



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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BOUTELLIS: Today is the 24th of July, 2008, and I am now sitting with Faton Hamiti, who is administrative assistant in the office of the Police Commissioner. We are today in the Kosovo Police main headquarters office in Priština, Kosovo. First, thank you for your time. Before we start the interview, I'd like you to please confirm that you've given your consent to the interview.

HAMITI: *It is my pleasure to be with you today, so I'll do my best to answer your questions.*

BOUTELLIS: Thank you very much. I'd like to start the interview by asking you a little bit more about your personal background, particularly the positions you held before coming into this current position, and how did you get involved in police work.

HAMITI: *I'm Faton Hamiti, as you said. I come from Skënderaj. Before the war I used to be a journalist for a daily newspaper named Koha Ditore, and then of course after the war I wanted to be employed somewhere, and finally I decided to apply for the job of language assistant in UNMIK, the UN Mission in Kosovo. So finally I got the job and since July 2000, I am employed with the UN.*

I have been working first in Skënderaj, a member of a patrol unit. I've been translating cases verbally and written, various meetings, operation plans and other stuff. Then I have been redeployed to another office, an administration office as per operational needs. Later on I have been translating for the station commander, and I was his personal administration assistant, language assistant.

BOUTELLIS: So that was as an international police officer.

HAMITI: *Yes, when I started working there were just a few KPS officers. My first contact was with the international police officers, of course. Then the number of KPS officers was going up day after day. At the beginning there were just a few; probably when I got employed there were like five or six KPS employed in the police station and executive role, and everything was coming from the international police officers.*

BOUTELLIS: So how many international police officers were there in this police station, for instance?

HAMITI: *As I remember, there were maximum 42 or 43 CIVPOL officers. Later on sometimes more, sometimes less. When we had more KPS employed in our police station, we had less CIVPOL officers, because they were helped by the KPS officers being members of patrol units. They were patrolling together. Usually we had been patrolling—at the first place when I got employed, I patrolled mostly with one KPS, two CIVPOLs and me as the language assistant. Later on we were patrolling like two, two and we were the third one in the back seat. Usually we—according to some, we were told the language assistant was not possessing a flak jacket or something, protection tools; he should sit in the middle in case something happens. But there were some cases where we were just alone in the car, so that means it didn't help. That was just the plan.*

So time by time we had more KPS. We came to the point where we had about 150 KPS for Skënderaj municipality, and there were like 28 CIVPOLs. About two years ago, the KPS station was transitioned, and in the police station were left just two language assistants. One of them was me.

BOUTELLIS: That's 2006?

HAMITI: *Approximately 2006.*

BOUTELLIS: The police station was transitioned from UNPOL heading the police station to KPS officers.

HAMITI: *Yes, to the KPS officers. Since then there were only two CIVPOLs in that police station and two language assistants. As I remember, there was one German—.*

BOUTELLIS: How many KPS?

HAMITI: *There were about 155 KPS officers, plus of course in the police station were employed some of the civilians.*

BOUTELLIS: Support staff.

HAMITI: *Yes, support team. They were dealing with logistics, small administrative issues, kind of assisting works. Then, 16th of October, 2006, I was redeployed from Skënderaj police station to the deputy police commissioner of operations in Priština main headquarters. According to their deployment order, it was due to the operational needs. Of course I was consulted if I am interested to leave the police station or not. Nothing happened without my wish. I decided to come, and I worked with an American police officer. In fact he was deputy police commissioner of operations. He was coming from the United States.*

I worked for him more than a year; then, the first of March, 2008, I was assigned to work with the Police Commissioner as his personal administrative and language assistant. In the first place we were called language assistants, but later on due to some procedures we were named administrative assistants, because at the same time we were doing administrative work, and of course language matters as well. Of course I had been translating also, because I speak the Serbian language as well; I have been translating also in some Serbian villages. In our station I was the first one to attend some meetings held by our CIVPOL officers, KPS station commander and a representative of the Serbian community for these two villages. On a biweekly basis we usually had a meeting talking about the security situation in the abovementioned villages.

BOUTELLIS: Who was the police commissioner when you started working as his personal admin assistant?

HAMITI: *The police commissioner was Larry Wilson. Larry Wilson used to be my boss also as deputy police commissioner of operations. He considered that I may be a good help to him or assisting his office, so I had been redeployed to his office. Even this redeployment order came due to the operational needs and showing my readiness to come and work; I was ready to come and work. Even though I don't mind working; for me it is important being employed and working. I don't mind working because I had been working patrol on different shifts, night shift, afternoon, morning. I don't mind working in shifts.*

BOUTELLIS: Then there is a transition in police commissioner; a new police commissioner came.

