis and presentation of findings did not compromise the privacy, security, or well-being of any individuals or groups involved in the peacebuilding process. To this end, the study omitted any personally identifiable information or details that could be traced back to specific individuals, and care was taken to present findings in a manner that minimized the risk of harm or unintended consequences.

Another key ethical consideration was the maintenance of objectivity and impartiality in the analysis and interpretation of data. As a researcher with personal ties to Kosovo, it was important to acknowledge the potential for bias and to actively seek to minimize its influence on the research process. This involved a commitment to reflexivity, constantly examining one's own assumptions, perspectives, and interpretations, and seeking to understand and represent the views and experiences of others in a fair and balanced manner. The use of multiple data sources and perspectives, as well as the application of a rigorous theoretical framework, helped to mitigate the risk of bias and to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

The study also adhered to the highest standards of academic integrity and ethical conduct in the use and citation of secondary sources. All data and ideas drawn from existing literature were properly attributed to their original authors, and care was taken to avoid any form of plagiarism. The research process was conducted with transparency and honesty, clearly documenting the methods, data sources, and limitations of the study, and making the findings available for scrutiny and verification by other researchers.

In addition to these general ethical considerations, the study also sought to maintain a sensitivity to the complex political and social realities of post-conflict Kosovo. The analysis and presentation of findings were conducted with an awareness of the potential sensitivities

and tensions surrounding issues of ethnic identity, political affiliation, and competing narratives of the conflict and peacebuilding process. Care was taken to avoid any language or framing that could be perceived as inflammatory, biased, or disrespectful to any individuals or groups involved.

Finally, the study aimed to contribute to the ongoing efforts to build a more peaceful, stable, and inclusive society in Kosovo. While the primary purpose of the research was to generate academic knowledge and theoretical insights, the findings and recommendations were also intended to inform policy discussions and peacebuilding practices in a constructive and responsible manner.

In summary, the ethical considerations in this study were centered on the maintenance of objectivity and impartiality, the adherence to academic integrity and ethical conduct, the sensitivity to political and social realities, and the commitment to contributing to positive social change. By addressing these ethical imperatives throughout the research process, the study aimed to generate valuable insights into the dynamics of peacebuilding in Kosovo, while attempting to uphold the highest standards of ethical and responsible research practice.

4.11. Evolution of Focus: Applying a Hybrid Peace Lens to Party Politics and Statebuilding

The initial conceptualization of this dissertation focused primarily on examining the role of party politics in shaping Kosovo's post-independence statebuilding process. However, as the research progressed, it became increasingly apparent that the dynamics of statebuilding in Kosovo were inextricably linked to the broader challenges of peacebuilding and conflict transformation. The complex interplay between international interventions, local political actors, and societal divisions highlighted the need for a more comprehensive analytical framework that could capture the multifaceted nature of post-conflict reconstruction in Kosovo.

To address this conceptual challenge, the dissertation evolved to incorporate a hybrid peace lens, drawing on the theoretical insights of scholars such as Mac Ginty (2011), Richmond (2015), and Visoka (2017). The hybrid peace framework offered a valuable analytical tool for examining the interactions between international peacebuilding efforts and local agency, highlighting the ways in which external interventions are resisted, adapted, and transformed by local actors in pursuit of their own visions of peace and statehood.

The application of a hybrid peace lens to the study of party politics and statebuilding in Kosovo required a reconceptualization of the research focus and questions. Rather than examining party politics in isolation, the dissertation sought to situate the analysis within the broader context of Kosovo's hybrid peacebuilding landscape, exploring how a local political actor, Vetëvendosje, navigated the competing pressures and opportunities presented by international interventions and local societal dynamics.

This shift in focus necessitated a more explicit engagement with the peacebuilding literature, drawing on key concepts such as local ownership, resistance, and agency. The dissertation sought to contribute to the ongoing debates on the role of local actors in shaping peacebuilding outcomes, highlighting the ways in which Vetëvendosje's political strategies and actions challenged and transformed the dominant liberal peacebuilding paradigm in Kosovo.

The evolution of the dissertation's focus also required a recalibration of the research methodology, with a greater emphasis on the in-depth analysis of specific case studies that could illuminate the dynamics of hybrid peacebuilding in Kosovo. The selection of the ASM agreement and the ongoing crisis in North Kosovo as focal points for the analysis reflected this shift, as these cases provided rich empirical ground for examining the complex interplay between international interventions, local resistance, and alternative visions of peace and statehood. Incorporating a hybrid peace lens also allowed for a more nuanced examination of the long-term trajectories of peacebuilding and statebuilding in Kosovo. Rather than treating these processes as distinct or sequential, the dissertation sought to explore their interconnections and mutual influences over time. This diachronic perspective highlighted the ways in which the challenges of peacebuilding and conflict transformation continued to shape the dynamics of statebuilding and party politics in Kosovo, even decades after the initial international interventions.

In summary, the evolution of the dissertation's focus to incorporate a hybrid peace lens represents a significant conceptual and methodological shift, one that has enriched the analysis and expanded the relevance of the findings, by situating the study of party politics and statebuilding within the broader context of Kosovo's hybrid peacebuilding landscape.

4.12. Conclusion

This chapter has presented a comprehensive overview of the research methodology employed in this dissertation, which aimed to investigate the role of Vetëvendosje in shaping Kosovo's

post-independence peacebuilding landscape through the lens of Mac Ginty's hybrid peace framework. The study's qualitative research design, grounded in a combination of structured, focused comparisons across carefully selected case studies, in-depth document analysis, and process tracing, has enabled a nuanced and theoretically informed examination of Vetëvendosje's multifaceted engagement with international peacebuilding efforts and its impact on Kosovo's socio-political trajectory. The research questions and hypotheses, derived from the study's overarching aims and the selected case studies, have provided a focused and structured approach to investigating Vetëvendosje's strategies, actions, and influence in relation to the four dimensions of Mac Ginty's model: compliance power, incentivizing power, resistance of local actors, and alternatives provided by local actors. These dimensions have served as the foundation for the study's analytical framework, guiding the examination of the complex dynamics of peacebuilding in Kosovo and the role of Vetëvendosje as a critical local actor.

The case study approach, focusing on the stalled implementation of the ASM agreement and the 2023 crisis in North Kosovo, has allowed for an in-depth exploration of Vetëvendosje's engagement with international actors at critical junctures in Kosovo's post-independence trajectory. The selection of these cases, informed by clear criteria and the aim to capture the diversity and significance of Vetëvendosje's actions, has provided a robust foundation for generating transferable insights into the challenges and opportunities of local agency in shaping peacebuilding outcomes.

The data selection methods, centered on a comprehensive review and analysis of relevant sources, have sought to capture the multifaceted nature of Vetëvendosje's engagement and the broader context of peacebuilding in Kosovo. The use of thematic analysis, guided by the research questions and the analytical framework, has provided a systematic and rigorous approach to examining the complex dynamics of Vetëvendosje's role in shaping Kosovo's post-independence landscape, generating a set of coherent and meaningful themes that shed light on the key aspects of the party's strategies, actions, and impacts.

While acknowledging the limitations of the study, including the potential constraints of generalizability, the reliance on secondary data, and the focus on a single local actor, the dissertation has sought to generate valuable insights and theoretical propositions that can inform future research and practice in the field of hybrid peacebuilding. The ethical considerations, the maintenance of objectivity and impartiality, and the commitment to positive

social change, have been addressed throughout the research process, ensuring the study's adherence to the highest standards of ethical and responsible research practice.

The evolution of the dissertation's focus, incorporating a hybrid peace lens to the study of party politics and statebuilding in Kosovo, has represented a significant conceptual and methodological shift, enriched the analysis and expanded the relevance of the findings.

In conclusion, this chapter has provided a detailed account of the research methodology employed in this dissertation, demonstrating its alignment with the study's aims, its grounding in the relevant theoretical frameworks, and its adherence to the principles of ethical and responsible research practice. By employing a robust qualitative research design, combining multiple data sources and analytical techniques, and situating the findings within the wider context of hybrid peacebuilding theory and practice, this study has laid the foundation for a comprehensive and insightful examination of the complex dynamics of post-conflict reconstruction in Kosovo and beyond.

Chapter 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Introduction

In post-conflict peacebuilding, the complex interplay between international and local actors has given rise to the concept of hybrid peace. This notion acknowledges the agency and influence of local actors in shaping peacebuilding processes, even as they navigate the power asymmetries and competing agendas that characterize international interventions (Mac Ginty, 2010; Richmond, 2015). In the post-independence period, Kosovo has experienced a unique form of hybrid peace, characterized by the complex interplay between international actors, who continue to exert significant influence through the framework of supervised independence, and local actors, who have increasingly sought to assert their agency and shape the country's political, economic, and social trajectories. This dynamic has given rise to a distinctive form of hybrid peace, which differs from the more commonly studied cases of post-conflict peacebuilding, as it unfolds within the context of a newly independent state navigating the challenges of consolidating its sovereignty and democratic institutions.

Kosovo's supervised independence has created a unique set of conditions for the emergence and evolution of hybrid peace dynamics. On one hand, international actors, guided by the principles and practices of the liberal peace framework, have continued to play a significant role in shaping Kosovo's post-independence landscape, particularly through their involvement in the dialogue process with Serbia and their efforts to promote stability, democracy, and the rule of law (Visoka, 2017, pp. 33-70). On the other hand, local actors, emboldened by the achievement of independence and the gradual transfer of power to Kosovo's institutions, have increasingly sought to challenge the dominance of the international community and assert their own visions for the country's future.

The rise of Vetëvendosje, a local political movement with a strong grassroots base and a distinct ideological orientation, has introduced a new dimension to this hybrid peace equation. Founded in the early post-conflict period as a movement advocating for self-determination and opposing international supervision, Vetëvendosje has gradually evolved into a significant political force, challenging the dominant narratives and practices of both international actors and the established local political elite (Visoka, 2011; Schwandner-Sievers, 2013; Yabanci, 2016).

Vetëvendosje's emergence and ascent to power in 2020 have marked a crucial turning point in Kosovo's post-independence trajectory. The party has sought to fundamentally reshape the country's relationship with international actors, pursuing a more assertive and independent path to peace, stability, and development. This has brought Vetëvendosje into direct confrontation with the international community, particularly over issues such as the implementation of the ASM and the legacies of liberal peacebuilding in northern Kosovo, where Kosovo's sovereignty was largely absent (Beha, 2015).

The liberal peace framework's influence on Kosovo's post-conflict peacebuilding process is evident in the international community's approach to the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo. The ASM, proposed as part of the 2013 Brussels Agreement between Kosovo and Serbia, reflects the liberal peace framework's emphasis on minority rights, decentralization, and power-sharing as mechanisms for promoting stability and reconciliation (Wise et al., 2021). The international community has actively promoted the ASM's implementation to address the concerns of Kosovo's Serb minority and facilitate the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia (Troncota, 2018). However, Vetëvendosje has vehemently opposed the ASM, arguing that it undermines Kosovo's sovereignty and territorial integrity (Beha, 2015). This position has brought Vetëvendosje into direct conflict with the European Union and the United States.

Similarly, the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo, rooted in contested authority between external and internal actors, highlighted the challenges of post-conflict peacebuilding (Bieber, 2015; Visoka & Beha, 2011; Beha, 2015). Attempts by international actors to integrate northern Kosovo, particularly North Mitrovica, met resistance from entrenched local Serb leaders backed by Serbia (Guzina & Marijan, 2014; Beha, 2015). Heavy-handed approaches that disregarded local dynamics led to violence (Björkdahl & Gusic, 2013). UNMIK's direct control over the north (1999-2008) fueled resentment among local Serbs (Visoka & Beha, 2011), and Serbia retained influence after Kosovo's independence, further hindering integration (Economides & Ker-Lindsay, 2015). Vetëvendosje criticized international efforts to integrate Serb-majority northern municipalities, advocating for a stronger stance in asserting Kosovo's sovereignty. They also emphasized the need for inclusive dialogue and reconciliation.

However, the existing literature on Vetëvendosje's role in Kosovo's post-independence hybrid peace landscape remains limited and fragmented. While some scholars have examined Vetëvendosje's emergence as a grassroots movement and its political rise (e.g., Visoka, 2011; Schwandner-Sievers, 2013; Yabanci, 2016), there's a striking paucity of research on the party's navigation of specific complexities inherent to the ASM and the legacies of liberal peacebuilding in northern Kosovo, where Kosovo's sovereignty was largely absent. This dearth of analysis is particularly consequential since Vetëvendosje assumed power in 2021.

This study aims to address these gaps in the literature by focusing on Vetëvendosje's role as a governing party and its interaction with the liberal peace framework, this study investigates the multifaceted dynamics shaping Kosovo's unique form of hybrid peace. Specifically, it examines Vetëvendosje's engagement with the ASM and the ongoing challenges in northern Kosovo. Employing Mac Ginty's (2011) hybrid peace model as an analytical lens, this research seeks to illuminate the opportunities and constraints faced by local actors like Vetëvendosje. This analysis aims to reveal how they attempt to transform the peacebuilding agenda from within state institutions, while simultaneously navigating the persistent influence of international actors and the legacies of past peacebuilding efforts. By explicitly addressing the current limitations in the scholarship on Vetëvendosje and articulating how this study aims to fill these gaps and advance the theoretical and empirical understanding of hybrid peace dynamics, this research builds a compelling case for its significance and originality

The chapter begins by exploring Vetëvendosje's emergence and its critique of the international community's approach to Kosovo's post-conflict landscape. It then analyzes the compliance and incentivizing powers exerted by international actors in relation to the ASM and the northern Kosovo crisis. Subsequently, the chapter investigates Vetëvendosje's strategies and responses to these power dynamics, highlighting the party's navigation, resistance, and promotion of alternative, locally-driven approaches. Finally, the chapter reflects on how the analysis of Vetëvendosje's engagement can contribute to refining and adapting Mac Ginty's hybrid peace model to better capture the complexities of Kosovo's post-conflict context.

By providing a comprehensive and theoretically informed analysis of Vetëvendosje's role in Kosovo's hybrid peace landscape and its interaction with the liberal peace framework, this study aims to advance our understanding of the complex dynamics of post-conflict peacebuilding and the agency of local actors in shaping its outcomes. The insights generated by this research contribute to the ongoing efforts to refine and adapt existing theoretical

frameworks, such as Mac Ginty's, to better capture the unique dynamics and challenges of post-conflict peacebuilding in diverse contexts, including Kosovo's supervised independence, and the role of the liberal peace framework in shaping these dynamics.

5.2. Contesting the Peacebuilding Paradigm: Vetëvendosje's Challenge

The emergence and ascendancy of Vetëvendosje within the political arena of post-conflict Kosovo represent a pivotal shift in the discourse surrounding national sovereignty, peacebuilding, and the role of international actors. Founded in 2005 as a civic initiative, against a backdrop of widespread discontent with the prevailing post-war reconstruction efforts led by the international community, Vetëvendosje has evolved from a grassroots activist group to a significant political entity, challenging both the legitimacy and efficacy of external peacebuilding initiatives and the local political status quo (Visoka, 2011; Schwandner-Sievers, 2013).

At the heart of Vetëvendosje's ideological and practical framework is a profound critique of the international community's approach to Kosovo's post-conflict landscape. This critique is rooted in the early activism of students and citizens against the oppressive Milošević regime, with Albin Kurti, a prominent figure in these protests, emerging as the movement's founder and leader. Following the cessation of hostilities in 1999 and the establishment of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the movement positioned itself as a vocal opponent of the international administration, advocating for a reclamation of Kosovo's right to self-determination and independence (Visoka, 2011; Yabancı, 2016). As Kurti argued: “The international rule in Kosova is doubly undemocratic. First, it is undemocratic in itself; it consists only of top-down commands, with no internal democracy in the decision-making. Second, it is undemocratic for Kosova; domestic institutions are normatively and politically subordinated to internationals in an inclusive and absolute way. At most, the internationals have allowed Kosova’s institutions to deal with what Pierre Bourdieu (1999) calls ‘the left hand of the state’ (education, health care, culture) but the internationals always keep control of ‘the right hand of the state’ (army, police and judicial system). In addition, they have installed themselves as the supreme instance of authority and have the last word on every matter” (p. 90).

Vetëvendosje's strategies of non-violent resistance, including demonstrations, civil disobedience, and political graffiti, underscored a collective yearning for autonomy and sovereignty, standing in direct opposition to the conditional autonomy outlined in the Ahtisaari

Plan and other international peacebuilding efforts. The movement's critique extended to the stability paradigm promoted by international actors, which, as Kurti argues, amounted to a crisis management approach rather than a genuine pathway to independence and self-governance. This paradigm, according to Kurti, perpetuated a state of dependency and stagnation, undermining Kosovo's sovereignty and the will of its people (Kurti, 2011).

As Vetëvendosje gained popularity and support among the population, it began to expand its focus to address a wider range of political, economic, and social issues. The movement increasingly criticized the corruption and nepotism within Kosovo's political establishment, the lack of economic opportunities for young people, and the erosion of social welfare under the neoliberal policies promoted by the international community (Schwandner-Sievers, 2013). Vetëvendosje's anti-corruption stance and opposition to neoliberal policies broadened its appeal, while its tactics of direct action and civil disobedience, designed to challenge UNMIK's authority, were met with both praise and criticism for their potential to destabilize Kosovo (Visoka, 2011).

Vetëvendosje's blend of leftist populism, sovereignty-centered nationalism, and anti-colonialism sparked academic debate regarding the inclusivity of its nationalism and its broader societal impact (Visoka, 2011; Schwandner-Sievers, 2013). Under Kurti's leadership, the movement effectively harnessed popular discontent through public protests, citizen mobilization, and media campaigns (Visoka, 2011). This eclectic ideological mix fostered a broad appeal, attracting supporters from urban intellectuals to rural veterans. Vetëvendosje positioned itself as a radical alternative, advocating for full Kosovar sovereignty, opposing international oversight, favoring unification with Albania, and promoting leftist economic policies and active citizenship (Visoka, 2011; Schwandner-Sievers, 2013).

Visoka and Richmond (2016) argued that the emergence of Vetëvendosje could be seen as a response to the failure of liberal peace-building efforts in Kosovo to create a critical and engaged citizenry. The authors suggested that the international community's focus on working with donor-oriented civil society groups and the politics of liberal peace-builders had unintentionally suppressed the development of grassroots movements that challenged the status quo. The rise of Vetëvendosje as a populist movement outside the liberal peace framework demonstrated the growing discontent with the imposed peace and the perceived misconduct of local institutions in Kosovo. The movement's demands for greater participatory democracy, social justice, and the rejection of the neoliberal economic system highlighted the shortcomings

of the liberal peace agenda and its inability to address the needs and aspirations of the local population. Albin Kurti (2011), offers a scathing critique of the international community's approach to Kosovo. He argues that the "paradigm of stability" imposed by international actors suspends history and offers no clear path towards the future. He criticizes the international community's failure to genuinely address the past, citing the numerous conferences and projects focused on "dealing with the past" that never materialized into concrete action. This lack of progress, combined with the absence of a clear vision for the future, creates a situation of "postmodern immediacy" where the past remains unresolved and the future appears uncertain (p. 91).

In 2010, Vetëvendosje made the strategic decision to transform itself into a political party and participate in Kosovo's parliamentary elections. This marked a significant shift in the movement's approach, as it sought to challenge the existing power structures from within the political system (Yabanci, 2016). Vetëvendosje's electoral success in the 2010 elections, where it secured 12.69% of the vote and became the third-largest party in the Kosovo Assembly, demonstrated the growing appeal of its message and the dissatisfaction with the traditional political parties (Visoka, 2011). This electoral breakthrough signaled both the limitations of the liberal peacebuilding model and the growing desire among Kosovars for a political force that challenged the status quo.

Vetëvendosje's political strategy has been characterized by a dual approach of contentious activism and institutional participation (Visoka 2011). After winning seats in parliament in 2010, the movement continued to organize high-profile protests while using its parliamentary platform to scrutinize the government, shape the political agenda, and block policies it opposes, such as dialogue with Serbia (Visoka 2011; Landau 2017). This has allowed Vetëvendosje to maintain its anti-establishment credentials while incrementally gaining political power and influence.

5.2.1. Challenging the Status Quo: Vetëvendosje's Nationalist Stance

The rise of Vetëvendosje can be seen as a form of local resistance to the post-conflict international liberal governance paradigm (Visoka 2011; Schwandner-Sievers 2013; Landau 2017). By challenging core assumptions of the international approach, such as the viability of Kosovo as a multi-ethnic state and the accountability of international authorities to the local population, Vetëvendosje has exposed the contradictions and limitations of externally-led state-building (Visoka 2011; Landau 2017). At the same time, the movement's success highlights the

potential for local agency to unsettle international designs and shape the political trajectory of post-conflict states (Visoka 2011; Schwandner-Sievers 2013).

Central to Vetëvendosje's success has been its ability to tap into Kosovo Albanian nationalism. By challenging the internationally-led framing of post-independence Kosovo as a "multi-ethnic state" and rejecting symbols like the new flag, Vetëvendosje has offered a counter-narrative that celebrates Albanian identity and resonates with a significant portion of the population (Landau 2017). This has led to tensions with international actors, who view Vetëvendosje's brand of politics as a threat to stability and inter-ethnic reconciliation (Visoka 2011).

However, Vetëvendosje's brand of politics also carries risks of furthering societal polarization and instability (Visoka 2011; Landau 2017). The movement's uncompromising stance on issues such as Kosovo's sovereignty and its relationship with Serbia has the potential to exacerbate inter-ethnic tensions and undermine the fragile peace in the region (Visoka 2011). Moreover, Vetëvendosje's populist tendencies and its willingness to employ contentious tactics raise questions about its commitment to democratic norms and institutions.

Since entering parliament, Vetëvendosje has continued to play a crucial role in shaping Kosovo's political discourse and challenging the international community's approach to post-conflict peacebuilding. The party has been a vocal critic of the European Union-facilitated dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, arguing that the process has failed to address the fundamental issues of Kosovo's sovereignty and territorial integrity (Vetëvendosje, 2015). Vetëvendosje has also been a strong opponent of the ASM, a key component of the Brussels Agreement between Kosovo and Serbia, claiming that it undermines Kosovo's sovereignty and opens the door for the creation of an entity similar to that in Bosnia, within Kosovo (Visoka, 2017, pp. 113-146). The party vehemently opposed the ASM, arguing that it threatened Kosovo's sovereignty and territorial integrity by granting excessive autonomy to Serb-majority areas (Beha, 2015). Kurti starkly articulated this position in a 2015 interview, stating: "This is the return of Serbia, which will bring war to the next generation. With the unification of these 10 municipalities into a state within a state, our children will have war on their doorstep" (INTERAKTIV ALBIN KURTI 28.08.2015). Vetëvendosje's opposition extended beyond rhetoric. In early 2016, the party orchestrated protests against the ASM's implementation. Slogans such as "Down with the Community," "We want a state with sovereignty," and "The Republic is Res publica" ('Vetëvendosje' Gati Për Protestë, 2016) underscored the movement's

core demands, directly linking the ASM to threats to Kosovo's sovereignty and self-determination.

In addition to its stance on the dialogue with Serbia and the ASM, Vetëvendosje has been actively engaged in addressing the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo. The party has criticized the international community's approach to the region, arguing that it has failed to effectively integrate the Serb-majority municipalities into Kosovo's institutional and legal framework (Vetëvendosje, 2019). Vetëvendosje has called for a more assertive approach to establishing the rule of law and extending Kosovo's sovereignty in the north, while also emphasizing the need for inclusive dialogue and reconciliation between the Albanian and Serb communities.

Vetëvendosje's ascendancy in Kosovo's political realm, as evidenced by its electoral victories in 2019 and 2021, underscores a pivotal transformation within the nation's political dynamics. Under the leadership of Albin Kurti, Vetëvendosje transitioned from an oppositional movement to a governing force, challenging the entrenched political elite with a platform centered around anti-corruption, social justice, and self-determination (Yabanci, 2016). This transition marked a departure from the longstanding political status quo.

5.2.2. Vetëvendosje in Power: Between Ideological Stance and Governance Realities

Upon assuming governance, Vetëvendosje embarked on realizing its ambitious agenda for Kosovo. However, it navigates the complex landscape of post-conflict peacebuilding amidst scrutiny from both the international community and internal political opponents. Critics have labeled the party's approach as overly confrontational, voicing concerns over its potential to unsettle the fragile balance of peace and stability in the region (Visoka, 2021). This criticism highlights the intricate balance Vetëvendosje must maintain between advocating for its principles and ensuring Kosovo's continued development towards lasting peace and prosperity. As Hehir (2023) recent study suggests, the rise of Vetëvendosje reflects a broader sentiment of disillusionment and frustration among the Kosovar populace. This frustration stems from the perceived inadequacies of both domestic leadership and international stakeholders in fulfilling the promises of the post-independence era. The international community, despite its involvement in Kosovo, faces criticism for hindering Vetëvendosje's capacity to effectively address the needs and aspirations of its citizens. These challenges are further magnified by Kosovo's complex geopolitical position, complicating its journey towards realizing its future aspirations (Hehir, 2023).

In summary, Vetëvendosje's rise to power initiated a new phase in Kosovo's political landscape. Founded upon a critique of international interventions and a belief in unyielding sovereignty, Vetëvendosje faces the challenge of adapting its ideological stance to the realities of governing. This transition marked a shift, as Vetëvendosje could no longer rely exclusively on its history of opposition to international influence. Instead, it became a participant within Kosovo's political system, where international actors hold significant sway and often employ compliance power and incentives as tools of leverage.

Vetëvendosje now had to navigate the balance between its core belief in Kosovo's absolute sovereignty and the need to engage with international actors, manage complex political issues, and maintain stability – all while addressing the expectations of its electorate. The ASM and the ongoing crisis in North Kosovo serve as key examples where Vetëvendosje's interactions with international actors are tested.

PM Kurti's (2020) stance on international pressure illuminates this dynamic. He stated, "There is no pressure on me. Those who have experienced pressure [referring to Kosovo's politicians with governing experience] should tell us what that pressure looks like. I remain curious to understand how international pressure works. However, it is possible that when you are not corrupt and cannot be blackmailed, you simply don't experience that pressure" (Si Duket Presioni Ndërkombëtar? – Një Shpjegim I Shkurtër/Albanian Post, 2022). Kurti's words suggest a defiance against the conventional dynamics of international influence. His assertion implies that integrity and transparency can insulate Kosovo's leadership from the pressures that have historically shaped its politics. The following section looks at these interactions.

5.3. Case Study 1: Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities (ASM)

5.3.1. Historical background and context of the ASM

The Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities (ASM) originated from the 2013 Brussels Agreement, which aimed to normalize relations between Kosovo and Serbia and integrate the Serbian community in Kosovo into the country's legal and institutional framework (Brussels Agreement, 2013). The ASM was envisioned as a self-governing entity with competences in areas such as economic development, education, health, and urban and rural planning, while also providing a representative role to the central authorities in Pristina (Brussels Agreement, 2013, para. 4-6). These provisions sought to balance the concerns and aspirations of the Serbian

community in Kosovo by enabling them to manage their own affairs and preserve their cultural identity, while simultaneously ensuring their integration within Kosovo's legal and institutional structures (Beha, 2015).

However, the implementation of the ASM has been fraught with controversy and delays, stemming from the divergent views held by Kosovo and Serbia on the nature and scope of the entity. Kosovo insisted on an ASM operating strictly within its constitutional and legal framework, emphasizing the integration of Kosovo Serbs. In contrast, Serbia advocated for a more expansive and autonomous entity (Beha, 2015). This divergence in expectations and interpretations has led to a protracted impasse in the implementation process, with both sides accusing the other of obstruction and bad faith (Bieber, 2015). The historical context surrounding the ASM is deeply intertwined with Serbia's opposition to Kosovo's independence and the presence of Serbian parallel institutions in the North of Kosovo, shaping the negotiations characterized by the contrasting objectives of Kosovo and Serbia. Kosovo aimed to fully integrate the Serbian community into its institutional framework, while Serbia sought to maintain its influence and establish broad autonomy for the Serbian population in Kosovo (Bieber, 2015).

Despite the intentions behind its creation, the envisioned ASM raised concerns about potential infringement on Kosovo's sovereignty and its long-term internal stability. These concerns would form the basis for significant political opposition to the ASM's implementation.

5.3.2. The August 2015 Agreement: A Step Towards Autonomy

A pivotal development occurred in August 2015 with the signing of the "August Agreement" or "ASM Agreement" between Kosovo and Serbia. This accord, aimed at resolving the impasse, delineated a more comprehensive framework for the establishment of the ASM, as documented by the European External Action Service (2015). It meticulously outlined the general principles and core components necessary for the ASM's inception, including provisions for its own flag, emblem, and anthem, thereby marking a significant step towards autonomy. Furthermore, the agreement conferred upon the ASM extensive authority over various policy domains, illustrating a move towards greater self-governance. The international community, including EU High Representative Federica Mogherini, lauded this agreement as a "landmark achievement" (European External Action Service, 2015), highlighting its potential to foster a more harmonious and cooperative relationship between Kosovo and Serbia.

However, the ASM Agreement met with considerable resistance within Kosovo, particularly from the opposition party Vetëvendosje, which posited that the accord threatened Kosovo's sovereignty by potentially establishing a "Bosnian-style" entity akin to Republika Srpska, thereby altering the country's internal dynamics and autonomy (Gashi, 2015a; RFE/RL, 2015). Republika Srpska is one of the two entities that make up Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a significant degree of autonomy and its own government, parliament, and president. The opposition's dissent escalated into tangible disruption, with parliamentary proceedings being interrupted through various means, including the deployment of tear gas (Gashi, 2015b; Gashi, 2015c). Furthermore, the opposition presented a petition to the Assembly, calling for decisive action on the ASM and addressing other contentious issues (Konushevci, 2015), underscoring the profound political and societal cleavages the agreement had unearthed.

