

A POLICY REPORT BY GLPS AND PCFR

NO. 07 – OCTOBER 2013



# The United Kingdom's Foreign Policy towards Kosovo

## - A policy perspective



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# Policy Report 07/2013

## The United Kingdom's Foreign Policy towards Kosovo. A Policy Perspective

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October 2013

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# THE UNITED KINGDOM'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS KOSOVO. A POLICY PERSPECTIVE

## I. KOSOVO: A UK FOREIGN POLICY PERSPECTIVE

### - Introduction

The way in which nations interact with those that are in crisis can be vitally important to shaping governance and institutions in those nations. The United Kingdom (UK) and Kosovo have, for nearly two decades, had extensive interaction as a result of the Yugoslav War. “International relations are about the whole range of contacts between people in different countries”<sup>1</sup> such as aid, trade, military contributions and diplomacy as well as multilateral policy – this report looks at each of these factors. This report aims to provide an analysis of the present-day UK foreign policy towards Kosovo show not only where it has evolved from, but how it should be strategized into the future.

## II. UK AND KOSOVO: FROM WAR TO INDEPENDENCE

### - Ahtisaari and Contact Group

Perhaps the most significant moment in Kosovo’s contemporary history was the state’s declaration of independence in February of 2008; immediately this dramatically altered the way other states and organisations acted towards the once region, now state, and in an effort to provide some context for this piece, a brief summary of the UK’s involvement in Kosovo since 2000 will be explored in order show the development of this relationship. While there exists a UK policy towards the Western Balkan region<sup>2</sup> this tells us little about the UK government’s views towards the countries within it. UK foreign policy towards Kosovo can be best analysed by the domestic discourse around the state, the legislation it put in place and concrete actions it took. Additionally, its multilateral efforts also need to be evaluated to get a fuller picture of UK policy. For example, it could be argued, that between 2000 and 2008 the UK’s stance towards Kosovo was strongly influenced by the multilateral organisations it participated within.

The UK government was vocal in its support for the UN Special Envoy to Kosovo (Martti Ahtisaari), and his report entitled: “Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement.”<sup>3</sup> The recommendations in question were a UN attempt to progress relations between Pristina and Belgrade, which had failed on numerous occasions before, leaving unresolved tensions. As a result the UK supported the plan in an effort to legitimise the intergovernmental attempt to reconcile the two parties; this being the UK’s primary concern for the region as ethnic, social and political tensions continued to disrupt the area’s development. The Ahtisaari plan offered a possible route for stability through political discourse and mediation with UN backing; because of

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<sup>1</sup> Petrit Selimi (2011) *Kosovo-British Relations*, Diplomat Magazine

<sup>2</sup> Gov.uk (2013) Promoting stability throughout the Western Balkans, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/promoting-stability-throughout-the-western-balkans--2> (Accessed 22 July, 2013)

<sup>3</sup> HC Deb, 18 July 2006, c54WH; available at: <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/whall/?gid=2006-07-18b.54.1> (Accessed 20 July, 2013)

its viability, UK ministers endorsed the plan on multiple occasions.<sup>4</sup> For example in 2006 Geoff Hoon MP (Minister for Europe) stated:

“It is for Martti Ahtisaari to make his recommendations, and as I said, he will have our full support.”<sup>5</sup>

However beyond its work within the UN and co-sponsoring the draft resolution (SCR 1244) on Kosovo, the UK also aimed to stabilise the region through its diplomatic work within the Contact Group. The Group was made up of six UN member states (US, UK, France, Germany, Italy and Russia) with its primary goal (during this period) to achieve stability between Serbia and Kosovo through diplomacy independent of the UN and EU. Its members were bound to the outcomes of their meetings and were expected to take concrete actions based on any recommendations,<sup>6</sup> thus the UK influenced Contact Group recommendations but were expected to adopt them and support them through foreign policy efforts. The Contact Group acquired legitimisation through the “participation of, and the coordination of its policies with, the UN Mission in Kosovo [UNMIK] and the UN designed envoys and representatives.”<sup>7</sup> The UK parliament mentioned and supported Contact Group diplomatic efforts on numerous occasions continually affirming peaceful relations between Belgrade and Pristina.<sup>8</sup>

The Group attached importance to three fundamental principles which identified closely with the UK’s primary concerns in finding a solution between Serbia and Kosovo: “acceptance of the settlement by the people of Kosovo, strong guarantees for protection of minorities, and regional stability.”<sup>9</sup> In this way the UK worked with those countries that had an interest in finding a resolution quicker than the UN could deliver it whilst simultaneously legitimising the work of the UN in commissioning a report into the area. The Contact Group is notable as its existence is a testament to the “the lack of a more active, cohesive, coordinated, and effective UN collective security system.”<sup>10</sup> In 2005 the group set out its guiding principles on finding a settlement for Kosovo, these being written in order to guide the UN Special Envoy to Kosovo, Martin Ahtisaari<sup>11</sup> and his report.

One aspect of the Contact Group’s output was holding rounds of talks, which included representatives from both Belgrade and Pristina; at the time this was seen as a major breakthrough the international stalemate that had been present.<sup>12</sup> These talks were the first initial steps towards the normalisation of relations between the two nations and thus are particularly politically important. With the UK’s position as strong ally of Kosovo its involvement was important in bringing Pristina’s delegates to these talks and mediating the subsequent

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<sup>4</sup> HC Deb, 11 December 2007, c184; available at <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/debates/?id=2007-12-11d.181.0&s=Kosovo+government+policy#g184.1> (Accessed 20 July, 2013)

<sup>5</sup> HC Deb, 18 July 2006, c54WH available at: <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/whall/?gid=2006-07-18b.54.1>

<sup>6</sup> Qerimi, Q. R. (2007) *An Informal World: The Role and Status of 'Contact Group' Under International Law*. *Chicago-Kent Journal of International and Comparative Law*, 117-143.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*.pg. 137

<sup>8</sup> HC Deb, 6 July 2006, c1342W

<sup>9</sup> Qerimi, Q. R. (2007) *An Informal World: The Role and Status of 'Contact Group' Under International Law*. *Chicago-Kent Journal of International and Comparative Law*, 117-143, pg. 140

