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France's Foreign Policy towards Kosovo - What future for cooperation?



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France's Foreign Policy towards Kosovo. What future for cooperation?

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FRANCE'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS KOSOVO. WHAT FUTURE FOR COOPERATION?

INTRODUCTION

As a Quint member,¹ France has been highly involved in Kosovo, during the war, in the reconstruction phase and in the Kosovo status and post-status process. With the end of international supervision in September 2012, and the signature of a normalization agreement with Serbia in April 2013, Kosovo has now almost the full capacities of a “normal” State. Notable progress nonetheless has to be made on many levels for Europe's newest country to develop economically, stabilize politically and integrate international networks and institutions. The support from the old allies is therefore more necessary than ever before. Kosovo has reached a new stage in its development with a new medium term objective of integrating European institutions. European politics are shifting and the Balkans will be an undeniable factor in the next few years. As a historical founder, a strong EU power, and an ally of Kosovo, it is in France's interest to play a strategic role in Kosovo's European shift.

Over the past decade, France has supported Kosovo in many areas: institutions building, political status determination, reconstruction, cultural development, education or minority support. In light of recent events, however, it is necessary for France and Kosovo to assess the current state of their relationship, and rethink future priorities. While French involvement has been multifaceted, there have been very few comprehensive analyses of France's involvement in Kosovo. In light of this shift towards the EU, it should be in France's interest to play a strategic role in the region, which makes it crucial to analyze France's current foreign policy towards Kosovo and devise a strategy from which to move forward. Kosovo policymakers also have to capitalize on this traditionally strong relationship. Kosovo could benefit greatly from an increased support of France not only for its integration in international institutions, but also on economic and cultural issues at the domestic level. The Kosovo government needs to better articulate its needs in order to optimize, better target and maintain French support.

Hence, the ultimate aim of this policy analysis will be to provide policy recommendations as to how France and Kosovo can enhance cooperation and move forward. By first understanding the context in which this relationship has evolved, it will then be possible to analyze current areas of cooperation, and France's policy with respect to such. A special attention will also be given to France's role in multilateral institutions, and in the European Union, especially given the current process of European rapprochement in the Western Balkans. Finally, recommendations will be provided with respect to the two countries' political relationship, France's engagement towards minority rights, French cultural and educational engagement in Kosovo, and finally the improvement of business relationships.

¹ The Quint is an informal grouping of 5 States, the US, the UK, Germany, Italy and France. Those States have played the biggest role in the settlement of the Kosovo question.

I. UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF FRANCE'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS KOSOVO

I.1 France's historical ties to the region

France's current involvement in Kosovo and the Western Balkans must be put into the historical perspective of its ties with the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes prior to World War I and later on its engagement in former Yugoslavia. After the First World War, it became clear that France wanted to extend its interests and influence to the newly created States of Eastern Europe and the Balkans, mostly as a counter balance to German power in the region.² France rapidly benefited from this image of elite civilization, and presented a model to which those new States should aspire.³ In the 1920's French cultural diplomacy therefore emerged as a vector of soft power. French rapidly became the language of the intellectuals and ruling elite. Despite a weakening of Franco-Serbian ties in the 1930's, foundations had nonetheless been laid for a long-term cultural and linguistic French influence in Yugoslavia.

The current post-implosion repercussions of this relationship are of course multi-faceted. Throughout the Yugoslavia era, France had not only developed ties with Serbia, but also with all Yugoslav nations. For this reason, France still has a cultural and educational influence on several Balkans States, including Kosovo. French was the first foreign language studied by Kosovar students in school throughout the Yugoslav era, and is now often a common second language for Kosovars over the age of 35. Those historical ties have contributed to shaping the important cultural cooperation that exists between France and Kosovo today.

I.2 France in the Kosovo War and its immediate aftermath

France has had an important role in the resolution of the Kosovo war. The advocacy of a diplomatic, negotiated solution was definitely a striking characteristic of France's position, in 1997-1999, and will be representative of its approach in the following decade's negotiations. Starting in 1997, Hubert Védrine, France's Minister of Foreign Affairs under Lionel Jospin's left-wing coalition government in the Chirac Presidency had already made a point of finding a diplomatic solution to the conflict. With the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Védrine wrote to Milosevic exposing him the importance of finding a solution through dialogue, and then visited Belgrade in March 1998.⁴ At that point, France wanted Milosevic to end repression and withdraw Serb paramilitary forces from Kosovo. Neither status quo nor independence were then considered options by France.⁵

In 1998 France took the initiative of reactivating the Contact Group,⁶ which slowly devised a solution of substantial autonomy for Kosovo, given the non-advancement of the dialogue. NATO was then starting to study the potential use of force. Throughout the crisis, France had to reconcile its individual position with multilateral consensus required by an involvement within the Contact Group and NATO. While the US and NATO were pushing for

² Stanislav Stretenovic, "French cultural diplomacy in the kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians in the 1920s," *European Review of History* 16:1 (2009), 33-47. Accessed July 9th, 2013. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13507480802655352>.

³*Ibid* pg. 34.

⁴Anne-Sophie Paquez, "La Politique de la France au Kosovo était-elle 'gaulliste'?", *Institut européen de l'Université de Genève*, in *Euryopa* vol. 19 (2003), pg. 11.

⁵*Ibid*. pg. 12.

⁶ The Contact Group was an informal grouping of States first formed earlier in the 1990s as a response to the crisis in Bosnia. It was put into operation again in 1998, from a French initiative to use international diplomacy in response to the Kosovo crisis. It was comprised of the US, the UK, France, Germany, Italy and Russia.

recourse to military sanctions, France wanted to take a more progressive approach and first consider all diplomatic options, shown in its proposal of sending two OSCE observatory missions, and later on, in its co-organization of the Rambouillet conference.⁷ It also insisted on getting support from the UN Security Council prior to any NATO intervention.

France was mostly attached to progressivity. After it realized all diplomatic attempts had failed, the need to stop violence pushed actors to adopt a consensus on the Kosovo question. After the failure of the Rambouillet Conference co-organized by France in February 1998, Védérine mentioned that all possible attempts at negotiating had been made, and that the priority for France was then to stop Milosevic's army and policy.⁸ France then slowly shifted towards the NATO/US position of using force,⁹ and thereby fully adhered to NATO's Operation Allied Force. It was even the second contributor to the intervention after the United States.¹⁰

During and immediately following the conflict, France was also an important humanitarian actor and supplier of aid. Through the "Fonds d'urgence humanitaire" and with the help of several French NGOs, France spent a total of 237 million of francs in aid, which went to intervention in refugee camps in Albania and Macedonia; delivery of supplies collected by NGOs; hosting refugees; funding NGOs and contributing to international organizations.¹¹ Clearly, the special relations of the French speaking Ibrahim Rugova and official Paris always existed which was one of the crucial factors bringing Paris closer to the fate of Kosovo for years to come.

