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Kosovo and the Region: Consequences of the Waiting Game

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Introduction

The internationalisation of the conflict over Kosovo by NATO military action in March-June 1999 was defined and given legal standing according to humanitarian and human rights principles. The Serbian and Yugoslav governments were held to be in violation of international humanitarian and human rights conventions and, by causing a humanitarian crisis that included large population displacement into neighbouring states, posed a threat to regional security and peace.

United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1244 recognises the territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and its continuing sovereignty over Kosovo, while requiring Serbian and Yugoslav military and civilian authorities to hand over control of the province to a transitional international administration. This is an extraordinary precedent. In contrast to the United Nations Transitional Administrations in Eastern Slavonia (Croatia) or East Timor (Indonesia) – where international assistance was considered necessary to protect the human and minority rights of the resident populations during a political transition, but the political status of the territory was settled (reintegration into Croatia in the first case, independence in the second) – the international presence in Kosovo has temporarily deprived a country of the right to rule over part of its territory and population. According to NATO powers and the United Nations Security Council,

1 This is a revised version of a paper presented at the conference "Options for Kosovo's Final Status", organised by the IAI and the United Nations Association of the United States (UNA-USA) and held in Rome on 12-14 December 1999. The full text of this and other papers for the conference can be found at http://www.unausa.org/issues/kosovo/rome/index.htm.

sovereignty is not inviolable but subject to a higher law; by violating that law in their treatment of the Albanian population of Kosovo for almost a decade, Yugoslav authorities have temporarily lost the right to rule Kosovo.

The decisions to internationalise the Kosovo conflict and establish a temporary protectorate have, however, irrevocably changed the Kosovo issue. Although the declared goal of this transitional authority is the restoration of extensive autonomy for the province according to the constitutional rights granted by the 1974 Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the UNSCR specifies the basis for that autonomy as the draft political agreement presented at Rambouillet in February 1999 and its presumption of a referendum in Kosovo on the province's final political status at the end of three years. Accordingly, the international rhetoric of human rights during Operation Allied Force has been replaced by the language of sovereignty and the right of national self-determination said to belong to any ethnic majority in a land. As happened with the Palestinians, but in a radically shorter period of time, the term *Kosovar* (the Slavic word for a person from Kosovo) is now widely used only for the Albanian population of Kosovo, and not, as before March 1999, for all people originating from Kosovo, regardless of ethnic and national identity. In addition, the task of establishing and running an international protectorate that is simultaneously *within* a country but not subject to its rule – for which there are no international rules – has reinforced the separate status of the province. The United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has approached the problem of currency, customs, power, police, and security, to take a few examples, by establishing independent political, economic, and military institutions that in some instances, such as the choice of the Deutschmark as local currency, represent *sovereign* prerogatives and may not be easily reversible.

A third way? The option of delay

The options for Kosovo thus now include the very real possibility of independence, whether the argument is based on the brutality of the Serbian regime in Kosovo in the 1990s or on the *faits accomplis* of the international response (the Rambouillet proposals, the NATO bombing campaign, and the administrative decisions of UNMIK and the NATO-led Kosovo Force - KFOR). To square the circle between this current reality and its many supporters, on the one hand, and the international commitment to Yugoslav sovereignty, made clear in UNSCR 1244 and still strongly held by many states in the world including in Europe, on the other, the architects of policy toward Kosovo have chosen to focus instead on the *political process* that should evolve in Kosovo over the next few years. Yet, by doing so, they have also transformed the debate on options for Kosovo.

Instead of a choice between extensive autonomy within Yugoslavia (tantamount to separate republican status within the federation) or independence, the debate is now over timing. Should independence be declared immediately, or should the decision be delayed and emerge out of the political process? For those

who advocate an immediate decision, the evolving political process cannot but be about Kosovo's political status, if that status is not clear. The goals of democracy, good governance, and reconstruction will take second place. The logic is simple. If borders are unsettled and the bearers of sovereignty are unclear, people do not know where to direct their political loyalty, their expectations of citizenship rights, or their universe of political participation; there cannot be a true political process. International financial institutions can only have negotiations and programs with sovereign units, and foreign investors cannot operate without knowing who is accountable, who has authority. However drawn out a path toward EU membership, it cannot even begin until there are states. And if one option for Kosovo is independence, these consequences also affect the rest of FRY and possibly Kosovo's neighbours.

