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# A European Balkans?

## Working Paper No. 18 of the European Security Forum

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# Chairman's Summing up

## François Heisbourg\*

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The Chairman recalled the reasons for holding this particular session. On the one hand, at the Thessaloniki meeting of the European Council (June 2003), the prospect was laid out of the Balkans being included, over time, within the European Union; hence, the title of the session. How that vision is to be fulfilled is obviously very much open to question, which is indeed one of reasons underlying the work of the new International Commission on the Balkans chaired by former Italian Prime Minister Giuliano Amato. On the other hand, short-term events are going to put the Balkans at the centre of European concerns over the coming months in the run-up to the final status discussions in mid-2005: the Macedonian referendum in early November, the deployment of European Union forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina (operation Altea) in December and the rising expectations of Kosovar Albanians following the October 2004 elections. To introduce the session three papers were presented.

The European perspective was laid out by Jacques Rupnik, Research Director at CERI in Paris. In his oral presentation, he emphasised that 'Serbian questions' were pivotal in the region, rather than Kosovo *per se* (which is emphasised in the two other papers) and that there is a need to move from a failed project (that of a 'Greater Serbia') to the adaptation of a smaller Serbia in the region. He stated his fear that the 'Biarritz assumption' that the region was moving towards the European Union was not actually proving to be correct, except with regard to Croatia. The traditional EU approach to enlargement was not relevant, given the weakness of the states and the uncertainties regarding statehood in the region. Therefore, a broad regional approach was necessary, including some form of EU trusteeship. He concluded by stating that the credibility of the European Union was very much at stake on the resolution of this issue: if it did not succeed in the Balkans, how could it succeed elsewhere? Furthermore, the EU was going to be largely on its own, with the United States currently focussing on other priorities.

Boris Shmelev, Deputy Director of IMEPI IRAS in Moscow, stressed the centrality of the Kosovo issue and the need for a quick settlement (points also made in the paper by Daniel Serwer, Director of Peace and Stability Operations and its Balkans Initiative at the US Peace Institute). His basic formula involves the partition of Kosovo, with the Serbian part going to Serbia and the Albanian part remaining under American and European military stewardship in order to avoid the risk of a 'Greater Albania' being formed, which he saw as an inevitable consequence of independence – with new Balkan conflicts or even a clash of civilisations occurring as a result. He restated the view that the independence of Kosovo would create an unacceptable precedent for Russia with regard to Chechnya, but also to its Transcaucasian neighbours (e.g. the Abkhazian or South Ossetian issues).

In the absence of Mr Serwer, Dana Allin of the International Institute for Strategic Studies confirmed that the Balkans and Kosovo would not be a priority issue for the US. Even former US Ambassador to the UN Richard Holbrooke would have other things to deal with. While emphasising the need for final status (given that "Kosovo Won't Wait", to use the title of Mr

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Serwer's contribution), Mr Allin rejected partition as an outcome, although the risk of partition could serve as a tool of leverage *vis-à-vis* the Albanian Kosovar politicians.

In opening the floor for debate, the Chairman highlighted a few points and questions:

- The EU would have to exercise leadership.
- 'High noon' is approaching in Kosovo, against the backdrop of the failure of the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).
- Independence is inevitable.
- The EU would have to become more deeply involved, while also holding all parts of the ring, in order to ensure coherence of the international community's actions in Belgrade, Pristina, Skopje, Podgorica and Sarajevo.
- Does Kosovar independence necessarily create a precedent for Russia? After all, the independence of East Pakistan/Bangladesh or the independence of former French metropolitan territory in Algeria (with the removal of more than 1 million inhabitants of European origin) did not, in their time, lead to separatism elsewhere. Isn't there a risk of this Russian insistence becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy? Would partition not be both a more difficult solution (e.g. the India-Pakistan partition of 1947) and one more likely to set a precedent?

A prominent NGO representative agreed that independence was inevitable, considering that there was little support for a Greater Albania. Nevertheless, the Serbian enclaves in Kosovo had to be protected by the Western forces indefinitely if necessary, even if this means creating many 'West Berlins'. He underscored, as did many others in the discussion that followed, the negative consequences of the EU's visa restrictions. Another participant underlined the difficulties of 'fuzzy states' in moving towards EU membership: the future prospects of Kosovo, Bosnia and Montenegro had to be set out clearly.

An EU official qualified Mr Rupnik's 'Biarritz assumption': it never was going to be "10 years to the EU". He noted that Europeanisation of the 'protectorate' in Bosnia was happening, as probably would in Kosovo as well. He strongly stressed the importance of keeping the Thessaloniki perspective open and not making the Balkans hostage to the notion that after Croatia, further EU membership would have to be put to referendum in this or that member state. He confirmed that EU ministers are not always aware of the future scale of engagement necessary in the Balkans.

A Russian participant questioned the nature of Russia's interests in the Balkans, now that Moscow has withdrawn its troops from the region.

A former US official reminded us that there were a number of territories with a 'fuzzy' status in the world, with places as different as Northern Cyprus, Taiwan, Puerto Rico or the West Bank. He concurred with the view that the US would leave the problems of the Balkans largely to the EU (while still keeping some US troops there): in effect, back to initial position of the 1991 Bush administration.

A question was also raised about the consequences of having a non-EU Western Balkans as an 'enclave' in the EU once Bulgaria and Romania are member states. A participant from an EU-accession country made the point that this in itself would benefit the non-members, if only by making the case that membership is possible – after all, what did Bulgaria look like 15 years ago?

In responding to these and other comments and queries, the panel expressed a diversity of views. Mr Shmelev stressed that the partition of Kosovo would not constitute a precedent by virtue of the balance of forces in Chechnya. Although he did not state a specific Russian policy towards the Balkans – Russia has in effect sought good generic relations notably in economic terms – he expressed the worry existing in Moscow about the possibility of NATO bases in the Balkans as a result of moves towards NATO membership.