1.3 France in post-conflict Kosovo

French involvement in Kosovo was carried on after the end of war. Early on, it had been clear that France believed in the EU's responsibility for stabilizing the region. France, as a EU member state, thereby established a strong presence. At the end of the conflict, Védérine clearly stated that France perceived its engagement in Kosovo as long term and structural, especially in light of this European responsibility.¹²

France had a leading role in the initiation of the UNMIK governance. Bernard Kouchner, a French Minister and politician, was actually the UN mission's first Special Representative, which gave France a crucial role in setting the initial direction of international governance in Kosovo. Throughout this period, French involvement was multifaceted. On the military and security side, French soldiers were immediately deployed in the KFOR contingent. The French military was also involved in Civil-Military cooperation, especially in managing refugee camps. France sent police officers to contribute to reconstruction, worked in UNMIK police and supported the creation and formation of the Kosovo Police, by helping training at Vushtrri academy.¹³

On the humanitarian side, the Fauroux Mission, a French inter-ministerial mission in the Balkans operated from 1999 and lasted until December 2000. It coordinated the action of French public and private actors, gave direction to aid and reconstruction and acted as a liaison

⁷ Anne-Sophie Paquez, "La Politique de la France au Kosovo était-elle 'gaulliste'?", *Institut européen de l'Université de Genève*, in *Euryopa* vol. 19 (2003), pg. 13.

⁸*Ibid*, pg. 14.

⁹*Ibid*.

¹⁰*Ibid*, pg. 17. France sent 7,000 soldiers on the ground and 60 planes, making it the second contributor after the 480 planes provided by the United States.

¹¹*Ibid*, pg. 20.

¹²*Ibid*, pg. 24.

¹³*Ibid*, pg. 25.

between France and bilateral/multilateral donors.¹⁴ Yet, the lack of a proper development agency rapidly limited France in its bilateral aid initiatives.¹⁵ Hence, French humanitarian and bilateral aid in Kosovo rapidly slowed down after 2000, allowing for an increase in contributions to multilateral institutions – NATO's KFOR, the United Nations's Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the European Union, the European Commission, etc.¹⁶ The Fauroux mission had nonetheless helped the implementation of a strong French private sector presence, with many firms involved in reconstruction; namely Alcatel, France Telecom, Vivendi, Cap Gemini etc.¹⁷

France's early involvement in Kosovo during and immediately following the conflict has undeniably laid the foundations from which to look at its current position and future participation. Indeed, from early on, it was clear that France preferred a strong activity within multilateral institutions. With its involvement in UNMIK and the OSCE, France showed a commitment to stability and institutions building. It also worked early on the question of Kosovo's status within the Contact Group. Finally, it presented itself as a strong advocate of the European Union's involvement in the Balkans, a framework in which the country still operates.

1.4 France in the Kosovo Status Process: a progressive consensual diplomatic approach

France was never a hard liner on the Kosovo question. Even before the military intervention in 1999, France had always pushed for a diplomatic settlement. As a sensible partner to the Serbia's interest, and an active actor in Kosovo, France pushed for a solution acceptable by both sides. For a long time, France had advocated for a special status for Kosovo, never mentioning full independence. Yet, Bernard Kouchner ex-UNMIK SRSG, and then Ministry of Foreign Affairs clearly prioritized stability in the Balkans, and the settlement of the Kosovo question as a pre-condition of such.¹⁸ Arguably, higher levels of policy making such as President Chirac, later followed by President Sarkozy were vocal and continues at advocating for a sustainable solution to the Kosovo problem. Further, President Chirac was adamant at supporting NATO operations without UNSC resolution after the failure of the second round of Rambouillet conference.

As a member of the Contact Group, France was active in the Kosovo Status process, which began in 2006 under the supervision of Maarti Ahtisaari. Once again, a political, diplomatic, and consensus-seeking approach was a distinct attribute of France's position. France here pushed for a solution that would be acceptable to both parties, especially from the desire to avoid alienating Serbia, an undeniable factor of Balkans' stability. Seeing the mitigated results of negotiations in 2007 and the failure of Security Council Resolutions, France even had the initiative of launching a second round, under the supervision of a Troika composed of the US, the EU and Russia.¹⁹

¹⁴ Clarisse Vernhes, "La mission Fauroux dans les Balkans," *RFI*, October 14th, 1999, http://www.rfi.fr/actufr/articles/998/article_3173.asp.

¹⁵ Anne-Sophie Paquez, "La Politique de la France au Kosovo était-elle 'gaulliste'?", *Institut européen de l'Université de Genève*, in *Euryopa* vol. 19 (2003), pg. 13.

¹⁶ In 1999 already, 60% of French contributions to Kosovo were done through multilateral institutions. See "Les acteurs français dans le 'post-conflit'," (Report, Paris: Haut Conseil de la Coopération Internationale – République Française, March 2005), 39-40.

¹⁷ Anne-Sophie Paquez, "La Politique de la France au Kosovo était-elle 'gaulliste'?", *Institut européen de l'Université de Genève*, in *Euryopa* vol. 19 (2003), pg. 13.

¹⁸ Bernard Kouchner and David Miliband, "Le Kosovo, une affaire européenne," *Le Monde*, September 6th, 2007, http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2007/09/06/le-kosovo-une-affaire-europeenne-par-bernard-kouchner-et-david-miliband_951960_3232.html.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Yet, Kouchner had made it clear that, upon failure of the diplomatic approach, France would fall back on Maarti Ahtisaari's recommendation of supervised independence²⁰ and follow the Contact Group's Guiding Principles agreed to in 2005. The failure of the adoption of the Ahtisaari proposal by the UN actually led France to rethink its position, which is why France formally recognized the independence Kosovo on February 18th, 2008.²¹ Upon Kosovo's independence, EU countries, including France, clearly expressed their desire for the deployment of a Common Security and Defence Policy mission. France already saw an increased responsibility for the EU in stabilizing the Balkans, and therefore was highly supportive of the establishment of the EULEX mission.²²

2. POST-STATUS FRANCO-KOSOVAR RELATIONS

French President Sarkozy's February 18th 2008 letter to Fatmir Sejdiu, President of Kosovo, formally marked France's recognition of Kosovo as an independent and sovereign State, thereby making France one of the first recognizers. President Sarkozy's letter embodies the essence French's position, and perspective for the years following independence. France had supported the Martti Ahtisaari's Comprehensive Proposal for a Status Settlement of Kosovo since its draft in 2007, and therefore insisted on the importance of this proposal as a basis for building an independent Kosovo. In his letter, Sarkozy presented Kosovo's agreement to international supervision and implementation of the provisions of the Ahtisaari plan as two determining factors of France's position.²³ Looking at Kosovo's short-term future Sarkozy stated France's strong support to a rapid implementation of the provisions of the Comprehensive Status Proposal through the supervision of the international community (the later established International Civilian Office). Furthermore, Kosovo's adoption of positive dispositions towards the Serbian community was also stated as a crucial French concern. More generally this recognition formally established normalized diplomatic and political relations, but also cultural, university and economic cooperation.²⁴ Through its Embassy in Prishtina and other organizations France is currently involved in several bilateral initiatives ranging from minority protection, cultural cooperation, business climate development, or higher education.