For those who advocate delay, ambiguity is a virtue, allowing people to focus on creating a capacity for local administration and democratic accountability in Kosovo until political conditions clarify the best choice. Given the very real fears in neighbouring states as far away as Romania and beyond about the precedent of internationalisation and subsequently of independence for Kosovo, they argue that delay will prevent by postponement a new chain of demands for self-determination and separation and the pre-emptive manoeuvring within states that such an opportunity engenders. Postponement is also intended to act as an incentive to opposition forces in Serbia to overthrow Slobodan Milosevic and regain the right to govern Kosovo. Above all, given the extraordinary effort to create unity among NATO powers to intervene with force and the current disagreement over the final status of Kosovo among the major powers, including the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, delay avoids jeopardising that unity, which was wearing thin by the end of May 1999, or a serious row among the major powers.

Although this debate about the consequences of ambiguity and a postponed decision is not over, the choice has already been made. The reasons for choosing delay and ambiguity lie in international disagreement and major-power politics, not in the best course toward stability in the region. No state is currently ready to violate Yugoslav sovereignty and UNSCR 1244 and to recognise a change of borders. Those who prefer the independence option believe that this will be the outcome of the political process in any case, so why not let it happen and avoid creating a major-power conflict or violating international norms (including the UN Security Council Resolution 1244 and KFOR's commitment in the Military Technical Agreement with Yugoslav forces). Those who oppose independence out of fear of the precedent regarding the change of borders, after holding the line for so long against it and with such tragic consequences in the wars of the Yugoslav dissolution, can be reassured or at least lulled into confidence. The decision to delay *is a decision not to decide* so as to maintain the international coalition created by the NATO campaign and the effort made in the summer of 1999 to restore relations with Russia and China.

The precautionary principle[2]

Neither way of framing the options for Kosovo reveals the reason for international concern. The issue now is whether the political process can be confined to the legal status of the province – autonomy or independence — or whether it is already about the Albanian national question – the right to self-determination of the Albanian people and therefore to live in one state if they so choose — and the ramifications of this latter formulation for all states with Albanian populations in the region. The idea that a political process within Kosovo can resolve the status question ignores the catalytic and indirect effect of this uncertainty on the political conditions that are supposed to change both within Kosovo and in neighbouring states. The matter of timing is not, in fact, about the best way to manage the choice between autonomy and independence, but about the dynamic interaction between the political process within Kosovo and political processes in other states of the region.

The conflict over Kosovo, at least since 1981, has always been more about its external consequences than about its internal order. This remains true today. Both choices – independence or autonomy – are statements about a *relationship* between Kosovo and its neighbours, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania, and other territories that may become subjects of sovereignty in the area. The status of Kosovo is as much about the criteria for restoring Yugoslav sovereignty (having deprived Yugoslavia temporarily of sovereignty, what changes in Serbia would justify restoring it?) as the Albanian national question is about the survival and stability of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania. And the very issue of independence has a direct effect on the separate processes of state formation and reformation in the neighbourhood.

What happens to Kosovo now is primarily — and should be — about the *consequences* for the entire region of a decision on the province's final status and, equally important, of the way that the outcome is decided. In fact, there is no solution to the Kosovo conflict other than a regional solution.

The wider regional effects of the Kosovo issue can be seen in each phase of the current conflict – in 1981, from 1985 to 90, and now.[3] The illustration provided here will be limited to the most recent phase, the results of the air operation in spring 1999. An assessment will follow of the possible consequences of a waiting game and of the elements of a regional approach that might prevent more war.

