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November 2008

Online at <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/11722/>
MPRA Paper No. 11722, posted 24 Nov 2008 00:26 UTC

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“Independent Kosovo: A Threat for the Balkan Region?”

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ABSTRACT. Both political and security future of the Balkans highly depend on the conditions in a newly created state of Kosovo. Bearing in mind the ethnic Albanian leadership declared unilateral independence in February 2008 and without providing the Serbian minority with durable solution, this paper aims at exploring three possible scenarios following the Kosovo independence. It combines both sides' positions offering wider understanding why each of them feels entitled to the Kosovo's territory and what are the risks if that territory remains only in one side's hands. The three puzzling questions presented in this paper, supported by the concepts from different thinkers (Cox, Buzan, Wæver) are arguably among the least discussed ones in contemporary discourse about Kosovo's future.

1. Introduction

Both the political and the security future of the Balkans highly depend on the situation in a newly created state of Kosovo. After the ethnic Albanian leadership declared unilateral independence in February 2008 and without providing the Serbian minority with a durable solution, the international community¹ somehow ignored consideration of the scenarios the Albanian decision might have on the Balkan region marking “a turning point in international politics” (Schwartz, 2008: 1).

While having in mind that “subject peoples must be prepared for political independence before being granted it” (Beitz, 1999: 96), this paper analyzes the conundrums and possible complications that Kosovo independence may cause. The current situation, characterized by unviable political, economic and social components, can easily generate new violence both within the borders of Kosovo and in its neighboring countries. Accordingly, this paper, while addressing possible scenarios that may result from Kosovo independence in the near future, identifies responsible actors expected to provide independent Kosovo with peace and stability. The paper examines three possible scenarios. First, the Serbian minority, accounting for 7% of total population (CIA: The World Factbook 2008), who has not yet openly expressed itself, may decide to claim autonomy and link itself to Serbia. Second, Albanians living in Macedonia, accounting officially for 25.2% (Ibid.) and unofficially close to 40% of the total population (Buzan & Wæver, 2003: 385), may demand secession from the former Yugoslav republic and unite with Kosovo or Albania or both, if the idea of creating Greater Albania (dating back to the 1878 League of Prizren)² is to be followed. Third, as long as post-Dayton Bosnia is a weak state with an underperforming economy and malfunctioning multi-ethnic society, Serbs living in Republika Srpska may decide to support Serbs from Kosovo and thus vote on secession from Bosnia and link to Serbia – a difficult, but possible project. Thus, while having in mind the linkage between the possible scenarios and their responsible actors, the paper examines three actors bearing responsibility for the successful functioning of an independent Kosovo: Serbs, Albanians, and internationals.

While relying on the ideas of Robert Cox (1996) and his understanding of the critical theory, this paper aims at exploring discourses among Serbs and Albanians, their production and the historical momentum in a political consciousness. Moreover, critical theory provides with parameters necessary to understand in what conditions the international actors should act as a positive driving force (in our case, in the Balkans) to master this problem. The attention is paid to

¹ This paper appreciates Marina Ottaway’s (2003) definition of international community – “the conglomerate of industrialized democracies and the multilateral agencies over which they have preponderant influence,” p. 245.

² Albanian political movement focused at protecting the Albanian-inhabited territories from being taken away by Slavic countries in the Balkans and unifying Albanian lands under the Ottoman Empire. See, for example, Denisa Kostovicova, *Kosovo: The Politics of Identity and Space*, p. 31.

conflict minimization between ideologically different groups, thus how to make them cooperate.

2. Serbs in Kosovo: what next?

The first argument considers the Serbian majority inhabiting northern Kosovo. This majority has rejected independence of the province to such an extent that it would be ready to claim autonomy and link itself to Serbia. In their analysis, Kacowicz and Lutomski (2007: 91) argue that after the humanitarian intervention in 1999, the final status of Kosovo became a major issue of discussion, and it was the Serbian government which encouraged the “return of Serbs to strategic locations, particularly in northern Kosovo, as a means for eventual partition.” Thus, Serbian denial of independence was an expected reaction. In his attempt to warn the European Union and the United States, Boris Tadic, the Serbian President, while speaking at the security conference in Munich, as reported by Gehmlich (2008), called on everybody to “be very careful about cutting corners ... [and] remain vigilant of the dangers of expediency and take seriously the strategic priorities we all share.” Such a position finds its justification in a study offered by Layne (2000: 12) who argues that “because of Kosovo’s historical and cultural importance to them, Serbs view Kosovo as an integral part of their nation, and hence they reject ethnic Albanian demands for independence and are unwilling to give up the province.”