HAMITI: *Yes, of course there were—I was on CTO when I came back. The previous police commissioner, Larry Wilson, he was not in the office because he had to—he was called urgently when his family member, I think his wife, was really sick. Then acting deputy police commissioner for crime, which is the current police*

commissioner or acting police commissioner [Tor] Iver [Ter] Frigard. He is now my boss. Of course usually we go through the chief of staff. The chief of staff is our first supervisor. So we don't bother him for simple issues, but he is our main boss.

BOUTELLIS: You grew up in Kosovo, and you've been working with UNMIK and the police, the KPS and UNMIK since July 2000. Can you describe for us the post-war transition, and what was the situation in terms of rule of law, crime, right at the end of the war, and how did the international police start their work?

HAMITI: *After the war, when I started working in 2000, UNMIK police consisted of different nationalities, different states including African, Asiatic, United States, European. They were trying to rule the law in Skënderaj. Skënderaj, where I used to work, is one of the most sensitive places; it is the birthplace of the war. So people accepted them very well, and they were welcomed in the community. Of course crime level comparing to most probably other places wasn't so high, but people were really suffering for houses, they were suffering for food and whatever else, because still everything was not covered by the United Nations organization. Some people were usually coming to the police stations to report that some NGOs were misusing—. I remember the first time that they were coming saying that some NGOs are not reconstructing our houses as we were told. They were complaining against some locals as well, that they were a member of these NGOs.*

Anyhow, for the minor crimes, there were not so many cases reported in the first place because they just considered that it is not that important. They were hesitating to report the cases. But day after day I really had to translate a lot, because international police officers initially were taking statements and we were doing the translation simultaneously. That means they were addressing the questions and we were replying to their questions. Some of the officers were on duty desk; some of the officers were patrolling, foot patrol. Usually at the beginning we had the mobile patrols. The shift commander was the one to assign language assistants and other police officers where to go, what area to patrol.

In the beginning I remember we had not done any patrolling in the Serbian areas like the two villages—time by time they were accepting the police presence, but until later they never reported any case directly to our police station. Maybe they met a patrol unit while conducting a patrol.

BOUTELLIS: Can you describe the patrols at the time? They were solely UNPOLs; there were no KPS officers at that time?

HAMITI: *Sometimes there were not so many; we had four or five patrols in the same shift. We had eight to twelve officers, maybe sometimes six or seven for a shift. Then two officers were going. If the KPS was available, we took a KPS patrolling. The other patrol units, or the other units like investigations, they were trying to investigate some cases that were reported in our area. But it was hard because everybody knew—it was clear to everybody that they couldn't investigate so easily because they were working there most probably for two months or something. When the KPS got engaged, more cases were solved.*

BOUTELLIS: When did you feel like the beginning of the transition between UNPOL and the KPS taking more of a role?

HAMITI: *Before the transition, KPS was getting ready to be transitioned, before officially. We had the CIVPOLs that were assigning police, KPS police patrols alone*

without even the presence of language assistants. But for some reason, when we had not such a number of KPS, we as language assistants sometimes used to stay in the communication room, because at the same time we were communicating with both patrols, international and KPS, we were translating and filling in the log information. Or we logged in the information—whatever.

BOUTELLIS: Did you feel the evolution—in terms of the crime and the challenges faced by the police—did you feel an evolution from when you started in 2000? Maybe when you moved to headquarters in 2006?

HAMITI: *It took time, but yes. Every day you could have seen improvement. Of course there were a lot of things: for example, we had cases where we had to go search a house along with KFOR, we had to intervene immediately. We as admin assistants we were not protected completely. We had no vest. I don't know if we were allowed to or anything. All of them, CIVPOL and KPS, they were well equipped, but we had to be with them while they were conducting a search. That means sometimes we were in life-threatening—this is reality, what happened, not just with me. Also when there were some demonstrations or protests or something, we usually had to be with the internationals in order to clarify a lot of issues. Even in such situations we had no—somehow our staff tried to protect us, but he can't protect you if you're not equipped. He cannot always stay in front of you because you have to translate. Most of the local people, at the beginning they didn't speak any English, so we had to translate. We had sometimes, of course—were sometimes at risk, but fortunately nothing happened to us.*

BOUTELLIS: You described the type of crimes that were reported, very low crime reporting at the beginning, and more social issues. Did this change? Did the trend change?

HAMITI: *Yes, in fact when I started major crimes were taken over by the regional headquarters. I was not working for the regional investigation unit. If you were talking about minor offenses, most of them—of course the first police to respond were from Skënderaj, but they were securing the place and others. But of course, there was a kind of conflict that when people were killed we didn't know who shot them, what kind of conflicts, but I don't know who was killing who. Being honest, I think even now a lot of cases are not being solved.*

BOUTELLIS: For what reasons?

