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# Solutions Proposed by a Greek Think-Tank for the Kosovo Conundrum

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## **Solutions Proposed by a Greek Think-Tank for the Kosovo Conundrum**

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**Summary**

The Greek think-tank, The Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP) was one of the first European institutes to deal with the Kosovo problem. A research project, financed by the Ford Foundation, began in 1995 on conflict prevention in the region involving various Balkan scholars, including Albanians and Serbs.

The author argues that the cleavage between the autonomy that the international community was willing to offer the Kosovar Albanians, and the full independence they demanded, could have been bridged by the ELIAMEP proposal of June, 1998. Evangelos Kofos who was responsible for drafting the proposal, introduced a timeframe that would allow a careful transition from one phase to another with a minimum of friction.

Until recently, American policymakers considered the region a periphery of the Caucasus and the Middle East, both hubs of energy, rather than valuable in and of itself. The eclipse of Russia's regional presence, however, appears to be over and its comeback is spurred by the advantage its position in the energy sector affords it.

It is difficult to foresee the full spectrum of consequences that Kosovar independence will generate. In principle it will create a precedent that will make it impossible for Western states to deny self-determination to other candidates under similar circumstances.

**Keywords**

*Kosovo, Serbia, ELIAMEP, NATO, Southeastern Europe, EU*

The Greek think-tank, *The Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy* (ELIAMEP) was one of the first European institutes to deal with the Kosovo problem. A research project, financed by the Ford Foundation, began in 1995 on conflict prevention in the region involving various Balkan scholars, including Albanians and Serbs. The goal of that study, published in 1998 with the title: *Avoiding Another Balkan War*, was to identify non-violent ways that would prevent conflict and would facilitate a solution in Kosovo. The final phase consisted of disseminating policy proposals based on the conclusions of this study to all interested parties: regional actors, international organizations, representatives of major powers, think tanks and the mass media.

During the presentation of the conclusions of the project on May 1996, Dr. Willem Van Eekelen, former Secretary General of the Western European Union (WEU), U.S. Ambassador Richard Shifter, Special Assistant to the President and Counselor of the Staff of the National Security Council-Washington D.C. and Dr. Harald Bungarten, Head of Press and Media Section of NATO, contributed their own extensive comments on salient points of the project and offered their evaluations. Subsequently on 5-6 September 1996, Albanians and Serbs met in Rhodes to discuss the findings of the ELIAMEP project and the conclusions were published in the *Europäische Rundschau*, No. 3/1997. According to the Conclusions:

“We believe that any solution will have to be the product of negotiations between the two sides, with the aid of an interlocutor who is credible to both sides.

The starting points of any negotiation will be that:

- a. The territorial integrity of the FRY is not under question. Future constitutional arrangements, however, regarding the status of Kosovo and Vojvodina will be at the center of the settlement process.
- b. The Albanian majority of Kosovo is a constituent part of the FRY.
- c. The international community (UN, EU, OSCE, Council of Europe) guarantees the federal character of Yugoslavia, and Kosovo as a constituent part of it.

We believe that a form of an extensive special status ought to be the aim of the negotiations. Towards that end, a) an interim restitution of the autonomous status of Kosovo must go into effect, until the agreement is completed b) international guarantees must be given that will secure the external borders of FRY and exclude the possibility of Kosovo's independence and union with neighboring states c) international aid will be extended to Kosovo for financing bi-communal projects d) the Albanians of Kosovo must agree to participate in future national elections of FRY e) military units must be relocated from urban centers to the borders of FRY f) all paramilitary groups must be disbanded g) the possibility of setting-up a higher juridical body made up of two Albanians and two Serbs, presided by an independent personality chosen by the two, must be explored.

Confidence-building measures:

1. Banning secessionist activities and propaganda.
2. Reopening of the University of Prishtina as a bilingual institution as well as schools of primary and secondary education. (This has already been agreed upon in the August 1996 “Memorandum of Understanding” between Milosevic and Rugova).
3. Establishment of bi-communal mass media.”