Conversely, Serbia perceives the establishment of the ASM as an indispensable prerequisite for the normalization of relations with Kosovo, asserting its role as a fundamental mechanism for safeguarding the rights and interests of the Serb community within Kosovo (Dragojlov, 2020). For Serbia, the ASM represents not only a means to ensure the survival and welfare of the Serb community but also to retain a degree of influence and leverage within the political landscape of Kosovo. Additionally, certain factions within Serbia posit the ASM as a potential precursor to the eventual reintegration of Serb-majority regions back into Serbia, indicating a broader strategic objective.

As the political impasse escalated, it became increasingly apparent that dialogue between the Kosovo government and the opposition constituted the sole pathway to resolution (Gashi, 2015c). Despite this, the opposition imposed stringent conditions for engaging in discussions with the government (Gashi, 2015d), further exacerbating the standoff by continuing their disruption of parliamentary activities. In October 2015, Kosovo President Atifete Jahjaga initiated a constitutional review of the ASM Agreement by referring it to the Constitutional Court, questioning its adherence to Kosovo's constitution (RFE/RL, 2015b). In response, the Court temporarily halted the implementation of the agreement to conduct its assessment (RFE/RL, 2015c). Amidst this scrutiny, Kosovo PM Isa Mustafa staunchly upheld the legality of the ASM Agreement, asserting its congruence with the national constitution and reaffirming his dedication to the ongoing dialogue with Serbia (RFE/RL, 2015a).

Nevertheless, the court's suspension of the ASM Agreement failed to mitigate the political deadlock. The opposition, unwavering in its stance, insisted on the annulment of the accords

with Serbia as a precondition for normalizing the political climate. Concurrently, they escalated their dissent by planning protests aimed at the government (RFE/RL, 2016), signifying the persistent and deep-seated divisions within Kosovo's political landscape. Nevertheless, the court's suspension of the ASM Agreement failed to mitigate the political deadlock. The opposition insisted on the annulment of the accords with Serbia as a precondition for normalizing the political climate and escalated their dissent by planning protests aimed at the government (RFE/RL, 2016).

While the following years witnessed various efforts to overcome the impasse, including a court decision and international pressure, the ASM remained a source of contention. This ultimately led to a period of renewed stasis in the discussions surrounding its implementation.

5.3.3. Stalemate and Stumbling Blocks (2016-2018)

In December 2015, the Constitutional Court of Kosovo issued a ruling that the ASM's foundational principles partially contravened the national constitution (RFE/RL, 2015e). The court found that while the general principles of the ASM Agreement were not entirely in conflict with the constitution, certain elements, such as the provision for the ASM to have its own flag, emblem, and anthem, were deemed unconstitutional. Despite the government's commitment to adhere to the Court's verdict, the opposition intensified its stance, demanding the resignation of those in power. PM Isa Mustafa stood firm, rejecting calls for his resignation and urging the opposition to eschew violent forms of protest (RFE/RL, 2015f). The Court's verdict introduced further complexities in the realization of the ASM, with Serbian authorities asserting the legitimacy of the August 2015 agreement, whereas Kosovar opposition parties underscored the imperative of upholding the judicial decision. This judicial outcome deepened the political deadlock and posed significant challenges to the ongoing dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia.

In the backdrop of these tensions, Kosovo PM Mustafa and his Serbian counterpart, Aleksandar Vučić, engaged in a pivotal meeting in Brussels in December 2015, aimed at addressing the impasse and charting a forward path in the dialogue (RFE/RL, 2016b). In the unfolding political landscape of 2016, conjecture emerged regarding the formation of an additional Serb municipality in Kosovo, a move speculated to be linked with the election of Hashim Thaçi as the President of Kosovo (RFE/RL, 2016c).

Progress towards the establishment of the ASM was anticipated, signaling a move into its foundational phase (RFE/RL, 2016d). EU High Representative Federica Mogherini emphasized the critical need for the implementation of the accords forged in the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue (RFE/RL, 2016e). In response, opposition parties in Kosovo declared their intention to resume their parliamentary activities specifically to contest the ASM and the border demarcation agreement with Montenegro (RFE/RL, 2016f). The border demarcation agreement, signed in 2015, aimed to define the border between Kosovo and Montenegro but faced opposition in Kosovo over concerns about territorial loss. This period also sparked conversations regarding the necessity for a revitalized approach to the ongoing dialogue (RFE/RL, 2016) and the prerequisite of dismantling existing parallel structures within Kosovo prior to the ASM's inception (RFE/RL, 2016f).

Throughout these developments, the international community remained a steadfast proponent of the dialogue process and the actualization of the agreements reached. EU Special Representative Samuel Žbogar articulated that both the ASM and the demarcation agreement were integral components of Kosovo's path towards European integration (RFE/RL, 2016g). Concurrently, the Serbian List, representing the Serbian constituency in Kosovo, exerted pressure on the government to expedite the ASM's establishment and anticipated an official invitation from the PM to reintegrate into Kosovo's institutional framework (RFE/RL, 2016h), marking a critical juncture in Kosovo's ongoing political and diplomatic negotiations. The Serbian List is a political party in Kosovo that primarily represents the interests of the ethnic Serb community and maintains close ties with Belgrade.

As the political impasse in Kosovo showed no signs of abating throughout 2016—a year aptly dubbed "the year of deadlock" (Insajderi, 2016)—the discourse around the ASM gained renewed vigor. PM Isa Mustafa voiced criticisms of the Brussels-facilitated dialogue, advocating for substantive changes to the process (KOHA, 2017). Concurrently, the Serbian List argued for the establishment of the ASM in strict accordance with the provisions of the 2013 agreement (RFE/RL, 2017), indicating a rift in perspectives on the path forward. The advancement of the ASM was intrinsically linked to the broader trajectory of the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue (RFE/RL, 2017b). Despite the critical role of the ASM in these discussions, the Kosovo government did not prioritize its immediate formation (RFE/RL, 2017c), reflecting the complex web of challenges and uncertainties surrounding its actualization.

In the 2018 negotiations between Pristina and Belgrade, the ASM emerged as a pivotal issue once again (RFE/RL, 2018). Although Kosovo President Hashim Thaçi urged the government to initiate the ASM's development (RFE/RL, 2018c), the official green light for its inception from the government was still forthcoming (RFE/RL, 2018b).

The stance of the Serbian List further complicated the scenario. This group dismissed the government's proposition regarding the ASM (KOHA, 2018) and steadfastly demanded constitutional amendments for its implementation (RFE/RL, 2018d). The discord over the ASM not only underscored a clash of competencies but also led the Serbian List to regard governmental efforts as insincere or superficial (RFE/RL, 2018d), highlighting the profound complexities and contentious nature of the ASM's establishment within the broader Kosovo-Serbia dialogue.

The discourse surrounding the ASM ignited a debate on its potential impact on the autonomy of the Serbian community in Kosovo and raised concerns regarding the sanctity and inviolability of the Kosovo Constitution (RFE/RL, 2018f; RFE/RL, 2018g). The delivery of a report on the drafting of the ASM statute to the government sparked further debate on whether the establishment of the ASM should proceed through constitutional mechanisms or be the result of political negotiation (RFE/RL, 2018h; RFE/RL, 2018j).

Minutes from the management team responsible for drafting the statute of the ASM, submitted to the Government of Kosovo, documented their task of informing the government about the statute's drafting process. These minutes, highlighting discussions from June and July 2018, became a significant focal point (RFE/RL, 2018k), especially as the inclusion of the ASM in the final agreement between Kosovo and Serbia was contemplated (Kallxo, 2018). According to the documents obtained by Radio Free Europe, Serbian representatives in Kosovo had requested that the ASM's statute include competencies in privatization, economy, preservation of the educational system with Serbia, among other areas. Moreover, some officials met by the drafting team advocated for constitutional amendments to ensure that the ASM aligns with Kosovo's Constitution, a move opposed by the Kosovar side. However, despite these detailed preparations and proposals, Kosovo and Serbia continued to levy accusations against each other for the non-implementation of previously agreed terms (RFE/RL, 2018l), underscoring the persistent challenges in achieving a consensus.

5.3.4. Revival and Renewed Stasis (2019-2020)

For a period, the issue of the ASM remained stagnant until the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia was revived in 2019 (RFE/RL, 2019). The resumption of talks in Brussels opened discussions on the ASM, as well as on property and financial matters (RFE/RL, 2020). Kosovo PM Avdullah Hoti expressed Kosovo's intention to honor the ASM agreement (RFE/RL, 2020b), yet Kosovo set a precondition for Serbia, stipulating that the ASM's implementation would only proceed following mutual recognition between the two nations (KOHA, 2020), signifying a new phase in the diplomatic engagements with significant implications for regional stability and cooperation.

As the dialogue continued, Serbia conditioned its continuation on the formation of the ASM in 2020 (RFE/RL, 2020c), putting into question the next meeting between Kosovo PM Avdullah Hoti and Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić (RFE/RL, 2020d). The ASM emerged as a critical yet challenging compromise in the negotiations (RFE/RL, 2020d). However, PM Hoti stepped back from discussions regarding the ASM within the Brussels-mediated dialogue, clarifying, "This topic is not open for discussion because it has been conclusively addressed by the agreement of 2013 and subsequently by the agreement on principles in 2015, which in fact enhances the 2013 agreement. Therefore, this is not a topic to be reopened in the dialogue process" (RFE/RL, 2020f).

Amidst the ongoing dialogue, the opposition in Kosovo advocated for a clear platform to guide the discussions, contrasting with the government's lack of public response to the matter (RFE/RL, 2020g). The European Union underscored that the formation of the ASM should align with the Constitutional Court of Kosovo's opinion (RFE/RL, 2020h). Nevertheless, the establishment of the ASM was identified as a prerequisite for the progression of the dialogue (RFE/RL, 2020h). PM Avdullah Hoti firmly stated that Kosovo's commitments in the dialogue would not proceed without Serbia's recognition of Kosovo's sovereignty (RFE/RL, 2020j). The debate around the ASM was framed as a source of external pressure on Kosovo (RFE/RL, 2020k). The Serbian List issued a warning that it would exit Kosovo's political institutions if the ASM was not established. Acting President Vjosa Osmani stated that any formation of the ASM must be in strict compliance with the rulings of the Constitutional Court of Kosovo (RFE/RL, 2020l). Miroslav Lajčák, the EU Special Representative for the Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue, clarified that the establishment of the ASM would follow the formal signing of an agreement between Kosovo and Serbia (RFE/RL, 2020m). During a visit to Belgrade, Lajčák

reiterated that a consensus on the ASM had been achieved and underscored the necessity of its execution (RFE/RL, 2020n). Despite Lajčák's remarks, the Kosovo government did not publicly respond, especially to his caution regarding potential amendments to the Constitution (RFE/RL, 2020o), while concerns about the "trap of constitutional changes" were perceived as obstructing the dialogue (RFE/RL, 2020p).

In the following years, the ASM remained a central topic in the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, with both sides maintaining their positions and the international community encouraging constructive engagement (RFE/RL, 2016; RFE/RL, 2020). The Serbian List continued to insist on the implementation of the ASM according to the 2013 agreement (RFE/RL, 2016) and even threatened to leave Kosovo's institutions if the ASM was not formed (RFE/RL, 2020). Despite renewed international pressure and a degree of progress, the ASM question remained unresolved. This issue would take on a new dimension with the 2021 elections that ushered in a period of political change in Kosovo, marked by the rise of Vetëvendosje, known for its strong opposition to the ASM agreement.

5.3.5. Vetëvendosje in Power: A New Approach?

The 2021 February parliamentary election in Kosovo resulted in a decisive victory Vetëvendosje, signaling a significant shift in the political landscape. This change was fueled by widespread public dissatisfaction with the entrenched corruption and patronage networks linked to the long-dominant political establishment. Upon assuming office, PM Kurti prioritized domestic priorities such as anti-corruption initiatives, social justice reforms, and economic development, rather than focusing on dialogue with Serbia (RFE/RL, 2021).

In 2021, PM Kurti outlined key principles that would guide Kosovo's engagement in dialogue with Serbia. He emphasized the necessity of recognizing Kosovo's independence, Serbian accountability for past actions, equality between negotiating parties, and ensuring outcomes that benefit citizens of both nations (RFE/RL, 2021b). Kurti underscored the need for a revised approach to the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, highlighting the historical lack of progress and the flawed strategies employed by previous administrations:

"In the dialogue with Serbia, there is a lack of progress, and this did not start with us. There has been a lack of progress for a long time, but we have highlighted that a large part of the lack of progress comes from the wrong approaches. Therefore, agreements were signed that were harmful to Kosovo, which even the Constitutional Court, as it was, would not accept (e.g., the

Agreement on the Association of Serbian-majority municipalities). In this sense, we need a new chapter, we need a new approach, and for us, it must be principled with citizens as beneficiaries and with mutual recognition at the center" (RFE/RL, 2021c).

Vetëvendosje has remained steadfast in its opposition to implementing the ASM agreement. The party argues the ASM jeopardizes Kosovo's sovereignty and territorial integrity, potentially creating an entity within Kosovo resembling the semi-autonomous Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They contend that such a structure could enable Serbia to exert undue influence within Kosovo, drawing upon historical precedents and potentially leading to internal instability. PM Kurti expressed this stance clearly: "We will not allow the right to territorialization and the creation of anything that would look like the Republika Srpska in BiH. We will not allow a satellite statelet with a destructive essence that would undermine the statehood of Kosovo" (KOHA, 2023).

While maintaining a firm stance on core issues such as the ASM, Vetëvendosje has nonetheless demonstrated a growing awareness of the strategic value of international engagement. This shift signals a recognition of the need to work constructively with global actors in order to best advance Kosovo's interests. This evolution is evident in a February 15th, 2023 parliamentary speech by PM Kurti, where he addresses the delicate balance of coordination with international partners:

"I do not surprise the international community, our partners, our friends, our international allies. I coordinate with them. Yet, you must understand: I am Albanian, not international. I am the PM of the Republic of Kosovo. Constant calls for 'coordination' risk becoming subordination. My ultimate responsibility is to defend the interests of our republic, our people, our society, and our constitution. Let's never forget that the internationals have two hats: one as recognizers of our state, and another as mediators. This means they sometimes arrive bearing demands of the other party" (A1 TV, 2023).

Vetëvendosje's rise to power indeed brought a new approach to Kosovo's political landscape. The party prioritized domestic reforms, maintained a principled stance on dialogue with Serbia, and demonstrated a growing understanding of the strategic value and complexity of international engagement..

5.3.6 Analysis of international actors' use of compliance power in relation to the ASM

The initial discovery of this investigation, pertaining to the utilization of compliance power by global entities in the scenario involving the Association of Serb Municipalities (ASM) vis-à-vis the administration of Kurti following their ascension to governance, unveils a complex strategy. These international stakeholders have employed a diverse array of power dynamics to exert influence over the government of Kosovo concerning the formation of the ASM.

Amidst the complex political scenario exacerbated by the global coronavirus pandemic, the ensuing tensions became more pronounced. The United States, under the direction of Richard Grenell, the U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Serbia and Kosovo Peace Negotiations, endeavored to expedite the resolution of the protracted discord between Kosovo and Serbia. However, a rift emerged, notably between PM Albin Kurti and Grenell, primarily due to Kurti's resistance to a proposed land swap and Grenell's demands for the immediate removal of tariffs against Serbia. This disagreement not only fueled Kosovo's internal political turmoil but also catalyzed the collapse of Kurti's government following a no-confidence vote led by its coalition partner, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), on March 25, 2020.

Subsequently, the ousting of Kurti's administration underscored the fragile nature of Kosovo's political landscape, yet his re-election in 2021 marked a significant turnaround. Scholarly analysis, such as that by Hamza (2021), interprets Grenell's endeavors as primarily aimed at clinching a swift foreign policy triumph for President Trump in the run-up to the electoral period, a move that culminated in the U.S.'s suspension of development aid to Kosovo as reported by Reuters (2020). This interpretation suggests that Grenell's strategy, driven by the goal of a quick diplomatic victory, ultimately led to punitive measures against Kosovo when its leadership, particularly Kurti, impeded these objectives.

In a subsequent phase, the European Union (EU) significantly intensified its diplomatic endeavors in early 2023, aiming to foster continued dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. This was particularly evident after comprehensive discussions surrounding a French-German proposal, formulated in the latter part of 2022, designed to mediate the ongoing conflict. In a noteworthy diplomatic move, Josep Borrell, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, extended formal invitations to Kosovo's PM, Albin Kurti, and Serbia's President, Aleksandar Vucic, to endorse the proposal by signing it on February 27, 2023.

In the period preceding the summit, the United States, articulated through its diplomatic channels in Pristina, exerted explicit pressure on Kosovo to prioritize the establishment of the ASM as a pivotal step towards normalizing relations with Serbia. This insistence was

prominently voiced by Gabriel Escobar, the U.S. special envoy for the Western Balkans. In a 2022 interview, Escobar highlighted the ASM as a crucial objective for the U.S., noting, 'The association is the most important thing that Washington wants to see' (REF/RL, 2022). Moreover, Escobar's statement, 'We will have the Association, we will be a part of the process, and that process must include the Government of Kosovo. If not, we can pursue that discussion with alternative partners, with civil society, youth groups, the business community, and all those who would like to see Serbia and Kosovo emerge from this cycle of instability' (RFE/RL, 2022b), underscores the U.S.'s resolve to see the ASM established, even hinting at the possibility of engaging with non-governmental stakeholders in Kosovo to achieve this aim.

On January 30th, 2023, Derek Chollet, Counselor of the U.S. Department of State, released a letter titled "The Time for Establishing the ASM is Now," marking another significant instance of international engagement with Kosovo. In this communication, Chollet categorized the implementation of the ASM agreement as "one of the most critical tasks," directly addressing concerns about the ASM potentially mirroring the structure of Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina—an analogy PM Kurti often draws. The letter aimed to clarify the envisioned scope and limitations of the ASM, encouraging Kosovo's involvement in defining the association's structure, while simultaneously asserting that dismissing the agreement was not a viable option. Additionally, Chollet underscored the United States' longstanding support for Kosovo, highlighting its unique position as "the most pro-Kosovo country in the world (U.S. Embassy Pristina, 2023).

During the U.S. special envoy's, Gabriel Escobar visit to Kosovo in 2023, a palpable sense of frustration with PM Kurti's stance on the implementation of the ASM was once again evident. The envoy articulated this sentiment explicitly, stating: 'It's going to happen, the question is with who, and how long do we have to wait... We could have a statute in one day if we wanted to... I don't understand the delay... it is for Kosovo not to define itself by Serbia, but to define itself by its own values... by its relationship... to the seven hundred million people of the Euro-Atlantic community... Yet, whenever we talk to the PM and his deputy PM, all they ever want to talk about is Serbia... [With the ASM] on European terms, under protection of minority rights, I have a platform under which I can go to other European countries and say: 'They've done everything asked, so we need to move forward on other benefits to Kosovo.' And I cannot get there if Kosovo doesn't do its part of the agreement' (KoSSev, 2023).

Furthermore, the European Union's representatives, particularly EU's foreign affairs representative Josep Borrell in 2023, mirrored this sentiment of frustration regarding Kosovo's advancements concerning the ASM. Borrell articulated that PM Kurti 'was not ready to move forward' with the ASM, suggesting that this impasse has broader implications for Kosovo's aspirations towards European Union integration and eventual membership (Reuters, 2023). This stance from the EU underscores a shared perspective among international actors about the critical importance of the ASM in the broader context of Kosovo-Serbia relations and Kosovo's European integration process.

The U.S. envoy's comments revealed a discrepancy between international perspectives and those of Kosovo's leadership regarding the ASM. Framing the ASM's implementation as delayed and linking it to Kosovo's Euro-Atlantic integration suggested a downplaying of the complex local sensitivities surrounding the issue, particularly concerns that the ASM might resemble Republika Srpska, a contentious entity itself born from international involvement. Insisting on swift implementation while emphasizing European standards minimized historically rooted concerns about the ASM's potential impact on Kosovo's sovereignty. The envoy's remarks underscored the U.S. commitment to the ASM, aligning with liberal peace frameworks that prioritize top-down approaches. The mention of 'alternative partners' raised questions about Kosovo's political autonomy and democratic processes. This pressure is significant given that a Citizen Perception Survey (PIPS, 2020) found that 97.6% of Kosovars perceive the ASM with executive powers as a risk to the nation's stability and sovereignty.

Derek Chollet's letter, while providing a detailed description of the ASM's structure and limitations in an attempt to address concerns, also suggested a potential limitation on Kosovo's influence over the agreement's final form. In other words, the specificity of the description raised questions about whether Kosovo had a genuine voice in shaping the ASM or if its role would be largely confined to accepting a pre-determined structure.

Conversely, the consistent public observations by Josep Borrell, a notable EU figure, illustrate the application of compliance power by international entities, aimed at guiding Kosovo's engagement in the dialogue process with Serbia. Emphasizing the role of PM Kurti's administration in the ongoing deadlock and lack of progress, Borrell's comments suggest an effort to shape Kosovo's policy directions and exert pressure towards implementation of the ASM.

PM Kurti has articulated his stance regarding the interactions with international envoys, acknowledging the implications of their approach towards the Kosovo government. Kurti's response highlights a recognition of the methods employed by international representatives, including the suggestion of potential consequences or sanctions. He conveyed, 'I have been constructive, dedicated, creative, and I am all of these things, but I do not think that these things are solved with threats and mentions of consequences, perhaps even sanctions, against the most democratic and progressive state in the Western Balkans. I am convinced that we will be able to clarify the ambiguities. We have challenges with the European and American emissaries, but our bilateral relations with the EU and the US are excellent' (RFE/RL, 2023b). This statement highlights Kurti's perspective on the negotiation process, indicating a preference for dialogue over the imposition of punitive measures, while also distinguishing between the bilateral relations with the EU and the US and the specific challenges posed by their emissaries.

The analysis suggests the application of compliance power by international entities in three scenarios related to Kosovo's ASM discussions: exerting political pressure, suggesting sanctions, and setting political conditionality to influence Kosovo's compliance with their peace and integration strategies.

5.4. Case Study 2: Ongoing Crisis in northern Kosovo

5.4.1. Historical background and context of the ongoing northern Kosovo crisis

The international community's approach to post-conflict peacebuilding in Kosovo has been extensively critiqued, particularly the dominant paradigm of liberal peacebuilding. This model, emphasizing democracy, market economies, and the rule of law (Franks & Richmond, 2009), has faced criticism for its top-down, externally imposed nature, and its failure to address the root causes of conflict or prioritize local actors and contexts (Visoka, 2017). Northern Kosovo exemplifies the challenges of liberal peacebuilding. The region's entrenched ethnic divisions, parallel structures, and resistance to externally devised solutions have hindered efforts to establish lasting peace (Visoka & Bolton, 2011). Critics argue that the international community's focus on formal institutions and processes, such as the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) and competency transfers, overlooked the fundamental political and social dynamics perpetuating conflict (Franks & Richmond, 2009, pp. 114-148).

Following the 1999 NATO intervention, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) was established to oversee transitional administration and facilitate self-

governance (Yannis, 2004). However, UNMIK faced significant challenges in northern Kosovo, where the predominantly Serb population resisted its authority (Visoka, 2017; RES/1244, 1999). The 2001 Constitutional Framework for Provisional Self-Government in Kosovo, designed to establish the PISG and outline a transfer of authority, was largely rejected by the Serb community in the north (Brand, 2003). This rejection was rooted in the perception of the PISG as a step toward Kosovo's independence and a threat to Serbian ties (Dahlman & Williams, 2010). The ensuing boycott fostered a de facto dual governance system, severely constraining UNMIK and the PISG's authority while allowing Belgrade-supported parallel structures to operate in key sectors (OSCE, 2007).

These parallel structures profoundly hindered UNMIK's efforts to establish a unified system of governance and enforce the rule of law. Serb-run institutions in the north functioned autonomously, refusing to recognize the transitional institutions (Jenne, 2010). This situation led to a de facto partition, with the north operating as a distinct entity closely aligned with Serbia (Bataković, 2014). To understand the complexities within northern Kosovo, it is essential to consider the historical context. Kursani (2012) offers a detailed analysis, identifying five critical phases that outline the area's tumultuous history. In June 1999, NATO's intervention led to the withdrawal of Serbian military forces, facilitating the consolidation of the Serbian community in the North (particularly around North Mitrovica), under Belgrade's influence. This period saw the initial divisions within Mitrovica, further entrenched by the government-supported "Bridge Watchers," symbolizing emerging community divides. The situation deteriorated further in February 2000, when the murder of 11 Kosovo Albanians by Serbian extremists triggered a significant exodus of Kosovo Albanians from the North, radically altering the demographic landscape. This event highlighted tensions and revealed limitations within international peacekeeping efforts. A tragic event attributed to Serbs in March 2004 ignited widespread ethnic violence, with casualties and displacement on both sides. This outbreak underscored the region's volatile interethnic relations and the continuing struggle to maintain peace amidst deep-rooted animosity. Serbian defiance escalated dramatically after Kosovo's independence declaration in February/March 2008, with extremists burning border posts. This period highlighted challenges confronting the international community, especially the EULEX mission, in establishing functional rule of law amidst ongoing opposition to Kosovo's sovereignty. The Kosovo government's attempts to exert control and enforce trade measures in July 2011 ignited further violent clashes, reasserting a status quo of heightened radicalization and division. This phase demonstrates the constraints

upon both local governance and international peacekeeping missions when navigating entrenched political and ethnic divides within northern Kosovo (Kursani, 2012).

5.4.2. Key Developmental Phases in Northern Kosovo (2011-2019)

This part of analysis delineates key developmental phases in northern Kosovo from 2011 to 2019. This period provides crucial historical context for understanding the ongoing crisis in the region. A subsequent section will draw upon these findings to examine the impact of Vetëvendosje's rise to power in 2019 and their influence on the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo from 2020 to 2023. The following phases have been identified within the 2011-2019 timeline:

The EU-facilitated Brussels Agreement of April 2013 sought to normalize relations between Serbia and Kosovo (Bieber, 2015; Demjaha, 2017), outlining steps to integrate Serbian-majority municipalities in northern Kosovo into Kosovo's legal framework while granting them a degree of autonomy. Key provisions included the establishment of an Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities, the integration of Serbian police and judiciary into Kosovo's institutions, and the holding of local elections in northern Kosovo under Kosovo law. The implementation phase was fraught with difficulties, facing resistance from both Serbian and Albanian communities. The first local elections in October 2013, mandated by the Brussels Agreement, saw low Serbian turnout alongside instances of violence and intimidation (Bieber, 2015; Zupančič, 2018). The Serbian government's and local Serb leaders' boycott of the elections fueled interpretations of implicit recognition of Kosovo's independence, highlighting entrenched opposition to the Agreement.

In August 2015, Kosovo and Serbia reached EU-facilitated agreements on energy, telecommunications, and freedom of movement. The energy agreement aimed to resolve long-standing disputes over ownership and operation of the strategic Ujmani hydropower plant and electricity transmission in northern Kosovo. The telecommunications agreement focused on allocating a specific telephone code to Kosovo, while the freedom of movement agreement sought to facilitate the movement of people and goods between the two countries. However, the implementation of these agreements has been slow and marred by political obstacles and technical complexities.

The Serb-dominated municipality of North Mitrovica's construction of a wall near the Ibar River bridge in January 2017 exacerbated tensions. Long a symbol of division between Serbian and Albanian communities, the bridge became even more contentious. The construction

triggered protests, with the Albanian community viewing the wall as an attempt to further solidify the city's division. This incident poignantly highlighted the fragility of the reconciliation process and the persistence of deeply rooted ethnic divisions in the region. In November 2018, Kosovo imposed a 100% tariff on goods imported from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, in direct response to Serbia's ongoing efforts to block Kosovo's membership in international organizations. This trade embargo led to a significant escalation of tensions between Kosovo and Serbia and ultimately a breakdown in the EU-facilitated dialogue. The economic impact of the tariff was substantial, with Serbian businesses suffering considerable losses and Kosovo facing shortages of essential goods.

5.4.3. Tariffs, Reciprocity Measures, and Shifting Political Dynamics (2019-2021)

Since 2020, Kosovo's political landscape has undergone a significant shift, largely influenced by the ascent of the Vetëvendosje, which adopted a more assertive stance on issues pertaining to Kosovo's sovereignty and territorial integrity, particularly in northern Kosovo. The Vetëvendosje-led government, which assumed power in February 2021 under the leadership of PM Albin Kurti, has endeavored to challenge the status quo in the north and advocate for greater integration of the Serb-majority municipalities into Kosovo's political and legal framework.

One of the Kurti government's initial major decisions was the lifting of a 100% tariff on goods imported from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which had been introduced by the previous government in November 2018. The tariffs, viewed as a retaliatory measure against Serbia's campaign to obstruct Kosovo's membership in international organizations, had a considerable impact on the economy of northern Kosovo, which is heavily dependent on trade with Serbia (Emini & Morina, 2021). In April 2020, the Kurti government decided to partially lift the tariffs, replacing them with a system of reciprocity measures.