Mr Allin expressed distress at the manner in which UNMIK's problem could be used by UN-bashers in the US. He strongly supported the point that the movement of people had to be encouraged and that the EU's visa regime was a cause of the "claustrophobia of the ex-Yugoslav Republics", which is not good for anyone.

Mr Rupnik put forward the hope that we had moved beyond balance-of-power politics. He emphasised the point that time was playing against us, not for us. On the question of NATO, he made the point that the Muslim population in the region often trusted the Americans more than the Europeans. He agreed with the suggestion of a CEPS representative that a regional EU–post-Yugoslavian treaty be negotiated covering the Western Balkans, which is well worth exploring.

Conversely, he rejected the Cyprus analogy, which he viewed as an "anti-model"; the many 'West Berlins' in Kosovo would look too much like Cyprus between 1964 and 1974; further, the Kosovar Albanians need to understand that respecting the rights of the Serbs is not something that has to be done simply because we impose it, but because this is a basic condition for someday joining the EU. Similarly, the EU should be telling Belgrade that its message of refusal of the Kosovar institutions is unacceptable.

# Europe's Challenges in the Balkans

## A European Perspective

Jacques Rupnik\*

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**M**ore than five years after NATO's intervention in Kosovo and four years after the fall of the regime of former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic (considered as the prime – though by no means exclusive – source of instability and war), the situation in the Balkans as seen from Brussels tends to be described under the headings of 'stabilisation', 'democratisation' and 'Europeanisation'. In the first half of the 1990s, Bosnia revealed the failures of a common foreign and security policy (CFSP) in the Balkans. But more than a decade after Kosovo lost its autonomy, could the region become the catalyst for a coherent approach by the European Union and a European security and defence policy (ESDP)?

Such a reading of the situation is backed by the growing 'Europeanisation' of the protectorates: EU member states are taking over the NATO-led international Stabilisation Force (SFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, thus playing the lead role in Kosovo's peace-keeping. It is also backed by rapprochement from the EU, as evidenced by the European Commission giving the go-ahead to the finalisation of the accession process with Bulgaria and Romania and recommending the opening of membership negotiations with Turkey. Croatia has already been accepted as an accession candidate and Macedonia is hoping to gain that status soon. Hence the impression that the two-pronged EU policy in the Balkans is well on track and its success all the more plausible given that the levels of potential instability remain low and there are no significant policy differences with the US. Europe had displayed its divisions and the absence of any CFSP worth talking about over Iraq, and intends to redeem itself in the Balkans.

This reassuring picture makes sense only to the extent that it can reveal Europe's responsibilities and opportunities in the Balkans. It would definitely be counter-productive, however, if it encouraged complacency and minimised the risks. The aim of this paper is to stress the latter (not to be unduly alarmist), because:

- The somewhat complacent picture presented above goes hand in hand with the marginalisation of the Balkans among the EU's priorities. While the US is focussed on the 'war on terror' and the Greater Middle East, the EU is trying to put its own house in order after its recent enlargement with 10 new member states and attempts to adopt a new Constitution. A new Commission is likely to concentrate on the major challenges of negotiating a new budget and revising existing policies rather than think about strategic priorities.
- The interpretation of trends in the Balkans rests on some doubtful assumptions and a number of blind spots, which if not addressed, could bring the Balkans back to the fore of the EU's agenda sooner than desired.
- Some of the EU policies on offer to tackle the 'unfinished business' of a convalescent region are inadequate.

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## **The Biarritz scenario questioned**

In the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Milosevic regime four years ago, his successor in Belgrade was hastily invited to the EU's summit at Biarritz. This symbolic message to the Serbs and to the region was certainly laudable: after a decade of wars and merely a year after military intervention, the EU welcomed a new Serbia as key to its policy on the Balkans. The underlying assumption was that radical ethno-nationalism in the region had been defeated and that moderates and democrats were embarking on delayed democratic reforms induced by the prospect of a future in the EU. The other assumption was that moderate nationalists could provide a soft landing for exhausted or failed nationalist projects and that signals from the EU would do the rest. Both assumptions are in need of a serious rethink today.

The problem with the first assumption is that it has worked in Croatia, but not in Serbia. It can be argued that the government of Croatian President Ivo Sanader, leader of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) after the late President Franjo Tudjman, is the perfect illustration of the strategy: nationalist authoritarians have been tamed and made Euro-compatible through a plausible prospect of EU accession. Unfortunately, however, it has not worked where it mattered most – in Serbia, under the government of Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica. The triumph of the ultra-nationalist Radical party, led from The Hague by an indicted war criminal (winning 27.5% of the vote) in the December 2003 elections and the subsequent formation of a Kostunica government with the tacit backing of the radicals and the post-Milosevic socialists showed the shallowness of the Biarritz assumptions.

'Welcome back to Europe' was the right signal for the EU to send. But the unconditional nature of the welcome did not help to confront Serbian responsibilities for the war and thus the need for a break with the legacy of Mr Milosevic in terms of ideology, policies and the involvement of the state with organised crime. There was clearly no EU incentive for Kostunica's government to tackle some of the most difficult issues after a decade of lost wars. The often-repeated argument that nothing must be done to undermine the democratic transition in Belgrade has meant that Montenegro, led by President Milo Djukanovic, has been demoted to the status of an unruly tobacco-trafficking base and that Kosovo's status issue has remained taboo. The results of this strategy are apparent – the Croatian scenario is not working in Serbia because of the absence of effective conditionality and the window of opportunity to confront the most difficult issues of post-Yugoslavia (Kosovo and Montenegro) has been missed. Hence questions arise as to whether we are really sure that the scenario of stabilisation-transition-integration is at work or whether there are risks of resurgent nationalism in the region? These questions concern not only Serbia but also Kosovo, as the violent anti-Serb riots in March 2004 demonstrated, as well as Macedonia, where a precarious constitutional compromise between opposing nationalist agendas still holds and Bosnia-Herzegovina, where a new constitutional compromise is needed.

