

# The Int'l Community and Ethnic Nationalism in an Independent Kosovo

Although the International Community is not always timely, effective, and united in its responses to crises in the world, it often does make a good faith effort at improving the lives of at least some people. This has been the case with the Albanian population in Kosovo starting in late 1998 with actions such as the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1199 demanding a ceasefire and the withdrawal of Yugoslav forces that were being used to repress the civilian Albanian population, the positioning of various monitors groups within Kosovo, and the NATO bombing campaign of March-June 1999. It was the signing of the Military Technical Agreement between NATO and the Yugoslav National Army on June 9 that ended the hostilities and that provided for the withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo and the deployment of Kosovo Force (KFOR). This was a period of celebration for Kosovo's Albanian population. It is arguably the case that the IC's good faith effort was also meant to benefit Serb and other minority populations, starting with the deployment of NATO-led KFOR, though the summer of 1999 and March 2004 were periods during which there were serious lapses in security for Serbs. The benefits of this international intervention can also be seen in the civilian component under the direction of the UN Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK), which was established by the UN Security Council Resolution 1244 on June 10, 1999. It was this resolution that gave UNMIK its sweeping mandate of conducting all aspects of civil administration, establishing the sort of democratic institutions needed for self-governance, and creating the basis upon which Kosovo's political status would be resolved sometime in the future. Of course, a lot has changed since the passing of UNSCR 1244, including the Ahtisaari plan and the independence of Kosovo and its recognition by over 50 countries, as well as the replacement of UNMIK by the EU's law-and-order mission, EULEX, whose powers largely deal with policing and the judiciary. The past several weeks have shown the deployment of EULEX to be a hotly contested issue, first by a recalcitrant Belgrade that possessed a variety of concerns, one being that EULEX be status neutral. However, Belgrade eventually accepted a six-point plan with the EU and the UN that would allow the deployment of EULEX in the Serb-dominated areas of Kosovo. This led Prishtina to reject the plan on the grounds

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that it breached Kosovo's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and constitution. Although the government of Kosovo has not accepted the plan, and has responded with a four-point plan of its own, it has achieved a victory of sorts for the ongoing deployment of EULEX and transfer from UNMIK to EULEX will be done only in consultation with Kosovo's sovereign government.

As for the peoples of Prishtina and Mitrovica, the centers of Albanian and Serb nationalist sentiments, it is up to those who are looked upon as leaders within those communities to decide whether to call for demonstrations for or against the deployment or the six-point plan. There have been both in Prishtina and it is likely that there will be more. Serb leaders to the north in Mitrovica are not calling for resistance to the EULEX deployment, though a stroll through the northern portion of that city indicates that nationalist sentiments run high as a sign of the peoples' discontent. Much can be said about the last nine years of nation-building in Kosovo. In some ways UNMIK and the rest of the IC have been successful in improving the physical infrastructure, as well as creating a parliament, courts, and a new legal code. There have been plenty of failures, however. Perhaps the most glaringly disappointment has been the inability to create the conditions for a multiethnic democracy. Instrumental in this regard is an integration of the Albanian and Serb communities that lends itself to a sustainable peace and a multiethnic civil society supportive of democracy. Unfortunately, Serbs who do live in Kosovo are sometimes isolated from their Albanian neighbors in ways that allow Belgrade to support parallel structures in North Mitrovica and the various Serb "enclaves." Although the term "enclave" may no longer be applicable to Gračanica and some of the other communities, given the ability and desire of many Serbs to commute back and forth between home and larger towns and cities, there is still considerable distrust between the peoples that prevents them from living together. Yet there is just so much the International Community can do to overcome this divisiveness and mistrust, for the problem has its roots in ethno-national identities and ideologies that continue to dominant how peo-

ple view themselves and the Other and that have the full support of some political parties. Many Albanians as well as members of the IC focus on interference from Belgrade as the principal obstacle for Serb integration within a society that is predominantly Albanian. They give the impression that Serbs have no good reason, including Belgrade's wishes, to remain disconnected from mainstream Kosovar society. In fact, Serbs are told that the situation for them is much improved. Kosovo Premier Hashim Thaci himself has recently stated that "Kosovo has all the conditions for normal life."

A glance around Mitrovica and Prishtina suggests otherwise, however. If the presence of the state flag of the Republic of Serbia or Milosevic calendars in storefront windows are any indication of how important nationalism is for the people of North Mitrovica; and if the huge photo of Adem Jashari (the KLA's first martyr) that is draped on the Sports Complex, or the Albanian flag flying in greater numbers than the flag of Kosovo are any indication of the importance of nationalism for Albanians in Prishtina and elsewhere in the country; then no one should be surprised by Serb reluctance to become integrated.

These cultural symbols are powerful reminders of Serbhood and Albanianhood, but they are also about both sides believing that their take on what happened is "right," as well as believing they know who is to blame for what happened. It is because of this that many from both groups are unwilling to look inward for their own contribution to their current situation. Unfortunately, all this perpetuates the xenophobia and chauvinism that exists on both sides, which promotes parallel societies and allows Belgrade to have a disruptive influence on the Serb population within Kosovo. At this point those who manufacture Albanian consent, as well as those who are in charge of nation-building from the IC, should partake in a little self-examination given the problems brought on by nationalism and its connection to governmentality. Or, those Kosovars who are being created as certain types of citizen or subject by their own elites should become reflective agents of change. The question that should be asked is, if the Albanian majority, who dominant society and who consequently have more maneuverability than the Serb minority, are unwilling to alter their preoccupation with nationalism and how they use cultural symbols to make visible their nationalism, then why not

accept partition as the solution to the problem of a multiethnic society. Is the IC doing the Albanians any favors by enabling them to stay in a state of denial about who they are and how they are in part to blame for the dysfunctionality found in their country? Perhaps the IC is putting an undue burden

on Thaci's administration and the people of Kosovo by insisting that "there is no democracy without a multiethnic society." It may be far more advantageous to abandon the idea of such a society, which may be doomed to failure given that it is not appreciated by many in either group, than to hold

onto it if the goal is to improve the quality of life of as many Albanians and Serbs as possible. Without widespread and unqualified acceptance of multiethnicity, maybe the best one could hope for is to create the conditions that would give rise to increased quality of life within a partitioned Kosovo.