Another significant decision undertaken by the Kurti government in September 2021 was the deployment of Kosovo Police special units to northern Kosovo to enforce a decision requiring vehicles entering from Serbia to use temporary Kosovo license plates. The decision, announced in June 2021, required all vehicles entering Kosovo from Serbia to replace their Serbian-issued license plates with temporary Kosovo plates, valid for 60 days (Emini & Morina, 2021).

5.4.4. Tensions Escalate over Identity Documents and License Plates (2022-2023)

In the summer of 2022, Kosovo introduced new legislation requiring Kosovo-issued identity documents and vehicle license plates for all residents, including ethnic Serbs. This legislation, set to be implemented on July 31, 2022, directly challenged Serbia's claims to sovereignty over Kosovo's northern municipalities. Serbia responded by accusing Kosovo of employing disinformation tactics, while President Aleksandar Vucic sought diplomatic intervention from the international community. The rising tensions and potential for instability in northern Kosovo prompted the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) to signal its readiness to intervene. This was followed by the deployment of KFOR troops and the implementation of security measures. Under pressure from the international community, Kurti eventually agreed to postpone the implementation of the new measures for 30 days to allow for further negotiations with Serbia.

In the following months, the Kurti government continued its efforts to assert Kosovo's authority in the north while engaging in the EU-facilitated dialogue with Serbia. Serbian President Vucic and Kosovo PM Kurti convened in Brussels on August 18, 2022, at the headquarters of the EU diplomatic service, but the meeting concluded without reaching an agreement. Following the unsuccessful talks, Vucic asserted that the government in Pristina was resolute in its efforts to expel Kosovo Serbs from northern Kosovo as the deadlock over proposed border regulations persisted. Amid the ongoing impasse, Serbia claimed that seven countries had revoked their recognition of Kosovo's independence, although these countries were not explicitly named.

While initial talks proved fruitless, ongoing diplomatic efforts facilitated by the EU bore fruit. By the end of August, Serbia and Kosovo reached a consensus on a new border policy. This agreement stipulated that Albanians from Kosovo will not be issued accompanying documents to enter Serbia. Reciprocally, the Kosovo side will not issue accompanying documents to Serbs from Kosovo who possess Serbian identity cards, allowing them to freely cross into central Serbia and return to Kosovo. Despite the positive tone of the talks, progress in the normalization process remained slow, and tensions in the north continued to simmer. In October 2022, a series of incidents in the north, including attacks on Kosovo Police officers and the destruction of property, raised concerns about the potential for further escalation. In response to the incidents, the Kurti government announced a new set of measures aimed at strengthening the rule of law and combating organized crime in the north. The measures

included increased police patrols, the establishment of new security checkpoints, and the deployment of additional prosecutors and judges to the region. The announcement of the new measures was met with mixed reactions from the international community and the Serb community in the north. While some welcomed the government's efforts to strengthen the rule of law and combat crime, others criticized the measures as heavy-handed and potentially provocative.

In December 2022, tensions in the north escalated once again when a group of Serb protesters blocked a key road in the region, demanding the release of a Serb man who had been arrested on suspicion of involvement in organized crime. The blockade, which lasted for several days, led to clashes between protesters and Kosovo Police, and raised concerns about the potential for further violence. In a context of heightened tensions, Serbia's Defense Ministry placed its armed forces on high alert at the beginning of November in response to the ongoing dispute over car license plates. Throughout the year, Kosovo had repeatedly attempted to compel its Serb minority to adopt Kosovo-issued license plates. This initiative subsequently led to violent clashes between police and local Serbs.

The Serb List, the largest party representing Serbs in Kosovo, withdrew from Kosovo's central institutions and municipalities in the north of the country on November 6, 2022. The decision came after the Kosovo authorities suspended Nenad Gjuriq, the director of the Kosovo Police for the northern region, for refusing to implement the Kosovo government's decision to re-register cars with Serbian-issued license plates with those of the Republic of Kosovo. Furthermore, Serb members of the Kosovo Police, the judiciary, and the prosecution in the north also resigned, taking off their police uniforms. Kosovo's Interior Minister Xhelal Sveçla and PM Kurti confirmed this withdrawal, citing 578 police resignations in the north region.

In December 2022, Serbia and Kosovo reached an agreement to de-escalate tensions surrounding the car license plate dispute. The agreement was reached following negotiations in Brussels facilitated by EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell. The postponement of local elections in four northern municipalities, prompted by security concerns following attacks on election centers, led to heightened instability. Belgrade's request to deploy Serbian security forces in Kosovo under UN Resolution 1244, along with the arrest of a former Serb police officer, further intensified the situation. This resulted in Serbs erecting roadblocks at border crossings, while Serbia increased its combat readiness, and an Albanian national was arrested on terrorism charges.

Diplomatic efforts in early 2023 coincided with a decrease in tensions, as Kosovo Serbs removed barricades following an appeal from Serbian President Vucic. This appeal was reportedly influenced by assurances received from the US and EU that individuals involved in erecting the barricades would not be arrested. Furthermore, a shooting incident in southern Kosovo on January 6, 2023, involving a Kosovo Security Force member, resulted in injuries to two ethnic Serbs in the vicinity of Prishtina. The motive remains under investigation. Kosovo's PM and President condemned the incident, with the perpetrator facing swift arrest and legal proceedings. Local Serbs responded with a road blockade.

In February 2023, another Kosovo police operation targeting suspected smuggling and organized crime in the north sparked a strong reaction from the Serb community. The operation involved the deployment of special police units and resulted in the arrests of several dozen individuals, including some Serb officials. Serbia condemned the operation as a provocation and a violation of previous agreements. Serb residents in the north responded with protests and roadblocks, demanding the release of those arrested and the withdrawal of Kosovo police from the region. In a statement, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić called the operation a "brutal attack" on the Serb community in Kosovo and demanded an immediate end to what he described as "provocations and unilateral actions" by the Kosovo government.

PM Kurti, defended the police operation as a legitimate and necessary action to combat organized crime and strengthen the rule of law in the north. Kurti argued that the operation was conducted in accordance with Kosovo's laws and constitution and that it was not targeting any particular community or ethnicity. In the days following the operation, Serb residents in the north organized protests and erected roadblocks to demand the release of those arrested and the withdrawal of Kosovo police from the region. The protests, which attracted hundreds of participants, were largely peaceful but also marked by some incidents of violence and intimidation against Kosovo police and Albanian residents in the north.

Following European Union-facilitated negotiations in Brussels, Serbia and Kosovo reached a preliminary agreement in February 2023. This agreement, consisting of 11 points, sought to establish the principles of good neighborly relations. Additionally, it addressed the mutual recognition of official state documents, including passports and license plates, between the two states. On March 18th, the parties convened in Ohrid, North Macedonia, to establish an implementation plan for the agreement. The meeting was seen as an important opportunity to restart the normalization process and prevent further escalation in northern Kosovo.

5.4.5. Local Elections Boycott and Ensuing Protests (2023)

In April 2023, extraordinary local elections took place in the predominantly Serb municipalities of North Mitrovica, Zubin Potok, Zvečan, and Leposavic in Kosovo, initiated after the resignation of Serbian mayors, judges, and police officers. This move aimed to fill the vacancies. However, the Serbian List, the main political party representing Kosovo's Serb population, called for a boycott, accusing the Kosovo government and PM Albin Kurti of attempting to "occupy" these municipalities with what they termed "puppet mayors (RFE/RL, 2023). The impact of the boycott was undeniable, with the Central Election Commission (CEC) reporting an abysmal voter turnout of 3.47% (1,567 out of 45,095 registered voters) across the four municipalities. Despite a substantial number of candidates vying for positions (11 mayoral and 60 city council aspirants), the lack of engagement underscored the effectiveness of the boycott. This politically charged atmosphere paved the way for victories by two Kosovo-Albanian parties, Vetëvendosje and the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK). The attempted entry of these newly elected Albanian mayors into municipal buildings in May 2023 sparked protests in the Serb-majority municipalities of Zvečan, Leposavic, and Zubin Potok. Kosovo police responded with tear gas to disperse the protests, while tensions escalated further as Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić placed the Serbian military on high alert and ordered troop deployments closer to the Kosovo border. The situation reached a critical juncture on May 29th in Zvečan, where clashes erupted between Serbian demonstrators and KFOR troops after the former disregarded warnings and resorted to aggressive tactics, including throwing Molotov cocktails and projectiles at the peacekeeping forces. This resulted in injuries to 25 KFOR personnel.

Throughout the summer of 2023, the situation in Kosovo's Serb-majority municipalities remained tense. The international actors, recognizing the potential for wider regional instability, intensified diplomatic efforts to de-escalate tensions and foster dialogue between the Kosovo government and the Serbian List. The European Union and the United States played a leading role in these efforts, with EU High Representative Josep Borrell and U.S. Special Envoy Gabriel Escobar holding a series of meetings with both Kosovo PM Albin Kurti and Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić in June 2023. The international actors emphasized the need for restraint and urged both parties to resume talks aimed at finding a peaceful resolution to the ongoing disputes. On the ground, the newly elected ethnic Albanian mayors faced significant challenges in asserting their authority within the Serb-majority municipalities. They

encountered ongoing resistance from the local population and the Serbian List, which continued to delegitimize the April 2023 elections.

5.4.6 International Actors' Compliance Power in northern Kosovo ongoing Crisis

As emphasized in the previous section, tension has long existed in Kosovo's northern Serb-majority municipalities. This tension escalated in November 2022 when a Kosovo government decision on vehicle license plates led to mass resignations by Kosovo Serb officials in these municipalities. This sparked snap elections for April 2023, which saw ethnic Albanian mayors elected in a vote largely boycotted by local Serbs. Attempts to install these new mayors in May 2023 were met with resistance, leading to clashes between police and Serb protesters. The situation further escalated, drawing international attention and prompting Serbia to increase its military readiness along the border. It is in this context of the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo that some international actors have utilized compliance mechanisms, including political pressure and economic sanctions, in an attempt to influence Kosovo's actions and de-escalate the situation.

The United States has clearly expressed its disapproval of PM Kurti's actions through the use of compliance and enforcement mechanisms. This disapproval was prominently demonstrated by Kosovo's exclusion from the "Defender Europe 2023" exercises. The United States has also indicated the potential for further consequences. Ambassador Jeffrey Hovenier, speaking on May 30th, directly linked this decision to Kosovo's disregard for Washington's calls for de-escalation in the North, characterizing the crisis as "unnecessary" and emphasizing the forced entry into municipal buildings was conducted without U.S. coordination and against Washington's strong advice (U.S. Embassy Pristina, 2023b).

Furthermore, Ambassador Hovenier signaled a potential shift in U.S. priorities regarding Kosovo. He stated that, due to the current circumstances, the United States may be less enthusiastic about supporting certain Kosovan interests, namely engagement with non-recognizing states and efforts to advance Kosovo's European or Euro-Atlantic trajectory (U.S. Embassy Pristina, 2023c).

This stance aligns with an earlier statement on May 26th where U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken strongly condemned Kosovo's forced entry into municipal buildings in the north. Blinken's statement highlighted that these actions were taken against the advice of the United States and its European partners. He further characterized the escalation as needless and warned that it would undermine efforts towards normalizing Kosovo-Serbia relations, and would have

“consequences for our bilateral relations with Kosovo” (Blinken, 2023). Moreover, France, Italy, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States issued a joint statement condemning Kosovo's decision to forcibly enter municipal buildings in northern Kosovo, despite their calls for restraint (Ministère De L'Europe, 2023).

Noteworthy, the ambassador of the United States in Serbia, who was involved in the late 90s peace negotiations with Serbia, made a statement that indicated significant tensions between the US and Kosovo. His words suggested potential consequences for the relationship, with the US embassy in Pristina likely playing a crucial role in addressing the situation. This statement came as the EU signaled its own concerns, with spokesman Peter Stano announcing that the 27 EU member states had “unanimously” agreed to take “reversible and temporary measures” against Kosovo.

On June 23rd, 2023, the European Union followed the United States in imposing sanctions against Kosovo. These sanctions mirrored those enacted by the U.S. and included a reduction in high-level visits, contacts, and financial cooperation, significantly impacting Kosovo's need for assistance (Financial Times, 2023). At the time of writing, these sanctions remain in place.

Despite mounting pressure, Kurti remained defiant, rejecting demands from the U.S. and EU to withdraw special police from the north, remove recently installed mayors from municipal buildings, and initiate new elections. He insisted that bringing the Serbs responsible for the May 29th attacks on NATO and Kosovo police to justice was a necessary prerequisite (Euronews Albania, 2023). Moreover, he proposed a five-point plan as an alternative solution for de-escalation. This plan will be further elaborated upon in the section addressing alternatives presented by Vetevendosje as a local actor.

In the case of the ongoing crisis in the north of Kosovo, the European Union and the United States have employed various forms of compliance power in an attempt to influence Kosovo's actions. The European Union has imposed sanctions on Kosovo and issued public statements critical of its conduct. Additionally, the EU has linked Kosovo's potential membership to its compliance with EU directives. The United States has exerted diplomatic pressure, with high-ranking officials publicly emphasizing the importance of Kosovo adhering to US recommendations. The US has further reinforced this pressure through the use of economic and diplomatic sanctions.

5.4.7. Findings in Relation to Hypothesis 1

The cross-case analysis of the international actors' use of compliance power in relation to the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo reveals a consistent pattern of influence exerted by external stakeholders, particularly the United States and the European Union, in shaping Kosovo's post-independence peacebuilding process. In both cases, international actors employed a range of strategies, including political pressure, economic leverage, and diplomatic engagement, to align Kosovo's actions with their preferred vision of stability and peace. In the ASM case, the United States and the European Union consistently applied pressure on the Kurti government to establish the Association, despite local concerns about its potential impact on Kosovo's sovereignty and the overwhelming public perception of the ASM as a risk to the nation's stability. The international actors' insistence on the swift implementation of the ASM, often framed as a crucial step towards Kosovo's Euro-Atlantic integration, underscores the asymmetric power dynamics at play, with external stakeholders wielding significant influence over Kosovo's decision-making processes. The specificity of the ASM's proposed structure, as outlined in Derek Chollet's letter, further suggests that Kosovo's input in the agreement's final form may be limited.

Similarly, during the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo, international actors rapidly employed compliance power to compel Kosovo to de-escalate tensions by withdrawing special police and recently installed mayors from Serb-majority municipalities. The United States and the European Union imposed swift sanctions, reduced financial assistance, and linked Kosovo's compliance to its prospects for Euro-Atlantic integration. This swift application of coercive measures underscores international actors' willingness to utilize their economic and political resources to shape outcomes.

The findings from both cases support Hypothesis 1, which posited that international actors leverage their economic, political, and diplomatic resources to exert coercive pressure on Kosovo, shaping the peacebuilding process and the outcomes of the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo according to their preferred vision. The cross-case analysis reveals how external stakeholders, guided by the liberal peace framework, seek to assert their influence and vision on Kosovo's post-conflict trajectory, even in the face of local resistance and alternative approaches proposed by actors like Vetëvendosje. These findings align with the hybrid peace framework, which emphasizes the complex interplay between international and local actors in post-conflict peacebuilding. The cases illustrate the tensions that arise when

international actors, driven by their own agendas and conceptions of stability, attempt to impose their preferred solutions on local contexts, often without fully accounting for the unique historical, political, and social dynamics at play. Alternative visions of local actors, such as Vetëvendosje, highlighted the contested nature of the peacebuilding process and the ongoing struggle for agency in the face of external pressure.

The cross-case comparison and synthesis of findings provide valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of compliance power in post-conflict peacebuilding, particularly in the context of Kosovo's unique post-independence trajectory. By illuminating the strategies and mechanisms employed by international actors to shape the peacebuilding process, this analysis contributes to the broader theoretical and empirical understanding of hybrid peace dynamics. It highlights the challenges for local actors seeking to assert their vision for the future.

Moreover, the findings underscore the importance of critically examining the role of international actors in post-conflict settings, and the potential unintended consequences of their interventions. The cases of the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo demonstrate how the application of compliance power, even when intended to promote stability and conflict resolution, can sometimes exacerbate local tensions and undermine the legitimacy of local actors and institutions. This highlights the need for a more nuanced and context-sensitive approach to peacebuilding, one that prioritizes genuine dialogue, local ownership, and the accommodation of diverse perspectives and aspirations.

In conclusion, the cross-case analysis of international actors' compliance power in the ASM and the ongoing northern Kosovo crisis strongly supports Hypothesis 1. This study highlights the complex and contested nature of Kosovo's unique post-conflict peacebuilding trajectory. By examining the strategies and mechanisms used by external stakeholders to shape the peacebuilding process, the analysis advances our theoretical and empirical understanding of hybrid peace dynamics. Importantly, the findings emphasize the challenges local actors face in asserting their agency under these conditions, underscoring the critical need to reexamine the role of international actors in post-conflict settings. Prevailing liberal peacebuilding models must be questioned, and replaced with nuanced, context-sensitive approaches that prioritize genuine dialogue, local ownership, and the accommodation of diverse perspectives. This research exposes the inherent tensions and power imbalances that arise when international actors seek to impose their visions of peace in complex local contexts.

5.5. Incentivizing Power of International Actors

5.5.1. Discussion on definition of incentivizing power

Incentivization, as the second dimension of the framework, involves a complex interplay of strategies employed by international peacebuilders to encourage local compliance and cooperation in advancing externally-driven reform agendas. This sphere encompasses a range of economic and ideological incentives, including aid, investment, institutional capacity-building, and the promotion of liberal values such as democratization, empowerment, and equal opportunity (Mac Ginty, 2011; Richmond & Mitchell, 2012). The incentives offered by the liberal peace are deeply rooted in the principles of liberalism itself, proposing a combination of moral and material rewards designed to foster collaboration for shared social progress. The moral incentives offered by the liberal peace are exemplified by the promise of "internationally guaranteed peace" for groups entrenched in violent conflict (Mac Ginty, 2011, p. 81). This often takes the form of pressure from the "international community" to engage in conciliatory gestures and rejoin the "community of nations" (Mac Ginty, 2011, p. 81). However, the effectiveness of this incentive in actually promoting compliance remains uncertain.

In contrast, the material incentives provided by the liberal peace are substantial and far-reaching. As Mac Ginty (2011) notes, "The extent of resources that can be mobilized in the name of the liberal peace is not to be underestimated" (p. 81). Billions of dollars have been invested in peacebuilding efforts in countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Given the economic deprivation often experienced by post-conflict societies, "liberal peace actors may be among the few sources of new resource injections. This can award liberal peace actors' significant power" (Mac Ginty, 2011, p. 82). Moreover, the funds provided by liberal peace actors can be seen as "a 'bribe' to reward behaviour deemed compliant" and "to discipline behaviour regarded as non-compliant" (Mac Ginty, 2011, p. 83). This raises questions about the voluntary nature of support for the liberal peace, as "the relationship depended on cash from liberal peace agents" (Mac Ginty, 2011, p. 83). However, dependence on such funding from liberal actors raises questions of legitimacy and perceptions of international "bribery" to advance their reform agendas. Though incentivization facilitates the promotion of liberal ideals, reliance on outside capital inherently undermines local ownership and self-governance.

5.5.2. Incentives, the ASM, and the North Kosovo Crisis

The analysis of international actors' strategies revealed a range of incentives employed to encourage Kosovo's implementation of the ASM. Due to the identified close relation between the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo and the implementation of the ASM, both of which the international actors have tried to address jointly as a means of resolving the ongoing tensions between Kosovo and Serbia, the incentives for both cases have been outlined in a single section rather than separately.

The primary finding of the analysis revealed that the European Union consistently emphasized the ASM as a key condition for Kosovo's progress on its European path. This linkage was evident in official communications and pronouncements, where the EU explicitly tied the implementation of the ASM to various benefits associated with EU membership, such as access to substantial EU funds and financial assistance, increased trade and economic opportunities through access to the single European market, and enhanced political and security cooperation with other EU member states. For instance, the 2023 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy, published on November 8, 2023, clearly indicated that ASM was vital in that regard, stating: "Agreement on the path to normalization and its Implementation Annex as well as other agreements reached in the EU-facilitated dialogue without further delay or preconditions. This includes the establishment of the Association/Community of Serb Majority Municipalities. Normalization of relations is an essential condition on the European path of both Parties. Both risks losing important opportunities in the absence of progress" (2023 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy, p. 17).

The findings also showed that for Kosovo, which seeks to strengthen its economy, improve the living standards of its citizens, and enhance its regional and international standing, the prospect of EU membership with these associated benefits may serve as a significant motivator. The EU has consistently emphasized the linkage between the ASM and Kosovo's European aspirations, potentially leveraging this incentive. The EU's approach appears to highlight the importance of the ASM in the broader context of Kosovo's political and economic development, as well as its integration into the European community. By tying the implementation of the ASM to the benefits of EU membership, the EU may have created an incentive structure that could encourage Kosovo to take steps towards the establishment of the ASM, and the de-escalation of the crisis in the north.

Thirdly, the 2023 joint statement by France, Germany, and Italy underscored the critical link between Kosovo's implementation of the ASM and its aspirations for enhanced international

standing (Macron, Scholz, & Meloni, 2023). This position aligned with the stipulations outlined in the Ohrid Agreement, a French-German initiative that directly tied progress on EU accession for both Kosovo and Serbia to the normalization of their relations. The Atlantic Council highlighted that the agreement presented Kosovo with significant opportunities for wider recognition within the European sphere, including potential membership in NATO, the EU, and the Council of Europe (Maliqi, 2023).

The Ohrid Agreement outlined a comprehensive framework for the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia. Key points included a commitment to honor all past dialogue agreements, the establishment of specific arrangements for the Serbian community in Kosovo, and the creation of a joint monitoring committee chaired by the EU. The agreement also stipulated that both parties would refrain from blocking the implementation of any articles and that all discussions related to implementation would occur within the EU-facilitated dialogue.

Furthermore, incentives for adhering to the agreement were directly tied to the EU accession process. The agreement and its implementation annex became integral parts of the respective EU accession processes for both Kosovo and Serbia. Additionally, a donor conference was planned to establish an investment and financial aid package for both parties, with disbursement contingent upon full implementation of the agreement's provisions. Conversely, failure to honor obligations could result in negative consequences for their EU accession processes and financial aid received from the EU.

In summary, the analysis of international actors' strategies revealed a multi-faceted approach to incentivizing Kosovo's implementation of the ASM and resolving the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo. The EU consistently emphasized the ASM as a key condition for Kosovo's progress on its European path, linking it to various benefits associated with EU membership. The 2023 joint statement by France, Germany, and Italy, along with the Ohrid Agreement, further underscored the critical link between the ASM, the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, and their respective EU accession processes. The agreement outlined a comprehensive framework for normalization, with incentives and consequences directly tied to the EU accession process and financial aid.

5.5.3. Findings in relation to Hypothesis 2

The analysis of the strategies employed by international actors in promoting the resolution of the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo reveals a consistent pattern of utilizing

incentives to encourage cooperation from local actors. The European Union (EU) has emerged as a key player in this regard, consistently linking the implementation of the ASM to Kosovo's progress on its European path. Official communications and pronouncements, such as the 2023 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy, explicitly tie the establishment of the ASM to various benefits associated with EU membership, including access to substantial EU funds, financial assistance, increased trade and economic opportunities through the single European market, and enhanced political and security cooperation with other EU member states.

The joint statement by France, Germany, and Italy in 2023, along with the Ohrid Agreement, further reinforces this incentive-based approach. The agreement directly links the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, including the implementation of the ASM, to their respective EU accession processes. It outlines a comprehensive framework for normalization, with specific incentives tied to the EU accession process and financial aid. The agreement stipulates that progress on EU accession for both Kosovo and Serbia is contingent upon the normalization of their relations, while a planned donor conference aims to establish an investment and financial aid package for both parties, with disbursement dependent on the full implementation of the agreement's provisions.

The findings provide substantial support for Hypothesis 2, which posits that international actors employ incentives such as economic assistance, political support, and the prospect of integration into international institutions to encourage cooperation from local actors in implementing their agenda in the case of the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo.

The EU's consistent emphasis on the ASM as a key condition for Kosovo's progress towards EU membership, coupled with the potential benefits associated with this process, strongly aligns with the hypothesis's assertion that the prospect of integration into international institutions serves as a powerful incentive for local actors to cooperate with the international agenda. The 2023 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy, which explicitly links the establishment of the ASM to Kosovo's European path, provides compelling evidence in support of this claim.

Moreover, the Ohrid Agreement's provisions, which tie progress on EU accession and financial aid to the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, including the implementation of the ASM, demonstrate the strategic use of economic assistance and political support as incentives to encourage cooperation from local actors. The agreement's stipulation that failure to honor obligations could result in negative consequences for EU accession processes and

financial aid further underscores the potency of these incentives in shaping the behavior of local actors.

In conclusion, the analysis of international actors' strategies in promoting the resolution of the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo provides compelling evidence that supports Hypothesis 2. The EU and other international actors have strategically employed a range of incentives, including the prospect of EU membership, economic assistance, and political support, to encourage cooperation from local actors in implementing their agenda.

The current analysis does not examine how Vetëvendosje perceives and responds to these incentives offered by international actors. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics between international and local actors in shaping the peacebuilding process in post-independence Kosovo, the next section will investigate Vetëvendosje's stance and actions in relation to the international agenda.

5.6. Vetëvendosje's Navigation and Resistance

5.6.1. Discussion on local agency and resistance

The third dimension, Resistance by Local Actors, delves into the multifaceted ways in which local entities navigate, contest, or pragmatically subvert aspects of externally-promoted peacebuilding prescriptions. Mac Ginty (2011) underscores the agency of local actors in hybridizing the liberal peace by leveraging their contextual knowledge, territorial positionality, resilient social networks, and resonant cultural capital as sources of legitimacy and counter-narratives (p. 84). This dimension foregrounds local perspectives by analyzing how local stakeholders interpret, resist, co-opt, subvert, or challenge external peacebuilding agendas, shedding light on their capacity to shape peacebuilding trajectories in the face of structural constraints.

The extent to which local actors can subvert or renegotiate the liberal peace is determined by two key variables. The first is the social, political, and economic capital possessed by local actors, which may be eroded by war. The second is the willingness and ability of liberal peace actors to impose their version of statebuilding or peace implementation without considering local actors. The liberal peace spectrum ranges from "liberal peace-max" (non-negotiable imposition) to "liberal peace-lite" (more cooperative and emancipatory) (Mac Ginty, 2011, pp. 85-86). Subversion, resistance, and negotiation that hybridize the liberal peace often occur

over extended periods, as international attention is not sustained indefinitely. While many interventions aim to develop locally sustainable institutions and governance systems, this assumes local actors will accept international tutelage and replicate systems without local interpretation. In practice, local systems of governance, patronage, and clientelism often intertwine with internationally sponsored systems to produce a hybrid, particularly as international oversight diminishes over time (Mac Ginty, 2011). By foregrounding local perspectives and analyzing how local stakeholders interpret, navigate, resist, co-opt, subvert, or challenge external peacebuilding agendas, the Resistance by Local Actors dimension highlights the complex interplay between international and local actors in shaping post-conflict environments.

5.6.2. Vetëvendosje's engagement with compliance power on the case of the ASM

Despite its initial strong opposition to the ASM, Vetëvendosje also demonstrated a degree of partial compliance and strategic adaptation in its engagement with the issue. As the party assumed a more prominent role in government, it recognized the need to engage constructively with international actors and find a compromise solution that could address both local concerns and external expectations. This was demonstrated through Vetëvendosje's participation in EU-facilitated normalization of relations with Serbia dialogue, where the ASM has been a focal point. However, Vetëvendosje has consistently maintained that any engagement with Serbia must be based on the principles of reciprocity and respect for Kosovo's sovereignty. "Reciprocity in relations is dictated by our sovereignty. We cannot fail to exercise the sovereignty that we have declared, just as we cannot be neutral towards ourselves or make decisions that create dualism in our legal system" (RFE/RL, 2022a) Kurti said during an address to the General Council of the Vetëvendosje.

Furthermore, Glauk Konjufca, the Speaker of the Kosovo Assembly and a high-ranking official in Vetëvendosje, stated that the original concept behind the Agreement for Normalization of Relations was that the establishment of an Association of Serb-majority municipalities could not proceed without mutual recognition between Kosovo and Serbia. Konjufca emphasized, "The only key to moving the dialogue forward is the Association together with recognition; otherwise, there can be no progress in the dialogue, and it remains a problem." He further added that "it is Kosovo's responsibility to find a way for the Association to be in line with the Constitution and not to undermine the legal order of the country" (RFE/RL, 2023e).

Indeed, the Ohrid Agreement is a reflection of that, as two key points there have been the creation of the ASM for Kosovo, and for Serbia, the de-facto recognition of Kosovo. Kurti signed the agreement, unlike President Vucic. Kurti's accepted, therefore, showing a significant step-back on the earlier political stances on the issue. However, while Kurti expressed support for the agreement, and afterwards stated that he was willing to sign it, the Serbian president did not (Taylor, 2023). Therefore, while this was celebrated as an achievement by the international actors involved, suggests that it is not an agreement when both parties do not agree. Joseph Borrell, stated the following after the meeting "And we have been discussing for 12 hours about it. And I am glad to announce that, finally, after 12 hours, we have a deal, we have an agreement on how to do it. So, I can announce that Kosovo and Serbia have agreed on the Implementation Annex of the Agreement on the Path to Normalization of Relations between them, between Kosovo and Serbia. As part of the Annex, the Parties have fully committed to honor all Articles of the Agreement, and implement all their respective obligations expediently and in good faith" (Borrel, 2023).

