

guarantee that the EU will be able to preserve its international relations priorities based on democratisation, human rights and the social market system. Without such provisions, it is likely that the European 'zone of peace' will be eroded by the same competition currently plaguing other less developed regions. The Europe of tomorrow does not have to be the Europe of 1914.

Another European Cross-Road? Kosovo on the Brink of Recognition and Chaos

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The current situation facing Kosovo is the result of a long historic process which essentially began several hundred years ago. This process accelerated following the break-up of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. While the series of conflicts between Croats, Serbs and Bosniaks resulted in national independence for the six Yugoslav Republics, Kosovo remained an inseparable part of Serbia, despite its strong independence oriented identity. This was to change in the late 1990s when the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was formed and began a low-intensity conflict with Serbia in the hope of wresting authority away from Belgrade. As KLA attacks became more frequent, and negotiations broke down, Serbia responded in the spirit of 1990s Balkan excesses, with a deliberate policy of ethnic cleansing and wanton violence against both KLA targets and the Ethnic Albanian civilian population. As the humanitarian situation deteriorated NATO was prompted to intervene. This intervention went under the name of Operation Allied Force and was designed to end the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo. The problem then (1999) as now was what to do with Kosovo once NATO was in firm control of it. After operations in Kosovo subsided, the UNSC passed Resolution 1244 which retro-actively legitimated NATO military deployments – in what has become known as the 'Zorro Principle' which highlights the morality but illegality of an action – and authorised NATO to deploy peacekeeping forces under the command of 'KFOR.'

The 1999 war, and subsequent administration of Kosovo by NATO and the UN (under UNMIK), did not solve the Kosovo question. Ethnic tensions periodically flared-up (between Kosovar Muslims and Serbs) and until 2007, the future of Kosovo seemed very uncertain. However, in February 2007 Martii Ahtisaari, the former UN Special Envoy to the Kosovo Status Negotiations, prepared a contingency plan for the 'supervised' independence of Kosovo. The

draft-plan was turned over to the Security Council for negotiation. After many intense negotiating sessions, the draft was shelved, owing primarily to Russian intransigence, which will be discussed below.

Despite the intention of Kosovo to declare unilateral independence in 2007, it was postponed by Kosovo Albanian leaders until after the after the 2008 Kosovo Presidential elections. It is interesting that all serious candidates promised a swift declaration of independence.

Just about two weeks after the election of Fatmir Sejdiu to President of Kosovo the declaration of independence was made by members of the Kosovo Assembly meeting on 17 February 2008. The declaration kicked-off a tidal wave of reactions. The declaration was unanimously approved from all 109 members present (eleven deputies from ethnic minorities were absent, including Serbs).

Kosovo as an independent state is currently recognised by only a minority of states, around 30, with more than 40 others openly rejecting recognition, expressing concerns or urging further negotiations.

Other states and secessionists throughout international society take Kosovo as either a positive or negative precedent. Secessionists seem to want to follow the Kosovo model while many states seek to prevent it becoming an international norm, lest the multitude of minority groups striving for independence also declare so unilaterally. The most outspoken opponent of Kosovo's independence (besides Serbia) has been Russia. Russia voted against the Ahtisaari draft in the UN Security Council which was the main reason why the plan was redrafted four times and ultimately shelved. There has not been any indication that Russia's position will change under Dmitry Medvedev. This is the main reason why the Republic of Kosovo has not been recognised by the UN – negotiations over the acceptance would be blocked by Russia. While there are many factors driving Russia's Kosovo position, its fears that Kosovo's recognition may reinvigorate secessionists from Chechnya and lead to its declaration of independence as well. Additionally, there are many other states which fear worsening situations in their territories due to increased demands of minorities to separate and construct their own political entities. For example: Georgia fears the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Spain regarding the Basques, and Cyprus and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, are cases in point. The precedent is not only felt in Europe, many Asian and African states also worry about whether they are now going to come under pressure to be subdivided to meet the aspirations of various ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. India, Indonesia, China serve as good examples of these.

At present, Kosovo is not capable of guaranteeing its own existence. It is heavily reliant on NATO for external and internal security provision and on the EU and UN for economic and political stability. Kosovo may not be able to take security responsibility for itself for a long time, and domestic situation is

extremely volatile. With a population of two million, Kosovo has inherited an angry minority of ethnic Serbs (at least one hundred thousand), which naturally reject independence and seek protection and a return of Serbia. The recognition of Kosovo may cause more long-term troubles than it can possibly solve.

On the other hand, the US, with Britain, France, Italy and Germany, which comprised the bulk of the NATO force deployed, first against Serbia (1999), and then as the military guarantee against renewed hostilities have already recognised the new state. In light of these key recognitions, NATO has pledged to maintain its troop presence in Kosovo indefinitely, even though the UN administration will begin its phased handover of political responsibility to the Kosovar authorities. Many in Kosovo are counting on the EU to fill the administrative gap left by the withdraw of the UN.

Kosovo presents one of the greatest challenges yet to common European policies. Deploying an EU mission to replace the UN administration in Kosovo would require agreement from *all* member states. Cyprus, Greece, Slovakia and Spain, however, are all wary of fallout with their own separatist movements and have publicly pledged not to recognise Kosovo. This is in spite of the fact that the EU has been an integral part of the international effort to build a new future for Kosovo since the 1999 conflict. The EU – its members and institutions, notably the European Commission – play a prominent role in the reconstruction and development of Kosovo. In fact, the EU is by far the single largest donor, providing financial assistance to Kosovo and is at the forefront of the reconstruction effort there.

Finally, despite the heavy international presence in Kosovo and the interests that are at stake, ultimate responsibility for the future of Kosovo lies on Kosovo Albanians themselves. They have been assisted in gaining control of their republic and now must demonstrate that they can maintain the democratic principles the state was founded on. This includes the protection of minority rights for the Serbian population within their frontiers. They also have the responsibility to construct a strong economy, attract foreign investment and generally adhere to the social market system which the EU has encouraged. Under the UN and EU mandates Kosovo's efforts were extensive and they positively contributed to the long-term stability and viability of their state. Irrespective of the international pressures mounting against them, Kosovo is now an independent entity. Hopefully, it will not become another European cross-road, but rather continue on the path to success through deeper democratisation and integration into European political and economic structures.