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KOSOVO AND THE REGION:
CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAITING GAME

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Introduction

The internationalization 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 neighboring states, posed a threat to regional security and peace.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 recognizes the territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia 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 the political status of the territory was settled (reintegration into Croatia in the first case, independence in the second) but international assistance was considered necessary to protect the human and minority rights of these respective populations while the transition took place -- 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, 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 acts of internationalization and temporary protectorate, however, have irrevocably changed the Kosovo issue. Although the goal of this transitional authority is declared to be the restoration of extensive autonomy for the province, according to the constitutional rights accorded by the 1974 Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the UNSCR includes as a basis for that autonomy the draft political agreement presented at Rambouillet in February and its presumption of a referendum in Kosovo at the end of three years on the province's final political status. 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. Like the creation of a Palestinian nation, but in a radically shorter period of time, the term *Kosovar* (the Slavic word for a person from Kosovo) is now widely used for the Albanian population of Kosovo, not as before March 1999 for all people regardless of ethnic and national identify originating from Kosovo. 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 Deutsche Mark as local currency, represent *sovereign* prerogatives and may not be easily reversible.

A Third Way? The Option of Delay

Whether the argument is based on the brutality of the Serbian regime in Kosovo in the 1990s or on the *faites accompli* of the international response (the Rambouillet proposals, the NATO bombing campaign, and the decisions of UNMiK and the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR)), the options for Kosovo now include the very real possibility of independence. To square the circle between the international commitment to Yugoslav sovereignty, made clear in UNSCR 1244 and held strongly by many states in the world including in Europe, and the current reality, supported by other states, the architects of policy toward Kosovo are focusing on the *political process* that should evolve in Kosovo over the next few years. This focus has shifted the nature of current options: from a choice between extensive autonomy (tantamount to separate republican status within the Yugoslav federation) or independence, to a debate over timing. For some, independence should be declared immediately, while for others, a decision must be delayed and emerge out of the political process.

Accordingly, the debate is ever less about independence but the consequences of ambiguity and a postponed decision. For those who advocate an immediate decision, if that status is not clear, the evolving political process cannot be about anything except Kosovo's political status, rather than the goals of democracy, good governance, and reconstruction. 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 – the great advance of the Stability Pact that this is now possible – it cannot even begin until there are states, which includes not only Kosovo but the rest of the F.R. Yugoslavia and possibly the neighbors that will be affected by Kosovo's status.

For those who advocate delay, however, 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. Faced with very real fears among neighboring states as far as Romania and northward about the precedent being set, delay is said to prevent by postponement a new chain of demands for self-determination and separation and the preemptive maneuvering within states that this 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 permanent five members of the U.N. Security Council, delay avoids risks to that unity, which was wearing thin by the end of May 1999, or a serious row among the major powers.

Indeed, the choice has already been made in favor of delay and ambiguity for reasons of international disagreement and major-power politics, not for reasons of the best course to stability in the region. No state is currently ready to violate Yugoslav sovereignty and UNSCR 1244 and to recognize 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 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 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[1]

The question of Kosovo's final status, however, is not primarily a question of independence or autonomy. It is (1) whether the question of Kosovo is about the status of the province or about the Albanian national question, with its wider implications in the region, and (2) the catalytic and indirect effect of the Kosovo question on the political conditions that are supposed to change. The question of timing is not about the best way to manage this choice but about the interaction between the political process within Kosovo and the political dynamic in the region. The conflict over Kosovo, at least since 1981, has always been more about its external consequences, not its internal order. This remains true today. Both choices -- independence or autonomy -- are statements about a relationship – between Kosovo and its neighbors, 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 criteria for changes in Serbia would justify restoring sovereignty? The Albanian national question is as much 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 neighborhood.

What happens to Kosovo primarily is, and should be, about the <u>consequences</u> of the decision on final status and, equally, of the way that the decision is made. Those consequences are largely about its effects on its neighborhood, and only minimally about the people of Kosovo. One cannot discuss the options for Kosovo without an understanding of its regional context

[1] 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, take the consequences into account. My thanks to Roberto Toscano for this information.

and the implications for the region of each option. In fact, there is no solution to the Kosovo conflict apart from a regional solution.