# EU Should Keep Up Pressure on Belgrade

**Relaxing conditions on integration can only invite lapses in cooperation and stalls in justice process**

We have heard a lot about Serbia's new-found appetite for international justice, and that the European Union should reward its recent efforts, but let's not forget that the man blamed for the worst massacre on European soil since World War Two is still living freely in the Balkans and that his victims still have no justice. Thirteen years after the conflict in the former Yugoslavia ended, former Bosnian Serb president Radovan Karadzic and ex-police chief Stojan Zupljanin were arrested last summer, setting EU chiefs gushing about Serbia's long awaited "full cooperation" with the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, ICTY, and its readiness for EU membership. But Ratko Mladic, the Bosnian Serb military commander charged with orchestrating the 1995 Srebrenica genocide - when nearly 8,000 Bosniaks were carted off for slaughter - continues to evade justice. The ex-Serb leader in Croatia, Goran Hadzic, also remains on the run.

Given the recent arrests, not to mention the seriousness of the charges against Mladic, it is regrettable that European chiefs are looking to relax their strict conditions on movement towards integration just when they are starting to work.

The EU told Serbia last week that pre-membership negotiations remained frozen until there was full cooperation with the ICTY, but it is no secret that most member states actually want movement now. According to one European diplomat, "the vast majority" of EU members support initiating a trade agreement with Serbia before any more arrests are made or full cooperation with the tribunal is achieved.

"We think that the Serbian government has shown some very serious pro-European attitude and approaches recently," he said. "What they have shown to us, European politicians, merits some kind of gesture from the European Union side."

Only The Netherlands and Belgium remain rightfully adamant that justice for the war's monstrous crimes should not be exchanged for morale-boosting trade deals. Dutch foreign minister Maxime Verhagen has stuck admirably to his guns and, it is said, will continue to do so until Mladic is in The Hague. Meanwhile, other EU statesmen and

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their Brussels counterparts seem to have wildly misunderstood what is at stake. We are talking about a genocide that happened just 13 years ago and a supposed perpetrator who has allegedly been enjoying the good life in Serbia ever since.

The ICTY has a photograph of him celebrating a wedding at a Belgrade restaurant in 2002 and media reports suggest he was still receiving a pension from the Bosnian Serb army seven years after Srebrenica. A second United Nations court, the International Court of Justice, ICJ, in The Hague, also ordered Serbia to hand over Mladic to the ICTY in February 2007. That was almost two years ago.



Maxime Verhagen

There can be little doubt that a tough stance on EU progress has helped generate the improvements in Serbia's cooperation with the ICTY we have seen in 2008. Indeed, the evidence suggests that the arrests were more down to Serbia finding the political will to act than actually finding the fugitives themselves; they had been both living right under Belgrade's nose. Zupljanin was arrested in the town of Pancevo, a stone's throw from Belgrade, while Karadzic was finally captured on a bus in Belgrade itself. He had been living a relatively normal life in the city, practicing alternative medicine under a false name, disguised by a long white beard and pony tail.

In his address to the UN Security Council last week, ICTY chief prosecutor Serge Brammertz said that in searching for Mladic and Hadzic, Serbia needed to "overcome shortcomings of the previous management of the civilian intelligence services".

"In particular, their failure to analyze and act upon information obtained in relation to the search for the two fugitives," said Brammertz.

However, despite the failings being attributed to the old establishment, we should resist the temptation of getting ahead of ourselves and seeing last summer's arrests as a political turnaround in Serbia. What's more, the arrest of the fugitives aside, Belgrade lags behind in several other areas, such as providing the tribunal with necessary documentary evidence as well as undergoing wider political reform.

Continuing to apply EU leverage in full is the surest means of seeing Mladic in The Hague. And that is what should be the bloc's ultimate goal, not coming up with creative strategies to skirt around the problem to satisfy Belgrade and Brussels. Proponents of unfreezing the integration process argue that the pro-European government in Serbia will lose support if they do not receive more encouragement from Brussels.

Although not in favor of ratifying any agreement until full tribunal cooperation is achieved, they see opening up trade talks as an effective way to do this. The Democratic Party-led government was elected in May on the back of its promises of European advancement and has repeatedly voiced fears of a nationalist backlash if Europe does not deliver. But this is a deceptive message, long repeated by Serbian governments in the hope that the international community will buckle without it having to cooperate.

"We have been hearing this song [from Serbia], 'you have to help us but we're not going to help ourselves', for over a decade. The policy was used by [late President Slobodan] Milosevic. It's now being used by the post-Milosevic group and the parliament and government aren't producing reforms," said James Lyon of the Democratization Policy Council in Belgrade.

Relaxing EU conditions can only invite lapses in cooperation and stalls in the justice process. The Netherlands' long-term stance shows that the EU could and should prevent this and, in so doing, help bring Mladic to The Hague. It is a worry that other European members do not see it that way.