Furthermore, relating exactly to the ASM the same stated that Kurti had agreed to launch it immediately: "To implement Article 7 of the Agreement, Kosovo has agreed to launch immediately – and when I am saying immediately, I mean immediately - negotiations within the EU-facilitated Dialogue on establishing specific arrangements and guarantees to ensure an appropriate level of self-management for the Serbian community in Kosovo" (Borrel, 2023).

On the other hand, once Serbia voted against Kosovo joining the Council of Europe in 2023, going de-facto against the Ohrid agreement, that stipulated that the path of Kosovo to joining international organizations would not be interrupted. One day after, Kurti insisted on the implementation of the stating same agreement "must be implemented in full and as soon as possible. So, the text is clear, it requires implementation. It is unfortunate that the other side has said that it will implement it partially, which is another way of saying that it will not implement it" (RFE/RL, 2023b).

Faced with substantial political pressure from international actors regarding both the ASM issue and the crisis in the North, the government of Kosovo resisted. It framed this pressure as a threat to Kosovo's sovereignty, emphasizing the sovereignty of the people. Kurti's statement on the pressure exerted on him clearly illustrated this position:

"But the people voted for me; the ambassador didn't appoint me. You needed to understand that. The people of Kosovo voted me in, and the people of Kosovo had the power to vote me

out. The prime minister wasn't an appointed position – the prime minister was elected by the true source of sovereignty, the people" (KOHA, 2023).

The same sentiment regarding the European Union's envoy, Miroslav Lajcak, has been echoed in discussions surrounding the Association of Serb Municipalities (ASM). The government of Kosovo has consistently maintained that Lajcak has positioned himself "against Kosovo" and that Serbia's conditionality for Kosovo to form the ASM has been adopted by EU envoys as well (Tela & Arton Konushevci, 2023).

Elaborating on these observations, the head of the parliament of Kosovo stated, "Firstly, I don't consider those to be accusations. Rather, they were observations on Lajcak's working methods. It has been noted from the outset that the positions Lajcak articulates tend to initially align with Serbia's stance. He then attempts, through various mechanisms and even the wording of his proposed solutions, to establish these as a starting point for Serbia's position – essentially, accommodating Serbia's positioning most favorably" (RFE/RL, 2023f).

These statements highlight the perception among Kosovo's political leadership that the EU envoy's approach to the ASM issue has been biased towards Serbia's interests. The head of parliament's remarks suggest a concern that Lajcak's methodology in proposing solutions may be skewed in favor of accommodating Serbia's position, potentially at the expense of Kosovo's interests and sovereignty.

The case of the ASM agreement demonstrates Vetëvendosje's complex navigation of compliance power, combining elements of resistance, partial compliance, and strategic adaptation. While maintaining its principled opposition to aspects of the agreement that it perceived as threatening to Kosovo's sovereignty, the party also recognized the need to engage pragmatically with international actors and find a compromise solution that could advance its broader peacebuilding agenda. As PM Kurti stated that the proposal presented to Kosovo was a "take it or leave it" offer, with no room for negotiation. He emphasized that the other side had invested significant effort in securing Kosovo's membership in international organizations and would not accept a rejection. Kurti further warned that any refusal of the proposal would be met with "countermeasures and punitive diplomatic actions" (Marmullaku, 2023).

5.6.3. Vetëvendosje's engagement with the compliance power on the case of the ongoing crisis in the north

Vetëvendosje's criticism of the international community's approach to the crisis in northern Kosovo suggests that the party believes the international community has prioritized short-term stability and accommodation of Serb interests over the long-term consolidation of Kosovo's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The party has also consistently criticized successive Kosovo governments for failing to assert the authority of Kosovo's institutions in the north and making concessions to Belgrade in the EU-facilitated dialogue process.

The ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo, appears to illustrate Vetëvendosje's evolving engagement with compliance power. As tensions escalated in the north, with Serb representatives boycotting local institutions, Vetëvendosje seemingly faced pressure from international actors to de-escalate the situation and find a compromise solution (International Crisis Group, 2023). However, in contrast to the ASM agreement, Vetëvendosje appears to have adopted a more assertive approach in its response to the crisis, insisting on proceeding with local elections in Serb-majority municipalities despite the boycott by Serb representatives. The party's argument for this decision suggests that it was necessary to uphold Kosovo's democratic processes and prevent the re-establishment of parallel institutions that have existed in the north after the war (Konjufca, 2023)

Vetëvendosje's defense of the decision implies that it was a step towards establishing Kosovo's governance over the region, while acknowledging the mayors' limited legitimacy due to the election circumstances. PM Kurti's statement suggests that Vetëvendosje's decision aimed to establish Kosovo's governance over the region, while acknowledging the limited legitimacy of the elected mayors due to the circumstances surrounding the elections. Kurti emphasized the importance of occupying government buildings in Leposaviq, Zubin Potok, and Zvečan, stating that they are assets of the Republic of Kosovo and should not serve as illegal structures created with funds from Belgrade to destabilize Kosovo and promote the idea of a "great Serbian world" (RFE/RL, 2023c).

Vetëvendosje's stance seems to reflect a commitment to Kosovo's sovereignty, a refusal to yield to perceived Serbian provocations, and a critique of the international community's responses. The party has accused Serbia of exacerbating tensions in North Kosovo by allegedly supporting factions that resist Kosovo's sovereignty and influencing the Serb population to boycott local elections. Vetëvendosje maintains that its actions were justified and necessary for the stability and governance of Kosovo. The party has also criticized the European Union for imposing restrictions on Kosovo while allegedly being lenient towards Serbia, particularly for not

sanctioning Serbia despite its alignment with the Russian Federation regarding the aggression in Ukraine.

Vetëvendosje's resistance to international pressure, particularly from the United States and the European Union, appears to be rooted in its insistence that Serbia's refusal to recognize Kosovo's sovereignty and address its wartime past are central to the ongoing crisis. The party seems to criticize what it perceives as a tendency toward appeasement by the democratic West towards Serbia, arguing that a more assertive stance is needed to ensure peace and stability in the region (Mujanović, 2023). Vetëvendosje has accused Serbian President Vučić of inciting trouble in northern Kosovo by allegedly supporting what it refers to as a militia responsible for attacks on Kosovar Albanian journalists and international peacekeepers, highlighting the party's broader contention that Serbia, under Vučić's leadership, remains a destabilizing force in the region.

Furthermore, the Kosovo police's ongoing efforts to target smuggling and organized crime, particularly in the north, suggest Kosovo's claim to full sovereignty, by combating illegal activities in the north, but also by reinforcing the country's authority over its territory.

The international response, including calls for de-escalation and dialogue, suggests the complex dynamics that Vetëvendosje navigates amidst ongoing tensions. Despite the pressures, Vetëvendosje's actions appear to be part of a larger strategy aimed at consolidating Kosovo's independence and ensuring its governance structures are respected, even in the face of opposition from both within the Serb community in North Kosovo and from international actors.

In summary, Vetëvendosje remained defiant in the face of pressure and sanctions from the United States and the European Union to withdraw special police from northern Kosovo, remove recently installed mayors from municipal buildings, and initiate new elections. As of the time of writing, the mayors continue to occupy the municipal buildings.

5.6.4. Vetëvendosje's responses to incentives on the case of the case of the ASM and the ongoing Crisis in northern Kosovo

Due to the identified close relation between the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo and the implementation of the ASM, both of which the international actors have tried to address jointly as a means of resolving the ongoing tensions between Kosovo and Serbia, the resistance of

Vetëvendosje to incentives for both cases have been outlined in a single section rather than separately.

Vetëvendosje has responded to international incentives regarding the implementation of the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo with a combination of selective utilization and resistance. Vetëvendosje has demonstrated a willingness to engage with international initiatives that align with its goals and values, such as anti-corruption efforts and economic cooperation while leveraging international support to advance its domestic agenda and promote Kosovo's interests (KOHA, 2023a; Crowcroft, 2021). Furthermore, Vetëvendosje aimed to link the ASM negotiations to broader discussions on Kosovo's EU integration prospects, arguing that progress on the agreement implementation should be tied to concrete steps toward the de facto recognition of Kosovo by Serbia. This stance was clearly reflected in Kurti's speech to the Kosovo Parliament, where he stated:

"Since taking over the government in March 2021, we have emphasized the need for a new approach to dialogue – one based on principles and equality, with mutual recognition at its core. The main challenge was the decade-long legacy of dialogue that had failed to integrate the north or produce an agreement on recognition. Our government's primary focus has been on the demands expressed by citizens in the historic elections: jobs, development, justice, and well-being. Alongside this commitment to jobs, justice, and the rule of law throughout the territory, the dialogue process has progressed" (Albin Kurti, 2023). Additionally, the party emphasized the importance of resolving the fate of the nearly 1,600 Kosovo Albanians who disappeared during the Kosovo War, out of a total of 6,065 missing persons (Kosovo Memory Book, 2015; Brzozowski, 2023).

Despite the European Union's consistent emphasis on the ASM as a key condition for Kosovo's progress on its European path, Vetëvendosje has adopted a resistant stance towards these conditional incentives. The party argues that the incentives represent an attempt to pressure Kosovo into accepting a solution that does not fully address its concerns and priorities (Bislimi, 2023). Vetëvendosje insists on the need for a comprehensive agreement that guarantees Kosovo's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the rights and security of all its citizens. This includes the Serb community in the north, who have reportedly faced intimidation from the Serbian List party (backed by the Serbian government) as well as local rival politicians.

As Vetëvendosje increasingly recognizes the need to strategically navigate the incentives set by external actors to advance its domestic agenda, the party has demonstrated a shift towards

selective pragmatism, particularly in its engagement with the European Union, often, by providing alternatives, which will be addressed on the upcoming section. Deputy PM Besnik Bislimi emphasized this dynamic, stating that the government works closely with the international community to express Kosovo's interests and perspectives clearly, while also underlining a willingness to accommodate international priorities as long as they do not compromise Kosovo's national sovereignty (Bislimi, 2023).

Vetëvendosje has leveraged its leading political position (50 percent of the vote) to advocate for a more assertive approach to the northern Kosovo issue, including efforts to strengthen Kosovo's institutions and security forces, aimed at promoting the rule of law and combating corruption and organized crime in the north as well as throughout Kosovo.

In conclusion, Vetëvendosje's response to international incentives regarding the ASM implementation and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo suggests a balance between selective utilization of initiatives that align with its goals and principled resistance to external pressure that may compromise Kosovo's sovereignty and interests. The party's strategic navigation of these incentives reflects its commitment to advancing its domestic agenda while engaging with the international community on its own terms.

5.6.5. Findings in relation to Hypothesis 3

Vetëvendosje's navigation and response to the compliance and incentivizing powers exerted by international actors in Kosovo's peacebuilding process, specifically in relation to the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo, illustrate the complex dynamics of hybrid peace. The party's engagement with these issues reflects a nuanced approach that combines elements of resistance, partial compliance, strategic adaptation, and selective utilization of incentives to advance its agenda while maintaining its commitment to Kosovo's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In the case of the ASM, Vetëvendosje initially demonstrated strong opposition, perceiving the agreement as a threat to Kosovo's sovereignty. However, later on, it recognized the necessity of engaging constructively with international actors to find a compromise solution. This shift was evident in Vetëvendosje's participation in EU-facilitated dialogue with Serbia, where the ASM has been a central point of discussion. The party's approach to the ASM agreement exemplifies a combination of resistance, partial compliance, and strategic adaptation in response to compliance power, as posited by Mac Ginty's (2011) hybrid peace model.

Conversely, in addressing the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo, Vetëvendosje has adopted a more assertive stance, insisting on proceeding with local elections in Serb-majority municipalities despite the boycott by Serb representatives. The party contends that this decision was necessary to uphold Kosovo's democratic processes and prevent the re-establishment of parallel institutions that have existed in the north since the war. Vetëvendosje's position reflects a steadfast commitment to Kosovo's sovereignty, a refusal to yield to perceived Serbian provocations, and a critique of the international community's responses. This assertive approach aligns with the party's ideological orientation and its emphasis on the importance of consolidating Kosovo's statehood and territorial integrity.

In both cases, Vetëvendosje has navigated international incentives through a combination of selective utilization and resistance. The party has shown a willingness to engage with international initiatives that align with its goals and values, such as anti-corruption efforts and economic cooperation, while leveraging international support to advance its domestic agenda and promote Kosovo's interests. However, Vetëvendosje has also exhibited principled resistance to external pressure that may compromise Kosovo's sovereignty and interests, particularly in the context of the ASM implementation and the resolution of the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo.

The findings from the analysis of Vetëvendosje's navigation and response to compliance and incentivizing powers in these two cases largely support Hypothesis 3, which posits that despite power imbalances, Vetëvendosje actively engages with international actors using a range of strategies, including negotiation, subversion, and resistance, to shape the outcomes of these issues in alignment with their own priorities and vision. Vetëvendosje's approach to the ASM agreement and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo demonstrates the party's ability to adapt its strategies in response to changing political circumstances and international pressures, as predicted by the hybrid peace model (Mac Ginty, 2011).

However, the findings also highlight the constraints faced by Vetëvendosje in shaping outcomes, given the significant power imbalances between local and international actors in Kosovo's post-conflict environment. Despite its principled resistance and strategic engagement, the party must continuously navigate the persistent influence of international actors and the legacies of past peacebuilding efforts. This underscores the complexity of the hybrid peace landscape, where local actors must balance their own priorities and visions with the demands and expectations of international stakeholders.

In conclusion, the cross-case comparison and synthesis of findings support the notion that Vetëvendosje, as a local actor, actively navigates and responds to the compliance and incentivizing powers exerted by international actors in Kosovo's peacebuilding process. The party employs a range of strategies to shape outcomes in alignment with its priorities and vision, while operating within the constraints of the hybrid peace landscape. This analysis contributes to the broader theoretical understanding of hybrid peace dynamics by highlighting the agency and adaptability of local actors in post-conflict environments, as well as the challenges they face in navigating the complex interplay between international and local interests. Furthermore, the study's focus on Vetëvendosje's engagement with specific issues, such as the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo, addresses the identified gaps in the existing literature and provides valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of Kosovo's post-independence peacebuilding process.

5.7. Alternative Approaches by Vetëvendosje

5.7.1. Discussion on local agency and alternative peacebuilding approaches

The fourth dimension of the analytical framework, local alternatives, focuses on the capacity of local actors, networks, and structures to promote alternatives to the liberal peace in terms of both the concept and practicalities of peace (Mac Ginty, 2011, p. 86). This dimension acknowledges that while the hegemonic ambitions of the liberal peace often limit the space for alternative forms of peace, local actors can still articulate and pursue their own visions of peace that diverge from, hybridize, or present alternatives to dominant externally-imposed models of peacebuilding.

Mac Ginty (2011) argues that although the liberal peace may focus on macro-level security, politics, and economics, it often leaves other aspects of society outside its purview. In these marginal spaces, people may fashion alternatives to the liberal peace, either purposefully or out of necessity (pp. 86-87). However, given the immense power and ambition of the liberal peace, these local alternatives are likely to be partial and marginal, often conceived as "modifications" rather than fully-fledged systems capable of replacing the liberal peace (p. 87). Alternatives to the liberal peace are more likely to take the form of "organic, everyday citizen action associated with survival and social progress" (Richmond, 2009c, as cited in Mac Ginty, 2011, p. 87) and may not be recognizably political.

In conclusion, the fourth dimension of the analytical framework, is crucial for understanding the potential for locally-driven peacebuilding and the importance of engaging with the diverse perspectives and aspirations of local communities. By analyzing the ways in which local actors articulate and pursue their own visions of peace, the framework highlights the need for a more inclusive and responsive approach to peacebuilding that acknowledges the agency and capacity of local actors to shape their own futures.

5.7.2. Alternative approaches proposed by Vetëvendosje for the ASM

As previously discussed, Vetëvendosje strongly opposed the ASM in its original form, viewing it as a threat to Kosovo's sovereignty and territorial integrity. However, beyond simply rejecting the agreement, the party also put forward its own alternative proposal. Central to Vetëvendosje's alternative proposal was the idea of a decentralized, community-based approach to minority rights protection and representation. Rather than creating a separate, ethnically-defined structure like the ASM, Vetëvendosje argued for empowering local municipalities and communities to take the lead in addressing the specific needs and challenges of their Serb populations.

As a grassroots movement, Vetëvendosje has consistently advocated for a more decentralized and participatory approach to governance and decision-making, which includes strengthening local government institutions, promoting civic engagement and public participation, and creating mechanisms for direct democracy. Early on, one of Kurti's proposed approaches aligned with this vision: developing open communication with Kosovo's Serbian community. Kurti claimed that the dialogue would prioritize local Serbs and their everyday concerns, and this would forge collaboration on political participation and practical matters like community development and economic resources. Additionally, he claimed that the internal dialogue with Serbs is significantly more important than that with Serbia in Brussels (KOHA, 2017b).

This research found that one of the key approaches was the outlining of six conditions for the establishment of the ASM in Kosovo. According to Kurti, the ASM can only be considered by Kosovo if it meets the following conditions: (1) it must be in accordance with the Constitution and current laws of the Republic of Kosovo; (2) it cannot be mono-ethnic and must change its name and it cannot hold any executive powers; (3) the rights of national minorities and the relevant protective mechanisms must intertwine the principle of reciprocity between the two states, as well as take into account European standards and models; (4) before the establishment of the ASM, illegal structures in the north must be dismantled and illegal weapons must be

surrendered; (5) the ASM can only be part of the final agreement after mutual recognition, with Serbia accepting the principles of the UN Charter for Kosovo; and (6) Serbian President [Aleksandar Vučić] should withdraw the letters sent to the five EU member states and others regarding the non-acceptance of Kosovo's application for EU membership" (RFE/RL, 2023b). Kurti outlined his interpretation of the conditions, emphasizing their political nature and basis in universal and European principles.

On May 2nd, 2023, a meeting between Kosovo's PM Albin Kurti and Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić saw Kurti present his counter-proposal for the implementation of Article 7 of the basic agreement concerning the ASM. This proposal was formulated in response to a draft presented by the Management Team of the Draft Statute for the Association, which Kurti criticized as a "wish for a Republika Srpska in Kosovo" (Nacionale, 2023). The rejected draft contained provisions granting the ASM competences to execute laws, organize referendums, and establish institutions, arguing that such powers would undermine Kosovo's sovereignty and foster a parallel state within its territory (Welle, 2023; RFE/RL, 2023e).

Kurti's alternative proposal aimed to strike a balance between the interests of Kosovo's Serb community and the nation's constitutional framework. It emphasized adherence to the Constitution, including the Constitutional Court's 2015 decision and relevant Council of Europe conventions. The proposal envisioned a self-management framework for the Serb community, empowering them to promote and protect their interests while remaining firmly anchored within Kosovo's legal and political structures. It underscored a commitment to the principles of Kosovo's independence, institutional unity, and territorial integrity, outlining concrete measures for their practical implementation. Furthermore, the proposal sought to utilize existing legal frameworks to facilitate non-profit services and associations dedicated to Serbian cultural, artistic, scientific, and educational activities, thereby fostering community identity expression and development. It also championed political pluralism, freedom of speech, and freedom of association for Kosovo's Serbs. Finally, the proposal welcomed funding from various sources, including Kosovo's budget, international organizations, and third-party donations (including Serbia), with the strict caveat that all contributions adhere to the regulations established by the Kosovo Ministry of Finance (Vision-Draft, 2023).

Vetëvendosje's alternative proposal, while ultimately failing to gain consensus within the negotiations, represented a substantial effort to construct a locally-derived policy framework. In contrast, the six initial conditions demonstrate the capacity to shape the course of

international involvement. Discussions center on the interconnected concepts of de facto recognition and the ASM's establishment, representing a distinct departure from previous diplomatic strategies. This divergence is particularly pronounced in light of Vetëvendosje's documented resistance to alternative solutions.

5.7.3. The ongoing Crisis in north Kosovo: Alternative Approaches by Vetëvendosje

In assessing Vetëvendosje's role as a significant local actor within the political dynamics of northern Kosovo, it becomes imperative to delineate the party's initial strategy as not merely an alternative, but a distinctive departure from the prevailing status quo. Notably, this strategy was not formulated as a direct countermeasure to the compliance and incentive mechanisms utilized by international actors. Instead, it represented a concerted effort to ameliorate the void left by a lack of a comprehensive and cohesive policy over the preceding two decades, prior to Vetëvendosje's rise to governance. This distinction becomes increasingly pronounced when considering the extended period during which the status quo prevailed in the north, a region that, for more than two decades, remained beyond the control of Kosovo's central government. This historical context underscores the significance of Vetëvendosje's assertive approach, marking a critical shift from the longstanding practices and policies that had been unchallenged in the region.

Vetëvendosje has implemented reciprocity measures including the introduction of new legislation concerning identity documents and vehicle license plates, the deployment of special police units to enforce Kosovo's regulations on vehicles entering from Serbia, and the initiation of local elections in Serb-majority municipalities after the resignation of Serb officials. These measures are indicative of efforts to assert Kosovo's sovereignty and integrate Serb-majority areas into the national political and legal framework. Collectively, these actions represent a significant shift from the previously established status quo, prompting a reevaluation of traditional political dynamics within the region. The international actors' response, as detailed in previous sections, has been stringent, resulting in the imposition of sanctions. This indicates that Vetëvendosje's strategy, though intended to address persistent issues in north Kosovo and its relations with Serbia, has introduced a new dynamic into Kosovo's political landscape and its interactions with international actors. Accordingly, this research has identified that, in response to the compliance mechanisms enforced by international actors, Vetëvendosje has proposed a series of alternatives.

PM Kurti's five-point plan for de-escalating the situation in northern Kosovo stands as a direct counterpoint to the three-point proposal made by EU High Representative Josep Borrell. Borrell demanded immediate new elections in the north, guaranteed participation of Kosovo Serbs, and the initiation of work on establishing the Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities. He warned that "failure to do so will have serious consequences for our relations" (Albanian Post, 2023). Kurti's five points have been presented during a conference for media, a few days after the imposition of sanctions. Addressing to the journalists, PM Kurti shared a five-point plan for de-escalation that was presented international actors, emphasizing the need for justice against those responsible for the attacks. To reduce tensions, Kosovo proposed to scale back its police presence in key facilities based on proportionality. Additionally, the Kosovo Police, in collaboration with KFOR or EULEX, would conduct regular security assessments to maintain safety and support law enforcement. Early elections in the northern municipalities should be organized, ensuring they are free, democratic, and unhindered. Crucially, he proposed that Kosovo and Serbia must re-engage in the Brussels-mediated dialogue with the EU's support, utilizing the Basic Agreement and Ohrid Annex as a roadmap. Lastly, stating that high-level talks between the two states' leaders are necessary to demonstrate a commitment to finding a resolution (Kallxo, 2023).

EU's high representative found the plan insufficient, urging Kurti to take more resolute steps for de-escalation. He reiterated, "As the 27 EU Member States have made very clear, failure to de-escalate will result in negative consequences. Member States have been informed about measures and we will communicate them publicly" (Klan, 2023). In response, Kurti expanded his alternative plan, this time including eight points. His proposal initiated with Kosovo gradually reducing police presence in proportion to decreasing violence; and granting EULEX and human rights NGOs full access to monitor judicial proceedings relation to perpetrators of violence. Kurti also outlined a process for early elections in the four northern municipalities, triggered by a recall petition with at least 20% electorate support and certified by the President. Subsequent to the election's certification, incumbent mayors would be expected to hand over authority to their newly elected successors. Reciprocally, Kurti demanded that Serbia withdraw protestors, pledge cooperation with Kosovo law enforcement (monitored by EULEX), reduce armed forces readiness and removal of 48 Forward Operating Bases situated along the border, and refrain from impeding or interfering with the right of ethnic Serb citizens and of all political parties to freely participate, without intimidation, coercion, or corrupt influence, in the local electoral process (Euronews, 2023). Despite these expanded efforts to address the crisis, as of

the writing of this text, the situation remains unresolved, with Kosovo not having withdrawn its forces, indicating the ongoing complexity and volatility of the region's political landscape.

Vetëvendosje's proposals appear to advocate for a strategic framework addressing the northern Kosovo situation, focusing on long-term national interests and democratic progress. This approach suggests an emphasis on normalizing relations through principles of mutual recognition and territorial integrity, alongside aspirations to develop equitable and sustainable collaborations with international actors,

In sum, this section has scrutinized Vetëvendosje's alternatives concerning the north Kosovo crisis, underscoring efforts to contest the established status quo and address intricate political situations via legislative amendments, enforcement measures, and dialogue suggestions.

5.7.4. Findings in relation to Hypothesis 4

In both cases, Vetëvendosje's proposals prioritize the role of local actors and institutions in addressing the challenges at hand. For the ASM, the party advocated for a decentralized, community-based approach to minority rights protection, while in the case of northern Kosovo, it sought to assert Kosovo's sovereignty and integrate Serb-majority areas into the national political and legal framework. Vetëvendosje's alternative approaches represent a departure from the dominant externally-imposed models of peacebuilding. In the case of the ASM, the party rejected the ethnically-defined structure in favor of empowering local municipalities and communities. Similarly, in northern Kosovo, Vetëvendosje's assertive approach challenged the longstanding status quo and the influence of international actors. This approach aligns with Mac Ginty's (2011) argument that local actors can articulate and pursue their own visions of peace, even in the face of the hegemonic ambitions of the liberal peace.

Crucially, Vetëvendosje's alternative approaches in both cases demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the need to balance local interests with broader constitutional principles, such as sovereignty, territorial integrity, and institutional unity. This is evident in the party's efforts to strike a balance between the specific needs and concerns of local communities, particularly the Serb minority, and the fundamental principles enshrined in Kosovo's Constitution. By seeking to anchor its proposals within Kosovo's legal and political structures, Vetëvendosje aims to ensure that its alternative approaches are not only locally resonant but also compatible with the broader framework of Kosovo's statehood.

Moreover, despite their divergence from the liberal peace framework, Vetëvendosje's alternative approaches place a strong emphasis on dialogue and engagement as key mechanisms for addressing the challenges at hand. This is exemplified by the party's call for open communication with Kosovo's Serbian community regarding the ASM and its proposals for de-escalation and re-engagement in the Brussels-mediated dialogue in the context of the northern Kosovo crisis. By prioritizing dialogue and engagement, Vetëvendosje demonstrates a recognition of the importance of inclusive, participatory processes in building sustainable peace and reconciliation.

The findings from this analysis provide substantial support for Hypothesis 4, which posits that Vetëvendosje's engagement as a local actor reveals the emergence of context-specific, locally resonant alternatives to the international community's approach. The party's alternative proposals for the ASM and its handling of the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo clearly demonstrate the capacity of local actors to articulate and pursue their own visions of peace, even in the face of the hegemonic ambitions of the liberal peace.

In both cases, Vetëvendosje's proposals demonstrate a clear emphasis on local agency and the development of solutions that are tailored to the specific needs and challenges of the Kosovo context. By advocating for a decentralized, community-based approach to minority rights protection in the case of the ASM and seeking to assert Kosovo's sovereignty and integrate Serb-majority areas in northern Kosovo, Vetëvendosje has put forward alternatives that diverge from the dominant liberal peace framework and reflect a greater attentiveness to local realities and aspirations.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the effectiveness and long-term viability of these alternative approaches remain to be seen, as the challenges associated with the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo are complex and deeply entrenched. The sanctions imposed by international actors in response to Vetëvendosje's assertive approach in northern Kosovo underscore the difficulties faced by local actors in challenging the dominant frameworks of peacebuilding and asserting their own agency in the process.

In conclusion, the analysis of Vetëvendosje's alternative approaches to the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo through the lens of Mac Ginty's (2011) hybrid peace model reveals the significant potential for local actors to articulate and pursue context-specific, locally resonant alternatives. While the long-term impact of these approaches remains to be seen, their emergence underscores the importance of recognizing and engaging with the agency and

capacity of local actors in the pursuit of sustainable peace and reconciliation in post-conflict societies like Kosovo.

5.8. Refining Mac Ginty's Hybrid Peace Model

The analysis of Vetëvendosje's engagement with the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo provides a rich empirical foundation for refining and adapting Mac Ginty's hybrid peace model to better capture the dynamics of Kosovo's post-conflict context. By examining Vetëvendosje's strategies and experiences in navigating the compliance and incentivizing powers of international actors while simultaneously promoting alternative, locally-driven approaches, distinct patterns of interaction, contestation, and hybridization that necessitate targeted refinements to the model's four key dimensions have been identified.

1. Compliance Power: The study reveals the intricate dance between international actors' compliance power and Vetëvendosje's evolving resistance and strategic adaptation. In the case of the ASM, Vetëvendosje's shift from strong opposition to partial compliance and engagement highlights the need for the model to better account for the fluid and context-dependent nature of local actors' responses to compliance power. This adaptation could involve introducing a spectrum of resistance that ranges from outright defiance to strategic compromise, allowing the model to capture the nuanced ways in which local actors navigate the pressures exerted by international stakeholders. Furthermore, the model could incorporate a feedback loop that illustrates how local actors' responses to compliance power can, in turn, shape the strategies and tactics employed by international actors, creating a dynamic and reciprocal relationship between the two.

2. Incentivizing Power: Vetëvendosje's selective utilization and principled resistance to international incentives underscore the need for a more granular understanding of how local actors strategically engage with the inducements offered by external actors. The model could be enhanced by introducing a typology of incentives that distinguishes between material (e.g., economic assistance, infrastructure development) and non-material (e.g., political support, international recognition) inducements, as well as between short-term and long-term incentives. This refinement would enable the model to better capture the calculus behind local actors' decisions to accept, reject, or selectively engage with international incentives, shedding light on the complex interplay between pragmatism and principle in shaping hybrid peace outcomes.