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*.pg. 118

<sup>11</sup> Contact Group. (7 October, 2005) *Guiding Principles of the Contact Group for a settlement of the Status of Kosovo*, available at: <http://www.unosek.org/unosek/en/docref.html> (Accessed 22 July, 2013)

<sup>12</sup> Contact Group (24 July, 2006) *High Level Meeting on the Future Status of Kosovo*, available at: [http://www.unosek.org/docref/Statement\\_of\\_the\\_Contact\\_Group\\_after\\_first\\_Pristina-Belgrade\\_High-level\\_meeting\\_held\\_in\\_Vienna.pdf](http://www.unosek.org/docref/Statement_of_the_Contact_Group_after_first_Pristina-Belgrade_High-level_meeting_held_in_Vienna.pdf) (Accessed 22 July, 2013)

discourse.<sup>13</sup> Thus at this early stage the way the UK chose to expend its diplomatic efforts were defined largely by the multilateral actors it chose to work through.

Arguably, the continuous focus of the UK towards Kosovo is also a result of an old generation that, so to speak, of politicians who were present during the nineties and were aware first handedly with the developments in the Balkans, are part of the current governing administration, most notably Foreign Affairs Secretary William Hague being one of them.

### **- Building a new nation: UK pre-statehood assistance**

Diplomatic assistance in this instance could only help so much and in the wake of the Kosovo conflict the UK was notable in the amount of humanitarian assistance that it provided. Clare Short MP (former Secretary for State) claimed that in 1999 the UK provided a £110 million programme of humanitarian assistance that included “food supply, shelter, health care, mine clearance, support to the energy and water sectors, small and medium enterprise development and funding for international agencies(as well as) budgetary support.”<sup>14</sup>

While initially UK aid it was focussed at crisis management post-2000 it aimed at “building local capacity and institutions to tackle Kosovo’s development and transitional needs.”<sup>15</sup> For example from 2000-2002 the UK spent over £17 million on “technical assistance and budget support” showing a genuine commitment to not simply averting a humanitarian crisis but also building a governmental framework. This type of aid has a focus on development of institutions and an institutional framework that was vital at the time to alleviate institutional deficits. The UK’s commitment to Kosovar state building can be seen in the objectives of the Department for International Development (DFID) that opened an office in Pristina.<sup>16</sup> Broadly it can be said that the objects can be divided under three broad aims; to stabilise Kosovo, to promote European integration and improve international assistance within the state. Stabilisation involved four factors; to grow the economy, to prevent conflict and to aid the Kosovo government and its civil service. Perhaps the most important of these was to help create effective governance within Kosovo. To do this the DFID supported the Office of the Prime Minister and to ensure coordination between Ministries,<sup>17</sup> the impact of this was to aid creation and effective governance structure and build capacity in the existing frameworks to allow more focussed reconstruction and redevelopment. The UK found a niche in the help it could provide the Kosovar government and from 2003 to 2012 it continued to fill the “gap.”<sup>18</sup> The unbridled access of UK support within the Kosovo government is an indicator of the close diplomatic relations between the two governments. Despite the relatively small size of the DFID office the UK established in Pristina its expertise and specialist nature was important to helping the Kosovo government develop.<sup>19</sup> The other areas DFID focussed on were rule of law considerations, local government

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<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth Stewart (2013) *Lirim Graçevci Interview*, Embassy Magazine

<sup>14</sup> HC Deb, 6 November 2002, c341W, available at: <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2002-11-06.77720.h> (Accessed 20 July, 2013)

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> DFID (2008) Kosovo, available at:[https://www.forumsyd.org/upload/regional\\_webpages/kosovo/Publications/Kosovo%20Factsheet%20DFID.pdf](https://www.forumsyd.org/upload/regional_webpages/kosovo/Publications/Kosovo%20Factsheet%20DFID.pdf) (Accessed 22 July, 2013)

<sup>17</sup> “This is done through supporting the Cabinet’s weekly meetings, helping Ministers to have all necessary information and analysis; supporting forums where Ministers can resolve their differences; tracking the implementation of the GoK’s decisions; and improving communication with citizens.” *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Richard Taylor (Head of DFID office 2012) interview 06 August, 2013

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

institution building, conducting a population census (with other donors), supporting the constitutional court and co-ordinating communication between ministries.<sup>20</sup>

Part of the UK's contribution to pre-statehood building was coordinated under the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) - the interim protectorate of the Kosovo people. This international civil presence received contributions from UN member states in order to provide provisional administration while supervising and building a self-governing democracy. Although the UK had a presence with the DFID it also provided a number of additional resources to UNMIK. For example in March 2000 the UK had contributed 60 officers for international police presence, 40 police officers to train the future Kosovo Police service and 30 civilian secondees.<sup>21</sup> The UK's contribution has been reported as equal to the EU member average.<sup>22</sup> Participation of UNMIK allowed the UK to focus its bilateral efforts toward governance capacity building and development whilst UNMIK held authority over all legislative and executive powers and administration on the judiciary.<sup>23</sup>

These efforts however are separate to those of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) in which the UK played a particularly active role; for example KFOR's first commander came from British Armed Forces<sup>24</sup> and was supported by an estimate 10,500 UK troops representing nearly a fifth of the total number of KFOR troops 1999.<sup>25</sup> The UK took a leading role to placate the issues surrounding coordination of military intervention arguably strengthening the effectiveness of the collective effort as a whole.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps the best example of this the "Pristina Airport Incident" in which UK General Michael Jackson sanctioned disobeying direct orders from NATO to take the Russian held airport by force; potentially sparking conflict between NATO and Russian forces directly.<sup>27</sup> This demonstrates the leading role and the confidence in which the UK contingent within this operation had. Undoubtedly the UK committed large numbers of troops to the multinational military mission showing a strong initial commitment to ensuring public safety of Kosovo as well as the region as a result. Ambassador to Kosovo, Lirim Graçevci, stated, "we were fortunate to get international support...especially Britain."<sup>28</sup>

In contrast to the direct military action of the UN the EU's tact was different. Throughout the 1990's it had launched a number of initiatives, which exposed that to an extent it was "groping its way towards a clear policy for the region as a whole,"<sup>29</sup> therefore throughout the 2000's the EU main contribution was through aid programmes.