2.1 France and political diplomacy post-independence

A. France's legal stance

While the settlement of Kosovo's status remains inherently political in nature, the question of the legality of its independence was also subject of much debate and served as a crucial argument for States' decision to recognize (or not) the new European country. In October 2008, after

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹ Nicolas Sarkozy, "Kosovo: La lettre du Sarkozy," *LeFigaro*, February 18th, 2008, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2008/02/18/01003-20080218ARTFIG00666-kosovo-la-lettre-de-sarkozy.php>.

²² In several 2008 statements of France at the UN, French Ambassador Jean-Maurice Ripert stressed the importance of EULEX to promote stability, security and rule of law. The mission had full French support. See Jean-Maurice Ripert, "Déclarations de la France à New York," *Représentation permanente de la France auprès des Nations Unies*, 2008, <http://www.franceonu.org/la-france-a-l-onu/dossiers-geographiques/europe/kosovo-140/article/declarations-de-la-france-a-new-6917>.

²³ Nicolas Sarkozy, "Kosovo: La lettre du Sarkozy," *Le Figaro*, February 18th, 2008, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2008/02/18/01003-20080218ARTFIG00666-kosovo-la-lettre-de-sarkozy.php>.

²⁴*Ibid.*

Kosovo's declaration of independence, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 63/3 requesting an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) as to whether Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence was in accordance with international law. Serbia had initiated the procedure earlier in September with the submission of Draft resolution A/63/L.2.

The French Republic provided its official statement on the question in April 2009, statement which explicitly embodies the country's perspective on the question. France deplored this request and doubted the actual legal effects of such an opinion.²⁵ Kosovo's independence could allow the Balkans to move forward with reconciliation and stability, but such a request by Serbia would have no legal effects and instead would risk heightening political tensions, France argued.²⁶ Paris then provided its opinion on the independence of Kosovo itself, if the Court were to decide to execute the request. It stated that, "there (were) no grounds for claiming that the Kosovo's declaration of Kosovo's independence (was) not in accord with international law."²⁷ It also stressed the special character of the process that had led to independence.²⁸ Indeed, since 1999, Kosovo had had a separate status from Serbia, as established by resolution 1244. Independence was the result of a long process of negotiations, and had been done peacefully, in accordance with democratic principles, rule of law and human rights protection. Moreover, the UN and the EU still fully supported the Kosovo authorities. Kosovo was in an "irreversible situation" which had no precedent in international law. After years of negotiation, independence had emerged as the only option that met the requirements of the Security Council and the Contact Group,²⁹ which is what pushed France and other Western powers to recognition.

While the concrete consequences of the ICJ opinion remain still ambiguous, it has given Kosovo legitimacy on the international scene. Kosovo can now exist as an independent sovereign State, and has a legitimate place in the international community. Main Western supporters of Kosovo; namely the US, Germany, France, and UK, all voted in the favour of the statement that the Kosovo's Declaration did not violate international law. The positive result of the ICJ proceedings further unified and gave legitimacy to the Quint States in their support. Unfortunately, although the opinion invalidates the legal argument behind non-recognition, there has been very little progress in non-recognizers' position, showing how the issue remains mostly political in nature.

B. France's political role in Kosovo

Kosovo has benefited greatly for France's political support. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, political stability is a pre-requisite for a well functioning Kosovo,³⁰ and the support of the Quint States has been necessary to Kosovo's political development. As a member of the Contact Group prior to independence, France was highly attached to its 2005 Guiding Principles. After 2008, France worked in partnership with the Kosovo government to implement those guidelines on multi-ethnicity, rule of law, human rights and security, and pushed for their use as a basis for

²⁵ The French Republic, *Written Statement by the French Republic - Request for Advisory Opinion - Accordance with International Law of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence by the Provisional Institutions of the Republic of Kosovo*, (Paris: French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, April 17th 2009), pg. 2.

²⁶*Ibid*, pg. 12.

²⁷*Ibid*, pg. 25.

²⁸*Ibid*, pg. 29.

²⁹*Ibid*, pg. 35.

³⁰*Ibid*.

institution building in Kosovo.³¹ Those principles are in a way “embedded in the bilateral political relationship,” and guide France’s political involvement.³²

France has also fully supported Kosovo in the accomplishment of its foreign policy priorities and objectives.³³ International recognition of Kosovo is of course the first of those. In 2009 in fact, Kouchner, then Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the Sarkozy Presidency expressed France’s concern regarding the problem of recognition, and publicly offered his support to Hashim Thaçi, his Kosovar counterpart.³⁴ Other goals include Kosovo’s membership in international organizations, membership in the UN and eventually integration in the European Union. In this respect, France has repeatedly given its support to Kosovo, and spoke in its favour whether at the European Council, to other States or in international organizations.

Yet, the impact of France’s individual initiatives remains limited by the multilateral and international organization regulating international politics today. While France’s individual support to Kosovo is undeniable, it also seems that it has had, and still has, a more important role as a member of larger institutions. First, as a member of the Contact Group, then in the International Steering Group until the end of international supervision in October 2012, and now in the EU-led dialogue, France’s political involvement in Kosovo has often been done under a larger umbrella. In a way, this has allowed France to legitimize its political stance, but also to reinforce the impact of its political support it through a more unified multilateral voice.

2.2 An evolving vision of development?

A. The shift from pure aid to broader initiatives

France attaches a lot of importance to development. In 2010, it was the fourth largest donor amongst all Developed and Advanced Countries.³⁵ Yet, France’s bilateral aid outflow to Kosovo remains very minor, with US\$0.18 million in 2011,³⁶ making it the 42nd donor out of 60 organizations disbursing aid.³⁷ Only 5 percent of French bilateral aid goes to European countries.³⁸ However, this withdrawal of aid should not be seen as the end of France’s developmental involvement in Kosovo. France’s current development policy is focused around three pillars: (1) Economic Development in exchange for respect of democratic principles, rule of law enforcement and women’s rights; (2) security and (3) environmental and climate protection measures.³⁹ France therefore no longer sees aid as the only means of development.

³¹*Ibid.*

³²*Ibid.*

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴ “Sarkozy reconfirms France’s support to Kosovo – Entretien de Bernard Kouchner avec Hashim Thaçi,” Youtube video, posted by kosovoseals, October 6th, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5ZUgq-9Hfk>.

³⁵ “2012 DAC Report on Aid Predictability,” OECD, 2012, <http://www.oecd.org/development/effectiveness/aidpredictability.htm>.

³⁶ “Aid statistics,” OECD, accessed July 3rd, 2013, <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/>.