## **Inadequacies of the EU approach to the unfinished business in the Balkans**

The good news is that the Western Balkans will now be managed in the EU under the Directorate-General for Enlargement. That is the clearest message Brussels is sending to the region. The bad news is that the traditional concept of enlargement is inadequate for the Western Balkans. Why? Because the countries that need EU integration most are also the least ready for it.

The classic mode of enlargement that worked for southern Europe after Spain's General Francisco Franco and former Prime Minister Antonio De Oliveira Salazar, the colonels in Greece and the often-successful inclusion of Central European countries is not likely to fit the situation in the Western Balkans. There is a fragility in the democratic transitions (not yet consolidation) to contend with, along with economic backwardness (the gap with Central Europe is growing, not narrowing) and the legacies of war (the hold established by organised crime over the state institutions). Most importantly, there is the key condition of statehood that remains the main obstacle. The consensus over the territorial framework of the state is not only a pre-condition for democratic transition, but also for EU integration. The EU can only integrate functioning and legitimate states. Few in the Balkans pass that first hurdle. Bosnia-Herzegovina is a would-be state in search of an identity, Kosovo a de facto state in search of recognition and Montenegro is a micro-state in the making. The common denominator for the region is the uncertainty about the contours of the Serbian state. The drive for a 'Greater Serbia' has failed; the priority now is the process of defining a smaller Serbia with obvious implications for all its neighbours.

Since it is unlikely that functioning state institutions can be built that are compatible with the EU's concept of a shared rule of law if it is uncertain what state is being built, the EU may have to confront its involvement in state-building in the Balkans even more explicitly. This applies to the union of Serbia and Montenegro brokered by the EU (with the referendum on its existence planned in 2006), the issue of Kosovo's final status due to be addressed under particularly difficult circumstances in 2005 and the constitutional and political viability of Macedonia and Bosnia. All these issues entail seeking major concessions from mutually incompatible nationalist agendas. The only way to obtain them is to offer something more important to all the protagonists – and that can only be the prospect of EU membership. Given that the conditions for classic enlargement are unlikely to be met in the short or medium term for the reasons previously mentioned and that statehood issues will not wait, it may be relevant to consider other options, such as providing a common EU architecture for the post-Yugoslavia settlement in the Western Balkans.

In the distant past, that common architecture used to be provided by the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires, and more recently by that of former Yugoslavia. Now the common roof for belated state-building can only be provided by the EU. For the local protagonists this implies thinking differently and abandoning 19<sup>th</sup> century definitions of independence and sovereignty. For the EU this would require accepting its role as a substitute for an empire. Special membership or European 'trusteeship' for the region would be an attempt to reconcile the specific nature of the unfinished business of the post-war Balkans and the invention of a different pattern of EU integration. In conclusion, the Balkans are a test case of EU credibility in matters of security, particularly *vis-à-vis* its transatlantic relations.



# **Kosovo Won't Wait**

## **An American Perspective**

**Daniel Serwer\***

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**W**hile the Balkans will present democratisation and development challenges for the next 10 years, the past five have seen the resolution of almost all the war and peace issues that plagued the region in the 1990s. There is only one serious threat to stability in the Balkans today: the unsettled status of Kosovo. This issue is the one that must be settled if the region as a whole is to proceed expeditiously towards its European destination.

Serbia after former President Slobodan Milosevic has given up the threat of force to regain control over Kosovo, but the majority Albanian population there still fears Serbian intentions. Discontent is growing. Uncertainty over status, an inept UN administration (the UN Mission in Kosovo or UNMIK), concern about Belgrade's efforts to partition Kosovo, determination on the part of Albanian extremists to ethnically cleanse the minority population and economic crisis are combining to generate a predictable rebellion, which was previewed with the March ethnic riots. The June election of Boris Tadic as Serbia's President (over an extreme nationalist opponent) reduced the risk of an early crisis, but the handwriting is on the wall.

This situation presents the international community with a quandary. A crisis in Kosovo is predictable, but that does not mean that the political will to prevent it can be generated in advance. The war on terror and post-war Iraq are distracting the US. The EU has been preoccupied with writing a constitution and expanding its membership. The mistreatment of Serbs in Kosovo after the NATO-Yugoslavian war has greatly reduced international sympathy for Albanian aspirations. The international community has imposed on the Kosovars a policy of 'standards before status', which requires them to show progress towards democratisation before the international community will embark on deciding status.

Thus here we sit, waiting for a crisis we know is coming but unable to move on deciding Kosovo's status because of its failure to make progress in the treatment of Serbs and other minorities. Should we move ahead anyway, possibly further undermining any hope of progress on the standards? Or should we stand still, insisting on progress and risking the radicalisation of the Albanian population, and possibly even UNMIK's expulsion?

Kosovo's status will not be decided in a vacuum. Three 'Yugoslav' factors are relevant: the progress of reform in Belgrade, the political situation in Pristina and Serbia's relations with Montenegro. Broader Balkan and global issues also need to be taken into account.

### **Progress of reform in Belgrade**

While the election of Mr Tadic pulled Serbia back from the brink, it will not in itself put Serbia on a clear path. The radicals, whose leader is in The Hague awaiting trial for war crimes, still constitute the largest party in the Serbian parliament and Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica governs only with the support of Mr Milosevic's socialists. Security and judicial sector reforms have stalled (and even in some instances reversed) and Serbia's much-needed

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new constitution is hostage to the political situation. Cooperation with The Hague Tribunal is blocked, at least for the moment. As a result, the US has suspended bilateral aid and the EU is withholding a feasibility study for a Stability and Association Agreement with Serbia and Montenegro.

President Tadic must tread carefully. His formal powers are limited. He needs to manoeuvre the socialists out of the majority and his own democratic party into it, without causing a break-up of the existing governing coalition. He would like to avoid early parliamentary elections, fearing that the radicals might gain. But even if Mr Tadic is successful in reconstructing a majority that includes all the major democratic parties (but not the socialists), he will still have only a fragile base from which to deal with Kosovo, where nationalists both inside and outside the majority will exploit any concessions to Albanian aspirations.