Therefore, in November 2007, Serbian officials proposed Hong Kong model based on ‘one country, two systems’ policy for Kosovo, but the Kosovo Albanian leadership rejected the idea, seeing it as inappropriate. In his statement, Vojislav Kostunica (5 November 2007), Serbian Prime Minister at the time, stipulated:

“Stability, sustainability and functionality of the model applied in the case of Hong Kong emanate from the fact that the agreement was reached through negotiations, while recognizing a fundamental principle underpinning the modern international order, and that is respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of internationally recognized states. Equally, the case of Hong Kong is a good example showing that a stable and good solution can by no means be arrived at through unilateral actions but only through negotiations and only provided there is respect for the UN Charter and its fundamental principles. The moment unilateral steps take place is the very moment when stability, sustainability and, along with them, every kind of functionality disappear and when chronic hotbeds emerge instead, the crisis exacerbates and a serious instability is created.”

Under Hong Kong model, Kosovo, as partly independent, would be allowed to join international organizations, enjoy independent political decision-making, and establish economic and political competitive regimes in order to attract foreign direct investment and work towards economic growth and capital accumulation. This way, Kosovo would enjoy its taxation sovereignty. But considering that this model was rejected, further analysis offers three indicators regarding the

eventual Serbian reaction to Kosovo's independence.

First, on 11 December 2007 the Serbian Ministry for Kosovo and Metohija opened a parallel government section in the ethnically divided town of Mitrovica. In his report *Kosovo and the Future of Balkan Security*, Canas (2008) noted that the Serbian government goal was

“to coordinate the parallel structures in the Serb-majority areas. Belgrade officials pay regular visits to Serb dominated municipalities. Belgrade also has plans to invest in a number of economic projects in those areas, and to push for the creation of new municipalities and the establishment of new institutions. It is encouraging Kosovo Serbs to quit positions in Kosovo's central and local institutions.”

This approach, originally aimed at supporting local Serbs, became a matter for the UN to criticise as an open provocation. According to Joachim Ruecker (Serbian MFA, 2007), the UNMIK Chief, the office in Mitrovica signified “an open provocation by the Serbian government to the Kosovo and international institutions.” Similarly, Fatmir Sejdiu (Serbian MFA, 2007), the Kosovo President, stated that running such an office in Mitrovica “is unacceptable and not in keeping with the existing laws referring to the territorial integrity of Kosovo and the activities of international and local institutions in that sphere.” As a consequence, the difference between Serbian and Albanian positions resulting from popular support on one side or other may contribute to further antagonism, violence and conflict. Discussing popular support, Smith (2003: 11) stresses the importance of “belief in the cause [of conflict]” which is “a belief in its rightness, in its justice,” whereas both Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo “strongly resented the injustices” before the conflict in 1998.

Second, the opening of the office in Mitrovica was followed by the establishment of the Serbian assembly in May 2008. Although the UN and Kosovo's government objected its legal character, the assembly was aimed at helping coordination with Serbian leadership in Belgrade. As the BBC (2008) reported, Slobodan Samardzic, Serbian Minister for Kosovo, claimed that “the assembly would help Serbia fight to keep Kosovo,” an opinion strongly opposed by Fatmir Sejdiu for whom the existence of the assembly is “an attempt to destabilize Kosovo.” Thus, creating alternative *ad hoc* institutions can easily generate new forms of competition and violence – a problem even more accentuated in the case of Kosovo due to the existence of Serbian enclaves.