After illustrating the regional character of the Kosovo problem, I will return to an assessment of the consequences of a waiting game and then propose the elements of a regional approach that might prevent more war.

Background: Regional effects of the Kosovo conflict

For Albanian nationalists and the neighboring states of Kosovo, the question of Kosovo is an Albanian national question. What are the rights of the people of Albanian identity living outside Albania -- minority rights or national rights to self-determination, and if the latter, to equal rights to governance with other nations of the state in which they are citizens (such as Macedonia or Montenegro) or to separation and the goal of joining all "Albanian lands" in one nation-state? Kosovo plays a special role in this national question ever since 1912 and the first Balkan War, when the major powers decided that the territory contested between 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 a question of minority rights or of national rights within another state but a question of historical error and territorial sovereignty, either as an independent state or a part of a larger Albanian state.

The external effects of the issue of Kosovo 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 questions of regional security. But in a political context in which identities and states are being reformed, redefined, and reconstituted, including changes in borders, the case of Kosovo has been a catalyst or instrument of these reformulations throughout former Yugoslavia and the wider region.

The relation between Kosovo and its neighborhood can be illustrated in three periods of the Yugoslav crisis: its beginning around 1981, its climax in 1985-90, and the current situation after the bombing in 1999.

1981

Although the dispute over Kosovo (or Kosovo-Metohija, as Serbs call it) has been a feature of Yugoslav politics throughout the century, student riots over lousy cafeteria food at Pristina university in 1981 reignited awareness of the conflict when the demonstrations

unexpectedly escalated into demands for separate republic status within the Yugoslav federation. Although the demand, in effect to secede from Serbia – to be "masters in their own house" as they said – would appear to be about Pristina-Belgrade relations, its effect was far more threatening than it seemed on the surface. Raising the question of borders throughout the country for the first time since the catastrophic events of 1967-71, associated largely with Croatian nationalism that included demands for a separate seat in the United Nations (citing the Ukraine parallel), and in the first, uncertain year of the transition to a post-Tito era (Tito died in May 1980), the demonstrations provoked concern throughout the country over the status of the internal borders and the country's integrity. The greatest reaction, in fact, was not in Serbia but in neighboring Macedonia, where a large Albanian minority was also partly concentrated territorially in an area that bordered Kosovo. Tensions between the Macedonian government and its Albanian minority in the 1990s have roots, it is argued, in the government's reaction to the perceived threat of 1981 and the reduction in Albanian minority rights during the 1980s. But even in distant Slovenia, the Albanian demand for recognition of national rights on the basis of *numbers* revived the periodic concerns of Slovenes about the fate of the numerically smaller nations in Yugoslavia. Because Albanians were a national minority with full cultural rights but not national rights in the Yugoslav constitution – like all non-south Slav citizens of Yugoslavia, they did not have the status of constituent nation – their claim was a simple democratic one which threatened to replace the collectively defined privileges of constituent nations with the principle of majority rule. Facing pressures at the time from economic reformers and the IMF program to gain greater efficiency in federal decision-making through majority rule (such as in the Central Bank), in a context within Slovenia where Slovene cultural and intellectual nationalists were reviving the 1920s debate about the fate of small nations and a Slovene nation-state, the Slovene government intensified efforts to protect the political instruments of consensus rule, to use the veto in federal organs ever more assertively, and whenever that failed, to opt out of federal legislation and declare republican supremacy, paving the way toward independence whatever the intention.

Evidence that suggested a role in the surprising radicalization of the student demonstrations, from bad food to national rights, by the Albanian secret police in the neighboring regime of Enver Hodza was also perceived as a threat by the various members of the Yugoslav security apparatus, such as the intelligence community and the army, because it revived concerns that there were still external enemies opposed to the country's borders such as those they had faced in the 1960s from Germany and elsewhere in regard to Croatia. The reaction of the federal League of Communists, indeed, was to treat the demands as "counterrevolutionary" and impose martial law. Although this decision had to be approved by the leaderships of all eight federal units, it had an insidious effect on what was at the time a highly decentralized political system, including a balance in favor of the territorial defense forces of the republics as against the federal army. Aside from the drastic nature of the measure, martial law raised doubts about the use of the army (always seen as an instrument of central power) to restore internal order.