That being said, a democratic regime in Belgrade aiming at entry into the Partnership for Peace (PfP), the Schengen area and eventually NATO and the EU has to consider Kosovo more a burden than an asset. Belgrade has elaborate plans for governing the Kosovar Serbs and the territory they inhabit, but across the entire political spectrum there is no stomach for governing 1.8 million Kosovar Albanians. Tacitly even extreme nationalists in Belgrade have given up Mr Milosevic's hope of either repressing the Albanians or chasing them from Kosovo.

The essence of Belgrade's ambitions in Kosovo today is to preserve the governing authority over the Serbs who live there on territory protected from the majority Albanian population. Despite much talk of municipal decentralisation or the creation of 'entities' (such as those in Bosnia), partition is what the Serbs who care about Kosovo want. The more-nationalist Serbian politicians hope for a substantial number (five or six) of major Serbian enclaves, connected by recognised transportation routes and protected by Belgrade's army and police. The less-nationalist Serbian politicians would either give up all of Kosovo or hope to retain the three northern municipalities, in which the majority of the population was Serbian before the 1999 war.

The likely losers in partition are the Kosovar Serbs. There is little chance of preserving more than one or two Serbian enclaves south of the Ibar, where the majority of the Kosovar Serbs still live, more or less 'integrated' with the Albanian population. Any more than that would render the Kosovo state non-viable. Both Pristina and Belgrade would expect the Kosovar Serbs to move to Serbian-controlled areas, something they have so far chosen not to do, despite current security risks and substantial financial incentives.

Thus, even if Kosovo is partitioned, there is not much to be gained by Serbs in Kosovo, but there is a good deal to be lost by Belgrade by holding on too long. Once Serbia has rid itself of war-criminal indictees, little other than Kosovo stands in the way of rapid progress in Serbia's Euro-Atlantic integration. Belgrade can hope for quick entry into PfP without resolving the Kosovo status issue (assuming it drops its court case against the 1999 NATO bombing), but NATO and the EU will not be interested in Serbian membership so long as Kosovo's status remains unresolved. Neither will want the Kosovo problem inside their structures and both understand that their greatest leverage in resolving the issue is the prospect of membership.

While Albanian mistreatment of Serbs has given Belgrade the moral high ground, an increasingly democratic Serbia has to ask itself how it will deal with Albanian aspirations. In public statements, Belgrade has so far hoped that these could be satisfied with wide autonomy. No one who knows a Kosovar Albanian believes this to be the case.

### **The political situation in Pristina**

The problem as seen from Pristina is that Kosovo has already enjoyed a wide degree of autonomy as a province of Serbia in the late 1970s and 1980s, only to see it abruptly and violently removed by the Milosevic regime in 1989. Up until that point, Albanian aspirations focused on becoming a republic within former Yugoslavia, a seemingly small step since it already had its own parliament and police force as well as representative on the collective presidency. But with the removal of autonomy and repression by the Serbian army and police of both non-violent protests and the subsequent violent insurgency, Kosovar Albanians became convinced that only independence would do. Independence, in Kosovo, adheres to the Weberian definition of sovereignty. It essentially means that Serbia will not legitimately be able to send in its security forces.

Politics in Pristina revolve around the means to achieve independence. The spectrum runs from those who claim Kosovo is already independent and only needs international recognition (Kosovo's President Ibrahim Rugova), to those who think it should declare independence unilaterally (Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj), to those who believe independence should be negotiated with the US and EU (political leader Hashim Thaci and former Prime Minister Bajram Rexhepi). Others think independence can be achieved by violence against the Serbian population and UNMIK. For Albanians, UN-imposed 'standards before status' is an extra requirement that others in the region have not been asked to meet.

While the international community has managed so far to drag the Kosovar Albanians – some kicking and screaming more than others – into the standards process, even before the March rioting there were doubts about how much longer this could continue without fatally undermining the relative moderates who are doing their best to cooperate with the standards process. These doubts had led to the promise of a standards review by the summer of 2005, with the possibility of moving to status negotiations thereafter. The March rioting heightened doubts, especially because the violence was directed not only at the Kosovar Serbs but also at UNMIK (which is highly vulnerable). The six-nation Contact Group is trying to accelerate the process with frequent check-up visits to Pristina and turnover of more authority from UNMIK to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Governance (PISG).

It seems unlikely that significant progress will be made by mid-2005 on the only standard that really stands in the way of movement to a decision on final status: the treatment of Serbs and other minorities. Even with the best political will, Serbian returnees over the next year will number in the thousands rather than tens of thousands, especially since Belgrade is not encouraging Serbs to return anywhere but to enclaves. The best political will does not, however, prevail in Pristina. If a start on final status is made in 2005, it is more likely to be on the basis of the PISG's intentions rather than its achievements.

### **Serbia's relationship with Montenegro**

Serbia's 'union' with Montenegro is not going well, which should be no surprise. The word 'union' is used most often when things are coming apart (the United States became The Union only during the Civil War, Europe became a union when it reached a moment of hesitation in its integration process). As the loosest sort of confederation, the union of Serbia and Montenegro is not functioning well because neither side (but for the moment mainly the Montenegrins) sees much benefit in making it do so. A threat to hold Serbia back from integration with the EU unless the union of Serbia and Montenegro improves is not credible

and has now been dropped: why hold back a country of 7.5 million people vital to European interests in the Balkans because a country of 600,000 is not cooperating?

The problem for the *independentistas* of Montenegro is that they are not sure they have the votes to win an independence referendum that everyone now acknowledges they have the right to hold. Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic would like Serbia to make the first move and is therefore doing his best to convince Belgrade that the union is unworkable and needs to be dissolved. If need be, he can postpone the popular elections for the joint parliament scheduled for next year, thus truly rendering this union non-functional.

Montenegro's independence would not affect Kosovo's legal status, which is governed by UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1244. An independent Montenegro would gladly allow Serbia to be a 'successor state' when it comes to sovereignty of the current union over Kosovo, recognised (*qua* Yugoslavia) in UNSC 1244.