HAMITI: *We don't know. The reason might be—?*

BOUTELLIS: Lack of evidence?

HAMITI: *Maybe lack of evidence. People were not so much cooperating with the police, because it was kind of the first experience to have our own police or any peacekeeping mission here. That's why people still were not used to cooperating closely with police officers, because if you don't have people behind you and helping you to report and assist you as witnesses or something it is hard. Because people, witnesses, were most probably afraid to assist because they were not protected at all when criminals were released.*

We had a case where a 16-year-old guy was a well-known criminal, and he escaped many times from a jail as well. Most of the time the guy was arrested by the KPS officers and internationals while organizing operations. But five times he escaped from a prison. So you can consider how secure the detention was; five times he escaped from a jail. He is the guy who is being charged with murdering

a Russian officer. I wasn't there, I wasn't working there when that case happened, but in fact I was briefed.

BOUTELLIS: What were some of the other major challenges that both the international police and the KPS were facing when trying to do their job?

HAMITI: *I would say that they really had a good relationship. Of course some of them through language assistants, because at the beginning just a few KPS officers were able to speak in English. Sometimes, probably internationals and KPS officers noticed that some people are really poor to issue them a ticket, because traffic was one of the biggest concerns besides security. The traffic situation was catastrophic. So the challenges that they were facing: they stopped a car, they stopped a family, or they have seen cars without proper equipment.*

There were other challenges that KPS and CIVPOL officers were dealing with were also illegal wood cuttings. I remember that illegal wood cuttings was one of the biggest concerns, because really they were cutting woods, and of course it was against the law. On a daily basis we had a forest department coming to our station seeking our assistance, and it was hard to go with our cars, especially with Kia police cars to go to the deeper areas in the field. It was very dangerous because there were cases while the people were committing—cutting illegally woods, they were shot. We had cases where they were found dead from that and they were missing for two, three days. I remember one. The person that was shot, it was in a Serbian forest—owned by Serbians. I don't know the name of the victim, I don't remember in fact because I had been responding.

Secondly, most probably every time we had to wait for the response of our units from Mitrovica or Priština. For example, the murder case we had to wait for the canine unit, for the dogs. Only Ukrainian police were having dogs, so they had to come and show up at the scene. Of course they had to smell for any—.

BOUTELLIS: In terms of equipment and cars, etc., were there any limitations, challenges to doing proper policing work.

HAMITI: *There were some exceptions. For example sometimes even—we can't say that they have given their best to implement the law. That means also sometimes they were taking into consideration the current economic situation. Some of them didn't care at all. Some of them probably were not proper persons for such positions like, for example as you know, the UN Mission sends officers here as a simple police officer. Then the officer after two, three weeks or month is applying for another position which he never did before. He is taking, instead of bringing experience, he is taking the experience from learning, he is applying for another job. That happens many times. It is not that all of them were professionals. Most of them came—they have started here instead of being a professional. This is reality.*

As long as they got one position, like a shift commander, they were ready to apply even for the police commissioner's office. This I think is what the UN could probably improve: send the people who are experienced for certain fields and train local police. Not, for example, just because he wants to work somewhere to be assigned to that position. So that was one of the failures most probably of the UN mission itself. I'm not saying it wasn't 100%, but even 80% successful. They were coming from different countries. The other issue, challenges the KPS faced because every officer was coming with his local experience.

For example, some of them were saying, "Back home we don't do this. Back home it is not allowed to be done this." So everybody came with his own ideas. We had cases where an international police officer was patrolling with a blue light during the night time. KPS was against that, because how can you chase a thief or prevent the crime if you're just always patrolling with a blue light. I remember that officer was redeployed to another police station which was in the north station, because in the north, until later I think, there were no cases reported to the UNMIK police and KPS officers. This is what I was told by the other lays that they never did, just a few translations. There were like ten language assistants in the same shift doing nothing because there were no cases being reported.

BOUTELLIS: You're talking about North Mitrovica?

HAMITI: *Yes, I'm talking about North Mitrovica. When I started I was in Mitrovica region. We were aware because sometimes we met them in training or something. Even some CIVPOL officers were telling us that they don't have so much to do.*

BOUTELLIS: So from the beginning, the UNPOL officers had presence all over the country; there was no exception. They were patrolling in North Mitrovica in Serbian so-called enclaves all over the territory as well as the rest of the territories?

HAMITI: *As far as I know because I work in Skënderaj. My patrolling was limited to Skënderaj ward, but as far as I know they were patrolling in most of the areas, even in North Mitrovica, because some CIVPOLs were even living in North Mitrovica. So as far as I know, they were patrolling in most of the areas. Even if they couldn't cover because there were not so many officers to cover all the areas or all the villages, time by time we had four zones and we were patrolling one. One patrol unit was going in one zone, the other one is going in another zone.*

BOUTELLIS: How did the police relate to other sectors—like you mentioned the problem of the prisons; they were not necessarily well secured. What was the relationship with the justice sector, for instance? When there were arrests and so on, how were the cases handled?