In this paper we will attempt to record the various efforts of ELIAMEP to offer

viable solutions to the ever-deepening crisis of Kosovo”.

Kosovo was the first territory to disturb the sleep of Yugoslavia’s leadership. A carry-over of nineteenth century irredentist nationalism (Jelavich, 1977, pp. 224-27), it festered throughout the twentieth century and became the harbinger of Yugoslavia’s dissolution shortly after the death of Joseph Broz Tito (Woodward, 1995, pp. 94-5). The architect of the postwar state of the Southern Slavs, had taken special precautions. Having turned down Kosovo’s demand for Republican status, Tito offered more autonomy, financial aid and recognition to the Albanians. The constitutional amendments of 1968 and 1971 granted Kosovo some of the prerogatives of the Republics and the status of a Socialist Autonomous Province. This process of political decentralization crystallized in the 1974 constitution was pushed through by Tito and his Slovene deputy, Edvard Kardelj. Kosovo, recognized as a constituent element of the Yugoslav federation, was granted the right to fly the Albanian flag and gained policy-making rights. Furthermore, the crash program for economic development gave it priority over other areas (Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina). From 1971-75, 70 per cent of Kosovo’s budget and investments came from federal sources (Pavlowich, 1988, p. 82).

The 1974 constitution granted Kosovo a direct voice at the federal level, principally through representation to federal instruments of government and state and party leaderships. The new constitution diminished Serbian control over Kosovo, and signified a generalized process of decentralization in the federation, bringing about a certain ‘localism’, which soon led to friction. Instead of restraining the centrifugal forces, the ruling Communist party became the carrier of conflicts.

The *League of Communists of Yugoslavia* was divided into ethnic segments but was not democratized. It was the arena of a bitter contest between regional groups professing a communist identity but representing above all regional and ethnic interests. Thus the 1974 constitution laid the institutional ground for the trend of ethnic division which gradually alienated the peoples of Yugoslavia from Yugoslavism. It could be argued that the seventies are especially important in understanding, not only the subsequent break-up of Yugoslavia but also the nature of the Kosovo problem as it stands today.

The acute economic crisis in Yugoslavia of 1980 hit Kosovo hard and unemployment soared. The authorities responded with a massive expansion of education and the promotion of capital-intensive industries which did little to solve the problem. By 1981 Prishtina University had 51,000 students, the highest concentration of young people in any Yugoslav institution. Harsh economic conditions and the grim prospects of job opportunities for students prolonged their university studies and contributed to the formation of an intelligentsia embracing nationalism as an outlet for its discontent. The movement for a Federated Republic of Kosovo as well as ‘pan-Albanism’ attracted widespread grass-root support among students and intellectuals, sparking demonstrations across Kosovo between 1968 and 1979 (Pavlowich, 1982). Whereas class cleavages were acknowledged by the Communist doctrine, ethnic cleavages were deemed the result of state of ‘pseudo-consciousness’ by any Marxist regime. The federal state, therefore, chose to address the problem by throwing more funds into the turbulent province.

It is evident that liberalization, instead of pacifying the Albanians, strengthened their ethnic identity and resolve. It is equally evident that Serb nationalism draws upon this period to allege that the Serbs suffered hardships under Albanian rule. According to the estimates of Serbian Academy of Science and Arts, the extent of emigration varied from 78,000 to 102,000 in the period 1971-81 (Macura, 1982). Ethnic

Albanians would claim that such emigration was due to the harsh economic conditions and the discomfort of the Serbs at the shift of power from the Serbian minority to the Albanian majority.

Tito's death in 1980 ushered in the crisis of Yugoslavia's loss of authority. Ethnic nationalism was on the rise and the Serb variety was revived out of a sense of victimization rooted in medieval history. Tito was accused of deliberately weakening Serbia by removing "Vardar Banovina" and Montenegro from its realm and turning the former into the Socialist Republic of Macedonia, and the latter into the Federated Republic of Montenegro, while Kosovo and Vojvodina were made autonomous provinces.