In fact, the third and most alarming issue regards the Serbian enclaves in the province which are still fully politically and economically integrated with Serbia, thus questioning their integration within independent Kosovo. In his study, Kupchan (2005: 2) points out that in the enclaves “no one holds a steady job; the communities rely on handouts aid organizations and from Belgrade.” Moreover, Crotty (2005: 449) analyzes enclaves, where “frustration” is a dominant feature, by claiming that enclaves “invite violence in order to level the playing field in the society. The ghettoization of Serbs in Kosovo has intensified [and] resolve against compromise and cast doubt

on any credible claim by Albanian Kosovars that Serbs will be treated in more enlightened ways than Albanian ethnics were treated in the prewar period.” It is difficult to say what treatment the enclaves are going to be subjected to in an independent Kosovo due to their continuous dependence on Serbia, but what is more apparent is that enclaves represent an obstacle for crisis settlement. This argument corresponds to the idea that the main reason for the failure to produce long-term effect lies in the fact that the original dispute is completely unresolved. If the enclaves opted to link themselves to Serbia – a highly questionable ambition due to their position within the Kosovo province – such a decision would contribute to the intensification of the original dispute.

The above issues point out that the Serbian responsibility is to encourage Serbs willing to remain in an independent Kosovo to work towards greater inclusion and representation in the society, instead of following what Belgrade officials have to suggest – usually something which marginalizes them even more. For Kupchan (2005: 5), it is expected that Belgrade is concerned regarding the future of the Serbs in independent Kosovo, but at the same time, “its behavior has done little either to strengthen its case for keeping Kosovo in the fold or to ready its citizens for the impending loss of their southern province.” By threatening violence, Serbs in Kosovo have nothing to gain. In his analysis, Flottau (2007: 1) views the situation in Mitrovica as problematic by saying that “the city is a microcosm of the province itself: its northern part is *de facto* Serb territory, with Serbian flags lining the streets and hundreds of posters of Vojislav Seselj, a radical Serb leader and accused war criminal currently in jail in the Hague.” Such a situation suggests that the idea about partition of the province is still significant to some people.

In fact, while discussing the status of Kosovo, Western politicians agreed to exclude the idea of partition as a possibility. In his study, Keating (2005: 19) concludes that partition itself “rarely solves the problem, but merely creates new minorities while violating the territorial integrity of existing units.” Moreover, partition has usually been followed by forced population transfers, with loss of life. Accordingly, Michael Steiner (2002), the third UNMIK Chief, also publicly disapproved of the possibility for Kosovo partition along ethnic lines, placing significant emphasis on the creation of a multi-ethnic society. The reason why ethnic partition of Kosovo would be problematic is because Serbs are only chiefly settled in the north-east area of the province, in northern Mitrovica and three attached municipalities. This amounts to only one third of the Serbian minority population. The other two thirds are dispersed across the province and would need extra protection. With the process of partition meaning they could be located in an Albanian part, their position would become even more precarious. The regional stability process does not favor partition, either, because of the borders change of the province which could give a motive for redrawing borders elsewhere in the region – Serbia would be affected, the Slav Muslims living in Sandzak could ask

for independence, Bosnian Serbs living in Republika Srpska could ask to join Serbia. In addition, another attempt to divide Kosovo followed the independence proclamation, when Serbian leadership, as Bilefski reported for the *New York Times* on 25 March 2008, “proposed dividing newly independent Kosovo along ethnic lines, a move that was immediately rebuffed by Kosovo’s ethnic Albanian leadership in Pristina.”

Another fact worth considering is the Albanian minority in Serbia, accounting for 61,647 people (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2003) and predominantly inhabiting the southern part of the republic. It could react the same way as Serbs in Kosovo may do and advocate autonomy. The law of history suggests that young nations inhabiting a relatively small and limited territory but with a high demographic growth, like Albania is, tend to augment and claim the neighboring territory, through war, migration and then secession. If the neighboring nation, living on a comparatively large territory, is tired and relatively old, with a low demographic growth, like the Serbs are, the situation is mature for instability in the form of claims to possessions and territory. Thus, it remains an open question whether and when a Serbian or Albanian scenario regarding ‘a new territory’ will turn into an active project, involving and destabilizing not only the parties concerned, but also the wider Balkan region.

3. The Albanian factor in Macedonia

The second argument in this paper aims at analyzing to what extent an independent Kosovo might trigger extensive Albanian nationalism within neighboring countries, particularly in Macedonia. Having in mind Weibel’s (2002) understanding of the Balkans – a region where the use of violence has characterized most of the political conflicts since the end of the Cold War – it proves to be of relevant importance to assess the incentives of the Albanian minority in Macedonia to demand secession.