HAMITI: *There were some conflicts between the UNMIK police and—I'm talking conflicts not physically, but there were discussions while the judge or court couldn't solve all the problems. Somehow they were just ignoring, I would saying ignoring according to what KPS were telling. They were ignoring the cases. If the United Nations—this is my personal opinion if I may say—if the United Nations at least achieved in one field, they achieved to build the police. The other—if you even make a survey or ask people in general, most probably they're going to have more confidence in the police and trust than they have in the other, education or health or justice. The UN couldn't establish—as far as I know they couldn't establish a jurisdiction system, or in fact, especially courts were not functioning as they were supposed to. Due to the few number of judges or—I don't know, but still you have thousands and thousands of cases that were never solved or they were never sentenced.*

BOUTELLIS: Now when the police station at Skënderaj was transitioned to a KPS officer heading it, what did that change on the ground in terms of the way policing was done and the relationship with the people—did it change?

HAMITI: *Not so much, because it is not completely being handed over to them, but in fact even before we got transitioned there were sergeants that were team leaders, and they were just somehow monitored from a distance by the international*

police. So they were trained in advance, like two, three, four, five months before they took the situation under control. But even then, when it was transitioned it was a station commander liaison officer; he still had authority not to approve something or to deny something or to ask for any special operations.

BOUTELLIS: So since 2006 when a number of police stations and then regional command were transitioned to KPS you're back at headquarters working with operations and the police commissioner. You've witnessed the further transition. What have been the—I'm thinking particularly the Declaration of Independence in March 2008. What were some of the effects and some changes in terms of the police work?

HAMITI: *Nothing changed. As you know, the Declaration of Independence didn't affect at all the police structure. Even today still the United Nations is executive authority in Kosovo. So it didn't change anything. It just made the local police, international police working more closely because the intention of both sides is to solve the problems and prevent any possible incident. So it didn't change a lot. But when I talked about transition of KPS station in Skënderaj, I told you I was not sure if it was 2005 or 2006; sometimes I said 2006, but I'm not sure.*

BOUTELLIS: Now I'd like to go into different technical areas of policing. You're not a police officer yourself, but you've worked closely with the police. So if you don't have any comments on any particular areas, we'll just skip to the next one. The first area is recruitment. I wondered if you witnessed recruitment of KPS officers, and if you had comments on the way KPS officers were being recruited, the standards, etc.

HAMITI: *No, in our police station there were language assistants who were working with the PFTO office, which means the field training officer, which was international. He had his own language assistants he took with him while the KPS were recruited or interviewed or any physical test or anything, but I never had any—forget about chance, but I never had any intention to—.*

BOUTELLIS: When you were going on joint patrols between KPS and international UNPOLs, this was part of the field training, right?

HAMITI: *Of course. First the international police officers tried to explain to them, but also here there was a conflict as I mentioned even before because each officer did not have the same manner of operating. Some of them were telling—you have American style, we never stop a car without being at least two police officers on the side and observing from a distance. You have other countries where they just stop a car like he is his friend or he is his colleague. In other countries every car that was coming they considered as a suspect. We were doing a joint VCP, vehicle check points. Usually we had to translate what they were talking to the public, what the public was telling them. We had operations to prevent—sometimes in 2002, 2003 we had armed robberies, masked people, so we had to organize sudden operations like in sensitive areas where such cases were reported. So we had to go there. But as I told you, we as admin assistants thank God nothing happened, but mostly if you go somewhere in operation and you're part of the team and you're empty-handed—I'm not saying we should be equipped with weapons because we're not certified for that. But at least—.*

There were even some cases when demonstrations took place and our station commander—I remember him, he was really taking care of his staff. He told us, stay in the car, and in case we have to leave here, in case we cannot control the situation you're right inside the car. He was a station commander; he helped a lot

the community and police station. His name was David King; he was a US police officer. He did his best always and considered that life is more important than anything else.

BOUTELLIS: All UNPOL officers were carrying weapons, and the KPS as well; as soon as the KPS started working together, everybody carries a weapon.

HAMITI: *Yes, at the beginning, as far as I know, not all KPS had a weapon; they did not have a weapon. Like two or three months when I started, nobody had a weapon from KPS, especially most of them. Forget about radios. Later on they received the radios, later on they received the mag lights, later on they received proper boots or something, because it was hard to equip. I remember that KPS received financial support from other countries. As far as I remember, the United States was an organization that helped a lot the KPS to equip them with Motorola radios.*

Another mistake that I've seen—most probably it is not a mistake, but they purchased KPS Kia cars, and Kia for our roads didn't function properly, so we had a problem always. Toyota was completely different. Kias were very weak cars for Kosovo because our road conditions are very bad. They used to be much worse, so imagine how many times we had to call the tow company which belonged to KPS to tow the cars.