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<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Parliament.uk (2000) UK/EU contributions to UNMIK, available at: <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm199900/cmselect/cmfaff/28/0031608.htm> (Accessed 22 July, 2013)

<sup>22</sup> Parliament.uk (2000) Kosovo after the war, Select Committee Proceedings, available at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199900/cmselect/cmfaff/28/2815.htm#note471> (Accessed 22 July, 2013).

<sup>23</sup> UN (2011) Promoting security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo, available at: <https://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unmik/> (accessed 31 July, 2013)

<sup>24</sup> Lt. Gen. Sir Michael Jackson was in command from June 1999 – October 1999.

<sup>25</sup> Hansard, "Oral Answers to Questions", Defence, London: Hansard, 8 Nov 1999. Question 96126.

<sup>26</sup> Refugee Studies Programme (1995) *The Role of the Military in Humanitarian Emergencies*, Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford.

<sup>27</sup> The Telegraph (2007) Gen Sir Michael Jackson: My clash with NATO chief, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1562161/Gen-Sir-Mike-Jackson-My-clash-with-Nato-chief.html> (accessed 26 September, 2013)

<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth Stewart (2013) *Lirim Graçevci Interview*, Embassy Magazine.

<sup>29</sup> Initially it launched the EU Monitoring Mission in 1991, created an EU special envoy to Yugoslavia and through the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) enforced an arms embargo in order to constrain the fighting. Friis, L., & Murphy, A. (2000). *Negotiating in a time of crisis: The EU's response to the military conflict in Kosovo*. San Domenico: European University Institute.

As a member state, the UK contributed to these programmes and its main funding contribution (aid) was multilaterally distributed, by the then named, European Community. In the immediate aftermath of the Kosovo war Clare Short MP (former Secretary of State) outlined that the UK held a 20 percent share of European Community programmes which amounted to £280 million contribution in the four years from 1999.<sup>30</sup> Importantly the UK gave aid and assistance to Kosovo during this period - this provided oversight and accountability.<sup>31</sup> The UK at this time made monetary contributions but also established agents within the country to control and monitor these contributions. This is important because it demonstrated a tangible long-term commitment to Kosovo's future and the future of the Western Balkans as a whole. As Ambassador Graçevci states "We had to build a country and run a country at the same time,"<sup>32</sup> thus while humanitarian aid was no doubt important for short term concerns, Kosovo needed specialised aid to support institution building and capacity developing to tackle the medium/long term problems that were present.

### **- Refugees and their support**

Since 1993 the UK government had accepted Bosnian refugees from the Yugoslav War but the Kosovo War in 1999 lead to the largest exodus of refugees in a decade. The Refugee Council estimate 4,346 refugees arrived in the UK by 1999 with roughly 50 percent of these returning before 2002.<sup>33</sup> A burden-sharing programme was adopted by many states throughout Europe in order avoid crisis spreading to other states, notably Albania and Macedonia.<sup>34</sup> As a result the UK accepted Kosovar refugees during the conflict, many stayed as result leading to a vibrant and relatively integrated community within the UK, specifically London. In this way the UK opened up its historically tight borders to aid those in plight. As a result of those that settled (and in particular with the second generation) there are now social links between the two countries that have arisen largely without government policy intervening.<sup>35</sup> These links are important in fostering relations within communities which in turn lead to adoptions of cultural practice that have an impact of social reform. Indeed, although the Kosovo Diaspora is small in the UK (perhaps 35,000) compared to Germany, Switzerland or Austria "returnees from Britain seem to have a disproportionate influence in Prishtina's social life."<sup>36</sup>

A question that arises from this is why the UK decided to play such a lead role in the humanitarian crisis and then in the state building process afterwards. A large part of this is governance; the labour government assumed power in the UK in 1997, whilst in opposition they had been critical of the Conservative government's perceived weakness to react to the conflict in

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<sup>30</sup> HC Deb, 6 November 2002, c341W available at: <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrants/?id=2002-11-06.77720.h> (Accessed 20 July, 2013)

<sup>31</sup> A concern for countries with large aid budgets is how these are then used. Arguments taken from a Parliamentary briefing paper available at: <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN03714>

<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth Stewart (2013) *Lirim Graçevci Interview*, Embassy Magazine.

<sup>33</sup> Refugee Council (2013) 1990's, available at: [http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/about\\_refugee\\_council/history\\_of\\_refugee\\_council/1990s](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/about_refugee_council/history_of_refugee_council/1990s) (Accessed 22 July, 2013)

<sup>34</sup> The principal bilateral operations were run by Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, the UK and the USA according to UNHCR.

<sup>35</sup> Ambassador Lirim Graçevci email interview 14 July, 2013.

<sup>36</sup> Petrit Selimi (2011) *Kosovo-British Relations*, Diplomat Magazine.

Bosnia.<sup>37</sup> In an effort to avert some of the issues that arose in Bosnia (ethnic cleansing to name but one) arguably through Western inaction the UK, and notably UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, took a leading role in the political and military efforts seen above. It is also important to recognise the creation of DFID in 1997, which some argue shifted development goals away from only the Commonwealth and raised efficiency of the aid distributed.<sup>38</sup>

### III. KOSOVO 2.0 TILL NORMALISED RELATIONS

#### - Politically securing the state

In 2008 Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia fundamentally changing the nature of UK relations with the new nation. Previously efforts in the area had been to manage the humanitarian crisis and form an institutional framework. Interactions now shifted towards stabilising tensions, capacity building within the institutional framework, economic development and Belgrade-Pristina mediation – efforts dominated by the desire for long term stability in the area,<sup>39</sup> this is evident in the Foreign Secretary's words in 2010:

“The UK holds firm in its conviction that Kosovo’s status as a State and with its territory defined by its existing borders is a positive force for stability in the Western Balkans.”<sup>40</sup>

The link is made between a recognised independent Kosovar state and stability in the Balkans. Whilst lacking UN membership, a primary goal of the Kosovar government has been to achieve universal international recognition of independence.<sup>41</sup> The UK is a firm supporter of Kosovo’s independence and territorial integrity and has played a role in helping shape Government strategies for international recognition.<sup>42</sup>

