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Kosovo's independence cannot remain hostage to the will o' the wisp of Serbian goodwill

By Marko Attila Hoare, 30th November 2008

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1. The deployment of EULEX, the EU's law and order mission in Kosovo, on the basis of 'agreement' with Serbia and Russia, represents a dangerous precedent and unnecessary concession to ill-willed parties.**
- 2. Although not formally based upon it, the UN Security Council's approval of EULEX's deployment flows from UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon's 'six-point plan', that undermines Kosovo's independence in order to appease Serbia and Russia.**

3. The EU's readiness to support the Ban plan is part and parcel of a general drive in the EU toward appeasement of Russia, including over missile defence and over Georgia.

4. Britain and the US must put a brake on this policy of appeasement, and wage a more active campaign in defence of Kosovo's independence, bringing pressure to bear on allies that are undermining Western interests in the Balkans.

5. Ultimately, the battle for Kosovo will be won when the Kosovar state is capable of exercising its authority unchallenged across its entire territory; to achieve this, we must not be afraid of defying Serbia and Russia.

Once again, Europe has become a serious threat to stability in the Balkans. The UN Security Council has voted to deploy EULEX, the EU's law and order mission in Kosovo, on the basis of the six-point plan of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon. The plan panders simultaneously to a Serbia that appears determined to keep fighting a war it has already lost, a Russia whose own ill-will and lack of faith have been demonstrated in Georgia, and EU members for which toadying to Russia is an end in itself. Although the UN Security Council vote did not **formally mention** the plan, and although the US has been **at pains** to stress that Kosovo's opposition to the plan has been respected, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this is merely a fudge intended to mollify Kosovar opinion. Deploying the EU force in Kosovo only on the basis of agreement with Serbia and Russia represents a dangerous precedent and unnecessary concession to ill-willed parties. This policy of 'anything for a quiet' life must be halted to avoid serious damage to our interests, both in the Balkans and in Europe as a whole.

The Ban plan has been rejected by the Kosovar leadership and by all sections of Kosovo Albanian political and public opinion, as contrary to Kosovo's constitution and damaging to its territorial integrity, and it is worth pausing for a minute so see why this is so. The plan bases itself on UN Security Council 1244, which guaranteed the 'sovereignty and territorial integrity of

the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia'. As the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was transformed into the 'State Union of Serbia and Montenegro' in 2003, and as this union then dissolved in 2006 when Montenegro voted to become independent, talk of its 'territorial integrity' being maintained from 1999 is meaningless. The Ban plan has adopted this form to appease Belgrade, which wants to turn the clock back to before the international recognition of Kosovo's independence of this year, and sees reaffirming the Resolution 1244 as a way of doing this. But paradoxically, Belgrade wishes to do this in order ultimately to move the clock forward - to impose a territorial partition on Kosovo as the price for its independence, a partition that it has already enacted on the ground. By confining the EULEX mission to the areas of Kosovo under the control of the Albanian-dominated government, and by maintaining separate police, courts and customs for the Serb enclaves under UN rather than EU control, the Ban plan will, if put into practice, solidify this soft partition, thereby appeasing Serbia on this score as well. Again, the US [claims](#) that the Security Council vote allows for the deployment of EULEX throughout Kosovo, but whether EULEX will really be allowed to assume responsibility in the north appears uncertain.

It is, perhaps, a sign of how far several of the Balkan states have progressed in terms of democracy and responsibility, that they show [greater awareness](#) of the dangers inherent in this scenario than the supposedly mature democracies of Western Europe. According to Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha, 'The plan has serious problems, since it favours a soft partition of Kosovo.' After meeting with Berisha, Montenegrin Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic warned that a partition of Kosovo would destabilise the region, consequently 'The division of Kosovo along ethnic lines is a buried plan'. And in the words of Croatian President Stipe Mesic: 'The division of Kosovo based on Serb appetites is a dream of Serbia which reminds us of the epoch of the Milosevic dictatorship. And if it really happens as Belgrade intends, this means a step backwards. It means the realisation of the dream of Great Serbia.' Although the sabre-rattling in which Serbia has engaged in recently in relation to [Croatia](#) and [Montenegro](#) as well as to [Macedonia](#) and the [Western powers](#) over Kosovo is essentially empty, concessions of the kind represented by the Ban plan may serve to persuade Serbia that, despite its

past defeats, aggressive behaviour does pay after all.

It is paradoxical that this UN plan for Kosovo - rejected by Kosovo, favoured by Serbia and unpopular with Serbia's Balkan neighbours - has won EU approval, despite British and US reservations. Paradoxical, given that 22 out of 27 EU members, including all the larger ones except Spain, have recognised Kosovo's independence: the EU has ended up favouring a plan opposed by the side in the conflict whose position its members mostly support, and supported by the side that opposes the views of most EU members. This only makes sense if we consider the dynamics of European geopolitics. The EU's foreign policy chief is Spain's Javier Solana, **considered by some** at Brussels to have been rather quick off the mark in backing the Ban plan, and to have done so on the basis of Spanish rather than EU political considerations. Spain is, of course, the only larger EU member, and the only West European country, that refuses to recognise Kosovo's independence, and that indeed continues actively to lobby against it.