3. Ability to Resist, Ignore, or Adapt Liberal Peace Interventions: Vetëvendosje's assertive approach in the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo and its promotion of alternative visions for the ASM and the region's integration underscore the transformative potential of local resistance and agency. To better capture this dynamic, the model could incorporate a more explicit focus on the conditions that enable or constrain local actors' ability to challenge and reshape the dominant liberal peace framework. This could involve examining factors such as the degree of local legitimacy and popular support enjoyed by actors like Vetëvendosje, the coherence and resonance of their alternative visions, and the extent to which they can leverage networks and resources to advance their agendas. By situating local resistance within a broader structural and agential context, the refined model would offer a more comprehensive understanding of the possibilities and limitations of local agency in shaping hybrid peace outcomes.

4. Ability to Present and Maintain Alternatives: The study highlights the importance of recognizing and engaging with the alternative approaches put forward by local actors like Vetëvendosje. To better capture the emergence, evolution, and impact of these alternatives, the model could draw on insights from social movement theory and the literature on contentious politics. This interdisciplinary approach would provide a more robust framework for analyzing the processes through which local alternatives are articulated, mobilized, and sustained in the face of international pressures and incentives. The model could also incorporate a comparative dimension that examines how the experiences of actors like Vetëvendosje in Kosovo resonate with or diverge from those of local actors in other post-conflict contexts, enabling a more generalized understanding of the conditions that facilitate or hinder the development of locally-driven peacebuilding alternatives.

Moreover, the analysis of Vetëvendosje's engagement underscores the need for the hybrid peace model to adopt a more explicitly temporal and processual perspective. By examining how local actors' strategies and responses evolve in relation to the shifting constellation of international and domestic forces, the study reveals the dynamic and iterative nature of hybrid peace processes. To capture this temporal dimension, the model could incorporate a multi-stage framework that traces the emergence, consolidation, and transformation of hybrid peace arrangements over time. This could involve analyzing how critical junctures, such as changes in government or shifts in the international political landscape, create opportunities or constraints for local actors to assert their agency and advance their agendas. By adopting a processual approach, the refined model would be better equipped to illuminate the complex interplay between structure and agency in shaping the trajectory of hybrid peace processes.

Furthermore, the study's focus on Vetëvendosje's engagement with specific issues, such as the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo, highlights the importance of a more issue-specific and contextually-grounded approach to analyzing hybrid peace dynamics. While Mac Ginty's model provides a valuable overarching framework, the experiences of actors like Vetëvendosje suggest that the manifestation and implications of compliance power, incentivizing power, and local resistance may vary significantly depending on the specific issue at stake and the local political, social, and historical context in which it is embedded. To address this, the model could be adapted to include a more explicit focus on issue-specific dynamics, encouraging researchers to undertake fine-grained, contextualized analyses that explore how the interplay between international and local actors unfolds in relation to particular challenges or opportunities. This approach would enable the model to generate more nuanced and practically relevant insights that can inform context-specific peacebuilding strategies and interventions.

Finally, the analysis of Vetëvendosje's engagement raises important questions about the normative implications of hybrid peace processes and the role of local agency in shaping their outcomes. While the study highlights the potential for local actors to challenge and reshape the liberal peace framework, it also reveals the complex trade-offs and dilemmas involved in navigating the competing imperatives of international norms and local priorities. To grapple with these normative dimensions, the hybrid peace model could be refined to incorporate a more explicit ethical and critical perspective. This could involve interrogating the underlying assumptions and power dynamics that shape the interactions between international and local actors, as well as examining the distributional consequences of different hybrid peace arrangements for different groups and communities. By bringing normative considerations to the fore, the refined model would contribute to a more reflexive and politically attuned understanding of hybrid peace processes, one that is sensitive to the ways in which they can both empower and marginalize different actors and interests.

5.8.1. Conclusion: Hypothesis 5

In conclusion, the analysis of Vetëvendosje's engagement with the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo provides robust support for Hypothesis 5. The examination of Vetëvendosje's strategies and experiences in navigating the compliance and incentivizing powers of international actors while promoting alternative, locally-driven approaches reveal distinct patterns of interaction, contestation, and hybridization that necessitate targeted

refinements to Mac Ginty's hybrid peace model along its four key dimensions. By incorporating the insights derived from this analysis, the model can be enhanced to better capture the complex dynamics of Kosovo's post-conflict context, offering a more comprehensive, nuanced, and contextually-grounded understanding of the interplay between international and local actors in shaping the hybrid peace landscape. The proposed refinements, which encompass a more dynamic and processual perspective, a greater attention to issue-specific dynamics, and a more explicit engagement with normative and critical considerations, not only strengthen the model's explanatory power but also highlight the potential for local actors to challenge, reshape, and hybridize the liberal peace framework. By taking these insights seriously, the refined model can contribute to the development of more responsive, context-sensitive, and locally-owned approaches to peacebuilding that are better attuned to the needs, aspirations, and agency of the communities they seek to serve.

5.9. Discussion

The findings of this study make a significant contribution to the growing body of literature on peacebuilding and local agency in post-conflict settings, specifically focusing on the role of Vetëvendosje in shaping Kosovo's post-independence peacebuilding trajectory. By applying Mac Ginty's (2011) hybrid peace model to the analysis of Vetëvendosje's engagement with the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo, this research offers new insights into the complex interplay between international and local actors in shaping the dynamics of hybrid peace. The study's approach to examining Vetëvendosje's strategies and experiences through the lens of Mac Ginty's framework, while also engaging with a wide range of critical perspectives and empirical contexts, positions it as a valuable contribution to the evolving field of peacebuilding scholarship.

Building upon this foundation, the study's findings align with and extend the critical perspectives on liberal peacebuilding that have emerged in recent years (Chandler, 2010; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013; Pugh et al., 2008). These critiques have highlighted the limitations and unintended consequences of top-down, externally-driven interventions that prioritize the rapid implementation of liberal reforms over genuine engagement with local needs, priorities, and agency (Autesserre, 2014; Paffenholz, 2015). The analysis of Vetëvendosje's navigation of compliance power and incentivizing power in the cases of the ASM and northern Kosovo underscores the tensions and contradictions inherent in the liberal peacebuilding paradigm, as it seeks to impose a predetermined set of norms and institutions without adequately considering

the context-specific realities and aspirations of post-conflict societies (Paris, 2010; Richmond, 2011). This critique resonates with the work of scholars such as Duffield (2007), who argues that liberal peacebuilding often serves to reproduce and entrench existing power asymmetries, prioritizing the interests of international actors over those of local communities. From my perspective, the findings of this study demonstrate how the insistence on the implementation of the ASM by international actors, despite significant local opposition and concerns about its impact on Kosovo's sovereignty, reflects the tendency of liberal peacebuilding to prioritize stability and the achievement of predetermined benchmarks over genuine local ownership and participation.

In light of these findings, the study contributes to the emerging scholarship on local agency and resistance in hybrid peacebuilding contexts (Kappler, 2014; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013; Paffenholz, 2015). By examining Vetëvendosje's strategies of negotiation, resistance, and the promotion of alternative approaches to the ASM and the northern Kosovo crisis, this research highlights the transformative potential of local actors in challenging and reshaping the dominant frameworks of international peacebuilding (Randazzo, 2016; Visoka, 2017). The findings demonstrate how Vetëvendosje, as a significant local political force, has sought to assert Kosovo's sovereignty, promote context-specific solutions, and advocate for a more inclusive and locally-owned vision of peace and statebuilding. This analysis resonates with the work of scholars such as Richmond (2011) and Mitchell (2011), who emphasize the importance of recognizing and engaging with the agency and capacity of local actors in shaping peacebuilding processes. I contend that the study's findings on Vetëvendosje's promotion of alternative approaches to the ASM, such as the decentralized, community-based model of minority rights protection, align with Richmond's (2011) call for a more emancipatory and context-sensitive approach to peacebuilding that prioritizes local knowledge, needs, and aspirations.

However, the study also reveals the constraints and challenges faced by local actors like Vetëvendosje in navigating the complex landscape of hybrid peacebuilding (Belloni, 2012; Millar, 2015). The sanctions imposed by international actors in response to Vetëvendosje's assertive approach to the northern Kosovo crisis underscore the power asymmetries and structural barriers that can limit the agency and influence of local actors in shaping peacebuilding outcomes (Chandler, 2010; Richmond, 2011). These findings contribute to the critical debates on the possibilities and limitations of local ownership and participation in post-conflict settings, highlighting the need for a more nuanced and contextually-grounded

understanding of the conditions that enable or constrain local agency (Donais, 2012; Paffenholz, 2015). This analysis engages with the work of scholars such as Jarstad and Sisk (2008), who argue that the pursuit of local ownership in peacebuilding is often fraught with tensions and contradictions, as it requires navigating the competing interests and priorities of diverse local stakeholders. The study's findings on Vetëvendosje's engagement with the northern Kosovo crisis, particularly the challenges faced in asserting Kosovo's sovereignty while also addressing the concerns of the Serb community, illustrate the complex trade-offs and dilemmas involved in promoting local ownership in divided societies. This raises questions about the efficacy of traditional peacebuilding models in Kosovo, suggesting that a more grassroots approach could offer more sustainable solutions.

Furthermore, the analysis of Vetëvendosje's engagement with the ASM and the northern Kosovo crisis adds to the limited empirical research on the role of political parties in shaping hybrid peacebuilding dynamics (Visoka, 2011; Schwandner-Sievers, 2013; Yabanci, 2016). While existing studies have examined Vetëvendosje's emergence as a grassroots movement and its political rise, this study offers a novel perspective by focusing on the party's navigation of specific post-independence challenges and its interaction with the liberal peacebuilding framework. By situating Vetëvendosje's actions and strategies within the broader context of Kosovo's hybrid peace environment, this research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between local political actors, international interventions, and the legacies of conflict. This analysis resonates with the work of scholars such as Shahar Hameiri and Lee Jones (2015), who argue that peacebuilding interventions are inherently political processes that are shaped by the interplay between international and local actors, as well as the broader political economy of post-conflict societies. From my perspective, the study's findings on Vetëvendosje's role in shaping Kosovo's post-independence trajectory highlight the importance of examining the political and economic interests that drive the actions and strategies of local actors, as well as the ways in which they interact with and shape the agendas of international peacebuilders.

Given these findings, the study's engagement with alternative perspectives and critiques within the peacebuilding literature is particularly valuable. For instance, some scholars have argued that the emphasis on local agency and resistance in hybrid peacebuilding can risk romanticizing the local, overlooking power imbalances, and perpetuating inequalities within post-conflict societies (Mac Ginty, 2015; Millar, 2015; Paffenholz, 2015). The analysis of Vetëvendosje's engagement with the ASM and the northern Kosovo crisis acknowledges these concerns,

highlighting the need for a critical examination of the power dynamics and potential limitations of local resistance and alternative approaches. By engaging with these critiques, the study contributes to a more reflexive and politically-attuned understanding of hybrid peacebuilding, one that is sensitive to the ways in which local agency can both challenge and reproduce existing power structures and inequalities. This critical perspective aligns with the work of scholars such as Heathershaw (2008) and Sabaratnam (2017), who argue that the liberal peacebuilding framework often serves to depoliticize and technicize the inherently political nature of post-conflict interventions, obscuring the power relations and ideological agendas that shape peacebuilding practices. I contend that by examining Vetëvendosje's resistance to the ASM and its promotion of alternative visions of peacebuilding, this study contributes to a more politically-informed analysis of hybrid peace that recognizes the contested and power-laden nature of post-conflict reconstruction.

Moreover, the study's focus on Vetëvendosje's role in shaping Kosovo's post-independence trajectory addresses a significant gap in the literature on Kosovo's peacebuilding process. While existing research has extensively examined the international community's role in Kosovo (

adopt a more contextually-sensitive and locally-responsive approach to peacebuilding interventions (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013; Paffenholz, 2015). Rather than imposing predetermined solutions and conditions, international actors should prioritize genuine dialogue, partnership, and the co-creation of peacebuilding strategies with local stakeholders, taking into account their specific needs, priorities, and aspirations (Chandler, 2017; Paris, 2010). This recommendation aligns with the work of scholars such as de Coning (2018) and Autesserre (2014), who argue for a more adaptive and locally-grounded approach to peacebuilding that prioritizes the agency and capacity of local actors in shaping their own post-conflict futures. From my perspective, the study's findings on Vetëvendosje's promotion of alternative approaches to the ASM and the northern Kosovo crisis highlight the potential for locally-driven initiatives that are rooted in the specific realities and experiences of post-conflict societies to contribute to more sustainable and legitimate peacebuilding outcomes.

Building upon this insight, the study's findings on Vetëvendosje's promotion of alternative approaches to the ASM and the northern Kosovo crisis highlight the importance of supporting and empowering local initiatives that are rooted in the specific realities and experiences of post-conflict societies (Kappler, 2014; Randazzo, 2016). Policymakers and practitioners should seek to create enabling environments that foster local ownership, participation, and leadership in peacebuilding processes, while also addressing the structural barriers and power asymmetries that can constrain local agency (Donais, 2012; Paffenholz, 2015). This may involve providing tailored support for capacity-building, facilitating inclusive dialogue and collaboration among diverse local stakeholders, and advocating for more equitable and sustainable models of international engagement in post-conflict settings. This recommendation resonates with the work of scholars such as Lederach (1997) and Ramsbotham et al. (2016), who emphasize the importance of supporting local capacities for peace and fostering inclusive, multi-level processes of dialogue and reconciliation in post-conflict societies. I contend that the study's findings on Vetëvendosje's engagement with the northern Kosovo crisis, particularly its efforts to address the concerns of the Serb community while also asserting Kosovo's sovereignty, highlight the potential for locally-driven initiatives to contribute to more sustainable and legitimate peacebuilding outcomes.

Furthermore, the analysis of Vetëvendosje's engagement with the ASM and the northern Kosovo crisis underscores the need for a more holistic and integrated approach to peacebuilding that addresses the underlying drivers of conflict and promotes long-term social, economic, and political transformation (Galtung, 1969; Lederach, 1997). Policymakers and

practitioners should prioritize investments in education, healthcare, economic development, and social cohesion, alongside efforts to strengthen democratic institutions and promote the rule of law (Autesserre, 2014; Richmond, 2011). By adopting a more comprehensive and long-term perspective on peacebuilding, international actors can help to create the conditions for sustainable peace and development in post-conflict societies like Kosovo. This recommendation aligns with the work of scholars such as Paris (2004) and Barnett (2006), who argue for a more nuanced and contextually-sensitive approach to peacebuilding that recognizes the long-term and multi-dimensional nature of post-conflict transformation. From my perspective, the study's findings on Vetëvendosje's promotion of a more holistic and locally-grounded vision of peacebuilding, which prioritizes social and economic development alongside political reform, highlight the potential for alternative approaches that move beyond the narrow focus of the liberal peacebuilding framework.

Finally, the study's findings on the need to refine and adapt Mac Ginty's (2011) hybrid peace model to better capture the dynamics of Kosovo's post-conflict context have broader implications for the theoretical development of peacebuilding scholarship. The proposed refinements, which encompass a more dynamic and processual perspective, a greater attention to issue-specific dynamics, and a more explicit engagement with normative and critical considerations, highlight the importance of continually reassessing and updating theoretical frameworks in light of empirical research and evolving peacebuilding practices (Chandler, 2017; Richmond, 2011). By engaging in this reflexive and iterative process of theory-building, scholars can contribute to the development of more nuanced, context-sensitive, and practically-relevant models of hybrid peacebuilding that are better attuned to the complexities and challenges of contemporary post-conflict environments. This theoretical contribution resonates with the work of scholars such as Björkdahl and Höglund (2013) and Randazzo (2016), who argue for a more dynamic and processual understanding of hybrid peace that takes into account the evolving nature of post-conflict environments and the agency of local actors in shaping peacebuilding trajectories. I contend that the study's findings on Vetëvendosje's engagement with the ASM and the northern Kosovo crisis highlight the need for theoretical frameworks that are sensitive to the specific historical, political, and social contexts in which peacebuilding interventions unfold, as well as the ways in which local actors navigate and shape these contexts over time.

Moreover, the study's engagement with normative and critical considerations, particularly the need to interrogate the underlying assumptions and power dynamics that shape peacebuilding

interventions, aligns with the work of scholars such as Sabaratnam (2017) and Jabri (2013), who argue for a more reflexive and politically-attuned approach to peacebuilding scholarship. By highlighting the contested and power-laden nature of hybrid peace processes, this study contributes to a more critical understanding of the ways in which peacebuilding interventions can both empower and marginalize different actors and interests in post-conflict societies.

5.9.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study's analysis of Vetëvendosje's role in shaping Kosovo's post-independence peacebuilding trajectory through the lens of hybrid peace theory offers significant contributions to the scholarly understanding of local agency, resistance, and alternative approaches in post-conflict settings. By examining Vetëvendosje's engagement with the ASM and the northern Kosovo crisis, the research fills important gaps in the literature on Kosovo's peacebuilding process and provides new insights into the complex interplay between international interventions, local political dynamics, and the legacies of conflict. The findings underscore the transformative potential of local actors in challenging and reshaping the dominant frameworks of liberal peacebuilding, while also highlighting the constraints and challenges they face in navigating the structural barriers and power asymmetries of hybrid peace environments. My engagement with diverse critiques and perspectives within the peacebuilding discourse fosters a more reflective and politically astute comprehension of hybrid peace. This approach advocates for a nuanced awareness of how local agency can simultaneously contest and perpetuate existing power structures and disparities. The policy and practice implications derived from this study emphasize an imperative shift towards peacebuilding interventions that are contextually sensitive, locally informed, and encompass a holistic vision for post-conflict transformation. By suggesting refinements to Mac Ginty's hybrid peace model, this research underscores the essentiality of revising and enriching theoretical frameworks to align with empirical evidence and the evolving paradigms of peacebuilding practices

Reflecting on the broader significance of this investigation, I am compelled to argue for a foundational reevaluation of peacebuilding methodologies in the contemporary era. The insights gleaned from Vetëvendosje's role in navigating Kosovo's post-conflict journey underscore an urgent need for an inclusive, participatory, and emancipatory blueprint for peacebuilding. Such a framework recognizes the primacy of local actors' agency and capacity to define their trajectories of post-conflict recovery, emphasizing the transformation of

underlying structural conditions and power relations that fuel conflict and inequality. It is my hope that the findings and arguments presented in this study will contribute to ongoing debates and discussions on the future of peacebuilding, and that they will inspire further research, dialogue, and action aimed at supporting the agency and empowerment of local actors in their efforts to build a more just, equitable, and peaceful world. As we move forward in this collective endeavor, it is crucial that we remain open to learning from the experiences and perspectives of those most directly affected by conflict and its aftermath, and that we work tirelessly to create the conditions for genuine and lasting peace in Kosovo and beyond.

This study contributes to the vital discourse on reimagining peacebuilding, aspiring to spark further scholarly inquiry, dialogue, and practical engagement aimed at empowering local actors in their quest for a just, equitable, and peaceful future. The resilience, creativity, and transformative potential manifested by local actors, as exemplified by Vetëvendosje, reaffirm my conviction in the power of community-driven initiatives to surmount formidable challenges in pursuit of justice and equity. As this discourse advances, it becomes increasingly evident that achieving sustainable peace in Kosovo and other post-conflict settings is a complex, albeit achievable, endeavor. It necessitates a sustained commitment to fostering dialogue, partnership, and empowerment, coupled with the courage to address the structural barriers and power imbalances that shape the prospects for enduring peace and stability.

The analysis of Vetëvendosje's strategies offers a poignant reminder of the capacity for human agency and resistance to forge a more equitable future amidst adversity. It champions the spirit of resilience and transformative potential as a source of hope and inspiration for the future of peacebuilding in Kosovo and beyond. Learning from the experiences and perspectives of local actors like Vetëvendosje, and supporting their endeavors to construct an inclusive, participatory, and sustainable peace, marks the beginning of a novel trajectory for post-conflict reconstruction. This trajectory must navigate beyond conventional, top-down approaches to embrace a more grounded, contextually resonant, and locally led model of post-conflict transformation.

In closing, this inquiry into Kosovo's peacebuilding dynamics has been both a privilege and a profound learning experience, offering valuable lessons on the realities of hybrid peacebuilding in practice. The ongoing efforts of those striving for peace and justice in Kosovo and elsewhere underscore the critical need for continued research, dialogue, and action in support of these endeavors. It is with earnest hope that this study contributes to the collective process of

reflection, learning, and transformation necessary for fostering a more just, equitable, and sustainable peace in post-conflict environments worldwide. As we collectively navigate this path, let us remain steadfast in our dedication to inclusivity, empowerment, and locally informed approaches to peacebuilding, buoyed by the belief in the transformative power of local agency and the pursuit of shared visions for a better future.

5.10. Summary of the key findings and insights from the analysis

This study has provided a comprehensive analysis of the complex dynamics shaping Kosovo's unique form of hybrid peace in the post-independence period, with a specific focus on the role of Vetëvendosje in navigating the challenges posed by the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo. By employing Mac Ginty's (2011) hybrid peace model as an analytical lens, the research has illuminated the intricate interplay between international actors, who continue to exert significant influence through the framework of supervised independence, and local actors, particularly Vetëvendosje, who have increasingly sought to assert their agency and shape the country's political, economic, and social trajectories. The analysis has revealed how international actors have utilized compliance and incentivizing powers to shape the peacebuilding process in Kosovo, often in line with the liberal peace framework. However, it has also highlighted the agency and resilience of local actors, such as Vetëvendosje, in navigating, resisting, and adapting to these external pressures while simultaneously promoting alternative, locally-driven approaches to the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo.

5.10.1. Reflection on the research questions and hypotheses

The study has provided compelling evidence in support of the five hypotheses put forward, shedding light on the complex dynamics of hybrid peace in Kosovo. The analysis has demonstrated how international actors leverage their economic, political, and diplomatic resources to exert coercive pressure on Kosovo (Hypothesis 1) and employ incentives to encourage cooperation from local actors (Hypothesis 2). Simultaneously, the research has revealed how Vetëvendosje actively engages with international actors using a range of strategies, including negotiation, subversion, and resistance, to shape the outcomes of the ASM issue and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo in alignment with their own priorities and vision (Hypothesis 3). Moreover, the study has shown how Vetëvendosje's engagement as a local actor has led to the emergence of context-specific, locally resonant alternatives to the international community's approach (Hypothesis 4). Finally, the analysis has provided robust

support for the need to refine and adapt Mac Ginty's hybrid peace model to better capture the dynamics of Kosovo's post-conflict context (Hypothesis 5), by incorporating insights derived from the examination of Vetëvendosje's strategies and experiences.

5.10.2 Contributions to the understanding of hybrid peace dynamics in Kosovo and beyond

This study makes significant contributions to the understanding of hybrid peace dynamics, both in the specific context of Kosovo and in the broader field of post-conflict peacebuilding. By providing a nuanced and theoretically-informed analysis of Vetëvendosje's role in navigating the challenges of the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo, the research addresses important gaps in the existing literature and offers valuable insights into the complex interplay between international and local actors in shaping the hybrid peace landscape. The study's application and refinement of Mac Ginty's hybrid peace model also contribute to the advancement of theoretical frameworks for understanding and analyzing post-conflict peacebuilding processes. The proposed refinements, which incorporate a more dynamic, processual, and context-sensitive perspective, enhance the model's explanatory power and its potential to inform the development of more effective, locally-owned peacebuilding strategies.

5.10.3. Limitations of the study and recommendations for future research

Despite its noteworthy contributions to understanding hybrid peace dynamics in Kosovo, this study acknowledges certain limitations inherent in its design. Specifically, the research delineates its focus to the examination of Vetëvendosje's involvement with two closely interrelated case studies—the ASM and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo—within a narrowly defined timeframe. This constraint, while concentrating the analysis, inadvertently circumscribes the breadth of the inquiry. Future studies are encouraged to broaden the investigative lens, encompassing a wider array of local actors and issues. Such an expanded scope, coupled with an extended temporal analysis, promises to unveil a more nuanced and comprehensive portrait of the intricate peace dynamics operative in Kosovo.

Moreover, although this research is underpinned by a diverse amalgam of primary and secondary sources, it recognizes the enrichment potential of incorporating extensive fieldwork and structured interviews with pivotal stakeholders. This methodological augmentation would afford deeper, firsthand insights into the lived experiences and strategic approaches of local actors engaged in the post-conflict peacebuilding process. By integrating these perspectives,

subsequent research could offer a more layered understanding of the complexities and challenges that define peacebuilding efforts in post-conflict settings.

5.10.4. Concluding Remarks

This study's comprehensive and critical analysis of Vetëvendosje's role in shaping Kosovo's hybrid peace environment offers a significant and original contribution to the scholarly understanding of the complex dynamics of post-conflict peacebuilding. By engaging with a wide range of theoretical perspectives and empirical contexts, and by offering valuable insights and recommendations for policy and practice, this research has the potential to inform and inspire new approaches to peacebuilding that are more responsive to the needs, aspirations, and experiences of post-conflict societies themselves.

The study's findings and insights have far-reaching implications for the way we conceptualize, study, and practice peacebuilding in the 21st century. By challenging the dominant assumptions and frameworks of the liberal peace paradigm, and by offering a more nuanced, contextualized, and politically-informed understanding of the dynamics of hybrid peace, this research invites us to rethink the very foundations of our approach to supporting post-conflict societies in their pursuit of sustainable peace and development. At the heart of this rethinking lies a fundamental shift in the way we understand the relationship between international and local actors in peacebuilding processes. Rather than viewing local actors as passive recipients of external interventions, or as obstacles to be overcome in the pursuit of predetermined peacebuilding goals, this study highlights the need for a more dialogical, collaborative, and empowering approach to engaging with local communities and their political representatives.

By highlighting the agency of local actors like Vetëvendosje in challenging and reshaping the dominant narratives and practices of the international peacebuilding architecture, this study offers a powerful reminder of the transformative potential of bottom-up, locally-driven approaches to building peace. At the same time, by acknowledging the constraints and challenges facing these actors as they navigate the complex landscape of international interventions and domestic political struggles, it provides a sobering assessment of the limitations and contradictions of hybrid peacebuilding in practice. Ultimately, the insights and lessons drawn from this study point towards the need for a more reflexive, adaptive, and politically-attuned approach to peacebuilding scholarship and practice, one that is grounded in a deep understanding of the historical, cultural, and political contexts of post-conflict societies,

and that is committed to supporting the agency and empowerment of local communities in their pursuit of a more just, equitable, and sustainable peace.

Finally, this study's innovative and thought-provoking analysis of Vetëvendosje's role in shaping Kosovo's hybrid peace environment provides a valuable starting point for this ongoing process of reflection and dialogue. By shedding light on the complex interplay between international interventions, local political dynamics, and the agency of post-conflict societies, it invites us to rethink the very foundations of our approach to peacebuilding and to imagine new possibilities for supporting the transformative potential of local agency and innovation in the pursuit of sustainable peace and development.

Chapter 6: CONCLUSION - TRANSFORMING PEACEBUILDING THROUGH LOCAL AGENCY AND HYBRID APPROACHES

This dissertation has delved into the complex and dynamic role of local political actors in shaping the trajectory of post-conflict societies. By focusing on the case of Vetëvendosje, a prominent political party in Kosovo, the study provided a nuanced and contextualized understanding of how local agency interacted with, challenged, and reshaped international peacebuilding and statebuilding efforts.

The study's theoretical foundation rested upon Mac Ginty's (2011) hybrid peace model, which served as a lens to analyze the intricate interplay between international interventions and local responses. This framework was applied to two critical case studies: the contentious issue of the Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities (ASM) and the ongoing crisis in northern Kosovo. Through a rigorous examination of these cases, the dissertation shed light on the multifaceted strategies employed by Vetëvendosje in navigating the complexities of Kosovo's post-independence landscape.

One of the key findings of this research was the pervasive influence of international actors' compliance power in shaping Kosovo's peacebuilding and statebuilding processes. The study demonstrated how external actors leveraged their economic, political, and diplomatic resources to pressure local actors into aligning with their preferred vision of post-conflict reconstruction. However, the dissertation also highlighted the resilience and adaptability of local actors, exemplified by Vetëvendosje's strategic engagement with international incentives and its ability to resist and propose alternatives to externally imposed agendas.

The analysis of Vetëvendosje's navigation of the ASM issue and the northern Kosovo crisis yielded valuable insights into the dynamics of local agency in hybrid peace environments. The party's evolution from a grassroots movement to a governing force was marked by a delicate balancing act between its commitment to self-determination and the pragmatic necessities of engaging with international actors. Vetëvendosje's ability to articulate and promote context-specific, locally resonant alternatives to the dominant peacebuilding paradigm underscored the transformative potential of local political actors in shaping post-conflict trajectories.

The dissertation's findings had significant implications for both theory and practice in the field of peacebuilding and statebuilding. On a theoretical level, the study contributed to the refinement and adaptation of Mac Ginty's hybrid peace model, proposing targeted enhancements to better capture the nuances of Kosovo's post-conflict context. These

refinements encompassed a more dynamic and processual understanding of the interactions between international and local actors, a greater attentiveness to issue-specific dynamics, and a more explicit engagement with the normative and critical dimensions of hybrid peace.

In terms of policy and practice, the research highlighted the importance of fostering a more context-sensitive, locally responsive, and adaptive approach to peacebuilding interventions. The study underscored the need for international actors to prioritize genuine dialogue, partnership, and co-creation with local stakeholders, recognizing and supporting the agency and capacities of local communities in driving their own post-conflict transformations. Moreover, the dissertation emphasized the crucial role of local political parties like Vetëvendosje in articulating and advancing alternative visions of peace and development that were grounded in the specific realities and aspirations of their societies.