Background: Regional effects of the Kosovo conflict

For Albanian nationalists and the neighbouring states of Kosovo, the question of Kosovo is an Albanian national question. What are the rights of the people of

2 The legal principle in environmental law that says, if one is not sure an action will not bring disastrous consequences, one must think before acting, and if one acts, one must take the consequences into account. My thanks to Roberto Toscano for this information.

3 This illustration is provided in the longer version of this article (see note 1).

Albanian identity living outside Albania: minority rights or national rights to self-determination, and if the latter, equal rights to governance with other nations of the state in which they are citizens (such as Macedonia or Montenegro) or separation and the goal of joining all "Albanian lands" in one nation-state? Kosovo has played a special role in this national question ever since 1912 and the first Balkan War, when the major powers decided that the territory contested by Serbs and Albanians should be given to Serbia rather than the new state of Albania. Particularly as a result of demographic changes since 1912, nationalists argue that the question of Kosovo cannot be one of minority rights or of national rights within another state, but is one of historical error and territorial sovereignty, either as an independent state or as part of a larger Albanian state.

The external effects of the Kosovo issue are, in fact, far more complicated. In part this is because all national questions are reflexive – national identities are formed in *oppositional* relationship to other national groups, and questions of self-determination are ones of relative rights between two or more nationally defined groups. In areas such as the southern Balkans where state borders do not coincide with national borders and each state contains national minorities, minority rights and national identities are necessarily matters of regional security. But in a political context in which identities and states are being reformed, redefined, and reconstituted, as well as borders redrawn, the case of Kosovo has been especially charged, serving as a catalyst or instrument of reformulations throughout former Yugoslavia and the wider region.

Operation Allied Force was a politically conservative mission. Its stated goals were to restore the military *status quo* of October 1998, by demanding through force that Milosevic implement his agreement with Richard Holbrooke and UN Security Council Resolutions 1160, 1199, and 1203, and the political *status quo* of 1989, by creating the conditions that would enable the restoration of Kosovo's pre-1990 autonomy. The result of the series of international policies leading to and including the bombing campaign, however, was a fundamentally changed situation in the region.

First, of course, it brought the aspirations of pan-Albanianists much closer to their goal – so much so that they "can smell it". In addition, the population shifts as a result of the expulsion of Serbs and other non-Albanians from Kosovo since 9 June combined with the influx of Albanians from northern Albania over the uncontrolled border, particularly into the northern part of Kosovo, strengthens the claims for independence of Kosovo, and links the populations of northeastern Albania and Kosovo much more directly through personal and family ties (as did the refugee exodus into Albania during the bombing). This interchange and the nearly open border with Albania and Macedonia have led to a new stage in relations among Albanians in the three territories: a process of familiarisation, cultural exchange, and exploration of what it means to be part of one nation.

In addition, reliance by Western powers on the Albanian leadership in Tirana to assist in the negotiation phase – such as getting Hashim Thaci, leader of the UCK (Kosovo Liberation Army), to Rambouillet, or helping to unify the Kosovo

factions and leaders – and during the bombing has grown into a set of expectations of Albanian responsibility for Kosovo. This expectation also reinforces, however, a trend developing from the start of the first Berisha administration,[4] to make Kosovo a domestic issue in Albanian politics. But Albanian political development is still in the phase of deep polarisation – a phase seen in other post-communist transitions that can be transitory – and the Kosovo issue directly reinforces that polarisation. Instead of softening it so that political identities associated with government policy and performance can emerge, the association of the two political camps with regions (north and south), with clans (Gheg and Tosk), and with historical scars (both World War II and the communist period) has been strengthened by the Kosovo dimension. In place of a domestic political process that builds a new Albanian nation-state oriented to Tirana and civil-society approaches to reconciliation, the Kosovo issue is orienting many to Pristina and creating disputes over different concepts of Albanian national identity. It is not clear whether the fragile Albanian state has the resources to withstand the resulting stresses and suspicions between these two camps, let alone the proliferation of organised crime groups seizing the opportunities offered by the new conditions. Although the recent Montenegrin assertiveness in the Yugoslav federation would not in itself affect this dynamic, the pull of Pristina on northeastern Albania could result in a push on northwestern Albania along a Shkoder-Podgorica axis that would add another obstacle to Albanian state formation.[5]