Kosovo exploded in March and April 1981 bringing about a reversal of fortunes for Kosovo Albanians. Unrest was sparked by students in Pristina, Prizren and Projujevo, protesting over their living conditions. Tensions escalated with Albanians demanding that Kosovo be accorded the status of a Federated Republic; some even calling for union with Albania and the Albanian populated region of Tetovo in the Socialist Republic of Macedonia. The Federal Army used force to establish order. The number of dead varied between 500 to 1000, depending on which side was doing the reporting, but the official number of those convicted for conspiracy and irredentism was 658 and a lesser charges 2000 (Ramet, 1992, p. 196). The event caused much soul-searching in Belgrade over the 1974 reforms. Albania was singled out as the source of irredentism and the lines of communication between Tirana and Pristina were cut.

In the late 1985, the condition of the Serbs in Kosovo began to feature increasingly in the mainstream public opinion of Serbia. Some 200 prominent Belgrade intellectuals petitioned to the Yugoslav and Serbian national assemblies in January 1986 about the plight of their brethren. By 1987, Kosovo had become the cornerstone of Serb nationalism with 60,000 Serbs signing a petition alleging 'genocide' against their kind. Slobodan Milosevic's rise to power in the Serb Communist Party exploited the nationalist tide and put an end to Tito's multiethnic politics (Glenny, 1993, p. 33).

On 28 June 1987, -the 598<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1389 Kosovo battle- Milosevic, addressing a crowd at the 'field of Blackbirds', declared that the Serbs would never be vanquished again raising this national issue to the top of his agenda. By doing so he gained support among such nationalist intellectuals as Dobrice Cosic and created a firm power base to attack the leadership of the *Serbian League of Communists*. His nationalist campaign to bring Kosovo under Serb control and alter its autonomous status granted by the 1974 constitution was a harbinger of future developments (Ramet, 1991, pp. 93-105, 99).

In March 1989, Kosovo lost the authority to pass its own laws and on 5 July 1990, the Serbian parliament assumed full and direct control of the province. Ethnic Albanians reacted to the seizure by boycotting the Serbian take-over and building their own parallel set of political and social institutions. Kosovo's parliament and government refused to be dissolved and went underground. On 7 September 1990, the Kosovo Albanian legislature met in Kacanik and approved a constitution that gave Kosovo republican status within the Yugoslav federation. A year later (26-30 September 1991), Albanians endorsed the Kacanik constitution with a self-styled referendum and on 19 October the legislature met and declared Kosovo a 'sovereign and independent state'. (This state was recognized by Albania on 22 October). On 23 December, Kosovo appealed unsuccessfully to the EU for recognition and by February 1992, Albanian organizations claimed to have a million signatures for a petition to the UN Commission of Human Rights

protesting against the situation in the province, but no action was taken by the Commission.

In May 1992, Albanian Kosovars went to the polls to elect their President and 143 Members of Parliament. While the police prohibited voting in public places, they did not make a serious effort to stop the elections altogether and the turnout was high. Ibrahim Rugova, leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) was elected, his party winning 96 out of the 143 seats (Biberaj, 1993). Tore Bogh, head of the CSCE mission to Kosovo, soon after the expulsion of the organization stated that the only authority recognized by ethnic Albanians in Kosovo was the 'parallel' Rugova government.<sup>1</sup>

The implacable Kosovo problem led to a proposition for the partition of the region and the idea of partition was repeated by the president of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Aleksandar Despic.<sup>2</sup> In his speech to the Academy's annual assembly in July 1996, Despic warned that Kosovo represented the most significant strategic problem for the future of the Serbian nation. According to him, the higher birth rate of ethnic Albanians meant that 'in twenty or thirty years (Serbia will) become a country of two nations with approximately equal numbers of people'. He concluded his speech with a proposal that talks begin 'with those who are insisting on secession of Kosovo, about a peaceful, civilized separation and demarcation in order not to repeat the tragic experiences of recent history' (Maliqi, 1996, p. 14). The shape of peace in Bosnia would also determine the future of Kosovo: If Bosnia were ultimately partitioned between Croats and Serbs, the latter would adopt a similar solution for Kosovo, as part of a Serbian ethnic consolidation. But such a development would require redistributing territory and people, a process that could involve violence.