The dissertation's contributions extended beyond the specific case of Kosovo, offering valuable insights and lessons for the broader field of peacebuilding and statebuilding in post-conflict settings. By shedding light on the complex interplay between international interventions, local political dynamics, and the legacies of conflict, the study invited scholars and practitioners to rethink their assumptions and approaches to post-conflict reconstruction. It called for a more nuanced, contextualized, and politically informed understanding of the role of local agency in shaping the outcomes of peacebuilding and statebuilding processes.

While acknowledging the limitations of the study, such as its focus on a single political party and two specific case studies within a bounded timeframe, the dissertation laid a solid foundation for future research. It invited scholars to broaden the scope of analysis, incorporating a wider range of local actors, issues, and temporal dimensions. Furthermore, it encouraged the integration of extensive fieldwork and direct engagement with local stakeholders to gain deeper insights into the lived experiences and strategic calculations that shaped hybrid peace environments.

In conclusion, this dissertation made a significant and original contribution to the field of political science, particularly in the areas of peacebuilding, statebuilding, and post-conflict reconstruction. By offering a theoretically informed and empirically grounded analysis of the role of local political parties in navigating the complexities of hybrid peace, the study challenged dominant paradigms and opened up new avenues for understanding and supporting the transformative potential of local agency in post-conflict societies. It invited scholars and practitioners to embrace a more dialogical, collaborative, and empowering approach to

peacebuilding and statebuilding, one that recognized and nurtured the capacities of local actors to shape their own destinies in the pursuit of sustainable peace and development.

As the world continues to grapple with the challenges of post-conflict reconstruction in diverse contexts, the insights and lessons offered by this dissertation serve as a valuable compass for navigating the complex terrain of hybrid peace. By shedding light on the agency and resilience of local political actors like Vetëvendosje, the study inspires hope and offers guidance for harnessing the transformative potential of local leadership in building more just, inclusive, and sustainable post-conflict futures.

REFERENCE LIST

- Acharya, A. (2007). The emerging regional architecture of world politics. *World Politics*, 59(4), 629–652. <https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.2008.0000>
- Adam, R. (1999). NATO's 'Humanitarian War' over Kosovo. *Survival*, 41(3), 102–123. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396339912331342943>
- Ahtisaari, M. (2007). *Report of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Kosovo's future status (S/2007/168)—Serbia* | ReliefWeb (Reliefweb.Int). <https://reliefweb.int/report/serbia/report-special-envoy-secretary-general-kosovos-future-status-s2007168>
- Albanian Post. (2023). *Kurti refuzon pikat e Bashkësisë Ndërkombëtare, i prezanton të vetat – për sanksione s'përgjigjet* | Albanian Post. Albanian Post. <https://albanianpost.com/kurti-refuzon-pikat-e-bashkesise-nderkombetare-i-prezanton-te-vetat-per-sanksione-spergjigjet/>
- Albin Kurti. (2023). *VIDEO - Kurti: Për dy vite dialog kemi arritur veç një marrëveshje që sjell njohje de-facto nga Serbia*. Raporto Korrupsionin! KALLXO.Com. <https://kallxo.com/lajm/video-kurti-per-dy-vite-dialog-kemi-arritur-vec-nje-marreveshje-qe-sjell-njohje-de-facto-nga-serbia/>
- Albin Kurti synon veting e dialog të brendshëm me serbët*. (2017). Koha.
- Albright, M. (2013). *Madam Secretary: A Memoir*. Harpercollins ; Enfield.
- Andersen, R. (2000). How Multilateral Development Assistance Triggered the Conflict in Rwanda. *Third World Quarterly*, 21(3), 441–456. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713701045>
- Andrew, R. (2014). Analysis of current events: “towards the rule of law in Kosovo: EULEX should go.” *Nationalities Papers*, 42(2), 181–194. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2013.870545>
- Annual Survey International Politics and Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue*. (2020). Instituti i Prishtinës Për Studime Politike - PIPS. <https://pips-ks.org/en/Detail/ArtMID/1446/ArticleID/4183/Annual-Survey-International-Politics-and-Kosovo-Serbia-Dialogue>
- Antonenko, O. (2007). Russia and the Deadlock over Kosovo. *Survival*, 49(3), 91–106. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396330701564794>
- Arolda Elbasani & Senada Šelo Šabić. (2017). Rule of Law, Corruption and Democratic Accountability in the Course of EU Enlargement. *Social Science Research Network*.

- <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3308095>
- Arton Konushevci. (2015). *Opozita fut me forcë petitionin*. Radio Evropa e Lirë.
<https://www.evropaelire.org/a/27337420.html>
- Asociacioni i komunave serbe pritet të hyjë në fazën e themelimit*. (2016). Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/27699407.html>
- Asociacioni, në marrëveshjen finale Kosovë – Serbi*. (2018). Raporto Korrupsionin! KALLXO.Com. <https://kallxo.com/shkurt/asociacioni-ne-marreveshjen-finale-kosove-serbi/>
- Autesserre, S. (2017). International Peacebuilding and Local Success: Assumptions and Effectiveness. *International Studies Review*, 19(1), 114–132.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viw054>
- Avruch, K. (1998). *Culture & Conflict Resolution*. US Institute of Peace Press.
- Azar, E. E., & Moon, C. I. (1986). Managing Protracted Social Conflicts in the Third World: Facilitation and Development Diplomacy. *Millennium*, 15(3), 393–406.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298860150030601>
- Bagayoko, N., Hutchful, E., & Robin, L. (2016). Hybrid security governance in Africa: Rethinking the foundations of security, justice and legitimate public authority. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 16(1), 1–32.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2016.1136137>
- Balcer, A. (2003). *Kosovo: The Question of Final Status*. Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich im. Marka Karpia.
- Balkan Insight. (2020). *US Dismisses Kurti's Claims About Secret Land Swap Talks*. Balkan Insight. <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/03/27/us-dismisses-kurtis-claims-about-secret-land-swap-talks/>
- Barnett, M. (2006). Building a Republican Peace: Stabilizing States after War. *International Security*, 30(4), 87–112. <https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.2006.30.4.87>
- Barnett, M., Fang, S., & Christoph Zürcher. (2014). Compromised Peacebuilding. *International Studies Quarterly*, 58(3), 608–620. <https://doi.org/10.1111/isqu.12137>
- Barnett, M., Kim, H., O'Donnell, M., & Sitea, L. (2007). Peacebuilding: What Is in a Name? *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*, 13(1), 35–58. <https://doi.org/10.1163/19426720-01301004>
- Barnett, M., & Zürcher, C. (2008). The peacebuilder's contract: How external statebuilding reinforces weak statehood. In R. Paris & T. D. Sisk (Eds.), *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding*. Routledge.

- BE i përgjigjet Kurtit rreth Planit të tij me 5 pika për de-përshkallëzim të situatës në veri.*
(2023). Klan Macedonia; Klan Macedonia. <https://tvklan.mk/be-i-pergjigjet-kurtit-rreth-planit-te-tij-me-5-pika-per-de-pershkallezim-te-situates-ne-veri/>
- Béatrice Pouligny. (2006). *Peace operations seen from below: UN missions and local people.* Hurst And Company.
- Beha, A. (2015). Disputes over the 15-point agreement on normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia. *Nationalities Papers*, 43(1), 102–121.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2014.990367>
- Beha, A. (2023). Constitutionmaking and statebuilding in Kosovo: We (you) the people. *Peacebuilding*, 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2023.2217575>
- Beha, A. & Gëzim Selaci. (2018). Statebuilding without Exit Strategy in Kosovo: Stability, Clientelism, and Corruption. *Region*, 7(2), 97–123.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/reg.2018.0018>
- Beha, A., & Hajrullahu, A. (2020). Soft competitive authoritarianism and negative stability in Kosovo: Statebuilding from UNMIK to EULEX and beyond. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 20(1), 103–122. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2019.1709686>
- Bekaj, A. (2010). *The KLA and the Kosovo war: From intrastate conflict to independent country.* <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:uu:diva464704>
- Bellamy, A. J. (2002a). *Kosovo and International Society.* Palgrave Macmillan.
<https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230597600>
- Bellamy, A. J. (2002b). Pragmatic solidarism and the dilemmas of humanitarian intervention. *Millennium*, 31(3), 473–497. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298020310030601>
- Bellamy, A. J. (2008). The responsibility to protect and the problem of military intervention. *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, 84(4), 615–639.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25144868>
- Belloni, R. (2008). *State building and international intervention in Bosnia.* Routledge.
- Belloni, R. (2012). Hybrid Peace Governance: Its Emergence and Significance. *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*, 18(1), 21–38. <https://doi.org/10.1163/19426720-01801004>
- Benson, L. (2001). *Yugoslavia: A concise history.* Palgrave.
- Bergmann, J. (2020). The EU as a Mediator in the Kosovo–Serbia Conflict. In *The European Union as International Mediator: Brokering Stability and Peace in the Neighbourhood* (pp. 109–172). Springer International Publishing.
https://doi.org/10.1007/9783030255640_4

- Berisha, A. (2023). *Kurti tregon 6 kushtet mbi të cilat Kosova mund ta konsiderojë themelimin e Asociacionit*. Raporto Korrupsionin! KALLXO.Com.
<https://kallxo.com/lajm/kurti-tregon-6-kushtet-mbi-te-cilat-kosova-mund-ta-konsideroje-themelimin-e-asociacionit/>
- Betts, P. (2005). Germany, international justice and the twentieth century. *History and Memory*, 17(1–2), 45–86. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/his.2005.17.1-2.45>
- Bieber, F. (2015). The Serbia-Kosovo Agreements: An eu Success Story? *Review of Central and East European Law*, 40(3–4), 285–319. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15730352-04003008>
- Bilge Yabanci. (2016). Populism and Anti-Establishment Politics in Kosovo: A Case Study of Lëvizja Vetëvendosje. *Contemporary Southeastern Europe*, 3(2), 17–43.
- Binder, D. (1992). BUSH WARNS SERBS NOT TO WIDEN WAR (Published 1992). *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/12/28/world/bush-warns-serbs-not-to-widen-war.html>
- Bislimi, B., & Cvetković, L. (2021). *Marrëveshja e Uashingtonit: Çka u zbatua e çka jo?* Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/marreveshja-uashingtonit-nje-vit-pas/31442223.html>
- Björkdahl, A., & Gusic, I. (2013). The divided city – a space for frictional peacebuilding. *Peacebuilding*, 1(3), 317–333. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2013.813172>
- Björkdahl, A., & Höglund, K. (2013). Precarious peacebuilding: Friction in global–local encounters. *Peacebuilding*, 1(3), 289–299.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2013.813170>
- Björkdahl, A., & Kappler, S. (2017). *Peacebuilding and spatial transformation: Peace, space and place* (1–1 online resource). Routledge.
<http://www.dawsonera.com/depp/reader/protected/external/AbstractView/S9781315684529>
- Blinken, A. (2023). *Condemning Unilateral Actions by the Government of Kosovo*. U.S. Embassy in Serbia. <https://rs.usembassy.gov/condemning-unilateral-actions-by-the-government-of-kosovo/>
- Boege, V., Brown, M. A., & Clements, K. P. (2009). Hybrid Political Orders, Not Fragile States. *Peace Review*, 21(1), 13–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10402650802689997>
- Bojčić-Dželilović, V. (2013). Informality, Inequality and Social Reintegration in PostWar Transition. *Studies in Social Justice*, 7(2), 211–228.
<https://doi.org/10.26522/ssj.v7i2.1044>

- Bolton, G., & Visoka, G. (2010). *Recognizing Kosovo's independence: Remedial secession or earned sovereignty? - DORAS*.
- Booth, K. (2001). *The Kosovo Tragedy*. Informa. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203045466>
- Borger, J. (2014). *EU accused over its Kosovo mission: 'Corruption has grown exponentially.'* The Guardian; The Guardian.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/06/eu-accused-over-kosovo-mission-failings>
- Borrel, J. (2023). *Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue: Press remarks by High Representative Josep Borrell after the Ohrid Meeting with President Vučić and Prime Minister Kurti*. EEAS. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/belgrade-pristina-dialogue-press-remarks-high-representative-josep-borrell-after-ohrid-meeting_en
- Börzel, T. A., & Risse, T. (2009). *The Transformative Power of Europe: The European Union and the Diffusion of Ideas*. Ideas.Repec.Org.
<https://ideas.repec.org/p/erp/kfgxxx/p0001.html>
- BoutrosGhali, B. (1992). An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peacekeeping. *International Relations*, 11(3), 201–218.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/004711789201100302>
- Brancati, D., & Snyder, J. L. (2012). Time to Kill: The Impact of Election Timing on Postconflict St. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 57(5), 822–853.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002712449328>
- Brancati, D., & Snyder, J. L. (2013). Time to kill: The impact of election timing on postconflict stability. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 57(5), 822–853.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002712449328>
- Branimir Anzulovic. (1999). *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide*. New York University Press.
- Branka Magaš. (1993). *The destruction of Yugoslavia: Tracking the break-up 1980-92*. Verso.
- Bräutigam, D. A., & Knack, S. (2004). Foreign aid, institutions, and governance in Sub-Saharan africa. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 52(2), 255–285.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/380592>
- Brzozowski, A. (2023). *Kosovo, Serbia fall short of diffusing tensions, agree to resolve war missing cases*. Www.Euractiv.Com; EURACTIV.
<https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement-neighbourhood/news/kosovo-serbia-fall-short-of-diffusing-tensions-agree-to-resolve-war-missing-cases/>

- Buçaj, D. (2019). *Making the Law, Ruling the Law: International Statebuilding and the Rule of Law in Kosovo*. Ssrn.Com.
https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3471618
- Bull, H. (1977). *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (pp. 19, 62). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Burton, J. W. (1990). *Conflict: Human Needs Theory* (1st ed.). Palgrave Macmillan London.
- Buzan, B. (2004). *From international to world society?: English school theory and the social structure of globalisation*. Cambridge University Press.
- C. Guicherd. (1999). International law and the war in Kosovo. *Survival*, 41(2), 19–34.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/survival/41.2.19>
- CALL, C. T. (2012). *Why peace fails: The causes and prevention of civil war recurrence*. Georgetown University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2tt300>
- Call, C. T., & Cousens, E. M. (2008). Ending Wars and Building Peace: International Responses to War-Torn Societies. *International Studies Perspectives*, 9(1), 1–21.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1528-3585.2007.00313.x>
- Caplan, R. (1998). International Diplomacy and the Crisis in Kosovo. *International Affairs*, 74(4), 745–761. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.00043>
- Caplan, R. (2005). *Europe and the recognition of new states in Yugoslavia*. Cambridge University Press.
- Carothers, T. (2007). The “Sequencing” Fallacy. *Journal of Democracy*, 18(1), 12–27.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2007.0002>
- Çfarë thotë draft-statuti i Asociacionit i paraqitur nga Ekipi Menaxhues? (2023). Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/32393626.html>
- Chabal, P. & Jean-Pascal Daloz. (1999). *Africa works: Disorder as Political Instrument* (Vol. 7). Indiana University Press.
- Chandler, D. (2006). *Empire in denial: The politics of state-building*. Pluto Press.
- Chandler, D. (2010). *International Statebuilding The Rise of Post-Liberal Governance*. Routledge.
- Chandler, D. (2017). *Peacebuilding: The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1997-2017*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chesterman, S. (2004). *You, The People: The United Nations, Transitional Administration, and State-Building*. Oxford University Press Oxford.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/0199263485.001.0001>
- Chesterman, S. (2007). Ownership in Theory and in Practice: Transfer of Authority in UN

- Statebuilding Operations. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 1(1), 3–26.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17502970601075873>
- Chomsky, N. (1999). *The new military humanism: Lessons from Kosovo*. Common Courage Press.
- Christoph Zürcher. (2011). Building Democracy While Building Peace. *Journal of Democracy*, 22(1), 81–95. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2011.a412895>
- Christoph Zürcher, Manning, C., Evenson, K. D., Hayman, R., Sarah, & Roehner, N. (2013). *Costly Democracy*. Stanford University Press.
- CIERCO, T., & REIS, L. (2014). Eulex’s Impact on the Rule of Law in Kosovo. *Revista de Ciencia Política*, 34(3), 645–663.
<https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=32433390007>
- Clark, H. (2000). *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*. Pluto Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt18fsc6d>
- Clark, W. K. (2001). *Waging modern war: Bosnia, Kosovo, and the future of combat*. Public Affairs.
- Claude, I. L. (1966). Collective legitimization as a political function of the united nations. *International Organization*, 20(3), 367–379.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300012832>
- Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo*. (2008). https://mapl.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/1.CONSTITUTION_OF_THE_REPUBLIC_OF_KOSOVO.pdf
- Cordesman, A. H. (2001). *The lessons and non-lessons of the air and missile campaign in Kosovo*. Praeger.
- Cottey, A. (2009). The Kosovo war in perspective. *International Affairs*, 85(3), 593–608.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2009.00816.x>
- Critchley, W. H. (1993). The Failure of Federalism in Yugoslavia. *International Journal: Canada’s Journal of Global Policy Analysis*, 48(3), 434–447.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/002070209304800302>
- Crowcroft, O. (2021). *I would vote to unify Albania and Kosovo, says election winner Kurti*. Euronews; Euronews.com. <https://www.euronews.com/2021/02/16/i-would-vote-to-unify-albania-and-kosovo-election-winner-albin-kurti-tells-euronews>
- Cvetković, S. (2022). Kryeministri i Kosovës “harroi” dialogun e brendshëm me serbët. *Radio Evropa e Lirë*. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/kurti-dialogu-me-serbet/31774687.html>
- Daalder, I. H. (1998a). *Decision to Intervene: How the War in Bosnia Ended*. Brookings.

- <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/decision-to-intervene-how-the-war-in-bosnia-ended/>
- Daalder, I. H. (1998b). *Peace at any price? Kosovo deal costs Milosevic little, is unlikely to resolve crisis*. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/peace-at-any-price-kosovo-deal-costs-milosevic-little-is-unlikely-to-resolve-crisis/>
- Daalder, I. H., & O’Hanlon, M. E. (2004). *Winning Ugly: Nato’s War to Save Kosovo*. Brookings Institution Press.
- David, L. (2017). The myopic Foucauldian gaze: Discourse, knowledge and the authoritarian peace. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 11(1), 21–41.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2016.1276677>
- De Coning, C. (2013). Understanding Peacebuilding as Essentially Local. *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 2(1), 6.
<https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.as>
- de Coning, C. (2018). Adaptive peacebuilding. *International Affairs*, 94(2), 301–317.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix251>
- Decision—2023/1095—EN - EUR-Lex*. (2023). Europa.Eu. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32023D1095>
- “De-eskalim dhe normalizim në veri”, të gjitha pikat që Kurti ua prezantoi ndërkombëtarëve. (2023). Raporto Korrupsionin! KALLXO.Com. <https://kallxo.com/lajm/de-eskalim-dhe-normalizim-ne-veri-te-gjitha-pikat-qe-kurti-ua-prezantoi-nderkombetareve/>
- Dekonstruktive – Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* (2017). Vetevendosje.Org.
<https://www.vetevendosje.org/dekonstruktive/>
- Demjaha, A. (2017). Inter-Ethnic Relations in Kosovo. *SEEU Review*, 12(1), 181–196.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/seeur-2017-0013>
- Di John, J. (2008). *-Development as State-Making—CONCEPTUALISING THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF FAILED STATES: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE* Crisis States Working Papers Series No.2.
<https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/57427/wp25.2.pdf>
- Diamond, L. J. (1999). *Developing democracy: Toward consolidation*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Distler, W. (2020). Political crisis and the Corona—‘State of Emergency’ in Kosovo. *Zeitschrift Für Friedens- Und Konfliktforschung*, 9(2), 375–384.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s42597-020-00046-w>
- Djokić, D. (2009). *Whose Myth? Which ation? The Serbian Kosovo Myth Revisited* (pp. 215–

- 233). <https://research.gold.ac.uk/id/eprint/3455/1/Kosovomyth2.pdf>
- DODGE, T. (2013). Intervention and dreams of exogenous statebuilding: The application of Liberal Peacebuilding in Afghanistan and Iraq. *Review of International Studies*, 39(5), 1189–1212. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210513000272>
- Dominik Zaum. (2007a). The Sovereignty Paradox. *Oxford University Press eBooks*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199207435.001.0001>
- Dominik Zaum. (2007b). *The sovereignty paradox: The norms and politics of international statebuilding*. Oxford University Press.
- Donais, T. (2009). Empowerment or Imposition? Dilemmas of Local Ownership in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Processes. *Peace & Change*, 34(1), 3–26. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0130.2009.00531.x>
- Donais, T. (2012). *Peacebuilding and Local Ownership*. Routledge.
- Doyle, M. W. (1983). Kant, liberal legacies, and foreign affairs. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 12(3), 205–235.
- Doyle, M. W., & Sambanis, N. (2006). *Making war and building peace: United nations peace operations*. Princeton University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7rtn4>
- Duffield, M. (2007). *Development, security and unending war governing the world of peoples*. Cambridge Polity Press.
- Duffield, M. R. (2001). *Global governance and the new wars: The merging of development and security*. Zed Books.
- Easterly, W., & Pfutze, T. (2008). Where does the money go? Best and worst practices in foreign aid. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 22(2), 29–52. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.22.2.29>
- Economides, S., & Ker-Lindsay, J. (2015). ‘Pre-Accession Europeanization’: The Case of Serbia and Kosovo. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 53(5), 1027–1044. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12238>
- Edward, N., Roland, P., & Richmond, O. P. (2009). *New perspectives on liberal peacebuilding* (1–1 online resource (xi, 392 pages)). United Nations University Press. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=349258>
- Eide, K. (2005). *Letter dated 7 Oct 2005 from UN SG addressed to SC President—A comprehensive review of the situation in Kosovo (S/2005/635)—Serbia* | ReliefWeb. Reliefweb.Int. <https://reliefweb.int/report/serbia/letter-dated-7-oct-2005-un-sg-addressed-sc-president-comprehensive-review-situation>

- Ejdus, F. (2017). “Here is your mission, now own it!” The rhetoric and practice of local ownership in EU interventions. *European Security*, 26(4), 461–484.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2017.1333495>
- Elbasani, A. (2018). Statebuilding or statecapture? Institutional exports, local reception and hybridity of reforms in postwar Kosovo. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 18(2), 149–164. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2018.1475901>
- Emini, D., & Stacic, I. (2018). *Belgrade and Pristina: Lost in normalization?* European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS).
<https://www.feelingeurope.eu/Pages/Belgrade%20and%20Pristina.pdf>
- Escobar, A. (1995). *Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the third world* (STU-Student edition). Princeton University Press.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7rtgw>
- Euronews. (2023). *PM Kurti publishes eight-point plan to de-escalate situation in north Kosovo—Euronews Albania*. Euronews Albania. <https://euronews.al/en/pm-kurti-publishes-eight-point-plan-to-de-escalate-situation-in-north-kosovo/>
- Euronews Albania. (2023). *Kurti points finger at West: Emissaries come to us with Serbia’s demands—Euronews Albania*. Euronews Albania. <https://euronews.al/en/kurti-points-finger-at-west-emissaries-come-to-us-with-serbias-demands/>
- European Commission. (2016). Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between the European Union and Kosovo Enters into Force.
https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_16_1184
- European Union. (2023). *Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue: Implementation Annex to the Agreement on the Path to Normalisation of Relations between Kosovo and Serbia*. EEAS. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/belgrade-pristina-dialogue-implementation-annex-agreement-path-normalisation-relations-between_en
- Falk, R. A. (1999). Kosovo, World Order, and the Future of International Law. *The American Journal of International Law*, 93(4), 847–857. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2555350>
- Filip, E., & Juncos, A. E. (2018). Reclaiming the local in EU peacebuilding: Effectiveness, ownership, and resistance. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 39(1), 4–27.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2017.1407176>
- Financial Times*. (2018). @FinancialTimes. <https://www.ft.com/content/99a65be0-6af6-41f5-8de2-71f6e078568a>
- Florian, B. (2002). Nationalist Mobilization and Stories of Serb Suffering: The Kosovo myth from 600th anniversary to the present. *Rethinking History*, 6(1), 95–110.

- <https://doi.org/10.1080/136425200110112137>
- Florian, B. (2018). Patterns of competitive authoritarianism in the Western Balkans. *East European Politics*, 34(3), 337–354. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2018.1490272>
- Florian Bieber. (2020). *The rise of authoritarianism in the Western Balkans*. Basingstoke Palgrave Macmillan.
- Florian Bieber & Židas Daskalovski. (2003). *Understanding the war in Kosovo*. Frank Cass.
- Florian, Q., & Prezelj, I. (2017). Issues of local ownership in Kosovo’s security sector. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 17(3), 403–419. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2017.1324279>
- Franks, J., & Richmond, O. P. (2008). Coopting Liberal Peace-building. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 43(1), 81–103. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836707086738>
- FREEDMAN, L. (2000). Victims and victors: Reflections on the Kosovo War. *Review of International Studies*, 26(3), 335–358. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0260210500003351>
- Freitag, M., Kijewski, S., & Oppold, M. (2017). War experiences, economic grievances, and political participation in postwar societies: An empirical analysis of Kosovo. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 36(4), 405–424. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0738894217716464>
- Fukuyama, F. (2004). *State-building: Governance and world order in the 21st century*. Cornell University Press.
- G. John Ikenberry. (2009). Liberal internationalism 3.0: America and the dilemmas of liberal world order. *Perspectives on Politics*, 7(1), 71–87. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592709090112>
- G. John Ikenberry. (2011). The future of the liberal world order: Internationalism after America. *Foreign Affairs*, 90(3), 56–68. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23039408>
- Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3), 167–191. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002234336900600301>
- Galtung, J. (1976). *Essays in peace research / Vol. 2, Peace, war and defense*. C. Ejlers.
- Galtung, J. (1996). *Peace by peaceful means: Peace and conflict, development and civilization*. (pp. viii, 280). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Gashi, K., Musliu, V., & Orbie, J. (2017). Mediation through recontextualization: The European Union and the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. *EUROPEAN FOREIGN AFFAIRS REVIEW*, 22(4), 33–50. <http://hdl.handle.net/1854/LU-8554525>
- Gashi, K. & Vjosa Musliu. (2017). Mediation Through Recontextualization: The European Union and The Dialogue Between Kosovo and Serbia. *European Foreign Affairs*

- Review*, 22(4).
<https://kluwerlawonline.com/journalarticle/European+Foreign+Affairs+Review/22.4/EERR2017039>
- Gashi, Z. (2015a). *Dialogu, e vetmja zgjidhje*. Radio Evropa e Lirë.
<https://www.evropaelire.org/a/27264940.html>
- Gashi, Z. (2015b). *Kushtet e vështira për dialog*. Radio Evropa e Lirë.
<https://www.evropaelire.org/a/27275309.html>
- Gashi, Z. (2015c). *Opozita pamundëson vazhdimin e seancës*. Radio Evropa e Lirë.
<https://www.evropaelire.org/a/27253978.html>
- Gashi, Z. (2015d). *Seancë me fishkëllimat e opozitës dhe gaz lotsjellës*. Radio Evropa e Lirë.
<https://www.evropaelire.org/a/27294709.html>
- Gashi, Z. (2015e). *Të revoltuar me marrëveshjen*. Radio Evropa e Lirë.
<https://www.evropaelire.org/a/27210369.html>
- Gentjan Skara. (2017). The Bumpy Road of EULEX as an Exporter of Rule of Law in Kosovo. *Academicus International Scientific Journal*, 16, 69–87.
<https://ideas.repec.org/a/etc/journal/y2017i16p69-87.html>
- Gezim Visoka, & Beha, A. (2011). Minority Consultative Bodies in Kosovo: A Quest for Effective Emancipation or Elusive Participation? *DOAJ (DOAJ: Directory of Open Access Journals)*, Vol 10,(NO 1.), 1–30.
- Ghani, A., & Lockhart, C. (2009). *Fixing failed states: A framework for rebuilding a fractured world*. Oxford university press.
- Ginty, R. M. (2006). *No War, No Peace*. Palgrave Macmillan UK.
<https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230625686>
- Ginty, R. M. (2012). Routine peace: Technocracy and peacebuilding. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 47(3), 287–308. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836712444825>
- Gjoni, R., Wetterberg, A., & Dunbar, D. (2010). Decentralization as a conflict transformation tool: The challenge in Kosovo. *Public Administration and Development*, 30(5), 291–312. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pad.577>
- Goodhand, J. (2006). *Aiding Peace? The Role of NGOs in Armed Conflict*. Lynne Rienner Pub.
- Goodhand, J., & Walton, O. (2009). The Limits of Liberal Peacebuilding? International Engagement in the Sri Lankan Peace Process. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 3(3), 303–323. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17502970903086693>
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. International Publishers.