³⁷ “Donor profiles,” Aid Management Platform Kosovo, accessed July 3rd, 2013, <http://amp-mei.net/visualization/launchDashboard.do?reset=true&publicView=true&id=1>.

³⁸ “L’aide publique au développement,” France Diplomatie, accessed July 19th, 2013, <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/politique-et-rangere-de-la-france/aide-au-developpement-et/dispositifs-et-enjeux-de-l-aide-au-l-aide-publique-au-developpement/>.

³⁹*Ibid.*

In Kosovo, although the largest part of French bilateral flows go to cultural and cooperation initiatives,⁴⁰ France is highly active in other areas such as security, rule of law, democratization, minority rights protection through partnerships with NGOs and international organizations like the OSCE or EULEX.

B. Democratization, human rights, and minority rights protection

The Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement had established early on multi ethnicity, democracy and human rights protection as key priorities.⁴¹ Upon the independence of Kosovo in 2008, those principles served as a basis for the construction of Kosovo as a new State.⁴² France fully endorsed them, as a member of the International Steering Group, which supervised the implementation of those provisions. Upon recognition of independence, France had made it clear that democratization, human rights and minority protection (especially protection of the Serb minority) were key priorities and would be guiding principles for its involvement. This explains France's active engagement in the OSCE and EULEX. In the 2009 visit of Hashim Thaçi to France, Kouchner explicitly said that France fully supported integration of minorities, especially the well-being of the Serb community.⁴³

However, despite its engagement in the missions mentioned, France's concrete involvement in this area remains vague. France sporadically supports handful of NGOs in north Mitrovica and Gračanica,⁴⁴ Serb-majority towns, and has been involved in the protection of Serb cultural heritage. Yet, in view of the implementation of the April 19th Agreement of normalization between Kosovo and Serbia, integration of the Serbs has to become a key priority. Furthermore, Kosovo now needs more concrete support for the improvement of its human rights performance. The upcoming vote for Kosovo's integration of the Council of Europe could represent a key step in this direction. Indeed, through its accession to this institution, Kosovo will also be placed under the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights. Since Kosovo needs support of two thirds of the Council's 47 members for accession, it will need France's vote.

C. A shift towards cultural cooperation

With a budget of €170,000 in 2013,⁴⁵ cultural action and institutional cooperation represent the most important sector of activity and the largest share of the budget of the French Embassy in Prishtina. Cultural diplomacy is in itself a pillar of French Foreign Policy, with main objectives of increasing awareness of French culture abroad, building bridges between French establishments, and artists and policymakers abroad, and build the capacity of different artistic sectors.⁴⁶ For France, culture is a strong vector of soft power and can be an economic asset for recipient

⁴⁰ Isabelle Combarrous (Cooperation and Cultural Action adviser at the French Embassy) in discussion with the author, July 11th, 2013.

⁴¹ "Guiding principles of the Contact Group for a settlement of the status of Kosovo," *United Nations Office of the Special Envoy for Kosovo*, October 7th 2005, <http://www.unosek.org/docref/Contact%20Group%20-%20Ten%20Guiding%20principles%20for%20Ahtisaari.pdf>.

⁴² Valdrin Grainca (Senior Official for Bilateral Relations with EU Member States at the Kosovo Ministry of Foreign Affairs) in discussion with the authors, July 19th, 2013.

⁴³ "Sarkozy reconfirms France's support to Kosovo – Entretien de Bernard Kouchner avec Hashim Thaçi," Youtube video, posted by kosovoseals, October 6th, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5ZUgq-9Hfk>.

⁴⁴ Isabelle Combarrous (Cooperation and Cultural Action adviser at the French Embassy) in discussion with the authors, July 11th, 2013.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ "Cultural Diplomacy," *France Diplomatie*, last modified January 15th, 2013, <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy-1/cultural-diplomacy/>.

countries.⁴⁷ In fact, for the promotion of French language alone, France employs 500 expatriate staff and spends 600 million euros annually.⁴⁸

In Kosovo, France is active in the cultural sector through the French Embassy, which permanently employs a Cooperation and Cultural Action adviser, and the *Alliance Française*, an independent local association in charge of promoting the French language and culture. Since 2011, *French corners* small establishments located in several Kosovar towns have been developed by France to improve access to French books and improve the possibilities to learn French in more secluded regions. France also works in partnership with the Kosovo Ministry of culture and several local associations and NGOs.⁴⁹

i. Goals and priorities

In the short-term, increased visibility for French culture appears to be the immediate goal of French cultural initiatives in Kosovo. Yet, in the long term, France also aims at having a positive structural impact.⁵⁰ Developing a more collaborative long-term relationship with Kosovo is one of the Embassy's priorities. First, the Embassy attempts to work in collaboration with local stakeholders, in order to foster knowledge sharing and the development of a thriving cultural sector in Kosovo, an undeniable factor of international attractiveness. Indeed, cultural events organized by the Embassy and the Alliance always involve local artists thereby building bridges between locals and the expatriate community. Budgetary restrictions have led the Embassy to focus on small projects that nonetheless target specific needs, and can have immediate results.⁵¹

In addition, France works at improving the visibility of Kosovo abroad, a necessary prerequisite for the country's development. The Secretary General of the Franco-Kosovar Chamber of Commerce stated that, in his opinion, poor international visibility constituted a major impediment to international investments in Kosovo. A few steps in this direction have been made. France has brought Kosovar artists to France and created artistic residences. It has also helped showcase Kosovars in international events, such as the artist Anri Sala, who represented France at the 2013 Venice Biennale.⁵² Finally, the educational component of the Embassy's cultural action is crucial for the development of an intellectual elite in Kosovo, and has enormous potential if properly developed.

ii. Current French involvement in Prishtina

French cultural action in Prishtina is orchestrated around three key areas:⁵³

French Language - Promoting and supporting French language learning is a main goal of the French Embassy Cultural department. In this area, the French Embassy works in cooperation with

⁴⁷ "What is cultural diplomacy?" Daily Motion video, posted by France Diplo TV, accessed July 17th, 2013, http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xo8phg_what-is-cultural-diplomacy_news#Ueav9GQpbAF.

⁴⁸ "Promoting Francophony," *France Diplomatie*, accessed July 17th, 2013, <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy-1/promoting-francophony/>.

⁴⁹ Isabelle Combarrous (Cooperation and Cultural Action adviser at the French Embassy) in discussion with the authors, July 11th, 2013.

⁵⁰ Isabelle Combarrous (Cooperation and Cultural Action adviser at the French Embassy) in discussion with the authors, July 11th, 2013.

⁵¹ France has been involved in many one-time projects, upon the expression of a specific need – restoration of buildings, funding artists to attend festivals, etc.

⁵² Isabelle Combarrous (Cooperation and Cultural Action adviser at the French Embassy) in discussion with the authors, July 11th, 2013.