Legality is one thing, politics another. Montenegro's independence (or Serbia's, depending on perspective) would raise serious questions. If Montenegro, whose population speaks Serbian and has a long common history with Serbs, cannot stay in the same state with Serbia, how can Kosovo, whose majority population speaks a language Serbs do not understand and has a separate, parallel history? One of Serbia's main motives for maintaining the union with Montenegro is to avoid a precedent. If this structure dissolves, the independence of Kosovo will become inevitable to many.

Why not, many ask, strengthen the union by bringing Kosovo in as a third republic? The answer is that neither Serbia nor Montenegro would accept the proposition, never mind the Kosovar Albanians. Kosovo would have to enter the union as an equal partner (1.8 million Albanians could not be offered less than 600,000 citizens of Montenegro!). An already struggling union would then become a serious impediment to integration with the EU. 'Thanks, but no thanks' would be the response of both republics.

### **The rest of the world**

Five other places bear on Kosovo's status: first Bosnia and Macedonia, then Chechnya, Tibet and Kurdistan. The problem is how to prevent the determination of Kosovo's final status from destabilising existing states or creating obstacles in the UN Security Council, especially as the latter three bear on interests that permanent Security Council members regard as vital.

In both Bosnia and Macedonia there are extreme nationalists who might like to follow Kosovo's example, whatever it may be. The problem is acute if Kosovo is partitioned, as then Belgrade may look for 'compensation' for its losses by taking over the 'Serbian' part of Bosnia, and Pristina may look for 'compensation' for its losses by taking over the 'Albanian' part of Macedonia. But even if Kosovo's final status involves not partition but creation of Serbian and Albanian 'entities' (i.e. ethnically defined territories), problems arise – in Macedonia because Albanians might ask for equivalent treatment, and in Bosnia because Serbian resistance to the central government (which has been flagging) would revive. The international community should inoculate Bosnia and Macedonia against infection from a Kosovo final-status decision, through a UNSC resolution that guarantees their sovereignty and territorial integrity.

It has been long understood that Chechnya and Tibet present problems for deciding Kosovo's final status, since Russia and China respectively will not want to set a precedent of independence for a province, even one as far away as Kosovo. Kurdistan may also turn out to

be a serious problem. The US is expending enormous political and diplomatic capital to prevent Iraqi Kurdistan from gaining independence. Iraqi Kurds have a claim to independence similar to that of Kosovar Albanians: the Kurds were chased out of their homes *en masse*, they suffered mass slaughter (including the use of chemical weapons), they have developed their own governing institutions, and their language and culture are distinct from that of the Arab majority.

That being said, Turkey has been set against independence for Kurdistan (fearing the aspirations of its own Kurds). So, too, are Iran and Syria. It is the Turks though who count in American eyes, which in any case see the risk of instability without a strong Iraq on Iran's western border. An American president who agrees to final status for Kosovo will want to be sure that it does not set an unacceptable precedent for Kurdistan.

### **So do we go ahead or not?**

The bottom line is this: both in the US and in Europe, there is an increasing conviction that a decision on Kosovo's final status cannot and should not be put off for long. The current uncertainty, as President Branko Crvenkovski of Macedonia points out, is more destabilising than a final status decision. Those closest to the situation on the ground (especially in UNMIK) think it would be best to proceed with final status in 2005, after the review of progress on standards. Others think a decision might be put off until 2006. This could mean a decision on Montenegro first, thus simplifying the equation. Few experts in Washington, Brussels or most European capitals think it would be wise to put off a start to the decision-making past 2006.

Yet none of those capitals is ready. Neither are Belgrade or Pristina.

In Pristina, a great deal will depend on the October elections. If someone from the main Albanian parties becomes prime minister, the international community might postpone a decision to 2006 in order to see progress on the return of Serbians (provided it is reasonably confident that NATO and the UNMIK police can handle any consequent unrest). If, however, someone new – with demonstrated good intentions towards the Kosovo Serbian population – were to become prime minister, there would be an argument for moving ahead in 2005.

In Belgrade, the government is ready with its opening position, which has passed virtually unanimously in a vote of the Serbian parliament: Serbia wants sovereignty over all of Kosovo and governing authority over its Serbs. But the Serbian internal political situation is still unclear. If early parliamentary elections prove necessary, their outcome will be important. The international community will not be prepared to suggest to the Kosovar Albanians that they remain in a state with Serbia if an extreme nationalist were to come to power in Belgrade. A decision in 2005 would then be best. At the same time, if Mr Tadic and the democratic parties gain full control, there will be hesitancy to ask him to grab the third rail of Serbian politics with both hands. In that case, 2006 might be a better idea.

Washington and Brussels are also not well prepared. While many Europeans and Americans are saying that they need to enter a decision-making process on final status in 2005 or 2006, little has been done to become ready. Officials who mumble in private that independence is inevitable (with or without a bit of partition) have not worked out any details or negotiating strategy. Nor do they show the political will to start the process.

This situation needs to change. Washington and Brussels need to decide on both a process and a desired outcome, or at least a range of acceptable outcomes. It is clear from the more or less

abortive Belgrade-Pristina dialogue convened this year by UNMIK that the UN cannot handle final status negotiations. The US and the EU should nominate special envoys, as they did during the 2001 Macedonian crisis, to collaborate in steering the process and ensuring an outcome that falls within an acceptable range.

The US, even if distracted by Iraq, will have to play a vital role in Kosovo. It is more likely to do so if the Democrats win the presidency in November, since former Ambassador to the UN Richard Holbrooke, Senator Joseph Biden and others committed to Kosovo's self-determination would likely return to power. The Republicans have been more inclined to postpone action, concerned about the consequences of a final status decision for Belgrade and reluctant to invest American prestige in non-vital issues left over from the Clinton Administration.