“Britain has also been very helpful in Kosovo’s ongoing campaign to secure recognition from countries...This is particularly true of the Commonwealth countries”<sup>43</sup>

Importantly the UK used its relationship with other countries (notably from the Commonwealth) to promote recognition in a way Kosovo unable to undertake. This support continues as stated by Baroness Warsi (the Senior Minister of State) in January 2013:

“[We] will continue to encourage others to recognise Kosovo, using opportunities in bilateral and multilateral fora, and we will provide support to the lobbying efforts of the Kosovo Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Government are also part-funding a project to

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<sup>37</sup> Independent (1992) *British Military Intervention in Bosnia ruled out*, available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/british-military-intervention-in-bosnia-ruled-out-1561361.html> (accessed 27 September 2013)

<sup>38</sup> Owen Barder (2005) *Reforming Development Assistance: Lessons from the UK Experience*, Centre for Global Development, available at: [http://www.cgdev.org/files/4371\\_file\\_WP\\_70.pdf](http://www.cgdev.org/files/4371_file_WP_70.pdf) (accessed 27 September, 2013)

<sup>39</sup> Gov.uk (2013) *Promoting stability throughout the Western Balkans*, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/promoting-stability-throughout-the-western-balkans--2> (accessed 23 July, 2013)

<sup>40</sup> Gov.uk (2010) *Foreign Secretary welcomes Kosovo ruling*, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-welcomes-kosovo-ruling>

<sup>41</sup> Elizabeth Stewart (2013) *Lirim Graçevci Interview*, Embassy Magazine.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Senior UK diplomat (25 July, 2013)

<sup>43</sup> Elizabeth Stewart (2013) *Lirim Graçevci Interview*, Embassy Magazine.

deepen Kosovo's links with EU member states that do not recognise it, and to improve Kosovo's image abroad through public diplomacy.”<sup>44</sup>

International recognition not only legitimises the current administration and strengthens support for membership in international organisations (a priority for the Republic of Kosovo government currently)<sup>45</sup> but it also fosters confidence of stability in the area opening the door for increased international trade and investment.<sup>46</sup> This is an especially important area for Kosovo as it strives to develop its international trading links and build its economy.

The UK also played a role in the International Steering Group – this was a collection of 25 states that oversaw Kosovo’s “democratic development” from its declaration of independence. It aimed to promote “good governance, multi-ethnicity and rule of law in Kosovo.”<sup>47</sup> The group was responsible for appointing the International Civilian Office whose aims were to provide to help Kosovo’s European integration and ensure implementation of the Ahtisaari Plan. This represents another legitimisation act of the UK by participating and legitimising the actions of a group whose overarching aim was to establish Kosovo as an independent state that can act within the international fora.

Critically for Kosovo’s independence the UK played an active role toward the International Court of Justice’s (ICJ) advisory opinion on Kosovo’s declaration of independence. The UK sought to explicitly support Kosovo by not only submitting an extensive written contribution<sup>48</sup> to the court but also by submitting written comments on other states’ contributions.<sup>49</sup> These statements presented Kosovo’s declaration as legal and consistent with international law whilst also warning of the “inaccurate portrayal” some states used – most notably China.<sup>50</sup>

Additionally the UK contributed to the public debates held in December 2009 in which UN members can publically voice their arguments on topics. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s esteemed lawyer Daniel Bethlehem QC presented the case on behalf of the UK’s position unequivocally supporting Kosovo<sup>51</sup> whilst undermining Serbia’s claim that Kosovo independence violated international law:

“The United Kingdom warns about the misleading approach of Serbia, which would like the court to assess the legality of the declaration, ignoring the events that led to it.”<sup>52</sup>

However perhaps the most telling aspect of the UK’s input was James Crawford’s assertion that it is “recognition rather than declarations make statehood” citing that at that time 63 countries had already recognised Kosovo,<sup>53</sup> including three of the five permanent seats of the UN Security

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<sup>44</sup>HL Deb, 29 January 2013, c1425 available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201213/ldhansrd/text/l30129-0001.htm#l3012966000002>

<sup>45</sup> Valdrin Grainca interview (19 July, 2013).

<sup>46</sup> Interview via email with Dr. Eric Gordy (17 July, 2013).

<sup>47</sup> International Civilian Office (2012) ICO, available at <http://www.ico-kos.org> (Accessed 11 August, 2013)

<sup>48</sup> FCO, (2009) Letter to ICJ, available at: <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/141/15638.pdf> (Accessed 22 July, 2013)

<sup>49</sup> FCO (2009) Letter to ICJ, available at: <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/141/15702.pdf> (Accessed 22 July, 2013)

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> “The UK has supported the legality of the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo, arguing that it is not prohibited by international law, or by resolution 1244.” PTC, 2009, *Romania against Kosovo’s independence*, available at: <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/Srbija/357571/Holandija+brani+nezavisnost+Kosova> (Accessed 22 July, 2013)

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

Council. This statement is interesting because the onus falls on to how states interact rather than fulfilment of criteria.

The UK has played an important role in “helping Kosovo through its institutional presence in the EU, UN, and other international organisation” as well as through its bilateral relations with states across the globe.<sup>54</sup> This support has been important in a political sense to stabilise relations with many states and institutions to enable stability and peace to govern the region, which lies at the heart of the UK’s actions towards Kosovo.