⁵³*Ibid.*

the Alliance Française. The Alliance itself offers several sessions of French language classes for different levels, and French proficiency examinations to help Kosovar students go study in France. In addition, the Embassy supports the French Department at the University of Prishtina, and French professors all around Kosovo. It for instance sends an intern to the University every year.

University Support - Promoting higher education in Kosovo, by increasing accessibility, improving education quality, but also by allowing local students to go study in France is another French cultural priority. The French Embassy has developed a bursary program allowing 10 students at the graduate and postgraduate level to go study in France every year, this of course adding to the already existing EU grant programs. The program has made a good attempt at selecting students in a variety of sectors from medicine, to political science, law, chemistry, or computer science. At the same time, criticism has been made of the general approach of grant programs for Kosovar students. A lot of grants have been given in areas that are “not crucial” for Kosovo’s development. There has indeed been a lack of clear strategy on the part of the Kosovo government to identify key areas of need in the labour market, to subsequently target grant recipients in those sectors in demand. A major problem for investment in Kosovo has been the lack of qualified employees to fulfil the required jobs. There therefore seems to be a gap between the workforce’s skills and the employers’ demand. A developing economy like Kosovo needs to establish sectors in which it has comparative advantage. A first step for doing this comes from developing a strong educated labour force with the skills required to attract foreign businesses. In this respect, French and EU grants can help Kosovars acquire key skills and knowledge abroad. There has been a clear will on the French side to help. There now needs to be a better cooperation with the Kosovo government to redirect those funds to students in crucial areas.

In addition, France also supports higher education in Kosovo, by bringing guest lecturers and guest professors at the University of Prishtina. Yet, due to a lack of demonstrated interest on the Kosovo part, those visits remain on a sporadic basis.⁵⁴

Cultural Action - Finally, France more generally works at the promotion and the diversification of culture and art. The Embassy organizes various cultural events like la Semaine de la Francophonie, la Fête de la Musique, in partnership with the *Alliance Française*, or la Semaine du Film.⁵⁵ Those events are done in partnerships with Kosovar artists and stakeholders, thus contributing to increasing the visibility of French culture, but also of local artists. Furthermore, France is strongly engaged in promoting cultural heritage across Kosovo. Culture represents an inherent factor of national pride, and can have the power to promote reconciliation among communities, one of France’s aims with those initiatives.⁵⁶ In 2009-2010 for instance, the Serb Church of the Savior in Prizren was restored through a joint project between the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, coordinated by UNESCO-appointed French NGO Patrimoine sans Frontières.⁵⁷

The Embassy’s budget for the cultural action initiative remains low, which has therefore led to a lot of one-time projects. France should therefore stay focused on its goals, and find a way to align those projects with the priority of having a structural impact. In this respect, those

⁵⁴ Isabelle Combarrous (Cooperation and Cultural Action adviser at the French Embassy) in discussion with the authors, July 11th, 2013.

⁵⁵ French week, Music day, Film Week

⁵⁶ Isabelle Combarrous (Cooperation and Cultural Action adviser at the French Embassy) in discussion with the authors, July 11th, 2013.

⁵⁷ “Kosovo,” *Patrimoine Sans Frontières*, accessed July 18th, 2013, <http://www.patrimsf.org/projet/spip.php?article80>.

priorities should be transfer of knowledge, international recognition of Kosovars and local development.

2.3 Trade, Investment and business relations

A. French trade and investment in Kosovo: An assessment of the current situation

Several French firms contributed to reconstruction in the years following the conflict. Yet, with the independence in 2008, foreign investment has declined. France nonetheless remains present, and as such, it is fair to believe that Kosovo has the potential to develop improved business relations with France.

On the trade side, France remains a marginal partner, with less than 1 percent of Kosovo's importations coming from France⁵⁸ for a total of €9 million in 2012.⁵⁹ Exportations to France are quasi inexistent with only €1.5 million in 2012.⁶⁰ Kosovo is France's 171th client and 188th supplier.⁶¹ France has however had a more important, yet limited, participation in terms of foreign direct investment. With €6.3 million in 2012, French FDI represented 2.75 percent of total inflows,⁶² far behind Austria, Germany, Turkey, Slovenia, Switzerland or the UK. FDI results have highly volatile from year to year; due to the fact most of those investments are done on large contracts with one-time bids. In 2009, Kouchner acknowledged the problem of weak French investments, and insisted on the necessity to address this issue.⁶³ Yet, in the current context of the slow recovery from the European Debt Crisis, it seems unrealistic to predict immediate advances on this matter. Indeed, France's current trade policy is to concentrate on countries with high prospects of growth. With 4 percent annual growth prospects over the 2012-2015 period,⁶⁴ Kosovo still has not reached the level of an emerging economy.

Additional factors can explain the weakness of French investment and trade relations with Kosovo. First, Kosovo still benefits from a very poor image in France, especially due to the lack of information available for French investors. According to the Franco-Kosovar Chamber of Commerce poor reputation is one of the main causes of low French FDI. Language is also a barrier. Moreover, the general investment climate of Kosovo can be described as weak,⁶⁵ with poor infrastructure, lack of transparency, corruption, and deficiencies in the rule of law, political instability as the main factors of such. According to the Kosovo Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

⁵⁸ Cédric Berry and Mathieu Bruchon, "Commerce extérieur du Kosovo et relations économiques avec la France" (Report, Sofia: Service Économique Régional Danube-Balkans, June 12th 2013), pg. 2.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Central Bank of the Republic of Kosovo, "Foreign Direct Investment in Kosovo by Country", 2013.

⁶³ "Sarkozy reconfirms France's support to Kosovo – Entretien de Bernard Kouchner avec Hashim Thaçi," Youtube video, posted by kosovoseals, October 6th, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5ZUgq-9Hfk>.

⁶⁴ "Fragile States 2013: Resource Flows in a shifting world," OECD, 2012, <http://www.oecd.org/dac/incaf/FragileStates2013.pdf>, pg. 94.

⁶⁵ Kosovo still ranks 99th out of 185 countries in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business rankings. It has however gone up by 28 positions since 2012, showing clear progress. See "Ease of Doing Business in Kosovo," Doing Business, 2013, <http://www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploreeconomies/kosovo/>, accessed July 22nd, 2013.

perceived political risk remains very high among investors, and it will be hard for Kosovo to secure long-term investment flows until the political situation is settled.⁶⁶

Despite limited positions in Kosovo, French firms can still put forward significant accomplishments.⁶⁷ Several French firms such as Alstom Grid, Freyssinet or Alcatel Lutent contribute to local development projects. In the service sector, French bank BNP has entered Kosovo through a joint venture with Turkish Bank Turk Ekonomi Bankasi. Similarly, Aéroport de Lyon, in consortium with Turkish Limak, is now in charge of operating the Prishtina airport until 2030, building a new terminal, improving service quality, optimizing process, and more generally bringing in international expertise. Those French firms have brought significant knowledge to Kosovo, and are necessary for the development of its economy. While joint ventures between international firms for entering Kosovo have been common, it would be desirable to see increased partnerships between French and Kosovar enterprises. There has unfortunately been a lack of information in both France and Kosovo regarding the mutual benefits of trade and FDI partnerships. Both countries now need to recognize the comparative advantages the other offers. While Kosovo represents an important entry point in the Western Balkans markets for France, France can bring incredible knowledge and expertise for Kosovo. The current trade and FDI partnerships could therefore be greatly improved should both countries put in place promotional strategies making advantages clearer for investors and importers. The new French-Kosovar Chamber of Commerce will hopefully represent an important vector of information sharing.