The Dayton Agreement had profound implications on Kosovo's politics. The lessons drawn from it by many Albanian Kosovars, were the following:

- the territorial spoils of the Bosnian war were validated,
- the international position of former Yugoslavia's external borders stood firm.

Rugova's non-violent appeals to the world community for independence proved to be futile. Adem Demaci, a political dissident of the 1960s who spent many years in prison under the communist regime and subsequently became leader of the *Human Rights Council of Kosovo*, argued that Rugova's policy merely sustained the status quo while the clue to a solution of Kosovo's problem was in negotiations with Belgrade. According to Gasmend Pula, President of the *Kosova Helsinki Committee*, 'Demaci's past and his pronounced personal activism and charisma, includes remaining within the rump Yugoslav federation and despite publicly stated words of great respect for certain Serbian features, provide him also the support of more radical organizations domestically...' (Pula, 1996, pp. 4-5). On the radical side of the political spectrum there were voices calling for violent activism.

August 1996, however, held a pleasant surprise for Kosovo. Milocevic and Rugova, agreed to end the six-year Albanian boycott of schools. If the agreement had materialized, about 300,000 children and teachers would have returned to Kosovo's schools and 12,000 students to the University (Silber, 1996). The *Memorandum of*

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<sup>1</sup> The CSCE mission was expelled from Kosovo by the Serb authorities after the expulsion of the FRY from the organization.

<sup>2</sup> Kristic (1995), is discussed by Islami, H. (1995), pp.3.



*Understanding* between the two men also signified that, albeit unofficially, both leaders recognized each other's authority.<sup>3</sup>

A major impediment to a solution was the reluctance of the two sides to come to the negotiating table on anything but their own terms. The Kosovo Albanians shirked from any bilateral meeting that could be interpreted as an acceptance of the Serbian regime and insisted in international mediation. The Serbian government considered this a domestic dispute and overruled the presence of an international mediator.

The talks could materialize if Milošević, or the President of Serbia, Milan Milutinović, was convinced that a third party in the discussions need not compromise the Serbian position if it was not the representative of a major Western power, but rather a nongovernmental organization from a state in the region. A nongovernmental organization that enjoyed the confidence of both sides could go a long way toward breaking the impasse. The role of the 'San Egidio' community in Rome in facilitating the education agreement of 1996, is an example of how small actors succeed in mediation where great powers fail (Veremis, 1998).

The cleavage between Albanians and Serbs widened in the Spring of 1998 as the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA-UCK) made its entry demanding independence and refusing any communication with the authorities. The KLA shared with Kosovo's President elect, Ibrahim Rugova, a claim to independence, but unlike him, the armed rebels were not willing to wait for the prodigious demographic increase of the Albanians to overtake the Serbs.

If Kosovo was to be partitioned, the future demarcation line drawn by the Serbs would probably circumvent Pristina to include as many Serb monuments and mining areas as possible. The percentages would be settled in the field while NATO and the EU would attempt to discourage the FYROM Albanians from following the Kosovo example. Despite US envoy Richard Holbrooke's dire predictions, Greece was in no danger of being entangled in a Balkan war, but opposed to any anomaly that would destabilize the region. Mr. Gligorov was confronted with difficult decisions concerning the survival of FYROM.

On 13 October 1998, American Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, summoned all NATO foreign ministers to approve the Activation Orders (ACTORDS) that would allow air strikes against Serb targets in Kosovo and elsewhere in Serbia, if President of FRY, Milošević, failed to comply with UN Security Council decision (1199) of withdrawing his forces from the field of battle. Although there is little doubt as to who the West considered the villain in this conflict, there were certain factors that inhibited such a radical undertaking.

First of all, the attack directed against the forces of a sovereign state exercising (albeit in a brutal manner) authority within its territory, would create a problematic international precedent. In the case of Bosnia, the government of that state invited the air strikes, unlike the case in Serbia. The UN Security Council decision no doubt offered legitimacy to the act, but then scores of UN decisions in Cyprus were ignored throughout the past twenty-four years.