BOUTELLIS: How often in a mission—was it often that officers with UNPOLs and KPS had to use their weapons or not?

HAMITI: *There were some cases—I remember once a KPS had to shoot, and he injured a suspect because he was life-threatening. There were some cases also that KPS and CIVPOLs had to be very careful, but I don't remember that they shot someone.*

BOUTELLIS: In operations?

HAMITI: *Of course. Areas where I'm coming from, Skënderaj, and we have a night of fire celebration, most probably [...] area. In that place were attending about 150,000 to 200,000 people. We had a problem with the traffic, but another issue we were facing, the biggest concern were happy shooting. I remember sometime in 2002 or 2003, maybe 2002, there were participants; he got shot by happy fire.*

BOUTELLIS: So happy fire is shooting in the air.

HAMITI: *Yes, happy shooting. After the war people used to do it a lot, even during weddings. I didn't but of course our station organized prevention operations and talking to citizens: don't do happy shootings because we will conduct a search. It happens when we have searched everybody, we have surrounded the area and we have searched even the brides I remember.*

BOUTELLIS: Was there a law passed against happy shooting?

HAMITI: *Yes. It was illegal. Everything they had done was illegal, and they knew it was illegal. But when I was talking about Court, you can imagine maybe 40,000 cases for illegal weapon possession, and they are still pending. There is no case solved. As far as I know they were kept for a while; then they were released with a prosecutor's order for further step—I don't know. But these cases were usually transferred to a regional investigation unit or regional crime unit. So the station level had less authority on the panel offenses or criminal cases.*

BOUTELLIS: You mentioned the importance of communications with the community. What was the feedback you were getting from the communities, and were there any efforts to have so-called community policing? Sort of informing the community, trying to get the feedback from them?

HAMITI: *Since the beginning, in our station we had different departments: investigation, community-policing unit, traffic unit, administration, other pillars within the station level. The community police unit did a lot for us. It consisted of CIVPOLs and KPS officers. They were trying to do their best, but they couldn't achieve so much to prevent. But now, if you talk just three, four years ago, everything is being changed. People's mentality is being changed a lot. Maybe not because of police force, or maybe not because they don't have weapons, or maybe not because they are not happy again, but it just took time for people to understand that that is a very dangerous issue.*

BOUTELLIS: In what way has it changed?

HAMITI: *In a positive way, because now you don't have so many happy shootings.*

BOUTELLIS: What are the channels of communication between the police and the communities?

HAMITI: *Usually they were contacting the leader of the community. Sometimes they were organizing meetings with the villagers. For example, they were consulting with the village leader; then some of them participated, some of them didn't. Anyhow, they were trying to convince them that was life-threatening, because everything that goes up comes down. I told you we had a case while even during a wedding, people who were far away from that wedding were injured. I remember the last case I think was 2006, beginning of 2006, when a woman while being in her yard got shot. She wasn't killed but injured. I remember. Then we organized a search. Of course always we had to consult a prosecutor because this was the procedure.*

BOUTELLIS: What are the perceptions of the police by the communities? Have there been any public perception surveys, and generally how do people look at the new Kosovo police?

HAMITI: *Of course, I told you our bad experience. It didn't make them feel much more proud that we have all local police. Here in Kosovo I think people welcomed all police officers. They weren't doing any kind of discrimination or anything. We worked with different countries. Probably I didn't tell you a detail that I was working with an African officer; he was from Nigeria. We used to be good colleagues. In fact his wife delivered a son while he was on mission, and he named his son my name, so there is a Faton in Nigeria as well. So people were welcoming them a lot. Of course it was easy for the people to communicate with the KPS without the presence of a language assistant. That made them feel easier and not complaining for no reason, because sometimes even if they fail to reply properly they were always trying to blame the language assistant for mistranslation or something.*

We had a case in the municipality, the Skënderaj municipality, while a KPS lieutenant was talking Albanian, and a journalist wrote article in Albanian, and then he did not exactly say what the KPS lieutenant said. But he reacted, and the lieutenant said "I didn't say this"; he wrote the newspaper as a reaction. Then the journalist just kind of—crazy justification—said it was mistranslated, but in fact

the journalist and KPS were both speaking Albanian. So that means for some reason the language assistants were not in very good positions always. Plus, in case you were translating for any minor offense or issuing a ticket, they always would blame you. You don't want to translate, tell this, that. Sometimes they were telling first, then secondly, "Don't tell him what I said," because they were probably trying to insult police officers. Then you were told to translate, and somehow if you were translating you again would cause a problem. But I think mostly the language assistants helped a lot for good communication. Even when they were exchanging some very hot statements. We were logically threatened, but personally I didn't have any problem either with the public or the CIVPOL officers.