In Serbia itself, the protest fed directly into the political debate occupying much of the 1970s within Serbia proper over the 1974 Constitution, the place of Serbia in the federation, the

fragmentation of Serbs by the federal borders, and the formidable problem of governance that the extensive provincial autonomy granted Vojvodina and Kosovo in that constitution presented to the republican government.[2] There were also few issues more likely to act as a lightning rod of Serbian nationalism than Kosovo because of its central role in the development of Serbian national consciousness and identity. The Serbian leadership at the time were middle of the road economic reformers, trying to find a way under declining economic fortunes to regain control of republican finances for modernization and liberalization but without igniting the national question. Even if the International Monetary Fund program of 1982 for macroeconomic stabilization and debt repayment had not required political and economic reform that included the federal-republic relationship, this link between the republic's capacity to govern and promote economic prosperity under market reforms, on the one hand, and the national question made it increasingly difficult for the centrist leadership to hold the line against Serbian nationalists, increasingly anti-communist and anti-Titoist at the time, and their historicist and cultural approach to Serbian national identity and ideology.

1985-90

The relation between Slobodan Milosevic's rise to power in Serbia and Kosovo has been repeated so often that it has taken on the status of popular folklore, both in areas of former Yugoslavia and in the world at large. More important in the light shown on the current relation between Kosovo and its neighborhood is the role that Kosovo played in the political dynamic of late 1980s Yugoslavia and its disintegration into nation-states. Two aspects of that dynamic are particularly important: the efforts during the mid-1980s by Serbs and Montenegrins from Kosovo to gain public attention in Serbia to their complaints of discrimination and pressure to leave the province at the hands of an Albanian-majority government, and the use made of the issue of Albanian human rights by Slovenia and Western powers in the fateful policies of 1990-91. Through a complex political dynamic at the Serbian and federal level, the protests and governmental reaction provided an opportunity for those who wanted change.

In Serbia this was anticommunist nationalist intellectuals who by 1986 used the plight of Serbs in Kosovo in support of their strand of Serbian nationalism that included a concern with Serbs outside Serbia proper. In Slovenia this was both intellectual and official nationalists who wanted to make the case for republican supremacy by arguing that only nations can protect human rights. By 1987, in an attempt to preempt this growing challenge to League-of-Communists rule and to break the paralysis in Serbian reforms seen to be caused by the autonomy of its two regions, Slobodan Milosevic recaptured the nationalist cause of Serbs in Kosovo for the party. With the theme of injustice and the obligation to protect Serb minority rights *and their claim to the land* in place of the technocratic language of the party and its political silence in the face of growing grievances, Milosevic linked Serb

[2] On this, see Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1995), and *Socialist Unemployment: The Political Economy of Yugoslavia, 1945-90* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990).

cultural idioms and the defense of Kosovo as part of Serbia and as an issue of borders. Within half a year, he had engineered an inner party coup; the next year he used demonstrations by Kosovo Serbs to pressure for changes in the leadership of Vojvodina, and a year later, in Montenegro. By March 1989, he exploited a strike of Albanian miners in Kosovo, who were protesting the replacement of their leadership, to obtain parliamentary approval for the new republican constitution.[3] Slovene officials had already been moving gradually toward independence, until 1987 by non-compliance with federal rules and regulations considered contrary to Slovene interests, and by October 1987 in a series of vetoes against federal economic and constitutional reforms (including a refusal to pay into the special fund for Kosovo any longer). But they, too, took advantage of the Kosovo Albanian miners' strike. At an extraordinary mass rally in Ljubljana on February 27, 1989, the Slovene President, Milan Kucan, declared the miners' strike a defense of the "AVNOJ constitution" (1943) and thus associated territorial sovereignty of the eight federal units (not only the six republics) with human rights. This direct challenge to the Serbs and Montegrins from Kosovo, to Slobodan Milosevic, and particularly to the nationalist position in the Serbian community that saw "Tito's borders" as a deliberate effort to weaken Serbia by fragmenting the nation among different republics, was not, however, an effort to promote democracy and human rights throughout Yugoslavia but to justify republican (and provincial) sovereignty and an exit from Yugoslavia. By linking two Helsinki norms – democratic governance and human rights – with the republics, they made an argument against the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia (another Helsinki norm), they framed the Yugoslav crisis for outside observers that eventually worked. By the fall of 1990, for example, even the U.S. Congress had agreed that the "problem" of Yugoslavia was the violation of "Albanian human rights" in Kosovo, and imposed, in effect, sanctions on the federal and Serbian governments (by restricting aid to the Slovene and Croatian republics until significant improvements occurred in Albanian human rights).