In Macedonia, the links between Kosovo Albanians and Albanians living in the northwest of Macedonia (both Macedonian citizens and the large community originating from Kosovo) – the "Tetovo-Pristina axis" – predate the bombing and the altered status of Kosovo by two generations. Nonetheless, the timing of the bombing campaign was particularly unfortunate for political developments in Macedonia. A new government, installed only weeks before, had been elected on the basis of minority Albanian votes and had formed a coalition with the nationalist leader, Arben Xhaferi, of the more radical Albanian party, the Party for Democratic Prosperity of Albanians in Macedonia. But the refugee exodus of hundreds of thousands of Albanians into Macedonia, combined with massive international attention to their plight, caused enormous tensions between majority Macedonians and the Albanian minority of Macedonia. The latter provided an easy focus for the anger of average Macedonians at their international impotence and at the costs they had paid in terms of economic impoverishment, high unemployment, and a criminalised economy based on smuggling, without compensation as a result of the international policy on Kosovo (especially sanctions on their primary trading partner, Serbia). Whether this genie can ever be put back into his bottle is an open question, but it certainly erased the hopes for the new government's approach to

4 Sali Berisha was elected President of Albania in 1992.

5 The author wishes to thank Miranda Vickers for her insights into this problem.

ethnic relations. The prospect of Kosovo's independence, in addition, revives fears that Xhaferi's repeated proposals for federalisation of Macedonia, especially given his very close links to the UCK are, in fact, a stalking horse for separatism.

The new Macedonian government had also just risked a Chinese veto of the United Nations Preventive Deployment (UNPREDEP) in its desperate search for economic assistance (accepting Taiwanese aid) on the assumption and hope that NATO would have to fill the vacuum and help move its European agenda faster. Instead, a series of new bilateral agreements (such as one with Bulgaria attempting to end the stalemate over language that has been plaguing their relations) and the termination of UNPREDEP rapidly eroded the edifice of international protection for a Macedonian state, at the same time that the Kosovo crisis deepened the threat from the north. In place of the NATO force being actively discussed in Western capitals prior to the bombing, UNPREDEP was replaced by a NATO presence oriented to the Kosovo campaign, viewed antagonistically by Macedonians as a "Kosovo force". The idea that they could be abandoned in favour of Kosovo was reinforced by the outcome of the NATO operation. The international creation – however unwitting – of the third ethnically homogeneous political entity out of former Yugoslavia (Croatia in 1995, Bosnia and Herzegovina after 1993-95, and now Kosovo) is particularly threatening to Macedonia, not only to its commitment to a multi-ethnic state but also to its very survival – in the face of possible independence for Kosovo and the current UN protectorate, which actually acknowledges for the first time in the Yugoslav saga that borders can indeed be changed.

In Serbia, the result of Operation Allied Force and its aftermath has been to raise the Serbian question once again (with its influence on Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina), and to multiply the problems facing the Serbian opposition. The NATO action discredited the opposition, as in many other countries from Bulgaria to Russia, but with far more serious consequences. It interrupted the substantial progress toward local democracy, media freedom, and civil society development that had been made during the previous two years. It deprived the opposition of the one platform that joined otherwise quarrelling parties – Europeanisation and economic reform – and gave Milosevic a powerful argument against them in the form of accusations of treason. Furthermore, by causing the conditions for a dramatic worsening of humanitarian conditions in Serbia and reimposing sanctions, instead of rewarding the full compliance of the Yugoslav forces with the Military Technical Agreement (MTA), the campaign once again made Serbian citizens dependent on Slobodan Milosevic and his government's resources for sheer survival. Because the Kosovo operation was the long-sought basis for the Hague Tribunal's indictment on war crimes of Slobodan Milosevic, this strengthening of his position occurred in a context in which he has nothing to lose, as the increasing violence and lack of official restraint since May 1999 demonstrates. The bombing damage and the reimposition of economic sanctions also handed him a propaganda weapon of immense historical meaning: harking back to the Tito-Stalin conflict of 1948-49 when nearly the entire world was arrayed against Yugoslavia, Milosevic has revived the slogans of the campaign for self-reliance (*na sopstvene*