- Greenwood, C. (2000). International Law And The Nato Intervention In Kosovo. *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, 49(4), 926–934.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020589300064745>
- Grewal, B. S. (2003). Johan Galtung: Positive and negative peace. *School of Social Science, Auckland University of Technology*, 23–26.
- Grilj, B., & Zupancic, R. (2016). *Assessing the planning and implementation of the EU Rule of law missions: Case study of EULEX Kosovo*. 8, 63–86.
- Guzina, D., & Marijan, B. (2014). A FINE BALANCE: THE EU AND THE PROCESS OF NORMALIZING KOSOVO-SERBIA RELATIONS. 23, 5–11.
https://www.cigionline.org/static/documents/no23_0.pdf
- Hagmann, T., & Hoehne, M. V. (2009). Failures of the state failure debate: Evidence from the Somali territories. *Journal of International Development*, 21(1), 42–57.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.1482>
- Hameiri, S., & Jones, L. (2015). Global Governance as State Transformation. *Political Studies*, 64(4), 793–810. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.12225>
- Hameiri, S., & Jones, L. (2017). Beyond Hybridity to the Politics of Scale: International Intervention and ‘Local’ Politics. *Development and Change*, 48(1), 54–77.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12287>
- Hamza, A. (2021). *Kosovo is slowly recovering from Trump’s coup*. Al Jazeera; Al Jazeera.
<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/2/12/kosovo-is-slowly-recovering-from-trumps-coup>
- Hanlon, J. (2004). It is Possible to Just Give Money to the Poor. *Development and Change*, 35(2), 375–383. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.14677660.2004.00356.x>
- Heathershaw, J. (2008). Unpacking the Liberal Peace: The Dividing and Merging of Peacebuilding Discourses. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 36(3), 597–621. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298080360031101>
- Heathershaw, J. (2013). Towards better theories of peacebuilding: Beyond the liberal peace debate. *Peacebuilding*, 1(2), 275–282. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2013.783260>
- Hehir, A. (2006). Autonomous province building: Identification theory and the failure of UNMIK. *International Peacekeeping*, 13(2), 200–213.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13533310500437597>
- Hehir, A., & Robinson, N. (2007). *State-Building: Theory and Practice*. Routledge.
<https://www.routledge.com/State-Building-Theory-and-Practice/Hehir-Robinson/p/book/9780415543484>

- Hobbes, T. (1996). *Leviathan* (R. Tuck, Ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Holbrooke. (1998). *Yugoslavia: Agreement with Milosevic could avert air strikes—Serbia*. ReliefWeb. <https://reliefweb.int/report/serbia/yugoslavia-agreement-milosevic-could-avert-air-strikes>
- Honzak, R. (2006). *A NEW KFOR: CHANGES FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY IN KOSOVO*. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA449381.pdf>
- Horowitz, D. L. (1985). *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. University Of California Press.
- Horvat, S., & Štikš, I. (2015). *Welcome to the Desert of Post-Socialism*. Verso Books.
- Hughes, C., Öjendal, J., & Schierenbeck, I. (2015). The struggle versus the song – the local turn in peacebuilding: An introduction. *Third World Quarterly*, 36(5), 817–824. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1029907>
- Hughes, C., & Pupavac, V. (2005). Framing post-conflict societies: International pathologisation of cambodia and the post-yugoslav states. *Third World Quarterly*, 26(6), 873–889. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590500089232>
- Human Rights Watch. (1994). *Human Rights Watch World Report 1994—Yugoslavia* (Refworld). <https://www.refworld.org/reference/annualreport/hrw/1994/en/41265>
- Human Rights Watch. (1998). *Humanitarian Law Violations in Kosovo*. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/report/1998/10/01/humanitarian-law-violations-kosovo>
- Human Rights Watch. (1999). *Human Rights Watch investigation finds: Yugoslav Forces Guilty of War Crimes in Racak, Kosovo*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/1999/01/29/human-rights-watch-investigation-findsyugoslav-forces-guilty-war-crimes-racak-kosovo>
- Human Rights Watch. (2001). *Under Orders: War Crimes in Kosovo*. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2001/10/26/under-orders/war-crimes-kosovo>
- Human Rights Watch. (2004). *Failure to Protect: Anti-Minority Violence in Kosovo*. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2004/07/25/failure-protect/anti-minority-violence-kosovo-march-2004>
- Hurrell, A. (2007). *On global order: Power, values, and the constitution of international society*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199233106.001.0001>
- ICJ. (2010). *Accordance with international law of the unilateral declaration of independence in respect of Kosovo*. Icj-Cij.Org. <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/141>
- Idro Seferi. (2023). *Trajković: Integritet e serbëve po e bën mafia serbe*. Dw.Com; Deutsche Welle. <https://www.dw.com/sq/rada-trajkovic-vu%C3%A7iqi-po->

bashk%C3%ABpunon-me-mafian/a-64696968

- Ignatieff, M. (2003). *Empire Lite: Nation Building in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan*. Penguin Canada.
- Insajderi. (2016). *2016—Vit i bllokadës dhe i gazit—Insajderi*. Insajderi.
<https://insajderi.org/viti-i-bllokades/>
- Institute for War and Peace Reporting. (2005). *KOMENT: OKB NUK KUPTON RENDESINE E VENDIMIT ME TE FUNDIT*. Iwpr.Net. <https://iwpr.net/sq/global-voices/koment-okb-nuk-kupton-rendesine-e-vendimit-me-te-fundit>
- Jabri, V. (2007). *War and the Transformation of Global Politics*. Palgrave Macmillan.
<https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230626393>
- Jabri, V. (2012). *The Postcolonial Subject: Claiming Politics/Governing Others in Late Modernity*. Routledge.
- Jabri, V. (2013). Peacebuilding, the local and the international: A colonial or a postcolonial rationality? *Peacebuilding*, 1(1), 3–16.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2013.756253>
- Jarstad, A. K., & Belloni, R. (2012). Introducing Hybrid Peace Governance: Impact and Prospects of Liberal Peacebuilding. In T. J. Sinclair (Ed.), *Global Governance*. Polity Press.
- Jarstad, A. K., & Sisk, T. D. (2008). *From War to Democracy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Jasna Dragovic-Soso. (2002). *Saviours of the Nation: Serbia's Intellectual Opposition and the Revival of Nationalism*. McGill-Queen's Press - MQUP.
- Jenne, E. K. (2010). The Paradox of Ethnic Partition: Lessons from de facto Partition in Bosnia and Kosovo. In L. M. Anderson (Ed.), *The Paradox of Federalism Does Self-Rule Accommodate or Exacerbate Ethnic Divisions?* (p. Chapter 6). Routledge.
- Jens, N. (2008). PostConflict Peacebuilding and Local Ownership: Dynamics of External–Local Interaction in Kosovo under United Nations Administration. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 2(3), 369–390.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17502970802436361>
- Johan Galtung. (1990). Cultural violence. *Journal of Peace Research*, 27(3), 291–305.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343390027003005>
- Johan Galtung. (1998). *After violence: 3R, reconstruction, reconciliation, resolution: Coping with visible and invisible effects of war and violence*. Transcend.
- John Paul Lederach. (1997). *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Syracuse, N.Y. Syracuse University Press.

- John Paul Lederach. (2005). *The moral imagination: The art and soul of building peace*. Oxford University Press.
- Joint statement by France, Italy, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States of America—Violence in the North of Kosovo (26.05.23). (2023). France Diplomacy - Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs; France Diplomacy. <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/kosovo/news/article/joint-statement-by-france-italy-germany-the-united-kingdom-and-the-united>
- Joseph, E. P. (2023). *Kosovo Has a Deal With Serbia—If the United States and Europe Can Save It*. Foreign Policy; Foreign Policy. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/03/22/kosovo-serbia-deal-europe-united-states-ohrid/>
- Judah, T. (2002). *Kosovo: War and Revenge*. Yale Nota Bene.
- Judah, T. (2008). *Kosovo: What everyone needs to know*. Oxford University Press.
- KALDOR, M., MARTIN, M., & SELCHOW, S. (2007). Human security: A new strategic narrative for Europe. *International Affairs*, 83(2), 273–288. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2007.00618.x>
- Kant, I. (1991). *Kant: Political writings* (2nd ed., p. 130). Cambridge University Press.
- Kappler, S. (2014). *Local agency and peacebuilding: EU and international engagement in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus and south Africa*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kappler, S. (2015). The dynamic local: Delocalisation and (re-)localisation in the search for peacebuilding identity. *Third World Quarterly*, 36(5), 875–889. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1025740>
- Kappler, S., & Richmond, O. (2011). Peacebuilding and culture in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Resistance or emancipation? *Security Dialogue*, 42(3), 261–278. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010611405377>
- Kaufmann, C. (1996). Possible and impossible solutions to ethnic civil wars. *International Security*, 20(4), 136–175. <https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.20.4.136>
- Keen, D. (2003). Greedy elites, dwindling resources, alienated youths: The anatomy of protracted violence in Sierra Leone. *Internationale Politik Und Gesellschaft*, 2003(3), 67–94. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/id/eprint/59756>
- Keen, D. (2008). *Complex emergencies*. Polity Press.
- Ker-Lindsay, J. (2009). *Kosovo: The Path to Contested Statehood in the Balkans*. I.B. Tauris.
- Këto janë gjashtë kushtet e Kurtit për Asociacionin*. (2023). <https://nacionale.com/politike/keto-jane-gjashte-kushtet-e-kurtit-per-asociacioni>.
- KING, I., & MASON, W. (2006). *Peace at any price: How the world failed kosovo*. Cornell

- University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctvrf8c00>
- Knoll, B. (2005). From Benchmarking to Final Status? Kosovo and The Problem of an International Administration's Open-Ended Mandate. *European Journal of International Law*, 16(4), 637–660. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ejil/chi140>
- Knudsen, R. A. (2013). Privatization in Kosovo: 'Liberal Peace' in Practice. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 7(3), 287–307. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2012.734559>
- KOHA. (2017a). *Albin Kurti synon veting e dialog të brendshëm me serbët*. KOHA.Net; Koha.net. <https://www.koha.net/zgjedhjet-lajme/24035/albin-kurti-synon-veting-e-dialog-te-brendshem-me-serbet/>
- KOHA. (2017b). *Mustafa kritikon dialogun e Brukselit, kërkon ndryshime*. KOHA.Net; Koha.net. <https://www.koha.net/arberi/13082/mustafa-kritikon-dialogun-e-brukselit-kerkon-ndryshime/>
- KOHA. (2018). *Lista Serbe nuk e pranon nismën e Qeverisë për Asociacionin*. KOHA.Net; Koha.net. <https://www.koha.net/arberi/85344/lista-serbe-nuk-e-pranon-nismen-e-qeverise-per-asociacionin/>
- KOHA. (2020). *Kosova kushtëzon Serbinë për Asociacionin: Zbatimi, pas njohjes reciproke*. KOHA.Net; Koha.net. <https://www.koha.net/arberi/237557/kosova-kushtezon-serbine-per-asociacionin-zbatimi-pas-njohjes-reciproke/>
- KOHA. (2021). *Petkoviq: Nëse nuk formohet Asociacioni serbët do të largohen nga institucionet e Kosovës*. KOHA.Net; Koha.net. <https://www.koha.net/arberi/293106/petkoviq-nese-nuk-formohet-asociacioni-serbet-do-te-largohen-nga-institucionet-e-kosoves/>
- KOHA. (2022). *Trajkovic: Serbs in Kosovo must be freed from criminals*. KOHA.Net; Koha.net. <https://www.koha.net/en/arboretum/356523/Trajkovic%2C-Serbs-in-Kosovo-must-be-freed-from-criminals/>
- KOHA. (2023a). *Kosovo and the EU sign the IPA-2022 agreement worth over 62 million euros*. KOHA.Net; Koha.net. <https://www.koha.net/en/arboretum/370955/Kosovo-and-Bosnia-and-Herzegovina-sign-the-IPA-2022-agreement-worth-over-62-million-euros/>
- KOHA. (2023b). *Kurti: Çështja e kryetarëve të rinj, pretekst për dhunë nga shovinistët serbë*. KOHA.Net; Koha.net. <https://www.koha.net/arberi/380012/kurti-ceshtja-e-kryetareve-te-rinj-pretekst-per-dhune-nga-shovinistet-serbe/>
- Konjufca: Asociacioni bashkë me njohjen, çelës për përparimin e dialogut. (2023). *Radio*

- Evropa e Lirë*. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/konjufca-asociacioni-dialogu-serbia-/32601230.html>
- Konjufca: Veriu nuk kontrollohet nga Serbia, por nga Policia e Kosovës. (2022). In *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIOv5iYkcRg>
- Kosovo: Background and U.S. Policy*. (2021). <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R46175.pdf>
- Kosovo Declaration of Independence. (2008). *Kosovo Declaration of Independence / Refworld*. Refworld. <https://www.refworld.org/legal/legislation/natlegbod/2008/en/56552>
- KoSSev. (2023). *Escobar on ASM: It will be formed, the only question is who will form it and how long we have to wait—KoSSev*. KoSSev. <https://kossev.info/escobar-on-asm-it-will-be-formed-the-only-question-is-who-will-form-it-and-how-long-we-have-to-wait/>
- Krampe, F. (2016). Water for peace? Post-conflict water resource management in Kosovo. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 52(2), 147–165. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836716652428>
- Krasniqi, G. (2018). Contested Territories, Liminal Politics, Performative Citizenship: A Comparative Analysis. *Social Science Research Network*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3157555>
- Krasniqi, N. (2019). Kosovo: The development of interest groups in a fragile democracy. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 19(2). <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.1721>
- Kristoffer Lidén. (2009). Building Peace between Global and Local Politics: The Cosmopolitical Ethics of Liberal Peacebuilding. *International Peacekeeping*, 16(5), 616–634. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13533310903303255>
- Krüger, J., & Ball, P. (2014). *Evaluation of the Database of the Kosovo Memory Book*. https://hrdag.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Evaluation_of_the_Database_KMB-2014.pdf
- Kukić, L. (2018). Socialist growth revisited: Insights from Yugoslavia. *European Review of Economic History*, 22(4), 403–429. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ereh/hey001>
- Kuperman, A. J. (2008). The Moral Hazard of Humanitarian Intervention: Lessons from the Balkans. *International Studies Quarterly*, 52(1), 49–80. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2007.00491.x>
- Kursani, S. (2013). *A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF EULEX: WHAT NEXT?* Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development (KIPRED). <https://www.kipred.org/en/news/A-COMPREHENSIVEANALYSIS-OF-EULEX->

- Kurti: Reciprocitet i plotë deri në arritjen e marrëveshjes me Serbinë. (2022). *Radio Evropa e Lirë*. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/albin-kurti-reciprocitet-serbia-/32007779.html>
- Ky është vizioni i Kurtit për zbatimin e “vetëmenaxhimit” për serbët në Kosovë | Albanian Post*. (2023). Albanian Post. <https://albanianpost.com/ky-eshte-vizioni-i-kurtit-per-zbatimin-e-vetemenaxhimit-per-serbet-ne-kosove/>
- Lambeth, B. S. (2001). *NATO’s Air War for Kosovo: A Strategic and Operational Assessment*. RAND Corporation. <https://doi.org/10.7249/MR1365>
- Lampe, J. R. (2000). *Yugoslavia as History: Twice there was a country*. Cambridge University Press.
- Landau, D. M. (2017). The quest for legitimacy in independent Kosovo: The unfulfilled promise of diversity and minority rights. *Nationalities Papers*, 45(3), 442–463. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2016.1267137>
- Law No. 03/L-073 on General Elections in the Republic of Kosovo*. (2008). Aceproject.Org. <https://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/europe/KS/on-general-elections-in-the-republic-of-kosovo/view>
- Lederach, J. P. (1997). *Building peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*. United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Lekha Sriram, C. (2007). Justice as Peace? Liberal Peacebuilding and Strategies of Transitional Justice. *Global Society*, 21(4), 579–591. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600820701562843>
- Lemay-Hébert, N. (2009). Statebuilding without Nation-building? Legitimacy, State Failure and the Limits of the Institutional Approach. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 3(1), 21–45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17502970802608159>
- Lemay-Hebert, N. (2011). The “Empty-Shell” Approach: The Setup Process of International Administrations in Timor-Leste and Kosovo, Its Consequences and Lessons. *International Studies Perspectives*, 12(2), 190–211. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1528-3585.2011.00427.x>
- Lemay-Hébert, N. (2013). Everyday Legitimacy and International Administration: Global Governance and Local Legitimacy in Kosovo. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 7(1), 87–104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2012.655622>
- Lemay-Hébert, N., & Kappler, S. (2016). What attachment to peace? Exploring the normative and material dimensions of local ownership in peacebuilding. *Review of International Studies*, 42(5), 895–914. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0260210516000061>

- Leonardsson, H., & Rudd, G. (2015). The ‘local turn’ in peacebuilding: A literature review of effective and emancipatory local peacebuilding. *Third World Quarterly*, 36(5), 825–839. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1029905>
- Lidén, K., Mac Ginty, R., & Richmond, O. P. (2009). Introduction: Beyond Northern Epistemologies of Peace: Peacebuilding Reconstructed? *International Peacekeeping*, 16(5), 587–598. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13533310903303230>
- Lilyanova, V. (2016). *Kosovo: “First formal step” towards EU accession | Think Tank | European Parliament*. Europa.Eu. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_ATA\(2016\)573943](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_ATA(2016)573943)
- Lista Serbe pret ftesë nga kryeministri që të kthehet në institucione*. (2016). Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/28129207.html>
- Lyons, T. (2005). *Demilitarizing Politics: Elections on the Uncertain Road to Peace*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Mac Ginty, R. (2008). Indigenous Peace-Making Versus the Liberal Peace. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 43(2), 139–163. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836708089080>
- Mac Ginty, R. (2010). Hybrid Peace: The Interaction Between Top-Down and Bottom-Up Peace. *Security Dialogue*, 41(4), 391–412. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010610374312>
- Mac Ginty, R. (2011). *International peacebuilding and local resistance; Hybrid forms of peace* (1–256 pages : 3 black and white, illustrations, 7 4). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mac Ginty, R. (2015). Where is the local? Critical localism and peacebuilding. *Third World Quarterly*, 36(5), 840–856. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1045482>
- Mac Ginty, R., & Richmond, O. (2015). The fallacy of constructing hybrid political orders: A reappraisal of the hybrid turn in peacebuilding. *International Peacekeeping*, 23(2), 219–239. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2015.1099440>
- Mac Ginty, R., & Richmond, O. P. (2013). The Local Turn in Peace Building: A critical agenda for peace. *Third World Quarterly*, 34(5), 763–783. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2013.800750>
- Mac Ginty, R., & Sanghera, G. (2012). Hybridity in Peacebuilding and Development: An Introduction. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 7(2), 3–8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2012.742800>
- Mahr, E. (2017a). Local contestation against the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 39(1), 72–94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2017.1407060>

- Mahr, E. (2017b). Local contestation against the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 39(1), 72–94.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2017.1407060>
- Mahr, E. (2022). EULEX in the eyes of locals. *Research Publications (Maastricht University)*. <https://doi.org/10.26481/dis.20221123em>
- Malcolm, N. (1998). *Kosovo: A Short History*. Harperperennial.
- Maliqi, A. (2023). *Getting Back on Track: Unlocking Kosovo's Euro-Atlantic and Development Perspective*. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Unlocking-Kosovos-Potential.pdf>
- Manners, I. (n.d.). *The normative ethics of the European Union*. WileyBlackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Manning, C. (2003). Local Level Challenges to Post-conflict Peacebuilding. *International Peacekeeping*, 10(3), 25–43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13533310308559334>
- Maria Eriksson Baaz, & Stern, M. (2009). Why do soldiers rape? Masculinity, violence, and sexuality in the armed forces in the congo (DRC). *International Studies Quarterly*, 53(2), 495–518. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2009.00543.x>
- Marmullaku, A. (2023). *Kurti: Ndërkombëtarët ma kanë bërë të qartë, nëse i them jo planit do kem ndëshkime, futem në rrugë të konfrontimit me ta*. Albanian Post.
<https://albanianpost.com/kurti-nderkombetaret-ma-kane-ber-te-qarte-nese-i-them-jo-planit-do-kem-ndeshkime-futem-ne-rruge-te-konfrontimit-me-ta/>
- Martti Koskeniemi. (2011). *The Politics of International Law*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Mayer-Rieckh, A., & Duthie, R. (2009). *Enhancing Justice and Development Through Justice-Sensitive Security Sector Reform*. <https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Development-SSR-ResearchBrief-2009-English.pdf>
- Mbembe, A. (2003). Necropolitics. *Public Culture*, 15(1), 11–40.
- McGarryand, J., & O'Leary, B. (2009). Power Shared after the Death of Thousands John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary. In *Consociational Theory*. Routledge.
- Meera Sabaratnam. (2017). *Decolonising Intervention: International Statebuilding in Mozambique*. Rowman & Littlefield International.
- Mertus, J. A. (1999). *Kosovo: How Myths and Truths Started a War* (Reprint 2020, 1–1 online resource (416 p.) : 18 figs., 13 tables). University of California Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520341579>
- Michael, P. (2006). Postwar economies and the New York dissensus. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 6(3), 269–289. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678800600933464>

- Millar, G. (2014). Disaggregating hybridity: Why hybrid institutions do not produce predictable experiences of peace. *Journal of Peace Research*, 51(4), 501–514.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343313519465>
- Millar, G. (2015). *Ethnographic approach to peacebuilding: Understanding local experiences in transitional states*. Routledge.
- MITCHELL, A. (2011). Quality/control: International peace interventions and ‘the everyday.’ *Review of International Studies*, 37(4), 16231645.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210511000180>
- Mitchell, A. (2016). Posthuman Security/Ethics. In J. Nyman & A. J. Burke (Eds.), *Ethical Security Studies*. Informa. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315692005>
- Mitchell, C. R. (2009). *Conflict, Social Change and Conflict Resolution. An Enquiry*. (pp. 2–18). Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management.
<https://www.psicopolis.com/boxtesti/enquiry.pdf>
- Moss, T. J., & Pettersson Gelande, G. (2006). *An Aid Institutions Paradox? A Review Essay on Aid Dependency and State Building in SubSaharan Africa*.
<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.860826>
- Muharremi, R. (2008). Kosovo’s Declaration of Independence: SelfDetermination and Sovereignty Revisited. *Review of Central and East European Law*, 33(4), 401–435.
<https://doi.org/10.1163/157303508X339689>
- Mujanović, J. (2023). *The flare-up of violence in Kosovo shows the folly of the west’s appeasement of Serbia*. The Guardian; The Guardian.
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/sep/29/the-flare-up-of-violence-in-kosovo-shows-the-folly-of-the-wests-appeasement-of-serbia>
- Mulaj, K. (2008). Resisting an Oppressive Regime: The Case of Kosovo Liberation Army. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 31(12), 1103–1119.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100802510660>
- Murtagh, C. (2015). Reaching across: Institutional barriers to crossethnic parties in postconflict societies and the case of Northern Ireland. *Nations Natl*, 21(3), 544–565.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12129>
- Musliu, V., & Orbie, J. (2014). The international missions in Kosovo: What is in a name? *EUROPEAN FOREIGN AFFAIRS REVIEW*, 19(3), 411–428.
<https://doi.org/10.54648/EERR2014032>
- NADARAJAH, S., & RAMPTON, D. (2014). The limits of hybridity and the crisis of liberal peace. *Review of International Studies*, 41(1), 49–72.

- <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0260210514000060>
- NATO. (1999). *NATO Press Release (1999)051—12 April 1999*. Nato.Int.
<https://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-051e.htm>
- Në Bruksel hapet tema e Asociacionit, çështjeve pronësore dhe financiare. (2020). Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/30824647.html>
- Neff, S. C. (2005). *War and the Law of Nations: A General History*. Cambridge University Press.
- Neil, C. (2006). Chimeric governance and the extension of resource regulation. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 6(3), 315–335. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678800600933498>
- Newman, E. (2011). A Human Security PeaceBuilding Agenda. *Third World Quarterly*, 32(10), 17371756. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2011.610568>
- NEWMAN, M. (2009). Revisiting the ‘Responsibility to Protect.’ *The Political Quarterly*, 80(1), 92–100. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-923x.2009.01963.x>
- Niccolò Machiavelli. (2005). *The Prince*. Oxford University Press.
- Niels van Willigen. (2013). *Peacebuilding and International Administration*. Routledge.
- Nieminen, K. (2006). Review Essay: The Difficult Equation of Long-Term Peace and Post-Conflict Governance. *Security Dialogue*, 37(2), 263–272.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010606066178>
- Nina, W. (2009). Capacitybuilding or Capacitytaking? Legitimizing Concepts in Peace and Development Operations. *International Peacekeeping*, 16(3), 337–351.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13533310903036392>
- Norrie, M. (2008). *Peacekeeping and the international system* (Reprinted). Routledge.
- Norris, J. (2005). *Collision course: NATO, Russia, and Kosovo*. Praeger, Cop.
- Ole Jacob Sending. (2009). Why Peacebuilders Fail to Secure Ownership and be Sensitive to Context. *Norwegian Institute of International Affairs*.
- Ole Jacob Sending. (2010). Learning to build a sustainable peace: Ownership and everyday peacebuilding. *CHR. Michelsen Institute Report*.
<https://www.cmi.no/publications/file/3732-learning-to-build-a-sustainable-peace.pdf>
- ORAKHELASHVILI, A. (2017). Kosovo and intersecting legal regimes: An interdisciplinary analysis. *Global Constitutionalism*, 6(2), 237–264.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/s2045381717000120>
- OSCE. (1999). *Human Rights in Kosovo: As Seen, As Told. Volume I, October 1998—June 1999*. Osce.Org. <https://www.osce.org/odihr/17772>
- OSCE. (2018). *Compendium of all Municipal Profiles 2018*. Osce.Org.

- <https://www.osce.org/mission-in-kosovo/410279>
- Ottaway, M., & Lacina, B. (2003). International Interventions and Imperialism: Lessons from the 1990s. *SAIS Review*, 23(2), 71–92. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sais.2003.0051>
- Paffenholz, T. (2015). Unpacking the local turn in peacebuilding: A critical assessment towards an agenda for future research. *Third World Quarterly*, 36(5), 857–874. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1029908>
- Parimet e Asociacionit “nuk janë tërësisht” në përputhshmëri me Kushtetutën.* (2015). Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/27445466.html>
- Paris, R. (2002). International Peacebuilding and the “Mission Civilisatrice.” *Review of International Studies*, 28(4), 637–656. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026021050200637X>
- Paris, R. (2004). *At War’s End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict*. Cambridge University Press.
- Paris, R. (2010). Saving liberal peacebuilding. *Review of International Studies*, 36(2), 337–365. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0260210510000057>
- Paris, R., & Sisk, T. (2007). *Managing Contradictions: The Inherent Dilemmas of Postwar Statebuilding*. International Peace Academy Research Partnership on Postwar Statebuilding. International Peace Academy. https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/wps/ipi/0016371/f_0016371_14169.pdf
- Paris, R., & Sisk, T. D. (2009). *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding*. Routledge. <https://www.routledge.com/The-Dilemmas-of-Statebuilding-Confronting-the-contradictions-of-postwar-peace-operations/Paris-Sisk/p/book/9780415776295>
- Pellet, A. (1992). The Opinions of the Badinter Arbitration Committee A Second Breath for the Self-Determination of Peoples. *European Journal of International Law*, 3(1), 178–185. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.ejil.a035802>
- Pellumb Kelmendi, & Radin, A. (2018). Unsatisfied? Public support for postconflict international missions. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 62(5), 983–1011. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002716674536>
- PERRITT, H. H. (2008). *Kosovo liberation army: The inside story of an insurgency*. University of Illinois Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctt1xcgg3>
- Perritt, H. H. (2010). *The road to independence for Kosovo: A chronicle of the Ahtisaari plan*. Cambridge University Press.
- Perritt, H. H. Jr. (2009). *The Road to Independence for Kosovo*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511635410>
- Peterson, J. H. (2009). ‘Rule of Law’ initiatives and the liberal peace: The impact of

- politicised reform in post-conflict states. *Disasters*, 34, S15–S39.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7717.2009.01097.x>
- Pezullohet Asociacioni i komunave*. (2015). Radio Evropa e Lirë.
<https://www.evropaelire.org/a/27356424.html>
- Phillip, D. (2009). Rolling Back the Frontiers of Empire: Practising the Postcolonial. *International Peacekeeping*, 16(5), 699–716.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13533310903303347>
- Pol Bargaés-Pedreny, & Mathieu, X. (2018). Beyond Silence, Obstacle and Stigma: Revisiting the ‘Problem’ of Difference in Peacebuilding. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 12(3), 283–299. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2018.1513622>
- Posen, B. R. (2000). The War for Kosovo: Serbia’s Political-Military Strategy. *International Security*, 24(4), 39–84. <https://doi.org/10.1162/016228800560309>
- Pospisil, J., & Kühn, F. P. (2016). The resilient state: New regulatory modes in international approaches to state building? *Third World Quarterly*, 37(1), 1–16.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1086637>
- POULIGNY, B. (2005). Civil Society and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: Ambiguities of International Programmes Aimed at Building “New” Societies. *Security Dialogue*, 36(4), 495–510. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010605060448>
- Power, S. (2002). *“A problem from hell”: America and the age of genocide*. Basic Books.
- PPIO. (2015). *Statement by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini on the report by Jean-Paul Jacqué on the EULEX Kosovo mandate implementation in case of recent allegations—News—EULEX - European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo*. Eulex-Kosovo.Eu. <https://www.eulex-kosovo.eu/?page=2,11,201>
- Prelec, M., & Rashiti, N. (2015). *Serb Integration in Kosovo After the Brussels Agreement*. <https://balkansgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Serb-Integration-in-Kosovo-After-Brussels-Agreement.pdf>
- Publikohet vizioni i Kurtit për statutin: Asociacioni me kanal të drejtpërdrejt të komunikimit me Qeverinë—NACIONALE*. (2023). Nacionale. <https://nacionale.com/politike/kurti-e-publikon-vizionin-e-tij-per-asociacionin-do-te-kete-kanal-te-drejtperdrejt-te-komunikimit-me-qeverine>
- Pugh, M. (2004). Peacekeeping and critical theory. *International Peacekeeping*, 11(1), 39–58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1353331042000228445>
- Pugh, M. (2010). Welfare in Wartorn Societies: Nemesis of the Liberal Peace? In O. P. Richmond (Ed.), *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding: Critical Developments and*

- Approaches* (pp. 262–278). Palgrave Macmillan UK.
https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230282681_14
- Pugh, M. (2011). Local Agency and Political Economies of Peacebuilding. *Stud Ethn Nation*, 11(2), 308–320. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.13996576.2011.01113.x>
- Pugh, M. (2013). The Problem-solving and Critical Paradigms. In R. Mac Ginty (Ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding* (pp. 11–24). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203068175>
- Pugh, M. C. (2005). *The political economy of peacebuilding: A critical theory perspective*. Taipei, Taiwan : Published by Formosa College. <http://hdl.handle.net/10454/4181>
- Pugh, M., Cooper, N. R., & Turner, M. (2008). *Whose Peace? Critical Perspectives on the Political Economy of Peacebuilding*. Palgrave Macmillan.
<https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230228740>
- Pula, B. (2004). The Emergence of the Kosovo “Parallel State,” 1988–19921. *Nationalities Papers*, 32(4), 797–826. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0090599042000296131>
- Radin, A. (2018). *UNsatisfied? Public Support for Postconflict International Missions—Pellumb Kelmendi, Andrew Radin, 2018*. Journal of Conflict Resolution.
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0022002716674536>
- Ramet, S. P. (2002). *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration Of Yugoslavia From The Death Of Tito To The Fall Of Milosevic* (4th ed.). Westview Press.
- Randazzo, E. (2016). The paradoxes of the ‘everyday’: Scrutinising the local turn in peace building. *Third World Quarterly*, 37(8), 1351–1370.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1120154>
- REF/RL. (2022). *U.S. Envoy In Pristina Urges Establishment Of Association Of Serbian Municipalities*. RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty; RFE/RL.
<https://www.rferl.org/a/kosovo-serbia-escobar-association-serbian-municipalities/32175193.html>
- Reilly, B. (2002). Elections in PostConflict Scenarios: Constraints and Dangers. *International Peacekeeping*, 9(2), 118139. <https://doi.org/10.1080/714002729>
- Republic of Serbia. (2006). *Constitution of the Republic of Serbia (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 98/2006)*, Serbia, *WIPO Lex*. Wipo.Int.
<https://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/legislation/details/7378>
- RES/1244. (1999). *Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) on the situation relating Kosovo / UN Peacemaker*. Un.Org.
- Reuters. (2020). *U.S. halts aid to Kosovo over tariff dispute with Serbia*. Reuters.