### - The role of UK aid in an independent Kosovo

Since the fall of the Yugoslavian state, aid has played an important part of Kosovo’s recovery and development. With high unemployment and a lack of an export industry, Kosovo struggled initially to grow its economy. The DFID coordinated UK support in this area with the table below detailing flows since 2008 (numbers in £000’s):

	<b>DFID Bilateral Aid</b>	<b>Other Official Sources of UK Aid</b>	<b>Total Bilateral Gross Public Expenditure<sup>55</sup></b>	<b>UK Imputed Multilateral Shares</b>
<b>2008/09</b>	3,304	364	3,668	Unreported
<b>2009/10</b>	3,022	4,294	7,316	27,348
<b>2010/11</b>	3,301	3,547	6,848	24,135
<b>2011/12</b>	3,799	4,022	7,821	31,312

Source: DFID and UKAID<sup>56</sup>

The table shows two important aspects of the UK’s relationship with Kosovo:

1. Roughly four times more aid goes indirectly than directly from the UK to Kosovo via a multilateral organisations (predominantly this is to the EU but also the World Bank and the UN<sup>57</sup>) than it does directly.
2. DFID represents part of a larger UK presence in many regards including monetary contributions to programmes such as the Conflict Prevention Pool.<sup>58</sup>

When we also consider the DFID has also closed its office in Pristina as of December 2012<sup>59</sup> the imputed multilateral share of aid in 2013 is likely to represent almost the entire share of UK aid to Kosovo (estimated >90 percent). This demonstrates the changing nature of the UK’s relationship to Kosovo; while once the majority of its aid flowed bilaterally it is now moving to an almost entirely multilateral contribution.

<sup>54</sup> Ambassador Lirim Graçevci email interview 14 July, 2013

<sup>55</sup> This includes all government departments.

<sup>56</sup> DFID (2012) Statistics on International Development 2007/08 – 2011/12, available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/67317/SID-2012.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67317/SID-2012.pdf) (Accessed 22 July, 2013)

<sup>57</sup> Accurate as of 2012: European Commission (£1,220m/37 percent of total), World Bank (£1,039m/ 32 percent) and the United Nations (£377m/12 percent).

<sup>58</sup> Richard Taylor (Head of DFID office 2012) interview 06 August, 2013

<sup>59</sup> DFID recognised “the growing economic and political stability which means Kosovo no longer requires DFID assistance” report available at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/209330/DFID\\_Annual\\_Report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/209330/DFID_Annual_Report.pdf)

## A) APPG (All Party Parliamentary Groups)

All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) are an opportunity for members of UK parliament to discuss and collaborate on a single issue or topic. In many cases because of their focused work, APPGs are treated as experts on the topic and are consulted regularly when the government is debating issues.

Since 2008 there has been an APPG on Kosovo, which aims to “promote an understanding of the issues relating to Kosovo at Westminster, and to help deepen and thicken good relations between the UK and Kosovo and in particular good relations between UK and North Ireland Parliamentarians and Parliamentarians in Kosovo.”<sup>60</sup> This allows close cooperation between the two governments in a very different context than, for example, the DFID overseeing cabinet meetings of the Kosovo government. In this way relations are being strengthened with a view to longer-term cooperation between two independent governments in contrast to dialogue pre-2008. It is this type of interaction that demonstrates that the UK is one of Kosovo’s “strongest supporters” not only bilaterally but also within the EU.<sup>61</sup> APPGs ensure an issue is ever present within Westminster and also allows dialogue to continue on an issue regardless of government ministries of agendas. As a result the APPG on Kosovo is able to continue the UK’s commitment to the state, strengthening relations and working together, regardless of the wider foreign policy stance.

## B) The Kosovar economy and influence of UK trade

The UK DFID held an office within Pristina until 2012 and classified the economy in 2008 as needing decisive action.<sup>62</sup> However, it notes, there are positive signs for the economy with a need, according to the DFID, to access outside markets. This access is important not simply for the transfer of money that it represents but also for the transfer of “knowledge, skills, and technology.”<sup>63</sup> The UK government sees trade as an important tool for political development and stabilisation thus there is a strong trade relationship between the UK and Kosovo.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) represents an area where the UK has supported Kosovo substantially. The proportion of the UK’s contribution as a whole is important, for example in 2007 the UK provided 26 percent of the total FDI flowing into Kosovo. Below is a table of the UK contribution in terms of FDI. Below is a table detailing the UK FDI flows (in millions of Euros) into Kosovo and a column showing the percentage of this of the total global flows.

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<sup>60</sup> Interview via email with Tony Baldry MP (chair of the APPG on Kosovo) (16 July, 2013)

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> DFID predicting that if the status quo continued Kosovo would be left with high unemployment; low foreign direct investment; high interest rates; a frustrated business community; a narrow export base and continued reliance on remittance income; and a slow path towards EU accession. DFID report available at <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/seerecon/kdc/gae.pdf>

<sup>63</sup> DFID (2008) *Growth and Employment: A UK Framework for Policy Development in Kosovo*, available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/seerecon/kdc/gae.pdf> (Accessed 22 July, 2013) pg 7.

	Total FDI	GB FDI	GB as a % of total
<b>2007</b>	440.7	116.2	26.4%
<b>2008</b>	366.5	36.6	10.0%
<b>2009</b>	287.4	6.2	2.1%
<b>2010</b>	365.8	38.9	10.6%
<b>2011</b>	393.9	80.1	20.3%
<b>2012</b>	228.6	14.3	6.3%
<b>2013 Q1</b>	60.1	12.9	21.4%
<b>Average</b>	347.2	48.7	13%

(Source: Central Bank of Kosovo data)

This represents a significant amount when considering this measure includes countries such as the US, Russia, China and Germany; the UK invested more in fact than all these countries combined in 2007. The UK has always provided such high levels of investment but since 2007 the UK has on average been the source for 13 percent of the FDI flowing into Kosovo. This is set to continue in 2013 with preliminary first quarter statistics showing the UK has contributed 12.9 million Euros out of a total 60.1 million Euros – a 21.5 percent share of the total contribution.

Trade is important to Kosovo's fledgling economy and the work of the Council of British Chambers of Commerce in Europe in association with British Embassies in the Western Balkans has aimed to support new business coming to the region.<sup>64</sup> However, despite this Kosovo is still currently lacks a UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) office and is not represented on the UKTI website – notably it is not listed on the *Overseas Business Risk* part of the UKTI website. With no information on trading with Kosovo and no analysis of risk, investment is stifled as a result. As UKTI represents the UK governments tool for encouraging and informing business about global markets this critical lack of information represents a serious shortcoming in the UK strategy toward Kosovo: as a result advancing trade between the two states represents one of the priorities of the Embassy of the Republic of Kosovo in London.<sup>65</sup>

#### IV. THE UK AS A MULTILATERAL ACTOR POST-2008

Arguably there is an overlap of EU and UK aims in regards to the Western Balkans, a desire for stability through EU enlargement.<sup>66</sup> A barrier to this goal within Kosovo is rule of law, an area the EU is actively tackling through EULEX. The UK government provides full political support for the full implementation of the EULEX mandate including its engagement with all communities throughout Kosovo.<sup>67</sup> However, the UK's continued contribution to the organization is notable against the backdrop of withdrawal from the country. As David Lidington MP (Minister of State) stated in 2012:

“We continue to support actively the work of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo by providing over 35 secondees, including the Deputy Head of Mission, judges

<sup>64</sup>Council of British Chambers of Commerce in Europe (2011) *Commercial Insight*, London.