The co-existence between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians is problematic. The gap among these two peoples is alarming, considering that Albanians are not satisfied with their status within the state. This has a direct impact upon Macedonia’s long-term stability. In 2000, the International Crisis Group (Report No. 98) stated that the two ethnic groups “lead very separate and distinct lives.” Since then, the situation has not improved much. Political leaderships on both sides, while continuing privately a dialogue on improvements, “publicly cater[ed] to the more extreme nationalists in their respective parties” and consequently positions have hardened (Ibid.). Albanians in Macedonia claim more rights. While arguing that Macedonians do not give them equality and have not implemented what they fought for and what was consequently promised after Macedonia had been dragged from the brink of civil war in 2001, what Albanians seem to advocate is a Greater

Albania incorporating Albania itself, Kosovo, noticeable parts of Macedonia and part of Ipiros in Greece. Accordingly, Alia (1978) points out that in the late 19th century security threats on Albanian minorities already triggered an attempt to create a large, strong state including the entire ethnic group after the Ottoman Empire withdrawal from the Balkans. The possibility of a project creating a Greater Albania requires analysis about differences and similarities among Albanians inhabiting various states in the Balkans.

In a complex analysis, Zhelyazkova (1999) concludes that “the Albanians in Macedonia are definitely more conservative and less educated than the Kosovars and the Albanians from Albania. Along with this ... the Macedonian Albanians are richer than the Kosovars, who, on their part, are much richer than the population in Albania.” Although these differences may question the eventual interest in creating Greater Albania, at least in current circumstances, in order to understand whether Macedonian Albanians support Kosovo independence, Zhelyazkova (Ibid.) concludes that the Albanian intellectual elite in Macedonia was “euphorically eager to see the establishment of independent Kosovo” perceiving it as an opportunity to move and work.

The Albanian minority aimed at undermining stability in Macedonia, which would affect the Balkan region as a whole and in this regard, Buzan and Wæver’s (2003) theory of *Regional Security Complexes* (RCS), aimed at understanding how a set of units whose major processes including securitization, desecuritization, or both, are interlinked in a manner that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another (Buzan & Wæver, 1998: 201), seems to be a valuable tool to assess the impact of independent Kosovo on Albanian nationalist movement. Indeed, the authors (2003: 51) argue that such a theory is not only an efficient model seeking to provide an efficient “matrix for area studies,” but it is also a composite approach using both constructivism, to understand and assess the occurrence of “durable pattern of amity and enmity,” and realism, to understand issues such as “anarchic structure and its balance of power consequences, and [...] pressures of local geographical proximity” where enmity is at stake (Ibid: 45).

Thus, within this conceptual framework, assessing the impact of the independence of Kosovo for Albanian communities in the Balkans can be done by assessing the effect of such independence on both of amity/enmity and security issues such as balance of power. One of the main impacts of Kosovo independence on the creation of the pattern of amity with both Albania and the Albanian minority in Macedonia is the end of the repression of Albanian culture in the former Serbian province. Dufour (2004: 288) points out indicators which show that prior to the NATO intervention, Serbian central authority was oppressing any demonstration of Albanian language and culture, as well as radio and cinema diffusion, publishing and education. But relieved from the

Serbian pressure while administrated by the UNMIK, Kosovo has seen its Albanian ethnic majority expressing its own culture on a growing manner. The renewal of education in the Albanian language, complemented with close economic, cultural and professional links to both Albania and the Albanian minority in Macedonia, could be the ground for a reinforced shared identity by elites among national boundaries.

Accordingly, Albanian responsibility in regard to independent Kosovo lies in the idea of not being overambitious in regard to other territorial pretensions, in this case Macedonia. In his analysis, Kupchan (2005: 6) argues that independent Kosovo “promises to stabilize Macedonia by forestalling the radicalization of its ethnic Albanians and neutralizing Albanian extremists throughout the region,” but in the end it is Macedonian responsibility and behavior towards its Albanian minority “that will do more to stabilize (or destabilize) the country than developments elsewhere.” The argument offered by Zhelyazkova (1999) goes further by acknowledging that “Macedonia is not alternative for the Kosovars” due to significant differences including modernization, religion, culture and mentality. In fact, the author (Ibid.) concludes that neither of Albanian communities expresses a desire for unification in a common state but it is “only on a political and ideological level where the idea for a united Great Albania is not strange.” Moreover, such an opinion is characteristic of the elite circles in Albania, while educated people in Kosovo and Macedonia think differently: they rather count on “facilitating borders in the far future, and in the near future they hope for joint activities in independent Kosovo.” This is a reasonable standpoint considering that Macedonia itself can do nothing about the events in Kosovo. As argued by the ICG (2000: Report No. 98),