1999

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 the resulting U.N. Security Council Resolution, 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, was to bring 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 June 9 combined with the influx of Albanians from northern Albanian over the uncontrolled border, particularly into

[3] This episode is described in Susan L. Woodward, "Diaspora or the Politics of Disintegration: The Serbian Model in Perspective," forthcoming in Michael Mandelbaum, ed., *The New Diasporas of Eastern Europe* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2000).

the northern part of Kosovo, strengthens the claims for independence of Kosovo, and it links much more directly through personal and family ties (as did the refugee exodus into Albania during the bombing) the populations of north eastern Albania and Kosovo. This interchange and the nearly open border with Albania and Macedonia has led to a new stage in relations among Albanians in the three territories, a process of familiarization, 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 Thaqi 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, to make Kosovo a domestic issue in Albanian politics. But Albanian political development is still at the phase of deep polarization – a phase familiar to other post-communist transitions that can be passed – and the Kosovo issue directly reinforces that polarization. Instead of a process that should soften those divisions and mature into identities associated with policy and performance in government, the association of the two political camps with region (North and South), with clans (Gheg and Tosk), and with historical scars (both World War II and the communist period) is strengthened by the Kosovo dimension. Instead of a process of building an Albanian nation-state by orienting to Tirana and finding civil society approaches to reconciliation, the Kosovo issue orients many to Pristina. The links between the Kosovo Ghegs and the Democratic Party, between the KLA training and equipping and former President Berisha, and between Kosovo Albanians and the fascist struggles of WWII reinforce fears of Tosks, southerners, and Socialist voters that the demographic preponderance of the northern Ghegs, the association of Kosovo Albanians with anti-communism, and the perceived arrogance toward Albanian Albanians of those Kosovo Albanians who have been in Albania during the 1990s will overwhelm Albanian political development. It is not clear whether the fragile Albanian state has the resources to withstand these stresses and suspicions, let alone the increased opportunity for organized crime groups in 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 Shkodra-Podgorica axis that would add another obstacle to Albanian state formation.[4]

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" -- predates the bombing and the altered status of Kosovo by two generations. Nonetheless, the timing of the bombing campaign, as mentioned above, 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 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, instead caused enormous tensions between

[4] I wish to thank Miranda Vickers for her insights into this problem.

average Macedonians and the Albanian minority of Macedonia in focusing their anger at their international impotence, the costs they were having to pay without compensation, and the lack of attention for almost a decade at their economic impoverishment and high unemployment under international policies toward the region. 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 ethnic relations. The prospect of Kosovo's independence, in addition, revives fears that Xhaferi's repeated proposals for federalization of Macedonia, especially given his very close links to the UCK (Kosovo Liberation Army), are in fact a stalking horse for separatism.

The new Macedonian coalition 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 move their European agenda faster. Instead, the cancellation of UNPREDEP and a series of international agreements (such as one with Bulgaria attempting to end the stalemate over language that has been plaguing their relations) 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 a NATO force being actively discussed in western capitals prior to the bombing, UNPREDEP was replaced by a NATO presence oriented to the Kosovo campaign: in place of the protection they sought, Macedonians view NATO antagonistically as a "Kosovo force." The view that they can be abandoned in favor of Kosovo is reinforced by the outcome of the NATO operation. The international creation for the third time, however unwitting, of an ethnically homogeneous political entity out of former Yugoslavia (Croatia in 1995, Bosnia and Herzegovina after 1993, and now Kosovo) is particularly threatening to Macedonia, not only to its commitment to a multiethnic state but also from the prospect of Kosovo's independence and the fact that the Kosovo protectorate actually acknowledges for the first time in the Yugoslav saga that borders can indeed be changed.