The Kosovar Albanians have nurtured a just cause but their leader's peaceful resistance since 1989 when their autonomous status was cancelled, failed to alert Western attention. The KLA introduced tactics which in order occasions were identified

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<sup>3</sup> For the text of the Milošević – Rugova agreement, see ELIAMEP, Kosovo, pp. 40-41.



by Western governments as acts of terrorism and attracted massive Serb reprisals. Even Mr. Holbrooke appeared in a photograph with KLA representatives and by doing so he acknowledged its role in the solution of the Kosovo problem. Unlike the West however, that proposed autonomy for the Albanian Kosovars, President Rugova and the KLA insisted on independence (Caplan, 1998, p. 789).

The 13 October 1998 agreement between Richard Holbrooke and Slobodan Milosevic that averted NATO strikes in Kosovo was yet another reminder to the European onlookers that they had once again remained on the sidelines of Balkan developments (*International Herald Tribune*, 1998, p.1). As with Bosnia, Kosovo sharpened tensions between the US and the EU over security issues and many Europeans felt that the American envoy did not even take the trouble to send them a copy of the agreement with the Serb Leader (The Germans waited for two days before a copy of the accord was obtained through the Embassy of the FRY in Bonn.) To add insult to injury, Mr. Holbrooke failed to attend a meeting of the Contact Group on 15 October, two days after the agreement had been concluded in Belgrade. It was, after all, that group - made up of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Russia and the United States, that had given him his mandate to speak with the Yugoslav President (Cohen, 1998).

With the withdrawal of the Serb forces the KLA predictably made progress in resuming control of Kosovo. By mid-November 1998, approximately one third of the countryside was patrolled and policed by the guerilla forces, which secured passage to travelers or arrested and detained Serbs. The President of the FRY threatened the Albanians with renewed hostilities if movement in Kosovo was not restored according to the provisions of his accord with Holbrooke.

The cleavage between the autonomy that the international community was willing to offer the Kosovar Albanians, and the full independence they demanded, could have been bridged by the ELIAMEP proposal of June, 1998. Evangelos Kofos who was responsible for drafting the proposal, introduced a timeframe that would allow a careful transition from one phase to another with a minimum of friction.<sup>4</sup> The pacification of the region and the solution of the problem, according to the proposal, evolves in four phases:

*Phase One* During the first phase, that would be concluded on a predetermined time limit, the parties would agree on the reorganization of the province as an Autonomous Region, composed of Albanian and Serb cantons. The Serb cantons would include areas of strong symbolic value to the Serbs. Percentages of land distribution would be an issue of mutual agreement, but it could not surpass the limit of 30 per cent for the Serb cantons. Some minor movement of population on a voluntary basis - with strong incentives for those moving - might be necessary to ensure that the respective ethnic groups -Albanians and Serbs - enjoy relative majority respective cantons.

*Phase Two* Upon finalization of the arrangements agreed upon, the second phase of the agreement would come into force by the admittance of the 'Autonomous Kosovo Region' (AKR), as a self-ruled administrative entity within the Republic of Serbia. There would be three layers of administration: cantonal, regional and republican. Specific lines of self-rule would be drawn by negotiations. The AKR and its cantons would enjoy extensive self-rule in all domains, including public order, with exception of national defence and foreign policy.

*Phase Three* In phase three, the AKR, would be allowed, following a period of

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<sup>4</sup> For a detailed expose see, Kofos, E. and Veremis (1998, pp. 131-46).

up to 10 years, to decide to join the Yugoslav Federation as a federated 'Republic of Kosovo', (RK) sharing equal right with Serbia and Montenegro, which do not include the right of secession.

*Phase Four* After an additional period of 10-15 years, phase four would come into effect, whereby the cantons of the Republic of Kosovo by plebiscite could exercise the right of self-determination for establishing an independent state. Those cantons deciding against independence could choose to join one or the other remaining constituent states of the Yugoslav federation. Constitutional provisions, reinforced by international guarantees, would ensure that the putative independent state would commit itself not to opt for union with another state.