BOUTELLIS: When recruitment for the KPS started in '99, people turned out in great numbers to apply?

HAMITI: *I was told, but I don't know. I was not employed in the police in 1999; I don't know.*

BOUTELLIS: Recruitment has stopped a year ago?

HAMITI: *Most probably two years ago.*

BOUTELLIS: Is the KPS a popular institution to join?

HAMITI: *Yes it is, of course. Police is the main security service in any country in the world. I told you, if the United Nations mission in Kosovo achieved to create any department or institution, at least they did well with the KPS. Of course they were helped with OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe]. OSCE contributed a lot, because the police academy in Vushtrri was mostly financed by OSCE, as far as I am aware. Of course, even within the KPS there are people being employed just because there is no other place to apply for a job, that's true. But there are some who have a vision, and they really like the police job.*

BOUTELLIS: How does the salary of a police officer in KPS compare to other jobs you could have in Kosovo?

HAMITI: *It depends. If you were working with KPS it was like 200-something Euros. But if you were working as a teacher you receive less. If you were working as a nurse you receive less. If you work with any international organization like UNMIK, of course we received a bit more. If you work with for example the PTK, Kosovo Telecommunications—PTK is the post office—they receive a lot of money. For example, comparing KPS to some of them, a security guard receives three times more than a KPS officer.*

BOUTELLIS: It is a government institution?

HAMITI: *Yes, in fact that institution belonged to the Kosovo Trust Agency that was functioning under the United Nations. They were controlling all public companies. They were under the Kosovo Trust Agency.*

BOUTELLIS: Another area of interest is the issue of politicization. Are there any concerns about the potential politicization of the Kosovo police?

HAMITI: *I don't know, really, because the influence of politicians immediately after the war was very high, but I shouldn't say that, because if I don't have proof—I don't know, but most of the systems in the war have influence in their own police;*

maybe they have as well here, but I'm not aware of any specific case to mention. But because the KPS officers—in the beginning, I think they were hired in two, three different—. First, they were hired if they were KLA [Kosovo Liberation Army] soldiers. Then secondly, UNMIK police decided for them. Third, then maybe the other groups. Finally, it was kind of chance within the KPS to create a different vision, a different group with a different vision because they were hired from different authorities. So immediately after the war were KLA. Then was UNMIK police, then KPS officers itself; they were hiring their colleagues. It can be something, but I cannot be sure of anything.

BOUTELLIS: One of the important issues is the transition. So far, the transition to the KPS authority has been all police stations, all regional command except Mitrovica.

HAMITI: Yes.

BOUTELLIS: One pillar, the administrative pillar has been transitioned. How is this transition happening and what is the perception within the KPS or KP now of the way that things are progressively handed over to them?

HAMITI: *For sure, the KPS wanted at the same time to take over everything because they were thinking they were ready to take over everything. My personal opinion is, we still need an international presence here, because there is still room for improvements. Some of the stations were transitioned a year or two before the others. In Mitrovica regional headquarters, you still have international regional commander, even his deputy regional commander is an international police officer. You have some other units like in North Mitrovica, probably even the north station, as far as I know, until late wasn't transitioned. Then the station commander in North Mitrovica, the police station, is a guy that initially, I think he tried to do the best. He was cooperating closely until Independence Day, I think.*

BOUTELLIS: When you say there are still areas of improvements now at the stage we are at, what are the major challenges and maybe the priorities for the KP? Where are the—?

HAMITI: *Any field they need improvement: forensics, investigations, financially as well. They need to be not just KPS, but all over the world police are improving. Just because Kosovo is a young police service—of course the Kosovo Police is a very young service, with eight years experience, or ten, or two years being independent, or still not completely independent—it is very hard to say how much. But in many fields I would consider they need improvement.*

BOUTELLIS: Are there some priority areas, things that you think are essential for success?

HAMITI: *Maybe I would say organized crime fighting and operating with equipment. For example, as far as I know a lot of things need to be sent to other European countries for examination, because we don't have proper tools.*

BOUTELLIS: Is that in forensics?

HAMITI: *Yes, in forensics they still send things for DNA and other stuff; I think still they send outside Kosovo to examine.*

BOUTELLIS: When you say fight against organized crime, what type of issues?

HAMITI: *Everything, organized crime, everything, smuggling, economical crimes.*

BOUTELLIS: We started touching on the issue of Mitrovica, and maybe the main change in the police with the Declaration of Independence has been the issues that took place in Mitrovica. What are the conditions there, both on the political level, social, economic conditions that have made the job of the police more difficult.