The EU, even if much of it remains at odds with the US on Iraq, will also have to play a vital role. Only a joint US-EU effort will enable Belgrade and Pristina to find and implement a mutually acceptable solution, whatever it may be, and only a mutually acceptable solution will find a welcome reception in the UN Security Council. That will end, after more than a decade of war and strife, any serious threat of instability in the Balkans and open the way to Europe for all its peoples.

# **The Balkans: Powder keg of Europe or Zone of Peace and Stability?**

## **A Russian Perspective**

**Prof. Boris Shmelev\***

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### **1. The Balkan crisis**

The Balkan crisis is a result of serious conflicts in different areas of political, economic and social life in the former Yugoslavia. Relations between the former republics demonstrate the complex character of European security. Without the stable development of all regions it is impossible to guarantee the security across the whole European continent. Europe was shocked by the bloody events that marked the disintegration of former Yugoslavia. Nobody could imagine that such violent military clashes could take place in a European country 50 years after World War II and or that hundreds of thousands of people would seek refuge throughout Europe.

It was evident at the very beginning of the Yugoslavian crisis that the war would go on for many years and result in numerous victims if the international community did not intervene. The United Nations, the European Union and OSCE tried to prevent military clashes between the nations of the former Yugoslavia, but they failed. National elites conducted a policy aimed at creating national states and were supported by influential forces from abroad. To achieve this aim they were ready to pay any price.

### **2. Lagging behind in transformation**

The disintegration of former Yugoslavia in fact meant putting an end to the process that had determined the development of Western Europe from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the time between the two World Wars. It was the start of the nation-states. Having gone through a period of strengthening and then exhausting their potential, the countries and societies of Western Europe began to strive for political and economic integration by gradually merging their common structures. The Balkans were lagging behind in their transformation for many reasons and in contrast to Western and Central Europe they found themselves on a different wave of historical development, accompanied by conflicts and chaos. The collapse of socialism affected the situation, producing new political and economic conflicts. From this point of view, all the efforts of the international and European communities, directed at controlling the situation after the disintegration of former Yugoslavia, had no chance of success.

### **3. Nationalism in the Balkans**

An assessment of the Balkan crisis based on the analysis of historical trends that marked the development of European countries in recent centuries does not eliminate the question of what caused such a bloody break-up of the former Yugoslavian federation. Nor does it eliminate the question of the political and criminal responsibility of the leaders of different national movements there for crimes against humanity. Violent clashes in the region were not only precipitated by national prejudices and the lack of democratic traditions; they were also

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caused by the incompetence and irresponsibility of political leaders who did not manage to achieve a division by peaceful means. With the establishment of The Hague tribunal, both the international and European communities have tried to apportion the appropriate measure of responsibility to them and to treat everyone according to their actions. European countries have made every effort to condemn all forms of nationalism in the region. But it takes a lot of time to liberate the Balkans from nationalism. It is an influential power that has a strong impact on political processes in all the Balkan states and on their interstate relations as well. Until nationalism is eliminated, peace in the region will be fragile.

#### **4. Fragile democracies**

Political processes in all the Balkan countries indicate a strengthening of democracy with the best results achieved in Slovenia. The majority of democratic institutions are unstable but positive trends are evident. These trends are led by the tendency towards European values. Authoritarian regimes in Croatia, Serbia and Albania were done away with under the pressure of such tendencies. The compromise between ethnic communities in Macedonia was achieved not only because of the intervention of the EU and NATO but also because of their understanding of the fact that European expectations for Macedonia are reasonable only in the case of cooperation between them. The example of the regimes of former Albanian President Sali Berisha, former Yugoslavian President Slobodan Milosevic and the late President of Croatia, Franjo Tudjman, show the potential for autocracy in the Balkans. These regimes collapsed with the assistance of Europe and the door was opened for building up democratic institutions. But the elections in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina indicated that strong nationalistic positions have been preserved in the Balkans. It means that the democratic changes that have recently taken place in this area are reversible.

#### **5. Prospects for development**

The prospects for social, economic and political development in the Balkan countries depend on the character of their relationship with the EU and NATO. These countries are small and do not possess the necessary external resources for further evolution. The Balkan market is very limited and fruitful economic cooperation between the countries is impossible now because of the structure of their economies. Successful evolution can be realised by joining powerful economic and political structures such as the EU and NATO. In fact, they have no alternative other than pursuing NATO and EU membership. Any other option would lead to social and economic stagnation and conflict. In the future all the Balkan countries could be envisaged as members of the EU and NATO. Such membership will influence the situation in the region positively, and is very important for strengthening democracy there.

The EU-initiated Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe also plays a positive role. It is the first serious attempt by the international community to replace the previously reactive crisis-intervention policy in south-eastern Europe with a comprehensive, long-term, conflict prevention strategy. The pact enabled the signatories to mobilise additional funds for the region. First of all, the funds were employed for rebuilding the economies of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which were totally ruined during the civil war. Of course the pact cannot solve all the problems in the region, but it is evident that without it the situation in the Balkans would be worse. The pact defines the principles, mechanisms and instruments that will guide the EU in the regulation of its foreign policy and economic relations with the states of south-eastern Europe: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina the former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia, Croatia and former Republic of Yugoslavia. By joining in the pact, the countries



of south-eastern Europe commit themselves to continued democratic and economic reforms, as well as bilateral and regional cooperation among themselves to advance their integration, on an individual basis, into Euro-Atlantic structures.

## 6. The Kosovo problem

Some political actions by the EU and NATO have had negative consequences on stability and security in the region. They have accused the Serbs and Serbian leaders of all sins, although it has been evident that the leaders of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Slovenia, were also to blame for unleashing the civil war in former Yugoslavia. Seeking to eliminate former Yugoslavian President Slobodan Milosevic, NATO countries supported the Kosovar Albanians (or Kosovars) in their struggle for an independent Kosovo. This policy transformed into the aggression of NATO against former Yugoslavia and all the principles of international law were ignored. By trying to undo the Kosovo knot with the use of force, the EU and NATO instead tightened it, making it stronger. The negative effects of such action cannot be overestimated. It strongly affected the democratic forces in Serbia, contributed to the disintegration of former Yugoslavia, and produced tensions in relations between Russia and NATO countries. Thus NATO's aggression did not solve any problems and produced new ones. Serbia lost control over Kosovo, a part of its territory, and the reestablishment of the sovereignty of Serbia over Kosovo is unlikely. The Kosovars transformed Kosovo into an independent state, gradually realising the programme formulated by the Albanian national movement in the late 1980s.