Understandably, the provisions of such an agreement would require the solemn and binding guarantee of an international treaty, endorsed either by the Security Council of the United Nations, or by other relevant international bodies.

If this proposal had been adopted then, the subsequent trials and tribulations of Serbia, Kosovo and the USA, perhaps would not have taken place.

The negotiations over the Rambouillet accord in February and March 1999 were eminently successful with the Kosovar Albanians because their leaders, and more specifically, Veton Surroi, grasped the opportunity of an autonomy guaranteed by the West to overcome the deadly stalemate. Their hope, according to Surroi, was that a recovery of functional autonomy for Kosovo would generate a quantum leap in Serbo-Albanian relations and would establish new rules of the game in the region.

Although their serve was masterful, the Albanians failed to anticipate the combination of responses by Milosevic and their NATO supporters. The prospect of an autonomy for Kosovo that would allow the Albanians to prosper within Serbia and even acquire a demographic edge in a few decades, was certainly not an option welcome to the Serbs. Milosevic's priority had been either to dominate Kosovo, or partition it and preserve for Serbia whatever could be salvaged of the Serb heritage.<sup>5</sup> His chance to evade the likelihood was provided by NATO and the US with their insistence that the ground troops of the implementation force in Kosovo would be provided by the Atlantic Alliance, rather than any other institution involving Russia. In fact the make-up of the implementation forces was less important than the substance of the accord: the autonomous status of Kosovo as seen by the accord was not a lasting arrangement. Independence through a referendum would in time occur creating a precedent for FYROM.

Western governments have used various arguments to justify NATO action in legal terms. The most credible is that Milosevic violated a Security Council resolution adopted in October 1998 that imposed a ceasefire in Kosovo and set limits on the Yugoslav forces in the province. The resolution threatened action if Belgrade resisted and invoked chapter VII of the UN Charter, which calls for the use of force to uphold international peace and security (Taylor, 1999).

While the clouds of the impending war gathered in Kosovo, ELIAMEP held a conference in Athens on 22 January 1999 ("Recent Developments in the Kosovo Regions: Strategies and options for a Peaceful Solution"). The participants represented key actors in the Kosovo drama, Veton Surroi, Fehmi Agani, Edita Tahiri, Predrag Simic, Boris

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<sup>5</sup> For an early view on the partition of Kosovo see Kristic, B. (1995).

Trajkovski, Arben Xhaferi, Vasili Tuporkovski, Vesna Pesic, Milan Protic, Gasmend Pula and many others. Greek Foreign Minister, Theodore Pangalos also took part in this crucial meeting.

The following extract of the conclusions summarises many of the views aired in this conference:

“The Kosovo problem prescribes the need for a strategy of reintegration of the area into a European security and economic architecture. The implications of a terminal black hole in the Balkans could only lead to more disastrous consequences. If the dissolution of Yugoslavia occurred because Serbs, Croats, Slovenes and Muslims refused to live in a state with a preponderant element other than their own, the five resulting states have reproduced the very same problem within the respective realms by exchanging one dominant ethnic group for another. The birth and life of the new entities was founded on the ethnic basis of unitary states. The ethnic conflicts and cleansings that followed were the inevitable outcome of this congenital flaw.

The greatest peril of some western states of Southeastern Europe today - more numerous in numbers and less important individually to the West than during the Cold War - lies in their being neglected and isolated. The best prescription for avoiding political isolation, single-party regimes, media monopolies and the further conflict that will surely accompany them is economic and political integration”. (Veremis, Triantafylou, 1999).