3. A SHIFT TOWARDS MULTILATERAL INVOLVEMENT

3.1 France in multilateral international organizations

French involvement with respect to development, democratization, stabilization, and security has often been under international organizations' umbrella. Indeed, France still attaches a lot of importance to the existing missions in Kosovo, and therefore has important contributions, especially through personnel.⁶⁸ It has been made clear from several public statements that France believes Kosovo and more generally stabilization in the Balkans to be a collective European responsibility, which therefore explains its attachment to multilateral European-led missions.

With respect to the political settlement of the Kosovo question, France has taken a diplomatic, consensual approach to political diplomacy ever since the war, therefore explaining its activity in multilateral diplomatic missions. France could then legitimize its position through something bigger than itself as an independent actor, without ever having to adopt a blunt standpoint. With the Contact Group in the pre-independence period, the International Steering Group during the period of international supervision, and now with the EU, France has always supported the political activity of larger entities.

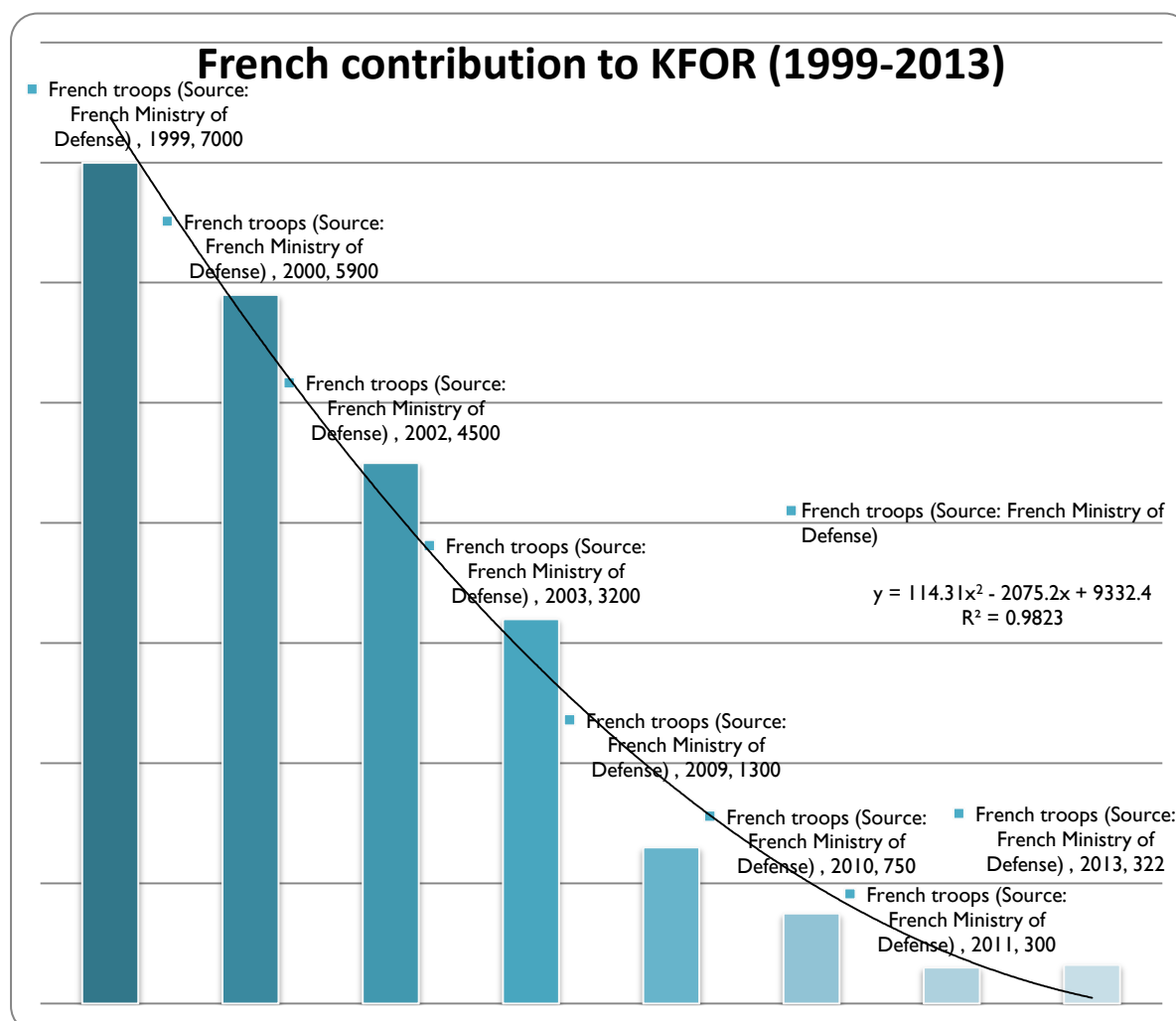
⁶⁶ Valdrin Grainca (Senior Official for Bilateral Relations with EU Member States at the Kosovo Ministry of Foreign Affairs) in discussion with the authors, July 19th, 2013.

⁶⁷ Cédric Berry and Mathieu Bruchon, "Commerce extérieur du Kosovo et relations économiques avec la France", Service Économique Régional Danube-Balkans (June 12th 2013), pg. 2.

⁶⁸ Gaël Veyssière (Press officer of the French Permanent Representation to the EU) in discussion with the authors, July 15th, 2013.

3.2 KFOR

France has always been very involved in KFOR with 7,000 troops or 14 percent of total contributions in 1999. Over the course of the mission, three French nationals served as mission



commanders.⁶⁹ Since 1999, KFOR has faced several successive restructurings. The transition from a post-conflict to an independent Kosovo has of course been accompanied by a decreased number of troops in the NATO mission. As of June 2013, France has 322 troops in KFOR, approximately 6.5 percent of total troops, and is the fifth largest contributor country after Germany, the US, Austria and Turkey.⁷⁰ France is present in the North, in Novo Selo camp, and also has troops in the Battle Group East. About 10 people are based at the headquarters in Prishtina.

France's maintained participation in KFOR is fully in line with the country's current strategic priorities. As outlined by the new 2013 Livre Blanc,⁷¹ France will prioritize, among others,

⁶⁹ "Les forces françaises au Kosovo," *Ministère de la Défense*, last updated May 15th, 2012, <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/autres-operations/kosovo/dossier/les-forces-francaises-au-kosovo>.