In Serbia, the result has been to raise the Serbian question once again, including its influence on Serbs in Bosnia. The bombing campaign increased manyfold the problems facing the Serbian opposition, for it deprived them of the one platform that joined otherwise quarreling parties – that of Europeanization and economic reform – and gave Milosevic a powerful argument against them in accusations of treason. 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 during the previous two years. By causing the conditions of a possible humanitarian disaster this winter 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 indictment on war crimes of Slobodan Milosevic, his strengthened position has occurred in a context where he has nothing to lose, as the increasing violence and lack of restraint since May 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 all of the world was 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 defense as he rebuilds bridges, roads, and hospitals that Western powers refuse to do.

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 obtaining 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 still hoping to move with caution in hopes of avoiding violence and under international pressure to do so as well, the fact that sanctions were not removed after the MTA has substantially worsened the motivations for most Montenegrin politicians of their separatist moves. 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 in but it also lost them a great deal of time in moving slowly toward some altered arrangement. On an electoral mandate filled with promises of improved standards of living, Djukanovic's coalition are running out of time in any case if they must show results before the next election on their democratization and reform project. The prospect of Kosovo's independence, including its effect on the Albanian minority in Montenegro, gives even less time for reflection if they do not want to be trapped as well by the unpredictable consequences of Kosovo going first.

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 their primary policy concern. Most aid and international activity for Republika Srpska screeched to a halt during the campaign at what appears to have been misplaced fears of attack on international personnel. Even the possibility of a break-up of F.R. Yugoslavia, much hastened by the events, introduces new and potentially disruptive elements into the Bosnian political scene – such as what will happen to Sandzak and the important role of Sandzaklije in Bosnian politics, or how Serb politicians will reorient to Serbia – at a moment when the passage of time since the Dayton signing and the High Representative's Bonn powers have together seemed to be having effect, in moving toward moderation and normalization.

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 their 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 destabilizing and possibly even violent, ignores the effect of uncertainty on behavior. The waiting game

over Kosovo without serious compensatory actions in the region 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 have predictable consequences. And it is states, or the equivalent in regional/international alliances and organizations, 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. 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 regularized economic relations, and of some overarching concept for the region's place in Europe has led to a quasi-military approach through NATO, by default. Yet that NATO-ization of policy toward the region also lacks an underlying policy. 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 organized crime in Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, or Bosnia and Herzegovina, by local factors, such as political will, populist politics, and habitual corruption, the fact is that the appalling external environment bears much responsibility. The post-communist transition cannot succeed, as we see 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 these 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 currently having a negative impact on the process of state formation, including 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 above, the processes of reconciliation with the past, of building a post-communist national ideology focusing on commonalities and oriented to Tirana, and of reducing the destabilizing level of political polarization have all been pushed in the wrong direction by the fortunes of the UCK (KLA) and the new prospects for Kosovo's independence. Orientation around Albanian 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, the extraordinary cooperation over the refugee crisis and 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 on Kosovo is that events in Kosovo will take a course, either directly or indirectly, undesired by international actors but which they cannot control. For example, as if to compensate for delay on deciding Kosovo's final status, there is growing consensus by the players who matter on holding early elections at the municipal level. Despite the lessons of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the absence of a voters' register, they believe that the political process requires an 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 those who are convinced that Hashim Thaqi will win those 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 neighboring 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 university level – is increasingly perceived to be part of an overall plan, with resulting increase in political tensions. The prospects of such an outcome as early as the spring of 2000 is pushing some Montenegrins toward preemptive action and has intensified fears in Macedonia about Xhaferi's plans and motives. Because Xhaferi has already been emboldened by the strength of his party's showing in the first round of the Macedonian presidential elections, his assertiveness is being perceived as linked to Kosovo independence. In feeling it necessary to respond to his campaign rhetoric, moreover, the socialist party candidate, Tito Petkovski, used language that is now being identified as similar in its anti-Albanian tone to the rhetoric in late 1980s. Such perceptions, which cannot be separated from the effect of the options for Kosovo, is leading to increasing political polarization in Macedonia after such success under the Gligorov regime at keeping passions calmed. The next step is likely to be Macedonian government actions to seek support in the region to replace that which the international community had once provided – perhaps, as some argue, to lean more on Bulgaria or even Serbia, with implications again 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 democratization in Serbia back by years, but it also worsened dramatically the conditions that any new government will face and thus reduces the likelihood of rapid change, 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 has made it more important in conditions of popular anger that will not permit opposition parties politically to do as the international community wants.