snage) of that earlier struggle for survival and an independent defence as he rebuilds the bridges, roads, and hospitals that Western powers refuse to.

Although the constitutional and policy disputes between Montenegro and Serbia, including a Montenegrin proposal for a confederation in 1998, preceded the bombing campaign, the crisis sharply accelerated the independence momentum. From refusing to send Montenegrin soldiers to the Kosovo front to receiving international exemption from the reimposed sanctions and enormous international attention to the Montenegrin project, the Djukanovic coalition has moved far faster in the direction of independence than prudence recommends. Although most Montenegrin politicians are still moving with caution in hopes of avoiding violence, and are under international pressure to do so, the conditions motivating separatist moves have actually been worsened by the fact that sanctions were not removed after the MTA. Facing dire economic conditions, they had grown increasingly impatient over their inability to reform their economy or open normal relations with the outside world. But the bombing campaign not only intensified their impatience and panic at the trap they feel they are in, but also lost them many crucial months in moving slowly toward some altered arrangement. On an electoral mandate filled with promises of improved standards of living, Djukanovic's coalition is running out of time in any case if it must show results on its democratisation and reform project before the next election. The prospect of Kosovo's independence, and its effect on the Albanian minority in Montenegro (largely supporters of the current government but increasingly assertive on national matters), allows even less time for reflection if it does not want to be trapped by the unpredictable consequences of such a move.

Finally, the Kosovo crisis diverted donor attention from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Kosovo at a moment when the upcoming start of repayment of principal on their foreign debt is the primary policy concern in B-H. Most aid and international activity for Republika Srpska (RS) screeched to a halt during the campaign because of what appears to have been misplaced fears of attack on international personnel. Still dramatically behind the Federation in external assistance, the inequality deepened as a result of the bombing campaign, and the halt in trade tripled the costs of imports and the trade deficit as the RS had to reorient from Yugoslavia westward.

Even the possibility of a break-up of FRY, much hastened by the events, introduces new and potentially disruptive elements into the Bosnian political scene [such as what will happen to Sandjak and the important role played by the people from Sandjak in Bosniac (Bosnian Muslim) politics, or how Serb politicians will reorient to Serbia if a movement for a Serbian nation-state gains speed] at a moment when the passage of time since the Dayton signing and the High Representative's Bonn powers seem, together, to be having an effect in moving the country toward moderation and normalisation.

Consequences of the waiting game

Political processes do not stand still, especially when economies are a disaster and the NATO security presence encourages people to feel free to take political risks with impunity in achieving ambitions that could threaten war. The idea that the political process in Kosovo and the region under international protection in Bosnia and Kosovo will promote stability, on the argument that quick decisions are more likely to be destabilising and possibly even violent, ignores the effect on behaviour of uncertainty itself. Without serious compensatory actions in the region, the waiting game over Kosovo increases uncertainty, risk taking, and defensive positioning. The literature on cooperation is very clear: greater uncertainty does not lead to cooperation, but the reverse. Peace and stability, in fact, occur in a context of rules and regulations such that rational expectations can be calculated. And it is states, or the equivalent in regional/international alliances and organisations, that legislate and enforce those rules and regulations.