<sup>65</sup> Ambassador Lirim Graçevci email interview 14 July, 2013

<sup>66</sup> Council of Europe Press Release (2012) available at: [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/EN/genaff/118487.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/genaff/118487.pdf) (Accessed 22 July, 2013)

<sup>67</sup>HC Deb, 31 March 2009, c1115W, available at: <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2009-03-31c.266823.h&s=%28EULEX%29+2008-01-01..2013-07-18#g266823.r0>

and prosecutors. We also fund a number of projects aimed at improving the performance and transparency of the Kosovo judiciary.”<sup>68</sup>

The UK has an interest in strengthening the judicial and legal framework within Kosovo. As early as 2000 Kosovo was identified as a “transit state” for smuggling and trafficking to other European states.<sup>69</sup> Strengthening domestic efforts in this regard has international effects on, for example illegal drug distribution that affects the entire continent. Additionally through EU funded “Twining Projects” the UK continues to help develop the Kosovo Police, specifically in specialised areas<sup>70</sup> such as Integrated Border Management (IBM) and Witness Protection. Thus despite the UK’s shrinking bilateral personnel contributions its commitment to certain EU missions continues to support change within the area - this is in contrast to UNMIK and KFOR. For example in UNMIK’s 400 strong attaché of personnel the UK no longer contributes.<sup>71</sup> It could be argued UNMIK’s presence within Kosovo acts as a barrier between Kosovo assuming full control of its sovereignty – the small number of contributing countries that now remain perhaps reflects this.

In the case of KFOR the UK initially was one of the largest contributors in 1999. Kosovo’s declaration of independence in 2008 however proved a watershed moment for KFOR and British forces as numbers started to dwindle and the total size of foreign forces reduced rapidly. With the relatively peaceful declaration of independence the UK government took the view that militarily, the region was not a priority and in October 2008 Defence Secretary John Hutton announced that “following a review of the security situation,” the UK’s contributions to the NATO/EU Balkans Operational Reserve Force would cease on 31st December 2008.<sup>72</sup> Two years later in 2010 there were just five UK armed service personnel out of the 9,923 KFOR troops.<sup>73</sup> As of June 2013 there remains a single representative of the UK within KFOR with the total number of troops is below 5000,<sup>74</sup> around a tenth of the original size of the KFOR deployment in 1999.<sup>75</sup> The UK military contribution plays a minor role to the one it once had within Kosovo, since 1999 there was always a seconded military personnel from MOD within the Kosovo Protection Corp (KPC) whose task was to oversee the transformation from Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) to KPC. Currently there is a NATO advisor to KSF seconded by UK (MOD). Indeed, as of 2008 the UK’s role became progressively more specialised as it supervised the demobilisation of the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) and assisting security sector reform and capability building.

Thus the UK role within the EU evolves in relation to Kosovo. While once focused on military and aid the UK now has an important role in shaping the broad agenda of the EU toward

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<sup>68</sup> HC Deb, 13 November 2012, c125W, available at <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2012-11-13b.127682.h&s=%28EULEX%29+2012-01-01..2013-07-18#g127682.r0> (Accessed 20 July, 2013)

<sup>69</sup> The Centre for Peace in the Balkans (2000) *Drug Wars: Kosovo’s new battle*, available at: <http://www.balkanpeace.org/index.php?index=article&articleid=7582> (Accessed 22 July, 2013)

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Senior UK diplomat (25 July, 2013)

<sup>71</sup> Contributing states found at: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unmik/facts.shtml>

<sup>72</sup> Politics.co.uk.(2013) *Former Yugoslavia and the Role of British Forces*, available at: <http://www.politics.co.uk/reference/former-yugoslavia-and-the-role-of-british-forces> (Accessed 02 July, 2013).

<sup>73</sup>NATO (2010) *NATO KOSOVO FORCE ACO | Allied Command Operations*, available at: <http://bit.ly/12ER6Kn> (Accessed 03 July, 2013).

<sup>74</sup>NATO (2013) *NATO KOSOVO FORCE ACO | Allied Command Operations*, available at: [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2013\\_06/20130604\\_130604-mb-kfor-placemat.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2013_06/20130604_130604-mb-kfor-placemat.pdf). (Accessed 03 July, 2013)

<sup>75</sup> NATO (2013) *NATO KFOR History ACO | Allied Command Operations*, available at: <http://www.aco.nato.int/kfor/about-us/history.aspx> (Accessed 03 July, 2013)

Kosovo, attempting to unify political consensus toward recognizing Kosovo. As Dr.sc. Eric Gordy asserts:

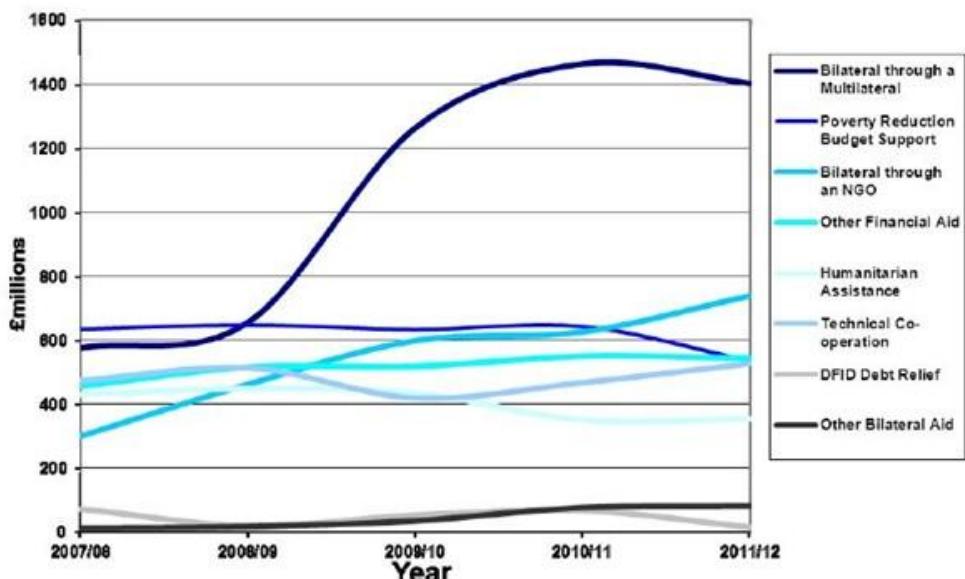
“...it is in the interest of most EU members that policy be as unified as possible. The greatest difficulty in relation to Kosovo has come from states that for their own reasons have decided to take a position against recognition.”<sup>76</sup>

As noted before the UK actively lobbies those states that have yet to recognise Kosovo and within the EU this is particularly important when considering Kosovo’s strong desire to join the EU.

### - UK development policy in context

Although UK policy towards Kosovo has evolved it is important to take into account the evolution of UK political context. From March 2011 UK development priorities are focused towards 27 countries, Kosovo not being one of them.<sup>77</sup> The list suggests the UK’s focus has shifted primarily to countries of Africa<sup>78</sup> and the Middle East and South Asia.<sup>79</sup> Arguably this is in part because of the stability within Europe and the EU’s influence throughout the continent.

In terms of the aid budget it has not only risen but has changed in composition over the last 20 years. The UK Aid Network graph (below) shows clearly how UK bilateral assistance is more actively being channelled through multilateral organisations as the aid budget rises to 0.7 percent of GDP.<sup>80</sup>



Source: UKAN<sup>81</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Interview via email with Dr Eric Gordy (17 July, 2013).

<sup>77</sup> Gov.uk (2011) *The future of UK aid*, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-future-of-uk-aid> (Accessed 23 July, 2013)

<sup>78</sup> African nations represent 15 of the 27 priority countries.

<sup>79</sup> Middle Eastern and South Asian nations represent 7 of the 27 priority countries.

<sup>80</sup> The UK has pledged to increase the aid budget to 0.7 percent of GDP by 2014. UNCTAD, 2013, *Home*, available at: <http://unctad.org/en/Pages/Home.aspx>

<sup>81</sup> Full factsheet available at: <http://www.ukan.org.uk/aid-quantity/uk-aid-breakdown/>

It could be argued that the UK is using multilateral organisations to combat questions regarding effectiveness<sup>82</sup> by shifting accountability to third party organisations. On the other hand the increased contributions towards multilateral organisations could be explained as move toward better coordination of global aid efforts as opposed to disparate bilateral flows that dominate currently – an aim the DFID has previously tried to accomplish in regard to Kosovo. Another argument is that the EU represents an international organisation, which has fairly consensual member foreign policy though a “higher degree of delegation and institutional integration.”<sup>83</sup> Certainly in terms of the commitment to “the European membership perspective for the Western Balkans” there are institutional mechanisms in place to guarantee this commitment.<sup>84</sup>

Trade policy has become a cornerstone of the UK’s recovery from the financial crisis. It also is commonly referred to an important tool for reform and redevelopment. The UK has adopted a policy aiming to promote<sup>85</sup> international trade for small to medium sized business which is having an effect on investment and trade relations with the UK and its global trade partners.<sup>86</sup>

Generally UK development policy has moved towards a more specialised framework with specific priority countries and aims to accomplish within them.<sup>87</sup> Although it can be argued the UK is perhaps neglecting its role as a developed nation in helping those that are developing, it accomplishes its wider security, development and aid mandate instead through “a limited bilateral programme operates alongside contributions to multilateral agencies that can work globally.”<sup>88</sup>

## V. THE UK AND KOSOVO

There are perhaps three main factors that best explain UK foreign policy towards Kosovo:

- The UK’s interest in Kosovo has always been governed by the desire for stability in the wider Western Balkans with Kosovo seen as the key to the area.
- UK foreign policy towards Kosovo since 1999 has been defined by multilateral actors.
- The UK is actively moving towards a policy of multilateral support for the Balkans i.e. through promoting enlargement of EU.
- Kosovo remains a priority for the UK because of high security importance and its political limbo within the Balkan region.

UK and Kosovo relations have evolved extensively over a relatively short space of time, the focus now is for the two governments to work as a partnership to enhance policy effectiveness, maintain relations and support “the internal democratic processes and institutional capacity building of Kosovo.”<sup>89][90]</sup> It is a testament to the progress in the region that the UK now supports

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<sup>82</sup> Arguments taken from a Parliamentary briefing paper available at: <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN03714>

<sup>83</sup> Ambassador Lirim Graçevci email interview 14 July, 2013

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>85</sup> Grahame Allen & Aliyah Dar (2013) *Foreign Direct Investment, Economic Policy and Statistics*, House of Commons Library.

<sup>86</sup> UK Trade and Investment (2013) *UKTI Annual Report and Accounts 2012/12*, London, available at: <http://www.ukti.gov.uk/uktihome/aboutuktii/ourperformance/officialreports.html>

<sup>87</sup> Richard Taylor (Head of DFID office 2012) interview 06 August, 2013

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Senior UK diplomat (25 July, 2013)

<sup>90</sup> Ambassador Lirim Graçevci email interview 14 July, 2013

Kosovar government committees with research when at one time it was helping shape that government bilaterally and multilaterally.<sup>91</sup>

UK-Kosovo relations are also affected by UK membership to multilateral groups. Ultimately this is a question of effectiveness as "...there are always going to be some instances where the UK is going to need to be of support to Kosovo on a bilateral basis, and some instances where policies are better taken forward through the EU."<sup>92</sup> In this way the UK can use what resources it has to best effect to accomplish its interests for the UK, for Kosovo and for Europe as a whole.<sup>93</sup> Currently the UK has three priorities when considering Kosovo:

