

The Independent Kosova and the Rebirth of Serbia

By Xhavit Shala

A study¹ prepared by the Brussels Institute for Security Studies,² titled “The Serbian Issue” has been presented recently to Javier Solana and the EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs. The study emphasizes that Serbia must now decide to redefine its relations with Kosova if it wants to remain a functioning state with a future in the EU. “Serbia needs to look at its state interests and determine what its top priority is,” the report says. The institute advises that it is in Serbia’s interest to once and forever divorce itself from Kosova. The study will be made public in Belgrade in October.

The recommendations of the institute are valuable for the Albanians not only because of the weight of this advice but also because of the fact that they come at a time when Kosova status talks are getting underway. The Institute for Security Studies is part of the EU institutions and this study was undertaken on the account of the EU. The institute was founded by the Council of Europe in 2001 with the goal of enriching the strategic debate, promoting fundamental EU interests and contributing towards creating a common EU culture on security matters.

This institution does not stand alone in its conclusion that independence for Kosova is the best solution for Serbia. Other institutions as well in Europe and the US and in Serbia have also made the same point before.

There are a series of factors that determine the conclusion reached by these institutes. The Albanians of Kosova that make up more than 90 per cent of the population never conceive of respecting the Serb state and calling it their own. The antagonism between the Serb and Albanian communities is centuries long and the Serb government would never be able to administer this territory. Their proposal “of more than autonomy, less than independence” would only ensure that Serbia would remain unstable, insecure and never functional enough to be admitted to the European Union. Kosova would continue to pull Serbia towards the abyss.³

The demographic growth of the Albanian population would present another serious threat to Serbia. In a supposedly joint state, the Albanians with their high birth rate

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² The article was published as an editorial in the daily “Korrieri” 03.10.2005; www.acnss.com

³ Ivan Ahel, an expert in the theory of administration, in his study titled “A systematic approach to the issue of Kosova” puts forth a series of arguments of why Serbia should let go of Kosova. Parts of the study were published in Belgrade’s daily “Danas” and the study itself was carried out in framework of the Forum on Ethnic Relations in Serbia. Danas, March 4 and 5, 2006

would threaten to quickly fill up the uninhabited areas of Central Serbia. In about 40 years the joint state could have an Albanian majority population which would not favor Serb interests and carry unforeseen consequences for them.⁴

Holding on to Kosova would also be economically fatal to Serbia. According to Serb sources, in 1980 alone it cost Serbia 1.5 million USD every day to maintain order in Kosova. If the 15 billion or more dollars spent in Kosova in the last 15 years would have been invested in the Serb economy, the country would be ahead of many others in Southeastern Europe today. Even in the case of a hypothetical dependence of Kosova on Serbia, any further Serb investment there would mean economic loss for Serbia. The economic expenses required to keep Kosova could not be justified by the revenue that would be generated from exploiting its resources.⁵

By voluntarily giving up Kosova, Serbia, which up to now has been a country that consumes security for the West, would automatically gain a different status. Thanks also to its old friendship with Western countries, it would be able to improve relations with the EU and the US and become an important security partner for them.⁶ Serbia's return to the European political theater would be much more beneficial than its insistence on forced coexistence with the Albanians in Kosova.

The peaceful separation of Kosova from Serbia would release important positive energies in Serbia. It would release the Serbs from the psychological burden that they have experienced in Kosova⁷ and it would deliver them once and for good from the

⁴ Central Serbia is experiencing an intensive depopulation. Young people leave and only men in their 60 are seen working in the fields. From an active population of 2.563.000 in 1948, it fell to 1.040.699 in 1991. There are no concrete data for 2004 but the estimates show a depressing situation. The village population of Central Serbia is old, less educated and practically incapable of advancing agricultural production. The vacated spaces of Central Serbia await the Albanian population that may take over the buildings. This is what the Serb government should first concern itself with when it deals with the final status of Kosova. Kosova on the other hand is experiencing a real boom in the population -Ivan Ahel, "A systematic approach to the issue of Kosova."

⁵ Ivan Shijakovic: Should Serbia offer independence to Kosova? Mr. Shijakovic is a Sociology Professor at the Economic Faculty of Banja Luka. The study was published in the daily Danas on April 21, 2005.

⁶ Among other things, in his analyses Shijakovic says: "It is not possible to administer a territory with a population that over 90 per cent of which will not respect any decision and who do not consider this state as their own. In such circumstances, there can be no stable and secure state. This would present us with a degradation of politics and security that could push other parts of the Serbian state over the cliff. Any further investment in Kosova is economically irrational. By giving up Kosova Serbia would improve its relations with the US and Europe. From a suspicious and unreliable interlocutor, Serbia could become a secure and important partner. It would have the right to provide solutions and give advice to others."

⁷ The Serb nations could become free of this psychological burden, Mr. Shijakovic says. "There is no Serb who does not experience Kosova as a big problem. The sentiments towards Kosova and Metohia are twofold. On the one hand, there is the aureole of myth and sacredness, of pride and resistance, and on the other hand, there is the bitter reality of the losers, an intensive development in the last 40 years and a gradual development for centuries now. As the situation of the losers is spreading and becoming clearer, the mythic dimension is turning into a mythomania."

mythological crown of pride, resistance which risks turning into a mythomania. These energies could then help Serbia resolve its real problem of Euro-Atlantic integration.

The final divorce of Kosova from Serbia would also help the Serb people achieve another result in a different field. With the passing of time, it would help Serbia get rid of its political forces and politicians that have tied their career and political survival to the old mythic Serb nationalism. These forces have never seen their success in working to secure a sustainable development and European integration for their country.

The Serb population in Kosova would also benefit from Kosova's independence. The manipulation of the Serb minority in Kosova has increased significantly. They are subjected to continued pressure that aims to discourage any attempt to integrate them into the life of Kosova. The insistence on keeping them passive and secluded in their enclaves only serves the Parties in Belgrade to score more points with their voters on the grounds that they are standing up for the rights of the Serb minority in Kosova. With an independent Kosova this would end and the Serbs who choose to live there could truly have the chance to live as equal citizens in the Republic of Kosova.

We would conclude by saying that as long as Serbia will continue to fight over the territory in a perpetual struggle with the Albanian population, it will never become a properly functioning state and will not be able to move forward toward integration. The creation of the independent state of Kosova would provide a new beginning to Serbia as well.