⁷⁰ "Troop numbers & Contribution Nations," *ACO-Allied Command Operations*, last updated June 1st, 2013, <http://www.aco.nato.int/kfor/about-us/troop-numbers-contributions.aspx>.

⁷¹ The French Livre Blanc sets the country strategic priorities in terms of defence and national security for the next 15 years. A new Livre Blanc was made public in April 2013 by French President François Hollande.

European and North Atlantic security, and stability in Europe⁷² for the horizon 2014-2019. In this respect, the Western Balkans, and Kosovo in particular remain a main challenge to European stability. It is therefore fair to predict France will maintain its traditional engagement towards security and stability in Kosovo, especially given the French government's current attempts at strengthening engagements within NATO.⁷³

3.2 EULEX and the OSCE

A strong commitment to rule of law, democratization and security has been a pillar of French policy in Kosovo, ever since the beginning of the status negotiations. Upon independence, France repeatedly emphasized the necessary role of the EU with respect to those issues. France therefore maintains a strong involvement in EULEX, the European Rule of Law mission in Kosovo as a part of the Common Security and Defense Policy of the EU. France was a strong advocate of EULEX from its inception in 2008, with French officials highly vocal on this matter at the UN. EULEX fulfilled France's main concern for stability, and also represented of way for the European Union to have a clear role in terms of security, something France had wished for.⁷⁴ It seems that the mere existence of EULEX has fulfilled France's ambition of articulating a Common Defense and Security Policy for the EU.

In 2011, France had 188 judges, police and customs officers, out of nearly 1,800 EULEX staff.⁷⁵ Today, with the restructuration of the mission with the end of international supervision, France still has 59 EULEX staff, including the Deputy Chief of Mission.⁷⁶ In this same concern for security and democratization, France maintains six staff in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and French ambassador Jean-Claude Schlumberger is Head of mission.

Since the end of international supervision, France has expressed its will for the restructuring of multilateral missions in Kosovo, especially UNMIK, to slowly transition towards autonomous local authorities.⁷⁷ It has also insisted on the need for the European Union to take the lead, as opposed to the international community.⁷⁸ This perhaps explains the end of France's involvement in UNMIK.

3.3 France, Kosovo and the EU

A. France in the EU led dialogue

A strong European role in Kosovo to ensure stability and political settlement has undeniably been at the heart of the French position. France has indeed been convinced of the European Union's

⁷²Livre Blanc *Défense et Sécurité Nationale 2013* (Paris: Direction de l'information légale et administrative, 2013).

⁷³Ibid, pg. 61.

⁷⁴ "L'Europe de la défense," *Ministère de la Défense*, 2013, <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/das/relations-internationales/l-europe-de-la-defense>.

⁷⁵ "Political Relations," *Ministère des Affaires Étrangères*, last updated March 2nd, 2011, http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files_156/kosovo_6154/france-and-kosovo_6155/political-relations_6162/index.html.

⁷⁶Gaël Veyssièrre (Press officer of the French Permanent Representation to the EU) in discussion with the author, July 15th, 2013.

⁷⁷ "Intervention de M. Martin Briens, Chargé d'Affaires A.I de la France auprès des Nations Unies," *Représentation Permanente de la France auprès des Nations Unies à New York*, June 14th, 2013, <http://www.franceonu.org/la-france-a-l-onu/espace-presse/interventions-en-seance-publique/conseil-de-securite/article/14-juin-2013-conseil-de-securite>.

⁷⁸ Gaël Veyssièrre (Press officer of the French Permanent Representation to the EU) in discussion with the author, July 15th, 2013.

responsibility for settling the question of Kosovo, and was therefore highly supportive of the EU-facilitated dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, initiated in September 2010 and concluded on April 19th 2013 with the landmark agreement of principles governing the normalization of relations between the Republic of Kosovo and the Republic of Serbia. "This dialogue will contribute to strengthening peace, security and stability in the region. It will also help Serbia and Kosovo to move forward on the path towards Europe. France will remain at their side to promote dialogue and cooperation, and assist in the process of rapprochement with the European Union,⁷⁹" mentioned a spokesman of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2010.

France has stated to be extremely pleased about the advancement of the process, the normalization agreement representing a major realization. The process should nonetheless continue, and France will keep supporting it, as a committed EU member State.⁸⁰ Yet, with its friendly ties with both Kosovo and Serbia, France has had a rather particular stance in the negotiations. On the one hand, Kosovo has had the strongest support of France ever since its independence, but at the same time, Serbia undeniably remains a privileged strategic ally, France and Serbia having been in a strategic partnership since 2011. Serbian Prime Minister Ivica Dacic even officially visited French Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault just a few days before the conclusion of the normalization agreement in early April 2013 to get France's hand.⁸¹ Compared to other countries, France was therefore one of the actors giving most support to Serbia in the dialogue.⁸²

B. European integration of Kosovo and Serbia

The analysis of France's position in the EU led dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia is hard to dissociate from the analysis of its stance towards their process of European integration. In 2009, Kouchner stated that all Western Balkans States' future lied with the European Union.⁸³ In this respect, France supports EU integration for Serbia and Kosovo, of course following different speeds, but encourages parallel progress for both parties. Both States have different short term objectives: accession negotiations should begin for Serbia, while Kosovo is still working on meeting the benchmarks required for the signature of a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU.

Kosovo - "Kosovo has its place in the European perspective," mentioned Kouchner in 2009. In the meantime, Kosovo has concrete priorities to fulfil as steps in this direction; namely, progress towards visa liberalization and the signature of Stabilization and Association agreement. Kosovo is the only Western Balkans country that has not achieved a visa-free regime with the EU. The visa process acts as a major barrier to the integration of Kosovars in Europe. The Visa liberalization dialogue began in January 2012, and the government was given a roadmap with requirements to fulfil. Once the conditions are met, the European Commission will present its

⁷⁹ "Kosovo," *Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations in New York*, accessed July 24th, 2013,

<http://www.franceonu.org/france-at-the-united-nations/geographic-files/europe-121/kosovo-438/article/kosovo>.

⁸⁰ Gaël Veyssière (Press officer of the French Permanent Representation to the EU) in discussion with the author, July 15th, 2013.

⁸¹ "Ivica Dacic : 'La Serbie est un paria européen'," *Le Monde*, April 6th, 2013,

http://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2013/04/06/ivica-dacic-la-serbie-est-un-paria-europeen_3155235_3214.html.

⁸² "President says Serbia to table position on Kosovo," *EurActiv.com*, April 8th, 2013,

<http://www.euractiv.com/enlargement/president-belgrade-table-positio-news-518940>.