Meanwhile, the big three of the continental EU, France, Germany and Italy, are motivated by a general policy of conciliating Russia on all fronts, therefore of mollifying the Serbia-Russia bloc over Kosovo. France holds the EU presidency, and at the EU-Russia summit this month at Nice, French President Nicolas Sarkozy attempted to **undermine** the US plan for a missile defence system for Europe - to the consternation of the Czechs and Poles - and called for an EU-Russia pact, despite Moscow's failure to honour the terms of the ceasefire in Georgia. Appeasement of Serbia, consequently of Russia over Kosovo is of a kind with this policy orientation, one that directly sacrifices the interests - and in some cases the sovereignty - of the Czech Republic, Poland, the Baltic states, Ukraine, Georgia, Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania and, of course, Kosovo.

Sarkozy's Gaullist pursuit of an independent French line, in a manner that undermines the unity of the Western alliance, is **not limited** to appeasement of Russia, however; he has vocally supported Greece in its 'name dispute' with Macedonia, in contrast to the US's support for Macedonia - despite the potentially tremendous damage that Greece's aggressively nationalistic

policy may do to the Balkans, and despite the fact that Macedonia has in recent years been a much better supporter of the Western alliance than has Greece. Sarkozy's determination to keep our crucial Turkish ally out of the EU, expressed and justified in the [crudest terms](#), is a further example of his pursuit of narrow French interests at the expense of common Western interests.

In Kosovo, the consequences of EU appeasement of Serbia are beginning to make themselves felt, with the Kosovars - up till now the most pro-Western nation in the Balkans - uniting in opposition to the form EU policy is taking. Their opposition is manifesting itself in [mass demonstrations](#), but there are ominous signs that resistance is also taking a more extreme form: on 14 November, a [bomb attack](#) was carried out on the EU representative office in Pristina, with a group calling itself the 'Army of the Republic of Kosovo' claiming responsibility, and threatening further attacks against Kosovo's Serb minority. Pursuing the will o' the wisp of Serbian goodwill over Kosovo, we have consequently let down our own Kosovar ally to such an extent that we risk engendering a new terrorist-extremist threat in this sensitive spot.

Things are going badly in the Balkans because Britain and the US, Kosovo's two strongest supporters in the Western alliance, have been far too reticent in standing up for our ally, and have allowed Russia, Serbia and their West European appeasers to make the running. Nor have we been sufficiently active on the world stage in promoting the cause of Kosovo's independence. Egypt, one of the opponents of Kosovo's independence, [blocked](#) Kosovo's participation at an Organisation of the Islamic Conference event in Cairo; despite being one of the largest recipients of US aid, the corrupt regime of Hosni Mubarak obviously has no qualms about undermining Western diplomacy in this gratuitous manner. Similarly, in last month's UN General Assembly vote on whether the International Court of Justice should rule on the legality of Kosovo's independence, it was left to the US and Albania, virtually alone, to vote against; the EU members that recognised Kosovo's independence all abstained, while the five EU members that reject Kosovo's independence all voted in favour. So it is the troublemakers - Spain, Greece,

Romania, Slovakia and Cyprus; the ones that are blocking a common EU policy on Kosovo - that aggressively promote their own policy, while Britain pursues the line of least resistance.

The rot must be stopped. If Britain and the US are to prevent further deterioration of the situation in the Balkans, discourage Serbia's escalating policy of revanchism, dampen the slide toward extremism in Kosovo, make it clear to Moscow that its mischief-making will be met with resistance, and put a brake on the Franco-German-Spanish-Italian appeasement drive, we must be much more forthright and vocal in promoting our policies and interests and in standing up for our friends. This means waging a much more active diplomatic and public campaign in defence of Kosovo. Diplomatic pressure should be brought to bear on the five EU members that have so far refused to recognise Kosovo's independence; in particular Spain which, as the only large and West European country among them, bears a particular responsibility for the failure to achieve EU unanimity on this question. Bad allies such as Egypt should be made to understand that they will suffer diplomatic and financial consequences if they continue to undermine us in the Balkans.

A successful diplomatic campaign is one half of winning the battle of Kosovo. The other half is to achieve facts on the ground that make this victory an irreversible fact. Serbian attempts to undermine Croatia's independence and annex parts of Croatian territory came to a definite end when the Croatian state became strong enough to assert its authority unchallenged across the whole of its territory. Similarly, Kosovo's independence will become a reality, irrespective of Serbian opposition, when a strong Kosovar state exercises full control over the whole of Kosovo, including the area north of the River Ibar. Consequently, the EULEX mission must not be allowed to become a permanent international protectorate that prevents the emergence of a genuinely independent Kosovo, but must work rapidly to put such a Kosovo on its feet. Bosnia, where the international protectorate has wholly failed to create a functioning state or a stable political order, and where the situation is [increasingly critical](#), should serve as a salutary warning of where a similar policy over Kosovo might

lead.

Britain and the US must therefore work together to ensure that the EULEX mission is a means to the end of a genuinely independent, territorially united Kosovo, not to the end of keeping a lid on things indefinitely so as to appease Serbia and Russia. The very aim of Belgrade and Moscow is to undermine us and promote Balkan instability; they will use our weakness and our fear of confrontation to ensure that the lid comes off. The corollary of this is that we cannot establish an independent Kosovo and stabilise the Balkans so long as we are pursuing the will o' the wisp of consensus with these regimes. We must choose: to acquiesce in the destabilisation of the Balkans by two regimes that are taking us for a ride, or to move forward and resolve the situation once and for all, at the price of a few impotent howls from them. It should not be a difficult choice to make.

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