“the Kosovo crisis exposed many of the fundamental divisions between the country’s ethnic Albanians and ethnic Macedonians ... Almost all ethnic Albanians in Macedonia believe that the conflict in Kosovo was necessary and worthwhile as it brought about the ‘liberation’ of Kosovo from Belgrade’s control. Ethnic Macedonians, however, worry that growing demands for the independence of Kosovo will encourage similar territorial aspirations among Albanians in Macedonia.”

Today when Kosovo is independent such worries are still valid. Yet another point worth discussion is that the Kosovo independence, gained through the use of war, might be perceived as an example by the Albanian minority in Macedonia. This supposition is supported by the occurrence of the 2001 insurgency in Macedonia where Macedonian factions of the UCK (Kosovo Liberation Army), influenced by the Kosovo experience tried to claim the independence of northern parts of the country featuring Albanian ethnic background. In a perspective suggested by Tilly (1992) where states make wars and war makes states, the fight for independence inspired by the Kosovo conflict of 1998-1999 might create preconditions for a trans-Albanian shared identity and proto-state structures. This would contribute to the realization of a Greater Albania, dating back to

the establishment of the League of Prizren in 1878.

But the independence of Kosovo may also trigger a pattern of enmity between the Albanian population and other local ethnic groups, especially the Serbs and the Macedonians. First, the independence of Kosovo stresses dramatically the pattern of enmity with its powerful Serbian neighbor. Dufour (2004: 289) points out that the latter has already shown its determination to this territory under its own ruling power by the use of force during the 1999 conflict with the UCK and the NATO forces. Nowadays, Serbia has not recognized Kosovo independence so far and there is no prospect for it: “For as long as the Serbian nation exists, Kosovo will remain Serbia” were the words pronounced by Vojislav Kostunica, the former Serbian Prime Minister. Furthermore, the spectre of the independence of Kosovo triggered an important political crisis in Serbia, leading to the dissolution of the parliament (AFP, 8 March 2008.). With confusing electoral results in May 2008, it is still not clear whether or not the crisis caused by Kosovo’s independence increased radical or extremist anti-Kosovo positions within Serbian political spectrum.

Second, for Buzan and Wæver (2003: 45), in a region where one group’s cohesion is reinforced, but its patterns of enmity with others are stressed, realist security issues such as balance of power are reactivated. Accordingly, the strategic weakness of Kosovo and Albanian minorities in Macedonia may encourage them to search for security by building a larger political entity with Albania. Indeed, as Dufour (2004: 289) put it, during the 1998 fights between the UCK and the Serbian security forces, the lack of military assets and heavy weapons on the Albanian side led to express and almost complete military demise, equivalent to “a military suicide” only stopped by the NATO intervention (Ibid: 288-294). The failure of a Macedonian faction of the UCK also showed the same level of military weakness. From a strategic point of view, the union of weak Albanian actors could be a way to balance weaknesses of security forces and prevent perceived Serbian or Macedonian threats. The weak security condition tormenting Albanians from Kosovo and Macedonia is also reinforced by the fact that their territories do not provide any sea access. Such a configuration is not an existential threat for groups who do not have capacities to develop and sustain a navy. Nonetheless, it significantly increases the Albanian population’s sensitivity to any Serbian or Macedonian blockade or denial of resources. Furthermore, the absence of sea access makes NATO-like support operations more complex. In 1999, this problem was solved by a strong political will to interrupt a civil war, and the deployment of large forces in Italy as well as in the Adriatic Sea. But, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the new U.S. defence doctrine aiming at priority rogue states and terrorists (US DoD, 2002) both political will and military assets availability to rescue Albanian populations may be weaker.

This part of the paper shows that Albanian population spread over the Balkan states has

incentives for growing common identity, but in a relational pattern of enmity with Serbs and Macedonians, while looking to unite and secure their own defence. Given this picture, only the integration or cooperation with the European Union seems to be able to stabilize the area and remove any incentives for an extended Albanian state – a project that can only be developed through the use of violence. Close cooperation with the EU is not only a rational security guarantee, but also a promise to become a part of the Regional Security Complex based on a pattern of amity and on rules that completely exclude the use of force to serve political goals (Buzan & Wæver, 2003: 343-374). Just as the European Union created the right conditions for a sustainable peace in Europe after the World War II, it is likely that nowadays, the same institution can help serving the same goal in the Balkans.