- <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN21033N/>
- Reuters. (2023). *EU blames Kosovo over stalled normalisation pact with Serbia*. Reuters.
<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-blames-kosovo-over-stalled-normalisation-pact-with-serbia-2023-09-14/>
- RFE/RL. (2015a). *Faza e re e raporteve, afekton dialogun*. Radio Evropa e Lirë.
<https://www.evropaelire.org/a/27365481.html>
- RFE/RL. (2015b). *Jahjaga ka deponuar kërkesën e saj për Asociacionin në Kushtetuese*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/27335832.html>
- RFE/RL. (2015c). *Lëvizja Vetëvendosje vazhdon aktivitetet kundër “Zajdenicës.”* Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/27228258.html>
- RFE/RL. (2015d). *Mustafa: Marrëveshjet janë në përputhje me Kushtetutën*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/27214580.html>
- RFE/RL. (2015e). *Pushteti zotohet për respektim të vendimit*. Radio Evropa e Lirë.
<https://www.evropaelire.org/a/27446909.html>
- RFE/RL. (2016a). *Asociacioni kushtëzohet me zhbërjen e strukturave paralele*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/27932003.html>
- RFE/RL. (2016b). *Mogherini: Të zbatohen marrëveshjet në dialogun Kosovë—Serbi*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/27717733.html>
- RFE/RL. (2016c). *Musafa e Vuçiq takohen sot në Bruksel*. Radio Evropa e Lirë.
<https://www.evropaelire.org/a/27514041.html>
- RFE/RL. (2016d). *Një komunë e re serbe, për zgjedhjen e Thaçit?* Radio Evropa e Lirë.
<https://www.evropaelire.org/a/27583265.html>
- RFE/RL. (2016e). *Opozita proteston nesër kundër qeverisë*. Radio Evropa e Lirë.
<https://www.evropaelire.org/a/27475088.html>
- RFE/RL. (2016f). *Zbogari: Demarkacioni dhe Asociacioni, pjesë e integriteteve të Kosovës*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/27933574.html>
- RFE/RL. (2017a). *Asociacioni varet nga mirëvajtja e dialogut në Bruksel*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/asociacioni-varet-nga-mirevajtja-e-dialogut-ne-bruksel-/28791975.html>
- RFE/RL. (2017b). *Lista Serbe: Asociacioni, sipas marrëveshjes së vitit 2013*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/asociacioni-sipas-marreveshjes-se-vitit-2013/28762704.html>
- RFE/RL. (2017c). *Qeveria nuk e sheh çështje të ngutshme themelimit të Asociacionit*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/qeveria-nuk-e-sheh-ceshtje-te->

- ngutshme-themelimi-e-asociacionit-/28874310.html
- RFE/RL. (2018a). *Asociacioni, ndërmjet Kushtetutës dhe negociatave politike*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/asociacioni-nd%C3%ABrmjet-kushtetut%C3%ABs-dhe-negociatave-politike-/29359619.html>
- RFE/RL. (2018b). *Asociacioni, temë e radhës në dialogun mes Prishtinës dhe Beogradit*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/29089320.html>
- RFE/RL. (2018c). *Çka thuhet në procesverbalet e ekipit menaxhues për Asociacionin?* Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/cka-thuhet-ne-procesverbalet-e-ekipit-menaxhues-per-asociacionit-/29433531.html>
- RFE/RL. (2018d). *Kosova dhe Serbia me akuza të ndërsjella për moszbatim të marrëveshjeve*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/kosova-serbia-me-akuza-per-moszbatim-te-marreveshjeve/29607079.html>
- RFE/RL. (2018e). *Kushtetuta e Kosovës nuk është e paprekshme*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/kushtetuta-e-kosov%C3%ABs-nuk-%C3%ABsht%C3%AB-e-paprekshme/29249183.html>
- RFE/RL. (2018f). *Lista Serbe i konsideron lojë përpjekjet për Asociacionin*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/lista-serbe-i-konsideron-loje-perpjekjet-per-asociacionin-/29156888.html>
- RFE/RL. (2018g). *Lista Serbe insiston në ndryshime kushtetuese për Asociacionin*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/lista-serbe-insiston-n%C3%ABndryshime-kushtetuese-p%C3%ABr-asociacionin/29243619.html>
- RFE/RL. (2018h). *Përmes Asociacionit deri tek autonomia*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/permes-asociacionit-deri-tek--autonomia/29245724.html>
- RFE/RL. (2018i). *Qeveria nuk ka dhënë 'dritën e gjelbër' për Asociacionin*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/qeveria-nuk-ka-dhene-driten-e-gjelber-per-asociacionin-/29094716.html>
- RFE/RL. (2018j). *Statuti i Asociacionit i gatshëm për diskutim në Bruksel*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/statuti-i-asociacionit-i-gatshem-per-diskutime-ne-bruksel-/29407014.html>
- RFE/RL. (2018k). *Statuti i Asociacionit i gatshëm për diskutim në Bruksel*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/statuti-i-asociacionit-i-gatshem-per-diskutime-ne-bruksel-/29407014.html>
- RFE/RL. (2018l). *Thaçi i kërkon Qeverisë nisjen e punës për Asociacionin*. Radio Evropa e

- Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/thaci-i-kerkon-qeverise-nisjen-e-punes-per-asociacionin/29124913.html>
- RFE/RL. (2019). *Asociacioni, çështje e ngrirë deri në vazhdimin e dialogut*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/asociacioni-dialogu-kosova-serbia-bruksel/30009089.html>
- RFE/RL. (2020a). *Asociacioni, “kushtëzimi i radhës” për vazhdimin e dialogut*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/dialogu-kosove-serbi-asociacioni-/30866743.html>
- RFE/RL. (2020b). *Asociacioni, shkas për presion ndaj Kosovës*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/asociacioni-presion-ndaj-kosoves-/30890611.html>
- RFE/RL. (2020c). *BE: Asociacioni të krijohet në bazë të opinionit të Gjykatës Kushtetuese*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/bashkimi-evropian-asociacioni-/30866496.html>
- RFE/RL. (2020d). *Dilemat e dialogut – opozita kërkon platformë, qeveria hesht*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/dilemat-e-dialogut-opozita-dhe-qeveria-/30859491.html>
- RFE/RL. (2020e). *Gracka e ndryshimeve kushtetuese bllokoi dialogun*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/30899516.html>
- RFE/RL. (2020f). *Hoti: Do ta respektojmë marrëveshjen për Asociacionin*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/30832008.html>
- RFE/RL. (2020g). *Hoti: Nuk do të zotohemi për asgjë pa njohjen e Kosovës nga Serbia*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/30889442.html>
- RFE/RL. (2020h). *Hoti tërhiqet nga diskutimet për Asociacionin në dialogun e Brukselit*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/30855598.html>
- RFE/RL. (2020i). *Kompromisi i ‘pakalueshëm’ Kosovë-Serbi*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/dialogu-kosove-serbi-kompromisi-/30854250.html>
- RFE/RL. (2020j). *Lajçak: Formimi i Asociacionit, pas nënshkrimit të marrëveshjes*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/30894818.html>
- RFE/RL. (2020k). *Lajçak në Beograd: Për Asociacionin është rënë dakord, duhet të realizohet*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/30895423.html>
- RFE/RL. (2020l). *Osmani: Asociacioni vetëm sipas vendimit të Gjykatës Kushtetuese*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/30891523.html>
- RFE/RL. (2020m). *Qeveria hesht pas paralajmërimit të Lajçakut për ndryshimin e Kushtetutës*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/30897055.html>

- RFE/RL. (2020n). *Takimi i radhës Hoti-Vuçiq, vihet në pikëpyetje*. Radio Evropa e Lirë.
<https://www.evropaelire.org/a/30854195.html>
- RFE/RL. (2021a). *Kurti dhe Osmani të koordinuar për dialogun me Serbinë*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/dialogu-me-serbine-albin-kurti-vjosa-osmani-/31191562.html>
- RFE/RL. (2021b). *Kurti: E pritshme që marrëveshja me Serbinë të arrihet gjatë mandatit tim*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/kurti-optimist-per-marreveshjen-me-serbine/31564028.html>
- RFE/RL. (2021c). *Plani i Kurtit*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/plani-i-albin-kurtit-/31103737.html>
- RFE/RL. (2022a). *Escobar për REL-in: SHBA-ja kategorikisht kundër kthimit të forcave serbe në Kosovë*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/gabriel-escobar-intervista-veriu-asociacioni-/32174891.html>
- RFE/RL. (2022b). *Kurti: Reciprocitet i plotë deri në arritjen e marrëveshjes me Serbinë*. Radio Evropa e Lirë; <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/albin-kurti-reciprocitet-serbia-/32007779.html>
- RFE/RL. (2022c). *U.S. Envoy In Pristina Urges Establishment Of Association Of Serbian Municipalities*. RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty; RFE/RL. <https://www.rferl.org/a/kosovo-serbia-escobar-association-serbian-municipalities/32175193.html>
- RFE/RL. (2023a). *Hill: Kemi probleme shumë thelbësore me Kurtin*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/christopher-hill-raportet-shba-kosove-/32450940.html>
- RFE/RL. (2023b). *Konjufca: Asociacioni bashkë me njohjen, çelës për përparimin e dialogut*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/konjufca-asociacioni-dialogu-serbia-/32601230.html>
- RFE/RL. (2023c). *Konjufca: Asociacioni bashkë me njohjen, çelës për përparimin e dialogut*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/konjufca-asociacioni-dialogu-serbia-/32601230.html>
- RFE/RL. (2023d). *Kurti: Kemi sfida në raportet me emisarët perëndimorë, por nuk mendoj se gjërat zgjidhen me trysni*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/32448842.html>
- RFE/RL. (2023e). *Kurti: Marrëveshja për Asociacionin, e vetmja që s'e ka kaluar testin e Kushetueses*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/kurti-flet-per-marreveshjen-e-asociacionit/32240670.html>

- RFE/RL. (2023f). *Kurti: Nuk mund të bëj kompromis me republikën demokratike*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/kurti-flet-per-bbc-rreth-tensioneve-ne-veri/32443877.html>
- RFE/RL. (2023g). *Kurti: Serbia po thotë që nuk do ta zbatojë Marrëveshjen e Ohrit*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/albin-kurti-serbia-marreveshja-e-ohrit-/32378952.html>
- RFE/RL. (2023h). *Kurti vendos kushtet për themelimin e Asociacionit, Vuçiq i quan “përrallë.”* Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/32252357.html>
- RFE/RL. (2023i). *Lista Serbe bën thirrje për bojkotim të zgjedhjeve në veri*. Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/zgjedhjet-e-parakohshme-lokale-ne-veri/32373821.html>
- Richards, P. (2008). *No peace, no war: An anthropology of contemporary armed conflicts ; in memoriam Bernhard Helander* ([Nachdr.]). Ohio Univ. Press Currey.
- Richmond, O. (2011). *A Post-Liberal Peace* (1st Edition). Routledge.
- Richmond, O. (2014). *PEACE: A Very Short Introduction* (Second Edition). Oxford University Press.
- Richmond, O. P. (2005). *The Transformation of Peace*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230505070>
- Richmond, O. P. (2006). The problem of peace: Understanding the ‘liberal peace.’ *Conflict, Security & Development*, 6(3), 291–314. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678800600933480>
- Richmond, O. P. (2008). Reclaiming Peace in International Relations. *Millennium*, 36(3), 439–470. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298080360030401>
- RICHMOND, O. P. (2009). A post-liberal peace: Eirenism and the everyday. *Review of International Studies*, 35(3), 557–580. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0260210509008651>
- Richmond, O. P. (2010). Resistance and the Postliberal Peace. *Millennium*, 38(3), 665–692. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829810365017>
- Richmond, O. P. (2012). A Pedagogy of Peacebuilding: Infrapolitics, Resistance, and Liberation1. *International Political Sociology*, 6(2), 115–131. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-5687.2012.00154.x>
- Richmond, O. P. (2013). Failed statebuilding versus peace formation. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 48(3), 378–400. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836713482816>
- Richmond, O. P. (2014). The dilemmas of a hybrid peace: Negative or positive? *Cooperation and Conflict*, 50(1), 50–68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836714537053>
- Richmond, O. P., & Franks, J. (2009). *Liberal peace transitions: Between statebuilding and*

- peacebuilding*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Richmond, O. P., & Jason, F. (2008). Liberal Peacebuilding in Timor Leste: The Emperor's New Clothes? *International Peacekeeping*, 15(2), 185–200.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13533310802041436>
- Richter, S., & Wunsch, N. (2019a). Money, power, glory: The linkages between EU conditionality and state capture in the Western Balkans. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 27(1), 41–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2019.1578815>
- Richter, S., & Wunsch, N. (2019b). Money, power, glory: The linkages between EU conditionality and state capture in the Western Balkans. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 27(1), 41–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2019.1578815>
- Rigual, C. (2018). Rethinking the ontology of peacebuilding. Gender, spaces and the limits of the local turn. *Peacebuilding*, 6(2), 144–169.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2018.1453640>
- Roberts, D. (2013). Hybrid Politics and Post-Conflict Policy. In D. Chandler & T. D. Sisk (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of International Statebuilding* (pp. 116–133). Routledge.
- Rubin, B. R. (2006). Peace building and statebuilding in Afghanistan: Constructing sovereignty for whose security? *Third World Quarterly*, 27(1), 175–185.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590500370038>
- Russett, B. (1993). *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a PostCold War World*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400821020>
- Sabaratnam, M. (2011). The liberal peace? An intellectual history of international conflict management, 1990-2010. In D. Chandler, S. Campbell, & M. Sabaratnam (Eds.), *A Liberal Peace? The Problems and Practices of Peacebuilding* (pp. 13–30).
<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/17185172.pdf>
- Schlichte, K., & Veit, A. (2007). Coupled Arenas: Why state-building is so difficult. *Working Papers Micropolitics No.3*. <https://www2.iniis-neu.uni-bremen.de/veroeffentlichungen/?publ=1664&page=1>
- Schwandner-Sievers, S. (2013). The bequest of Illegalja: Contested memories and moralities in contemporary Kosovo. *Nationalities Papers*, 41(6), 953–970.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2013.767792>
- Selby, J. (2013). The myth of liberal peace-building. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 13(1), 57–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2013.770259>
- Sell, L. (2002). *Slobodan Milosevic and the destruction of Yugoslavia*. Duke University Press.

- Serbia kushtëzon dialogun me formimin e Asociacionit.* (2020). Radio Evropa e Lirë.
<https://www.evropaelire.org/a/30844418.html>
- Séverine Autesserre. (2010). *Title: The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding.* Cambridge University Press.
- Séverine Autesserre. (2014). *Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention.* Cambridge University Press.
- Shahar Hameiri. (2010). *Regulating Statehood: State Building and the Transformation of the Global Order.* Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh. (2011). *Rethinking the Liberal Peace: External Models and Local Alternatives.* Taylor & Francis.
- Si duket presioni nderkombetar? – Nje shpjegim i shkurter | Albanian Post.* (2022). Albanian Post. <https://albanianpost.com/si-duket-presioni-nderkombetar-nje-shpjegim-i-shkurter/>
- Simangan, D. (2018). The pitfalls of local involvement: Justice and reconciliation in Cambodia, Kosovo and TimorLeste. *Peacebuilding*, 5(3), 305–319.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2016.1273489>
- Simma, B. (1999). NATO, the UN and the use of force: Legal aspects. *European Journal of International Law*, 10(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ejil/10.1.1>
- Simons, C., & Zanker, F. (2014). Questioning the Local in Peacebuilding. *Working Papers of the Priority Programme 1448 of the German Research Foundation, NR. 10(10)*, 3–15.
https://lost-research-group.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/SPP1448_WP10_Simons_Zanker.pdf
- Sisk, T. D. (2008). Peacebuilding as democratization: Findings and recommendations. In A. K. Jarstad & T. D. Sisk (Eds.), *From War to Democracy: Dilemmas of Peacebuilding* (pp. 239–259). Cambridge University Press.
- Skendaj, E. (2014). *Creating kosovo: International oversight and the making of ethical institutions.* Cornell University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt1287ffg>
- S/RES/1199. (1998). *Resolution 1199 (1998) /: Adopted by the Security Council at its 3930th meeting, on 23 September 1998.* United Nations Digital Library System; UN,.
<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/260416?ln=en&v=pdf>
- S/RES/1203. (1998). *Security Council Resolution 1203—UNSCR.* Unscr.Com.
<http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/1203>
- Stahn, C. (2001). Constitution Without a State? Kosovo Under the United Nations Constitutional Framework for Self-Government. *Leiden Journal of International Law*,

- 14(3), 531–561. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0922156501000279>
- Stojanovic, M. (2023). *Kosovo Café Massacre Plaque Blames Serbian State Security*. *Balkan Insight*. <https://balkaninsight.com/2023/12/14/kosovo-cafe-massacre-plaque-blames-serbian-state-security/>
- Strategic Comments. (2001). Self-government in Kosovo. *Strategic Comments*, 7(4), 1–2. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1356788010744>
- Strategic Comments. (2007). Kosovo’s uncertain future. *Strategic Comments*, 13(6), 1–2. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13567880701695184>
- Subotic, J. (2017). *Building democracy in serbia: One step forward, three steps back* (S. P. Ramet, C. M. Hassenstab, & O. Listhaug, Eds.; pp. 165–191). Cambridge University Press.
- Suhrke, A. (2007). Reconstruction as modernisation: The ‘post-conflict’ project in Afghanistan. *Third World Quarterly*, 28(7), 1291–1308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590701547053>
- Swift, J. (2003). The Legacy of the Cold War—Yugoslavia. In *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of the Cold War* (pp. 104–105). Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230001183_48
- Tadjbakhsh, S., & Chenoy, A. (2007). *Human Security: Concepts and implications*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203965955>
- Tansey, O. (2009). Kosovo: Independence and Tutelage. *Journal of Democracy*, 20(2), 153–166. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.0.0068>
- Taylor, A. (2023). *Serbia refuses to sign EU-backed dialogue agreements at Berlin Process Summit*. [www.Euractiv.Com](http://www.euractiv.com); EURACTIV. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/serbia-refuses-to-sign-eu-backed-dialogue-agreements-at-berlin-process-summit/>
- Tela, V. & Arton Konushevci. (2023). *Qeveria dhe BE-ja nuk pajtohen për Asociacionin: Çka tash?* Radio Evropa e Lirë. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/qeveria-dhe-be-nuk-pajtohen/32599920.html>
- Tesón, F. R. (2009). Kosovo: A Powerful Precedent for the Doctrine of Humanitarian Intervention. *Amsterdam Law Forum*, 1(2), 42. <https://doi.org/10.37974/alf.59>
- Troncotă, M. (2018). ‘The association that dissociates’ – narratives of local political resistance in Kosovo and the delayed implementation of the Brussels Agreement. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 18(2), 219–238. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2018.1474585>

- Tschirgi, N. (2004). Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Revisited: Achievements, Limitations, Challenges. *WSP International/IPA Peacebuilding*.
file:///C:/Users/bardh/Downloads/17F1039096804EA78525742D005B17F9-IPA_Post-Conflict_Peacebuilding_Oct04.pdf
- UN Security Council. (2010). *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo*. United Nations Digital Library System; UN,.
<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/680378?ln=en&v=pdf>
- UNHCR. (1999). *Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House: "The Challenge for Humanitarian Intervention in Kosovo" by Dennis McNamara, UNHCR Special Envoy to the former Yugoslavia/UN Deputy Representative of the Secretary-General in Kosovo (London) | UNHCR*. UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/royal-institute-international-affairs-chatham-house-challenge-humanitarian>
- UNMIK. (2001). *Constitutional Framework for Provisional Self-Government in Kosovo | IFES - The International Foundation for Electoral Systems*. Ifes.Org.
<https://www.ifes.org/tools-resources/election-materials/constitutional-framework-provisional-self-government-kosovo>
- UNMIK. (2003). *IMPLEMENTING 'STANDARDS BEFORE STATUS' POLICY CORE POLITICAL PROJECT FOR UN KOSOVO MISSION, SECURITY COUNCIL TOLD | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases*. Un.Org.
<https://press.un.org/en/2004/sc7999.doc.htm>
- U.S. Embassy pristina. (2023a). *Ambassador Hovenier's Press Roundtable*. U.S. Embassy in Kosovo. https://xk.usembassy.gov/press_roundtable/
- U.S. Embassy pristina. (2023b). *Ambassador Hovenier's Press Roundtable*. U.S. Embassy in Kosovo. https://xk.usembassy.gov/press_roundtable/
- U.S. Embassy Pristina. (2023). *The Time for Establishing the ASM is Now*. U.S. Embassy in Kosovo. <https://xk.usembassy.gov/oped-301-23/>
- ValenzuelaVermehren, L. (2013). EMPIRE, SOVEREIGNTY, AND JUSTICE IN FRANCISCO DE VITORIA'S INTERNATIONAL THOUGHT: A REINTERPRETATION OF DE INDIS (1532). *Revista Chilena de Derecho*, 40(1), 261–299. <https://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-34372013000100010>
- Vardari-Kesler, A. (2012). Politics of Protest in Supervised Statehood: Co-Shared Governance and Erosion of Citizenship. The Case-study of the Vetevendosje! Movement in Kosovo. *Southeastern Europe*, 36(2), 149–177.
<https://doi.org/10.1163/187633312x642068>

- Verkoren, W., & Leeuwen, van. (2014). Civil Society in Fragile Contexts. In *The Handbook of Global Security Policy* (pp. 463–481).
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118442975.ch26>
- 'Vetëvendosje' gati për protestë. (2016). Lajmet e Fundit - Zëri.
<https://zeri.info/aktuale/76268/vetevendosje-gati-per-proteste/>
- Vickers, M. (1998). *Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosovo*. Columbia Univ. Pr., Cop.
- Vidmar, J. (2009). International Legal Responses to Kosovo's Declaration of Independence. *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law*, 42(3), 779.
<https://scholarship.law.vanderbilt.edu/vjtl/vol42/iss3/2>
- Visoka, G. (2011). International Governance and Local Resistance in Kosovo: The Thin Line between Ethical, Emancipatory and Exclusionary Politics. *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 22(1), 99–125. <https://doi.org/10.3318/isia.2011.22.99>
- Visoka, G. (2017). *Shaping Peace in Kosovo: The Politics of Peacebuilding and Statehood*. Springer International Publishing : Imprint : Palgrave Macmillan.
- Visoka, G., & Richmond, O. (2016). After Liberal Peace? From Failed State-Building to an Emancipatory Peace in Kosovo. *International Studies Perspectives*, 18(1), 110–129.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/isp/ekw006>
- Wallensteen, P., & Sollenberg, M. (2001). Armed Conflict, 1989-2000. *Journal of Peace Research*, 38(5), 629–644. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343301038005008>
- Webel, C., & Galtung, J. (2007). *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*. Routledge.
- Welle, D. (2023). *Shkarkohet Ekipi Menaxhues i draft-statutit të Asociacionit*. Dw.Com; Deutsche Welle. <https://www.dw.com/sq/kosov%C3%AB-shkarkohet-ekipi-menaxhues-i-draft-statutit-t%C3%AB-asociacionit/a-65501679>
- Weller, M. (1999). The Rambouillet Conference on Kosovo. *International Affairs*, 75(2), 211–251. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.00069>
- Weller, M. (2008). Kosovo's final status. *International Affairs*, 84(6), 1223–1243.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2008.00766.x>
- Weller, M. (2009). *Contested statehood: Kosovo's struggle for independence*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199566167.001.0001>
- Willemijn Verkoren & Mathijs van Leeuwen. (2014). Civil Society in Fragile Contexts. In M. Kaldor & I. Rangelov (Eds.), *The Handbook of Global Security Policy* (pp. 463–481). John Wiley & Sons Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118442975.ch26>
- Williams, T., & Dahlman, C. T. (2010). Ethnic Enclavisation and State Formation In Kosovo.

- Geopolitics*, 15(2), 406–430. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650040903500890>
- Ymeri: Anulimi i këtij Demarkacioni, shmang luftën.* (2016). Radio Evropa e Lirë.
<https://www.evropaelire.org/a/28033818.html>
- Zaum, D. (2012). Beyond the “Liberal Peace.” *Global Governance*, 18(1), 121–132.
<https://doi.org/10.1163/19426720-01801010>

.....
imię, nazwisko/ name

Kraków, dnia/date.....

OŚWIADCZENIE/ DECLARATION

Świadomy/a odpowiedzialności oświadczam, że przedłożona rozprawa doktorska pt.:
Aware of my responsibility, I declare that the submitted dissertation entitled:

Polityka partyjna w Kosowie po uzyskaniu niepodległości: implikacje dla budowania pokoju i budowania państwa

jest mojego autorstwa.
is my own creation.

Jednocześnie oświadczam, że w/w rozprawa nie narusza praw autorskich w rozumieniu Ustawy z dnia 4 lutego 1994 roku o prawie autorskim i prawach pokrewnych (Dz.U. z 2021 r. poz. 1062 z późn. zmianami) oraz dóbr osobistych chronionych prawem cywilnym.

At the same time, I declare that the aforementioned dissertation does not infringe upon copyrights within the meaning of the Act of 4 February 1994 on Copyright and Related Rights (Journal of Laws of 2021, item 1062, as amended) and personal rights protected by civil law.

Przedłożona praca nie zawiera danych empirycznych ani też informacji, które uzyskałem/am w sposób niedozwolony.

The submitted work does not contain empirical data or information that I have obtained by unauthorised means.

Stwierdzam, iż przedstawiona praca w całości ani też w części nie była wcześniej podstawą żadnej innej urzędowej procedury związanej z zakończeniem kształcenia w szkole doktorskiej.

I certify that the submitted work, in whole or in part, has not previously formed the basis of any other official procedure relating to the completion of training in doctoral school.

.....
Data/date

.....
Podpis doktoranta/ PhD student's signature

.....
imię, nazwisko/ name

Kraków, dnia/date.....

OŚWIADCZENIE / DECLARATION

o zgodności wersji elektronicznej z wydrukiem on the conformity of the electronic version with the hard copy

Ja, Bardh Lipa, oświadczam, że wersja elektroniczna jest zgodna z wersją papierową rozprawy doktorskiej.

I, Bardh Lipa, declare that the electronic version **is compatible with the paper version** of the dissertation.

.....
Data/date

.....
Podpis doktoranta / PhD student's signature

.....
imię, nazwisko/ name

Kraków, dnia/date.....

OŚWIADCZENIE / DECLARATION

Ja, Bardh Lipa, **nie** wyrażam zgody na udostępnianie mojej rozprawy doktorskiej w wersji papierowej i elektronicznej dla celów naukowych i dydaktycznych.

I, Bardh Lipa, **do not** consent to my dissertation being made available in hard copy and electronic format for research and teaching purposes.

.....
Data/date

.....
Podpis doktoranta/ PhD student's signature