⁸³ "Sarkozy reconfirms France's support to Kosovo – Entretien de Bernard Kouchner avec Hashim Thaçi," Youtube video, posted by kosovoseals, October 6th, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5ZUgq-9Hfk>.

proposal to lift the visa requirements to the European Parliament and the Council.⁸⁴ Concerning the Stabilization and Association process, the European Commission concluded in October 2012 that there were no legal obstacles to the signature of an SAA with Kosovo. Hence, the signature of an SAA agreement with the EU was dependant on Kosovo's fulfillment of 13 established benchmarks, and currently the subsequent approval of the European Council.⁸⁵

With its clear stance towards Kosovo, France is an important intermediary in Kosovo's relations with the EU. As a EU member State, France can give support with the progress towards fulfilling those visa liberalization requirements and the SAA benchmarks. It can also defend Kosovo's interests in EU institutions, especially with votes at the European Council, and can also engage dialogue with other EU member States. France should also ensure the EU conducts a regular assessment of progress.

Serbia - France is a fervent advocate of Serbia's EU integration, especially as a factor of stability in the Balkans.⁸⁶ In 2011, France and Serbia signed a strategic partnership, which was France's way to show Serbia its commitment towards their European perspective.⁸⁷ Yet, it hasn't always been clear what impact the question of Kosovo would have on this process. In 2007, prior to the independence of Kosovo, Kouchner said that it would difficult to imagine any eventual EU accession for Serbia without having resolved the question of Kosovo.⁸⁸ "Settling the question of Kosovo" remains a vague objective with an evolving meaning depending on the changing political implications.

For France, the April 19th 2013 normalization agreement has represented an important step in the evolution of two countries' relation. It therefore seems that lately the French have somewhat clarified what impact Kosovo would have in Serbia's EU integration negotiations. For France, the "legal recognition"⁸⁹ of Kosovo is dependant on many factors beyond Serbia's will alone.⁹⁰ It therefore cannot be a pre-condition for Serbia's entry in the EU. Progress in the normalization of relations is sufficient for France to consider Serbia. As such, concrete negotiations can start as soon as the terms of the April 19th 2013 normalization agreement are put in place.⁹¹

⁸⁴ "Visa liberalisation with Kosovo roadmap," *the European External Action Service*, accessed July 25th, 2013, pg. 15, http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo/documents/eu_travel/visa_liberalisation_with_kosovo_roadmap.pdf.

⁸⁵ Aubrey Hamilton and Albana Merja, "Readying Kosovo for SAA Negotiations: A blueprint of achievements, slow reforms and the path ahead (Policy Analysis No. 02/2013)," *Group for Legal and Political Studies*, March 2013. Pg. 5.

⁸⁶ "Intervention de M. Martin Briens, Chargé d'Affaires A.I de la France auprès des Nations Unies," *Représentation Permanente de la France auprès des Nations Unies à New York*, June 14th, 2013, <http://www.franceonu.org/la-france-a-l-onu/espace-presse/interventions-en-seance-publique/conseil-de-securite/article/14-juin-2013-conseil-de-securite>.

⁸⁷ "French envoy talks with Serbia, addresses controversy," B92, last modified July 15th, 2011, http://www.b92.net/eng/insight/tvshows.php?yyyy=2011&mm=07&nav_id=75467, accessed July 16th, 2013.

⁸⁸ Bernard Kouchner and David Miliband, "Le Kosovo, une affaire européenne," *Le Monde*, September 6th, 2007, http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2007/09/06/le-kosovo-une-affaire-europeenne-par-bernard-kouchner-et-david-miliband_951960_3232.html.

⁸⁹ Term used by the French representation to the EU, referring to Kosovo's entry in the UN. See Gaël Veyssièrre (Press officer of the French Permanent Representation to the EU) in discussion with the author, July 15th, 2013.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

As an EU member State, France should:

- France should offer Kosovo continuous support in the implementation of the terms of the April 19th, 2013 Normalization Agreement between Kosovo and Serbia, and ensure such progress contributes to positive improvements in the EU integration process
 - France should further stick to its strong position regarding the necessity of enforcing those terms as a pre-condition for starting EU integration negotiations with Serbia.
- In light of France's desire to support the EU rapprochement of Kosovo, France should give Kosovo its support with its short term priorities, that is, the advancement of the Visa liberalization dialogue with Brussels, and the meeting of benchmarks for the signature of the SAA. As such, France should:
 - Support the Kosovo government in its implementation of the required policies, especially as an active member of the EULEX mission.
 - Ensure that the EU is active in its assessment of progress
 - Support Kosovo at the European Council, the organ in charge of the ultimate culmination of those processes
- France needs to maintain its policy of parallel progress in the respective EU integration processes of Kosovo and Serbia. France has been able to develop close ties between both countries, and therefore act as a balancing actor in the dialogue. Leaning over to one party could have highly detrimental effects on the current relations.

Human Rights and Minority protection

- France should support Kosovo's human rights performance by voting for its entry in the Council of Europe, which would not only be a stepping-stone for Kosovo's integration in EU institutions, but also place Kosovo under the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.
- In the context of the integration of the north required by the April 19th, 2013 agreement, France should clarify its support to NGOs in charge of minority integration. It should attempt at developing longer-term partnerships with such organizations, especially in northern municipalities.

Culture and Education

- The Embassy should focus its efforts on the higher education program by:
 - Identifying key sectors in need of a qualified workforce, and select bursary program students accordingly.
 - Inviting guest professors at the University of Prishtina with specific targeted expertise to teach for longer periods, which would have a more concrete impact than sporadic lectures.
- The Kosovo Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should articulate more clearly where Kosovo's needs are in terms of training and education. France has been willing to help, but has been constrained by a lack of cooperation on the local part. A greater collaboration between the Embassy and the Ministry would be desirable.
- With its small cultural projects, the Embassy should concentrate on some that have an impact on the local population's well-being, or contribute to increasing the visibility of Kosovo abroad.

- France should maintain its activities in the protection and promotion of Kosovo's cultural heritage.
 - With the recent trend of tourism in the Balkans, Kosovo represents an attractive possibility. France should therefore focus and extend its activity in Kosovo bearing this in mind, not only restoring Kosovo's heritage, but also promoting it internationally. Several municipalities and regions of France have been successful at developing a successful touristic sector. Similarly, starting work at a small-scale municipal level could be feasible for Kosovo. In this respect, communication should be established with the Tourism department at the Kosovar Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Business

- The Kosovo's business chambers should take the necessary steps to gain membership in the UCCIFE, the Union of French Chambers of Commerce abroad, and by that gain legitimacy and visibility for its work.
- The Kosovo's official business chambers should continue fostering partnerships between French and Kosovar firms, and by that encourage a transfer of knowledge, and an additional security for French investors.
- French businesses need to be provided incentives to invest in training the local workforce, in clear need to acquire foreign skills and techniques. Such incentives could be coordinated by the Kosovo's Chamber of Commerce, with the help French Ministry of Trade and the Kosovo Ministry of Trade and Industry.

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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.