4. Serbs in Bosnia and Serbs in Kosovo: direct linkage

The last argument of this paper concentrates on Serbs in Bosnia who have not excluded the possibility of demanding secession from Bosnia-Herzegovina since the independence of Kosovo became a reality. Thinking in such a direction is dangerous as it could challenge both the 1995 Dayton-created peace in Bosnia and the stability of the wider Balkan region. Assessing the quality of the Dayton Agreement, Woodward (1997: 384) argues that although it ended the war in Bosnia, it “did not provide an executive authority to make policy decisions, resolve differences, or define real strategy for peace.” Thus, since then the overall situation and future of Bosnia-Herzegovina, a country consisting of a joint Bosniak-Croat Federation and Bosnian-Serb governed Republika Srpska, has been subject to further analysis. This was mostly due to the disputable nature of the Dayton Agreement which created artificial borders within Bosnia, and according to Bose (2002: 67), accentuated “the deep divisions within the country.”

From the current perspective, while wishing to support their orthodox brothers ultimately determined to demand autonomy or self-determination from the newly created state of Kosovo, Republika Srpska may decide to benefit from the weakness of Dayton Agreement and demand secession from Bosnia-Herzegovina, and consequently link itself to Serbia. In fact, Raviv (2005) points out that “the civil part of the implementation is much harder and slower than the military one” – a component which may additionally encourage separation. Moreover, in his study, Bose (2002: 68) analyzes the constitution of the Republika Srpska and concludes that “the main goal of [its] framers is to convey that the RS closely approximates a sovereign state.” If created to become a sovereign state, then it is just a matter of time when the realization may begin.

The independence of Kosovo was followed by numerous protests in both Serbia and Republika Srpska. Consequently, on 21 February 2008, the parliament of the Republika Srpska

adopted a resolution enabling the RS authorities to organize a referendum to push for secession of the RS from Bosnia in case the international community recognized independence of Kosovo. Branislav Dukic, leader of the Serb Movement of Independent Associations (SPONA), called Milorad Dodik, the Prime Minister of Republika Srpska, to include a referendum on RS independence in his electoral campaign. Even more, as a response to Kosovo independence, from Dukic's standpoint, the Bosnian Serbs "shall request independence for the Serb Republic as well. If Kosovo's illegal parliament can proclaim independence, the Bosnian Serb legal parliament should immediately proclaim independence for Republika Srpska without calling for a referendum" (Alic, 2008). Such a drastic position to confront a newly created state corresponds to how the Serbian Radical Party perceives the future of RS – in its unity with Serbia. In a 1998 interview entitled *Dayton and Democracy*, Nikola Poplasen, leader of the Serbian Radical Party in RS, stressed that

"some political or historical goals may be achieved in five, ten or 20 years ... The existence of the Serbian people in Republika Srpska and in other countries in the Balkans is possible and will be prosperous only on the condition that other peoples who live in the Balkans live in peace ... I cannot decide whether Republika Srpska will unite with Serbia, or whether Bosnia will become stronger, in ten years or so, but all the people who live here must make that decision in a legitimate and democratic way."

This interview clearly suggested the uncertainty of the future of the RS. In order to understand direct linkage between Serbs in Bosnia and Serbs in Kosovo, Andjelic (2003: 111) goes back to the period before the 1998 conflict in Kosovo and concludes that the linkage is not a recent phenomenon, but rather something that had already existed: "there was pressure from Serbia to stage meetings in Bosnia-Herzegovina to support fellow Serbs in Kosovo. It did not come from official institutions in Serbia, but from individuals and groups. However, they were supported in every sense by the Serbian communists." Today, such a relationship is confirmed even more by Kosovo independence. Serbs remaining in Kosovo have full support from Serbs in Bosnia whatever their decision might be.