- "Continuing the diplomatic discourse between Kosovo and Serbia in line with normalising relations;
- To advise and support in the running of free and fair relations;
- To support Kosovo in its aspirations to join the Euro Atlantic Family."<sup>94</sup>

These priorities support Kosovo in its bid to assume its sovereignty of its defined territory and take its "rightful place" as an international actor.<sup>95</sup> The UK has always played an active role in the discourse between Serbia and Kosovo advising both sides and in many cases mediating. From Former British Diplomat Robert Cooper contributing to the technical dialogue between the two states,<sup>96</sup> to Catherine Ashton Vice President of the Commission, Chief of the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU and a Member of the UK House of Lords, has "been key to progress" dialogue and bring the two governments together.<sup>[97][98]</sup> In terms of elections, the UK continues to work within the legislative and judicial frameworks to ensure that Kosovo has rule of law. EU membership is "an attainable goal in due course"<sup>99</sup> and the UK continues to work to show that Kosovo can add value to multinational organisations it strives for. Conversely, the priorities for the Embassy of the Republic of Kosovo in London are:

1. "Promoting bilateral diplomatic relations;
2. The international consolidation of Kosovo's statehood;
3. Furthering of the process of recognition of the independence of Kosovo by other remaining UN member countries;
4. Promoting trade and investment between the UK and Kosovo;
5. Forging and developing cultural and educational ties between the two countries;"<sup>100</sup>

These priorities are complimentary to that of the UK and reveal a well developed dialogue between the nations and a consensus on the areas that need further support. Predictions for future relations between the UK and Kosovo are positive. There is momentum behind the Ahtisaari plan with the normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo and the general

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>92</sup> Interview via email with Tony Baldry MP (chair of the APPG on Kosovo) (16 July, 2013)

<sup>93</sup> UK foreign policy towards Kosovo is dominated by its interest for Europe as a whole; to prevent conflict, discourage large-scale migration, create an atmosphere that will be receptive for investment, and eventually integrate as many states as possible into the EU – Interview via email with Dr Eric Gordy (17 July, 2013).

<sup>94</sup> Interview with Senior UK diplomat (25 July, 2013)

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>96</sup> Ambassador Lirim Graçevci email interview 14 July, 2013

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>98</sup> Gov.uk (2012) *Foreign Secretary welcomes EU facilitated dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia*, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-welcomes-eu-facilitated-dialogue-between-kosovo-and-serbia> (Accessed 23 July, 2013)

<sup>99</sup> Interview via email with Tony Baldry MP (chair of the APPG on Kosovo) (16 July, 2013)

<sup>100</sup> Ambassador Lirim Graçevci email interview 14 July, 2013

tendency for Serbia and Kosovo to move toward resolution of outstanding questions, particularly in the last year.<sup>101</sup> Also Croatia's recent accession to the EU gives a positive sign to other states in the region<sup>102</sup> and may help "focus minds" to settle any outstanding issues in relation to Kosovo's status and independence. The UK will continue to play a role in this process and will be key in supporting membership opportunities. It is likely that UK-Kosovo trade relations will strengthen with UKTI promotion of trade in the area. Bilateral aid is likely to fall dramatically but as negotiations continue for EU and UN membership and more criteria are met this will open up additional funding streams. Strategically Kosovo has been important for the UK as an area that can help ensure stability in the wider region. In the future the UK will continue to support Kosovo in its bid of universal recognition and eventually in its applications for membership for international organisations. Thus the relationship between the two will continue to be important to each government, as Petrit Selimi (Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs) wrote "this is a friendship which will continue which will deepen, and which will develop more roots and branches."<sup>103</sup>

## VI. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The UK government, through UKTI, should promote stronger economic ties by providing relevant business information online. FDI facilitates the transfer of skills and technology which Kosovo is lacking at the moment. It also creates a social connection between states that can also be of use. Despite Kosovo's growing economy there are opportunities for the UK to do more.
2. International recognition determines Kosovo's role on the international stage. Croatia's accession to the EU should be seen as a positive step however there is a recognition deficit which needs to be addressed. UK support in promoting international recognition should continue and be focussed towards those countries for which Kosovo can add value.
3. The Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement should continue to be used as a structural guide for dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo. Support for its recommendations should be upheld by the UK government.
4. The UK must continue to advise from experience as to where Kosovo can add value to the international organisations to which Kosovo aspires to be members.
5. With an increasing aid budget the UK government should ensure high level scrutiny aid flows to ensure accountability and effectiveness. This should be enforced not only within Parliament but within those membership organisations it uses. This is important also because of the prevalence of organised crime and corruption that still exists in Kosovo.
6. The Kosovo APPG is a useful link between the countries. It allows ministers from both governments to form a political bond which would be hard to encourage in its absence – it should be aided in its efforts and strongly supported by the UK government to enable effective and constructive communication between governments.
7. EU membership is a priority, the Stabilisation and Association Agreement negotiations present another opportunity for the UK to help Kosovo take a step towards this. It should

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<sup>101</sup> Interview via email with Dr. Eric Gordy (17 July, 2013).

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>103</sup> Petrit Selimi (2011) *Kosovo-British Relations*, Diplomat Magazine

be noted despite the current optimism that Kosovo still has a long way to go and support should continue to be forthcoming in light of this.

#### **POLICY REPORTS**

Policy Reports are lengthy papers which provide a tool/forum for the thorough and systematic analysis of important policy issues, designed to offer well informed scientific and policy-based solutions for significant public policy problems. In general, Policy Reports aim to present value-oriented arguments, propose specific solutions in public policy – whereby influencing the policy debate on a particular issue – through the use of evidence as a means to push forward the comprehensive and consistent arguments of our organization. In particular, they identify key policy issues through reliable methodology which helps explore the implications on the design/structure of a policy. Policy Reports are very analytical in nature; hence, they not only offer facts or provide a description of events but also evaluate policies to develop questions for analysis, to provide arguments in response to certain policy implications and to offer policy choices/solutions in a more comprehensive perspective. Policy Reports serve as a tool for influencing decision-making and calling to action the concerned groups/stakeholders.