The EU and NATO are not able to block this process. The Kosovo problem is the key element of security in the Balkans. Without its solution it is impossible to achieve stable peace and sustainable development in the region. The secession of Kosovo (and Metohija) would be conducive to the weakening and dismemberment of Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia. It would be the first step on the way to creating a 'Greater Albania'. In geopolitical terms, without its southern province, without its links, pathways or strategic depth, Serbia would become a disempowered and damaged state. This would also mean the loss of vast stretches of cultivated and fertile land along with rich mineral and energy resources.

The secession of Kosovo from Serbia would be further proof that disintegration and fragmentation in the region is not over yet and that it is an ongoing process. It would be a blatant invitation to the Muslims from the Raska District (formerly Sajak) to demand secession from Serbia and Montenegro and to join the Muslim-Croat Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The future of Vojvodina would be questionable.

The loss of this national foothold and historical nucleus of state territory would be an immense and horrible ordeal for the Serbs. They would consider Kosovo only a temporarily occupied territory that, sooner or later, ought to be returned at any cost. Thus, a permanent state of potential armed conflict would prevail between Serbia and a new Greater Albania, which could turn into war at any time. Taking into account all the consequences of a secession of Kosovo and Metohija for Serbia, the reaction of Serbs is understandable as they consider secession to be a national disaster.

In secession were to occur, Serbs would probably seek compensation across the river Drina, in the post-Dayton Bosnia-Herzegovina. If Albanians were allowed to unite, why should the same right not be granted to the Serbs and Croats? Consequently, the Bosnian Serbs from the Republic of Srpska would immediately try to unite with their homeland and the Croats from the so-called 'Herzeg-Bosna' would follow suit. This would step up the process of

disintegration of the post-Dayton Bosnia-Herzegovina, with a possibility of another religious and ethnic bloodbath. Further, Montenegro would also be seriously affected by the loss of Kosovo and Metohija.

A Greater Albania would push Macedonia to the brink of disaster. Although, according to the EU census, Albanians account for 22.9% of the population of Macedonia, they nevertheless claim half of the country's territory. If such encompassing Albanian objectives were to be attained, Macedonia would cease to exist.

The division and dilution of Macedonia would boost the appetite of neighbouring countries for its territories. Any possible seizure of the remaining part of Macedonia by any of its neighbours would probably lead to another Balkan war. Even if the remaining part of Macedonia, incapable of defending itself from any neighbour's attack, decides to join a neighbouring country of its own accord, the situation could still lead to war, because the other Balkan states would rightfully see it as disturbing the balance in the central Balkans.

Apart from the conflicts among the Balkan states, two opposing blocs of Islamic and Orthodox countries could ensue from the formation of a Greater Albania. For all the neighbouring Orthodox countries, a Greater Albania would be the incarnation of an intolerable historical injustice. One may assume that those countries would, sooner or later, forge an Orthodox Balkan alliance against a Greater Albania. This would then force Greater Albania not only to unite forces with Turkey and Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also to call upon the Islamic world to intervene in Balkan affairs. Such trends in the development of the Balkans would influence the radicalisation of Muslims in Europe.

## **7. Partition of Kosovo**

The ethnic clashes that took place in Kosovo in March 2004 showed that the EU and NATO could not attain the principle of interstate equilibrium in the region, which promotes local state and historical identities, as opposed to the concept of ethnic exclusiveness, which implies a drastic redrawing of borders and overwhelming forced migrations. The Albanian community is gradually carrying out its plan of creating of its own independent state in Kosovo, where the Serbian minorities will have no real rights. All efforts for the development of democracy in Kosovo, as stated in the declaration of the UN Security Council's standards, for Kosovo have failed. The situation in Kosovo can be described as a deadlock. The objective of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSC) 1244, which is to secure the strict respect for all the provisions of the Resolution and the related documents (primarily those reaffirming the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the former Republic of Yugoslavia on its entire territory and the international convention on human rights), has not been fulfilled. Only the deployment of international security forces in Kosovo under UN auspices keeps the situation under control. If the international security forces were to withdraw from Kosovo, a war between the Serbs and Kosovars would be inevitable.

To break the deadlock in Kosovo, Serbia should adopt clear new political ideas based on rejecting old stereotypes and an understanding of the current role and significance of Kosovo for Serbs. Could Serbia concentrate its energy on economic and political reforms in order to increase its standard of living or it will continue to pursue the policy of revenge in Kosovo? The future of Serbia will depend upon the answer to that question. But it is evident that the policy of revenge will lead Serbia towards national catastrophe. Forward-thinking Serbian politicians realise this fact and are ready to negotiate with Kosovar leaders to come to a compromise or settlement to the Kosovo problem. The direct dialogue between Belgrade and

Pristina that started in October 2003 in Vienna will take time, but a compromise can be reached with the assistance of the EU and NATO. The settlement of the Kosovo problem cannot be put off in the future. The compromise could be manifested in the division of Kosovo into two parts – Serbian and Albanian. Serbia could renew its sovereignty over the northern part of Kosovo and the other part of Kosovo would remain under the control of the international community, first of all the EU and NATO. Western public opinion is drifting towards the independence of Kosovo and people seem to have forgotten the dramatic consequences of such a decision for the Balkans. Preservation of the status of UN protectorate for the rest of Kosovo would be in the interests of all the Balkan states. In the meantime, Serbia needs real and massive economic and financial assistance to carry out the reforms and to help Serbian refugees build up new communities and opportunities for employment. It can cope with all these problems only with the assistance of the EU. Otherwise, the dramatic economic and social crises that are taking place in Serbia could give rise to a powerful nationalistic movement. This outcome would blow up the peace in the Balkans.