Moreover, in addition to the waiting game surrounding Kosovo, the external context for all of former Yugoslavia remains ambiguous and capricious. Bilateral relations predominate, based on the principle of conditionality. That principle is unevenly – arbitrarily – applied, making it ineffective at best. And eventual membership in the EU and NATO, the sole vision for the region, is decades away, given that it cannot even begin until borders are settled and democratic governments installed. The relative absence of the EU, of regularised economic relations, and of some overarching concept for the region's place in Europe has led, by default, to a quasi-military approach through NATO. Yet that NATO-isation of policy toward the region also lacks an underlying strategy. While people explain the repeated failures of economic reform, such as in Romania, and of economic revival, such as in Bulgaria and Macedonia, or the growth of organised crime in Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina with local factors such as political will, populist politics, and habitual corruption, the fact is that the external environment bears much responsibility. The post-communist transition cannot succeed, as has been seen thus far in the differences between the cases of success (e.g., the Central Europe three) and failure (e.g., the southeastern states), without a nurturing external environment.

One of the crucial consequences of the Kosovo intervention and current waiting game is on the processes of state formation and reformation in the area (processes that create states that can be treated as legitimate partners) and therefore on the definition of borders. The current undefined status of Kosovo is having a negative impact on the process of state formation – and disintegration – throughout the region.

In Albania, for example, despite the remarkable efforts of Albanian leaders and external donors to assist its post-communist transition, a stable state requires redefining its national identity. As mentioned earlier, the processes of reconciliation with the past, of building a post-communist national identity focusing on commonalities and oriented toward Tirana, and of reducing the destabilising level of

political polarisation have all been pushed in the wrong direction by the fortunes of the UCK and the new prospects for Kosovo's independence. Orientation around wider Albanian ethno-national commonalities, ties, and obligations instead of state-building within current borders will inevitably dominate, despite the great differences between the populations, cultures, and political traditions of Kosovo and Albania. Even the foreign interest in Albania has shifted from its internal stability and reform progress to the Kosovo question. At the same time, Albania's extraordinary hospitality during the refugee crisis and cooperation with NATO during the bombing campaign was in part due to expectations in Tirana that the temporary NATO security guarantees would continue and that the NATO presence would aid their economy. These have already been disappointed, with as yet unknown costs.

Another consequence of the waiting game is that events in Kosovo could take a course, either directly or indirectly, undesired by international actors but beyond their control. For example, as if to compensate for delay in deciding Kosovo's final status, there is growing consensus by important players on holding early elections at the municipal level. Despite the lessons from Bosnia and Herzegovina and the absence of a voters' register, they believe that the political process requires the early creation of elected authorities within Kosovo. Yet this haste has immediate consequences for Montenegro and possibly for Albania and Macedonia: it reduces the credibility of those who argue that Montenegro should move cautiously, particularly in the eyes of those who are convinced that Hashim Thaci will win the elections and use his network already installed, *de facto*, in local government to declare independence. From there, many imagine rapid steps toward political cooperation across Albanian communities that would result, at least *de facto*, in a change of borders: for example, along the model of the Dayton accord, a federation of Ghegs and Tosks in Albania that establishes confederal relations with Kosovo and Western Macedonia.

Even a low probability of this happening has changed perceptions of relations with Albanian minorities in neighbouring states: the fact that Albanian national parties are making similar demands in separate states (to display their flag, change textbooks and curricula, and have Albanian educational institutions through to university level) is increasingly perceived to be part of an overall plan, with a resulting rise in political tensions. The prospect of such an outcome as early as spring 2000 is pushing some Montenegrins toward pre-emptive action and has intensified fears in Macedonia about Xhaferi's plans and motives. Such perceptions, which cannot be separated from the psychological effect of the new options for Kosovo, are increasing political polarisation in Macedonia, despite the admirable record of the Gligorov regime at keeping passions calmed. If the Macedonian government finds it necessary to seek support in the region to replace that which the international community once provided, and reaches out to Bulgaria or even Serbia, it could reinforce the territorial realignments already taking place among Albanians, with worrisome implications for borders and politics.