The protracted NATO bombing of Yugoslavia hastened the process that the alliance professed it would arrest. In fact President Clinton’s second and third aim (the first being, ‘to demonstrate the seriousness of NATO’s purpose’) to prevent further violence against the Kosovar population and to preserve regional stability, were not served by NATO’s action. Milosevic was prepared to take the punishment while proceeding to ethnically cleanse North-Western Kosovo and at the same time consolidated his authority at home. Historians will debate the merits and demerits of the US and NATO intervention in Kosovo and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Regardless of where one stands on this debate, the settlement of the conflict, as reflected in UN Security Council Resolution 1244, created an altogether new situation mandating a long-term presence of the international community in the long-suffering region. Dr Alexandros Yannis, the author of *Kosovo under international administration* (ELIAMEP, 2001) was a close political advisor to Bernard Kouchner throughout the initial period of UN administration in Kosovo (July 1999 to December 2000). Dr Yannis’ first hand experience allowed him to walk the tightrope between the zero-sum expectations of the Albanian majority and the Serb minority in Kosovo.

Part I of his study focused on the mixed record of the international community’s administration in Kosovo. A major “plus” is that without the presence of the UN and its cooperating institutions (NATO, the EU, OSCE and UNHCR) the region would have quickly returned to bloody conflict. An additional success of the first period of the international administration in Kosovo was laying the foundations for a constructive engagement of both Albanians and Serbs in the process of building an interim administration.

Yannis stressed the ambiguities of UN Resolution 1244, which was designed to define the tasks of the international community in Kosovo. The Albanians look at the resolution as a vehicle that prepared their country for independence. The Serbs argue that it rules out independence and calls for the return of Serbian control. Dr Yannis,

carefully and realistically, chose a middle-ground that was expected to move Kosovo toward a status of “substantial autonomy” for the Albanian majority and “functional autonomy” for the Serb minority. The author’s processual approach calls for “internationally managed ambiguity” given his fear that satisfying the maximum objectives of one side or the other, would most likely trigger a new wave of violence.

Part II of the study (through April 2001) assesses the new circumstances that have been created following the fall of Milosevic (October 5, 2000) and the gradual shift of the attention of the international community towards Belgrade that reflects the concern of the international community to facilitate the transition processes within Serbia. For Dr. Yannis time is of the essence. In sum, the author’s conclusion is that one should freeze the “final status” of Kosovo and work on solutions that meet the minimum objectives of both rivals and the maximum of neither. As he asserts “The territory of Kosovo should enter a deep winter in which Resolution 1244 will be the sole Northern Star.” The Study is supplemented by a list of annexes that contain a number of important and often rare documents that marked the first period of the political involvement of the international administration in the peace process in Kosovo (Yannis, 2001).

Following Kosovo’s declaration of independence on 17 February 2008, America’s certainty that this is a special case among entities seeking self-determination has prodded several EU states to fall in line. In fact, Kosovo is in no sense unique. There are striking similarities with a host of other entities, including Republika Srpska of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Nagorno Karabakh of Azerbaijan, Abkhazia of Georgia, the West Bank under Israel, Kashmir in India and a host of others. Europeans willing to give Kosovo the benefit of the doubt are perhaps trying to make amends for having failed to take concerted action during the Bosnian carnage. EU failure to produce a common foreign and security policy in the nineties invited the US and its decisive military action into the region. Championing the cause of the underdogs in the Yugoslav struggle for territory, the Americans hoped that they would promote multicultural democracies in the Western Balkans. It appears that they have merely succeeded in setting up two Western protectorates, that are hardly multicultural. Bosnia-Herzegovina is a federal state with its constituent ethnic groups totally segregated from each other, while Kosovo (95% Albanian) is probably one of the most ethnically homogeneous places in Europe. It is equally doubtful that the U.S. has secured Arab or Iranian approval as a result of its pro-Muslim humanitarian action in Bosnia and Kosovo (Ker-Lindsay, 2009).

Until recently, American policymakers considered the region a periphery of the Caucasus and the Middle East, both hubs of energy, rather than valuable in and of themselves. The eclipse of Russia’s regional presence, however, appears to be over and its comeback is spurred by the advantage its position in the energy sector affords it.

It is difficult to foresee the full spectrum of consequences that Kosovar independence will generate. In principle it will create a precedent that will make it impossible for Western states to deny self-determination to other candidates under similar circumstances.

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