HAMITI: *Of course, being honest, if you're talking about the Serbian side, of course the UN wasn't able to prevent the influence of Serbia even into the KPS and the Serbian minority in Kosovo. So that is the main point: that the UN for some reason wasn't ready, even after eight or ten years to establish having Kosovo number plates, because still in North Mitrovica and other areas, some Serbian villages, enclaves, they don't have Kosovo number plates. And Kosovo number plates don't say it is Albanian or Serbian; it is a Kosovo number plate. The UN or whoever was in charge, I think they failed to implement the law because they were taking so unseriously the issues. They wanted just to calm down the situation but not to move ahead. This is one of the consequences that now Kosovo police, international police, international presence is facing with them.*

They let them have elections. Belgrade had influence. Of course you have the KPS officers that are paid by Serbia, and there are no measures taken against them, so they are receiving two pays. They don't fall under—they are Kosovo police, but as far as I know they declared that they don't fall under the Kosovo Police Service. Most of these issues were in the media and were openly talked about. Since the Declaration of Independence they have resigned from duty. For some time they were suspended with pay and then without pay, but they are still, I think, members of the Kosovo Police. Our police and even the police commissioner and the Kosovo prime minister, president, they were giving them a chance; they still give them a chance to come back to the new reality, which is, join the Kosovo Police Service and join Kosovo institutions.

BOUTELLIS: There are approximately 700 out of 7,000 KP officers that are Serbian-ethnic.

HAMITI: *About 10% of them are—and they used to work together with the KPS officers even in the main headquarters.*

BOUTELLIS: How many have returned to work now?

HAMITI: *I don't know, I don't know about statistics.*

BOUTELLIS: Aside from North Mitrovica, were there some—perhaps in headquarters—some Serbian ethnic officers who were at higher ranks—?

HAMITI: *I don't know. When I came here—I cannot deal with statistics because I'm not in charge. I mostly do administrative and translation, so I'm not a guy who can tell you more about this.*

BOUTELLIS: Now looking at the Kosovo Police as a whole, are they—in the work of the international community, whether it be the UN or OSCE—are there particular programs, innovations or experiments that you know about that you think merit attention, things that have been tried?

HAMITI: *No, I think unless you are not giving them completely authority you cannot know what improvement is going to happen. Until everything goes through the police commissione—and as far as I know, of course they were given a chance to show themselves, but they were shown very successful in some fields. Like you have a first intervention team, which is very well trained and equipped. You have motorbike police, you have bike police. You have border patrol units as well.*

BOUTELLIS: You mean motor bikes and bicycles?

HAMITI: *Yes both of them.*

BOUTELLIS: And border police.

HAMITI: *Yes, but about exactly KPS issues, you can ask people who can give you exact details because I am not the guy who can give you anything I have translated or something.*

BOUTELLIS: Now for the last section—we've talked mostly about the Kosovo police; now I'd like to look at the UN and the international community. You are a Kosovar but you work for UNMIK so you've been working for seven years for the UN. What are maybe—we already started touching on some of these issues, but what are some two or three changes, maybe, in the way the UN does things, in terms of policies or management that could be changed and could make the job of the UN more effective?

HAMITI: *The more I can talk about the police department, because I have worked with the police.*

BOUTELLIS: From your experience.

HAMITI: *Yes, from my experience I would prefer the UN to have its own policy of training, because if they send a police officer from one country that is using a completely different method or different way of acting as the police, I think they should have special trained candidates who are certified for that special field. As I told you at the beginning, here it was a non-ranking mission. I would say that the guy who was very experienced, he was under the command of a guy who was just a simple officer or sergeant, because he was before in the mission. He at least had more experience with the way that things were happening, but not the way that things should happen.*

I would say that my suggestion would be, for example, to send police officers that are trained for that field and not to make him change or let him change anytime he wants to change his position. Then he is just training himself, he doesn't train any police force or any other country.

BOUTELLIS: Are there some mistakes that you've observed in the way that international organizations like the UN make in relationship with the host country personnel or politics of the country?

HAMITI: *I don't know. I think at the beginning I used to work as a journalist—I'm talking about before the war—as a journalist. Then what I didn't like, when you employ with the UN and you're being granted a grade level, because you are paid according to your level and working experience or something. For example, if I worked as a journalist for two years they did not take into consideration my working experience, but if a person worked for one week or two days with any document he translated for refugees somewhere in Macedonia or in Albania or somewhere and he is issued a small certificate of proof, it was taken into consideration. But mine wasn't taken. I had a boutique clothes shop, which was at least working experience. I was a journalist, which helps you to deal with people, and I still had the lowest grade level, because they never took that into consideration but they took something else.*

BOUTELLIS: Can you tell me some about what we call 'home-grown success'? Of course, the role of the international community, the UN police, and so on, has been very important because they had executive mandate—they had the mandate of building the Kosovo Police Service—but do you know of some home-grown success either with the police or in broader Kosovo? Things that maybe come from suggestions of the Kosovars?