## **8. Russian policy in the region**

The Balkans have been always the scene of struggle between the great powers for their influence in the region in order to serve their own geopolitical interests. The Balkan countries used the rivalry between them for achieving their own goals. But a different situation developed in the 1990s. The great powers, including the new Russia, tried to act together to find a solution to the Balkan crises. They cooperated in the six-nation Contact Group for Former Yugoslavia rather fruitfully and contributed to many decisions aimed at containing the crises. The Russian Federation avoided the temptation to become involved in the struggle for geopolitical influence in the Balkans, despite political forces to the contrary. Such a policy would have meant the dissipation of Russia's political and material resources, confrontation with NATO countries and in the end the isolation of Russia in Europe. Such activity didn't meet the interests of the Russian Federation and therefore it preferred to cooperate with NATO countries and tried to observe the equidistant principle in relations with all nations in the former Yugoslavia, which were at war with each other. This policy was not always pursued, but in general, Russia followed that political line.

In their turn, Western states did not seek to push Russia out the region, understanding that in this case the level of tensions and confrontation would have increased and security in the Balkans and in Europe would have been undermined. NATO countries did not wish to provoke a new version of the cold war over the Balkans. There were many similarities in the approach to the Balkan crises that resulted in cooperation between the parties.

Their cooperation demonstrated the possibilities and limits of interaction between them. If they had common interests, they reached positive results. Russia supported the initiative of the US in the settlement of the Bosnian crisis, which allowed the signing of the Dayton agreements. Russia took part in the fulfilment of them. Cooperation between Russia and the West yielded results, which were transformed into the implementation of the agreements. But differences in opinion over Kosovo led to an aggravation of the crisis. Russia strongly criticised the aggression of NATO against the former Republic of Yugoslavia and tried to stop it. Russia's reaction was motivated by the interests of its own security and those of European security as well. It was evident that crucial questions of European and international security were solved without the UN Security Council, basic principles of international law were ignored and the opinion of Russia was not taken into account. The Rambouillet plan could not be considered as a solid basis for the settlement of Kosovo crisis. In fact, the plan meant

interference in the internal conflict on the side of those forces – Kosovars – who sought to destroy the integrity of the state. It was clear that Russia could not support this state of affairs. The refusal of former Yugoslavian President Milosevic to sign such papers seemed understandable. No leader of a sovereign state could have signed such accords.

The Kosovo crisis produced real preconditions for a new cold war to begin. The confrontation would have had unpredictable consequences for the Balkans and for Europe as well. Therefore, Russia and NATO preferred to negotiate on the principles of settlement of the Kosovo crisis. The negotiations resulted in UNSC Resolution 1244. According to Annex 2 of Resolution 1244, “The international security presence with substantial North Atlantic Treaty Organization participation must be deployed under unified command and control and authorized to establish a safe environment for all people in Kosovo and to facilitate the safe return to their homes of all displaced persons and refugees”.<sup>1</sup> The Resolution also included a point about facilitating a political process designed to determine Kosovo’s future status, taking into account the Rambouillet accords. In that way, the former Republic of Yugoslavia was pressed on the Rambouillet plan, which had previously been rejected by Belgrade. But Resolution 1244, adopted by the Security Council, produced good grounds for cooperation between Russia and NATO in the Balkans and allowed the situation in Kosovo to be kept under control. At the same time, the Resolution did not eliminate the main reasons for the conflict. It only postponed the future settlement of it.

Improvements of the relationship between Russia and NATO and the new positive trends in their cooperation that have taken place lately have had a constructive affect on the situation in the Balkans. NATO and the EU have committed to maintaining stability in the region and Russia has silently accepted the status quo. After the transformations carried out in the former Balkan socialist countries, it is obvious that Russia is no longer the centre of their geopolitical or economic interests. They are oriented towards NATO and the EU, and Russia views such aspirations with understanding. But Russia cannot agree to their attempts to strengthen their own positions in the new geopolitical and economic conditions at the expense of Russia

## **9. Conclusion**

The Balkans are likely to remain the most unstable region in Europe. The possible proclamation of Montenegro’s independence would lead to a new balance of power in the region, further undermining stability in the Balkans. There is only hope for the development of European integration, which would lead the Balkans out of the historical deadlock they find themselves at the moment.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244, S/RES/1244 (1999), adopted 10 June 1999.

# About the European Security Forum

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The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) and the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) joined forces late in the year 2000, to launch a new forum on European security policy in Brussels. The objective of this *European Security Forum* is to bring together senior officials and experts from EU and Euro-Atlantic Partnership countries, including the United States and Russia, to discuss security issues of strategic importance to Europe. The Forum is jointly directed by CEPS and the IISS and is hosted by CEPS in Brussels.

The Forum brings together a select group of personalities from the Brussels institutions (EU, NATO and diplomatic missions), national governments, parliaments, business, media and independent experts. The informal and confidential character of the Forum enables participants to exchange ideas freely.

The aim of the initiative is to think ahead about the strategic security agenda for Europe, treating both its European and transatlantic implications. The topics to be addressed are selected from an open list that includes crisis management, defence capabilities, security concepts, defence industries and institutional developments (including enlargement) of the EU and NATO.

The Forum has about 60 members, who are invited to all meetings and receive current information on the activities of the Forum. This group meets every other month in a closed session to discuss a pre-arranged topic under Chatham House rules. The Forum meetings are presided over by François Heisbourg, Chairman of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy. As a general rule, three short issue papers are commissioned from independent experts for each session presenting EU, US and Russian viewpoints on the topic.

**The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS)** is an independent policy research institute founded in Brussels in 1983, with the aim of producing sound policy research leading to constructive solutions to the challenges facing Europe.

**The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS)**, founded in London in 1958, is the leading international and independent organisation for the study of military strategy, arms control, regional security and conflict resolution.



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