Thus, the question of responsibility in this case is a conundrum, with opinion divided between the parties concerned. Dismembering Bosnia-Herzegovina would mean going back to the period of the collapse of Yugoslavia. It is true that while using the terminology of peace process and reconciliation, the international community has been involved in changing the country, although its presence has very often been perceived as an external imposition of what is to be done and what it not. While certain improvements including tax reform, police reform, the development of a national security and defence system, and the capture of war criminals have been acknowledged, Zaum (2005) is suspicious about the degree and the way the international community should be involved in solving Bosnian problems. According to the author (2005: 51), although the international community has done much, there was minimal local ownership and participation in the reform

processes. For Zaum (Ibid.), “such lack of local ownership is indicative of an approach to policymaking by states and organizations involved in state-building missions that perceives the problem of state-building to be technical, rather than political,” and thus his main criticism is directed towards the international community which prioritized the technical nature of the problem over the political one.

Accordingly, an independent Kosovo can find itself in a similar situation if the international community opts for an inadequate approach. To what extent the international community is capable of dealing with post-independence Kosovo and contributing to a lasting peace between the Serbian minority and Albanians is another issue worthy of consideration. In their analysis, Kostovicova and Bojicic-Dzelilovic (2008: 9), identify the EU as an actor bearing a remarkable responsibility for both failure and success in the Balkans. The authors (p. 21) address their criticism by looking at the EU’s “lack of transnational dimension in dealing with the region ... the EU has not managed to tackle the source of strength of the region’s shady transnational networks.” Thus, it is the EU with its approach which can help overcome the problems from the past and accommodate the still existing differences. A civil society can also play a valuable role. According to Devic (2008: 43), the challenges civil society faces are alarming as they are often involved in “parallel structures” and thus in an “antipolitics model” working for one side’s benefits – a model making cooperation between constituent groups of the civil society harder, if not impossible. Moreover, whether the EU-led mission in Kosovo or greater civil society involvement, or both, will play the leading role in the Balkans and thus generate peace and stability in both post-Dayton Bosnia and post-independent Kosovo is a matter of predictability, currently in many circles considered a dangerous topic to discuss.

5. Conclusions

This paper explores three different scenarios in regard to the current situation characterizing independent Kosovo. The first argument offered a wider understanding of how Serbian minority may reject the independence of the province and use available tools to demand a closer linkage with Serbia. Following on from this, Serbian and Albanian responsibilities have been examined: while the Serbian one lies in being opened up for greater inclusion and cooperation within separated Kosovo, the Albanian side’s main responsibility is the establishment of a functioning state based on democratic institutions capable of fighting organized crime and corruption while reducing poverty and unemployment rates. In order to encourage Serbs to remain, as suggested by Kupchan (2005: 6), “ethnic Albanian leaders will need to capitalize on the prospect of independence to promote tolerance and protect minority rights.”

The second argument discussed the consequences independent Kosovo may have on encouraging a pan-Albanian nationalist movement, and consequently separatist tendencies in northern Macedonia. Having examined responsibilities deriving from both Albanian and Macedonian parties in regard to post-independence Kosovo, it demonstrated that being overambitious (especially in terms of territorial pretensions) can lead to another conflict. Here, as in any other sensitive issue in the Balkans, the international community is required to react by using adept diplomacy while coordinating its actions with leaderships from the countries in the Balkan region.

The third argument considered the situation in post-Dayton Bosnia and how the Serbian part of it may react in relation to the position of the Serbian minority within independent Kosovo. While acknowledging the unstable situation in Bosnia, the argument pointed out that dividing Bosnia-Herzegovina along ethnic lines could generate a new conflict similar to the one former Yugoslavia faced in 1991. Once again, the responsibility for avoiding the spread of new violence is to be divided between the local parties supported by adequate but limited international assistance.

Overall, while having in mind Cox (1996) and his advocacy for standing back from the existing order to question how it came into being, how it may be changed, and how that change may be influenced or channelled, this paper aims at understanding the underlying structural change as a necessary component for the security in the Balkans. Thus, while having in mind the responsibilities each party is subjected to, if one conclusion is to be drawn from the arguments elaborated, it would be that the most likely way to achieve stability in the Balkans is its integration in the European Union framework. In addition, as stated by Human Rights Watch (2008), while Kosovo is *de facto* independent, it remains “imperative that Kosovo authorities and the EU-led mission protect minorities from the violence that has been a persistent feature of Kosovo’s post-war history.” In the case of Kosovo, one hopes that the process of structural change aimed at securing better future, starts as soon as possible without negative implications for other Balkan states.

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