Most critical to the waiting game is the view that time will permit changes in Serbia and the possibility of a renegotiated relationship between Kosovo and a democratic, post-Milosevic Yugoslavia. But the economic and political consequences of the NATO operation have not only set democratisation in Serbia back years, but have also dramatically worsened the conditions that any new government will face, reducing the likelihood of rapid movement, even if a way is found to be rid of Milosevic. Instead of removing the sensitive issue of Kosovo and Albanian rights from Serbian domestic politics, the undefined status of Kosovo and international attention have made it more important — under conditions of popular anger that will not politically permit opposition parties to do as the international community wants.

The delay will also have effects on less directly involved states. What prospects are there for Bulgarian success in its imminent EU accession talks if the external conditions necessary to meet EU conditionality are not forthcoming? The result of long, drawn out talks – whatever the cause – will be to dishearten reformers and pro-Europe forces, particularly in the context of the anti-Western sentiments provoked by the bombing campaign and the feeling of betrayal throughout the region (including Russia) among pro-Western reformers on whom the West is counting for democratisation, stability, and markets. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is the threat that its fate will once again be derivative of events elsewhere: in Croatia, but especially in FRY, as the reality of a Serbian national state begins to drive politics within Serbia. The economic damage to Republika Srpska resulting from the trade effects of the bombing campaign, a closed border and reimposed sanctions, when it is still lagging seriously in external assistance, has complicated the efforts by its political leaders to ignore any serious movement to create a Serbian state or to respond to international demands to move closer to the Federation. Moreover, in general, ambiguity does not encourage investment.

Elements of a regional approach

The experience of Northern Ireland currently or Belgium in the past twenty years must be taken seriously. In the case of Northern Ireland, EU membership was critical in turning the conflict toward peace and a negotiated settlement because relations between Ireland and the United Kingdom were no longer confrontational but embedded in something much larger. In addition, the resulting economic growth gave self-confidence to the Irish population and redirected their focus from the national question to improved lives and diversions. Those who write about the Belgian case stress the same: that management of the ethno-linguistic tensions that have repeatedly threatened the country's integrity has been possible because of its incorporation into the EU, just as the Benelux arrangement for regional stability.

If there is no secure regional framework in which to embed the Kosovo options, then the political dynamic currently in process will lead to further disintegration and redrawing of borders – whether by *fait accompli* or international

conference. The alternative to a regional framework is continuing instability, crisis and probably war. The only question is how many borders will be changed before international patience runs out.

At the same time, there is general recognition that the Stability Pact is the closest we will get to a grand strategy. Nonetheless, within that shell and the three working tables, there is much that can be done to manage the consequences of the Kosovo options. A few examples follow:

- *Border regimes*: a preventive deployment on the Kosovo-Macedonian and Kosovo-Albanian borders could begin to restore some confidence in the international position on borders and reduce the fears that lead to pre-emptive, destabilising actions. To counteract the threats of the Albanian national question and the Serbian national question, international actors should structure explicit transborder relations among Albanians and among Serbs that respect the current borders. Specific joint projects of cooperation on very pragmatic issues will enable people to learn how to cooperate, a capacity that must be learned and for which opportunities have been sorely lacking in this decade. The concept of the US-originated Southeast European Cooperation Initiative (SECI) could well be extended to the fields of culture, politics and security.
- *Self-determination and sovereignty*: the undefined status of Kosovo has now made redefinition of the Montenegrin-Serbian relationship a matter of some urgency. Montenegrin or Kosovo independence will most likely lead to movement by Sandjak autonomists to go all the way. Sandjak is not confined to Serbia proper, but includes two counties in Montenegro. If the international community wants to protect the Dayton accord for Bosnia and Herzegovina, then it should immediately assist the negotiations in Yugoslavia through: substantial foreign aid to Montenegro to strengthen the Djukanovic coalition against the very real inroads of the Bulatovic-led opposition with the Montenegrin voters as a far better alternative than military contingency plans; an end, as soon as possible, to the isolation of Serbia and the identification of partners who can help revive negotiations over a confederation that assists Montenegro in avoiding a final, abrupt step of independence; and avoidance of interventions such as no-fly zones or monitoring missions that would most likely force Belgrade to respond – in the wrong direction. As for Macedonia, an international consensus must be developed immediately on how to help resolve a conflict between the Macedonian government and the ethnic Albanian majority in the northwestern counties, should it come to the point of national self-determination. A set of procedures for negotiating conflicts over self-determination and borders, agreed among the major powers, could serve the way doctrine does for armed forces: facilitating rapid and disciplined response, which is effective, to a known challenge. Reliance on military responses to make up for policy failures (particularly as the United States enters a season of presidential electioneering) cannot be sustained.