HAMITI: *I think if you want rule of law in one place—if you're implementing the rule of law in one place, you should treat all of them equally. Here the UN many times tried to make positive discrimination, but according to me they did negative discrimination. I told you at the beginning, if they were treating people not as a minority or majority it would be much more successful. We're coming back again to having parallel institutions. If you're not having authority to control this, that means you're not controlling your territory. The UN can decide anything on the north side of Mitrovica. The court is closed. The district court is very, very important for the justice in Kosovo, but people do not have access to the court. They have restricted access to Albanian doctors in the regional hospital in Mitrovica. All Albanians that are living in the Mitrovica region must come to Priština; they don't have access to Mitrovica.*

So that means that somehow they most probably were trying to do a positive discrimination, but they did a negative discrimination because they were begging them to implement UN law. As you know, until Kosovo became an independent state the UN was executive authority in Kosovo. They were doing—I paid a ticket during 2000, I paid a ticket for not possessing a numbered plate. I'm saving that. Just because you know where to get the number plates, because only Priština was issuing. I have a ticket that was issued by an Argentine police officer, CIVPOL, and you still see people hanging around with numbered plates. Especially what I don't like, the UN let people driving with old number plates PR through Priština or somewhere. They don't stop because that's kind of provocation to the public if you're driving with an illegal number plate. There is something behind that.

I haven't seen UNMIK police doing something or the international community doing something, because that reflects negatively even to a citizen, because I'm discriminated. If I have to pay taxes, if I have to have numbered plates and the other one can go wherever he wants without numbered plates or with illegal numbered plates, that is discrimination. I think for the next mission or whoever is going to have the opportunity to deal with the UN administration, I think they should try to be equal or not try to implement anything.

BOUTELLIS: Hold everyone to the same standards.

HAMITI: *Yes, to the same standards. Here still after nine years they do whatever they want. I'm not saying "they" because I'm Albanian and they are Serbs, but they are doing. You have a case where they were smuggling fuel, for example. Customs. The UN couldn't prevent smuggling on the north side of Mitrovica. One liter of fuel on the north side of Mitrovica is 95 cents or 97; on our side it is 1 Euro 30. So it means that there is a big difference. People are here suffering for money, and it is a big amount of money. It is discrimination that irritates people, because the UN is not equal to them. Of course you are thankful to the United Nations' international presence in Kosovo, but we are talking about negative points as well, or something that can be improved in the future. I'm talking as a member of the UN, so if I have a chance these are my suggestions.*

BOUTELLIS: One last question, maybe. The UN is drawing down, and there will be a transition to EU with EULEX, at least on the police side, with a lighter monitoring mandate, and eventually the KP, the Kosovo police force will stand on its feet. What do you think will be the biggest challenges the police force will face when the UN and the international community in general withdraw?

HAMITI: *I don't know, because I think the security situation in general in Kosovo is good, besides the north part of Mitrovica. In general you can go anywhere you want, even the villages inhabited by Serbs. We can go together, we can see them. But the problem is, maybe they will face because the international community is putting pressure on our KPS officers to respect the minorities. As you know, our government did a lot. Our government—I'm not talking as an Albanian, but our Kosovo government reserved 20 seats for them. This is UN-decided but they agreed upon. They wanted to have a flag without any national color or something. They wanted to have an anthem without a text. So that means that we have done everything to offer them a place. But the KPS for sure will face a problem if the international community is not going to convince the KP officers from Serbian nationality that they belong to Kosovo and they should be under the order and command of the main headquarters. No matter if it is a Serbian, Albanian or other, Turks or whatever, then we have to convince them. They have to realize that the only way to address the issue is Priština, not Belgrade. I'm talking about KP officers.*

Then the biggest problem they're going to face is not going to be the multi-ethnic conflict between KP, but will be the Belgrade influence, and if so Kosovo always is going to face a problem unless we're not rushing to do something to integrate Kosovo and Belgrade as a package in the European Union.

BOUTELLIS: Do you have any final comments?

HAMITI: *Not any comments. It was my pleasure to work for the UN. I have done my best, and I hope I'll have another chance, or we as the United Nations have shown very positive results. We have tried to do our best; we have cooperated closely with the international community. Of course with the locals as well. So I wish all the best, and I hope for the next mission they will improve everything.*

BOUTELLIS: Well, Faton, thank you very much.

HAMITI: *My pleasure.*