- *An end to the sanctions regime*, by whatever method, such as making a distinction between the Tribunal indictments and the sanctions on Serbia. Until region-wide normalisation occurs, the consequences of waiting will be negative. If the waiting game depends in part on a change of government in Serbia, then outsiders must recognise the psychological and political damage of the sanctions regime and its isolation, and help give the opposition parties an issue they can use to win.
- *A region-wide security regime*: surely the most forceful lesson of this past decade should be that stability does not result if international action waits until there is violence. A NATO policy is urgently needed that goes beyond its peacekeeping role in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo and its policy of staged membership in NATO itself. What role does a third-party, international force play in an unsettled political situation? Kosovo is not Bosnia and Herzegovina. Greater coordination between UNMIK and KFOR on strategy appropriate to the Kosovo political process should replace efforts focused on how to draw down KFOR. As long as the murder of Serbs in Kosovo continues, it will keep the revanchist forces in Serbia alive. A Kosovo Protection Corps and KFOR deterrence against a return of Yugoslav forces does not address the primary security issue of Kosovo. Expectations by Albania and Macedonia, and increasingly Montenegro, that NATO will in the end provide a security guarantee must be recognised and addressed directly, in place of the competition that has developed among the three for obtaining such guarantees – for example, by offering basing rights to assist NATO logistics as a way of engaging NATO's self-interest in their preservation. The essential role that NATO played in the success of the integrationist objectives of the Marshall Plan should not be forgotten.
- *The economic policy* of the multilateral and bilateral donors to countries in the region should incorporate the widespread calls throughout the region for demilitarisation. A policy of regional arms control and security sector reform is urgently needed and will only occur if donors take this need directly into account in their advice and assistance.
- Massive policies to engage the *younger generation* of the region, who are both the largest proportion of the population in Kosovo, Albania, Montenegro, and Macedonia, and understandably the most impatient for change.
- *Europeanisation*: above all, a policy to embed Kosovo's political process in an environment conducive to peaceful resolution must be one that addresses the common aspiration throughout the region (and the only one that has been shown in Western Europe to have such an effect): an explicit policy of Europeanisation. Despite the political advances of the Stability Pact, it remains limited to drawn-out, conditionality-based policies of eventual accession. Initiatives to begin incorporation now, such as euroisation, fewer trade barriers, and more assertive assistance to infrastructural development (as with the Tennessee Valley Authority in the US) and environmental safeguards, would demonstrate that commitment and actually promote improvements.

Conclusion

The current policy to let the political process under international protectorate determine the final status of Kosovo will not work in isolation. The political process is not separable from political developments and populations in neighbouring states. Those states are also undergoing processes of uncertain, potentially radical redefinition, processes that are in part contingent on what happens in Kosovo and that simultaneously influence options and developments there. The political status of Kosovo is, by definition, a *relationship* with its neighbours that must be negotiated and accepted if it is to be stable and peaceful, and that will in any case require adjustments, at a minimum, by Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Albania. It may well be, for example, that the best policy for Kosovo would be a policy toward Serbia, or toward Montenegro, rather than a policy toward Kosovo itself. The options for Kosovo must be discussed in terms of a regional or sub-regional strategy that includes policies to facilitate the non-military management of this process. This is the only way that Western powers can have their cake and eat it, too.