The delays also have effects on less directly involved states. What prospects are there for Bulgarian success in its EU accession talks that are now to begin 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 rise in anti-Western opinion over the bombing campaign and the feeling of betrayal throughout the region (including Russia) by pro-Western reformers on whom the West is counting for democratization, 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 F.R. Yugoslavia as the reality of a Serbian national state begins to drive politics within Serbia. The economic damage to Republika Srpska resulting from effects of the bombing campaign, closed border, and reimposition of sanctions, when it is still lagging seriously in external assistance, complicates seriously the efforts by its political leaders to ignore any serious movement to create a Serbian state. 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 the focus on the national question onto improved lives and diversions. Those who write about the Belgian case stress the same: that the management of 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 regional framework in which to embed the Kosovo options, then the political dynamic currently in process leads to further disintegration and the redrawing of borders – whether by *fait accompli* or international conference. Because there is no possibility of an international conference in sufficient time, that means the likelihood of several more wars and a process by which irredentism moves northward without any brakes. The alternative to a regional framework is continuing instability, crisis, and probably war. The only question is how many borders are 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. But within that shell, there is much that can be done to manage the consequences of the Kosovo operation.

1. Border regimes: a preventive deployment on the Kosovo-Macedonian border and the Kosovo-Albanian border could be the start of restoring some confidence in the international position on borders and reducing the fears that lead to preemptive, destablizing actions. To counteract the threat of the "Albanian national question" and of the "Serbian national question," explicit transborder relations among Albanians and among Serbs that respects the current borders should be structured by international actors. Specific joint projects of

cooperation on very pragmatic issues will enable people to learn how to cooperate, an experience sorely lacking in this decade.

2. Self-determination and sovereignty: the undefined status of Kosovo has now made the redefinition of the Montenegrin-Serbian relationship a matter of some urgency. Montenegrin independence or Kosovo independence will most likely lead to movement by Sandzak autonomists to go all the way, but Sandzak 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: substantial foreign aid to Montenegro to strengthen the Djukanovic coalition against very real inroads of the Bulatovic-led opposition with the Montenegrin voters and as a far better alternative than military contingency plans; as fast as possible, the end to the isolation of Serbia and identification of partners who can help revive negotiations over a confederation that aids Montenegro in avoiding a final, abrupt step of independence. As for Macedonia, international consensus must all be developed immediately on how to 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 to a known challenge that is effective. Reliance on military responses to make up for policy failures (particularly as the United States enters a season of presidential electioneering) cannot be sustained.

3. An end to the sanctions regime, whatever method can be found, such as a distinction between the Tribunal indictments and the sanctions on Serbia. Until region-wide normalization occurs, the consequences of waiting will be negative. The psychological and political consequences of the sanctions regime on the opposition to Milosevic needs to be addressed directly. Above all, if the waiting game is based in part on a change of government in Serbia, then outsiders must give the opposition parties an issue on which they can win.

4. A region-wide security regime: it should surely be the strongest lesson of this past decade that stability does not occur 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 in 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 this political process should replace efforts focused on how to draw down KFOR. And as long as the murder of Serbs in Kosovo continues, it will keep alive the revanchist forces in Serbia. A KPC 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 addressed directly, in place of the competition among the three – for example for basing rights to assist NATO logistics. The essential role that NATO played in the success of the Marshall Plan should not be forgotten.

5. Economic policy by the multilateral and bilateral donors to countries in the region should address more directly the widespread calls for demilitarization. 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.

6. 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 who are those understandably most impatient for change.

7. Europeanization: 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 Europeanization, not limited to drawn out, conditionality-based policies of eventual accession.

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 neighboring states. Those states are also undergoing processes of uncertain, potentially radical redefinition, processes that are contingent in part 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 neighbors that must be negotiated and accepted if it is to be stable and peaceful and that in any case will 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: to avoid resolving their own disagreements over Kosovo's future by leaving the outcome undefined and praising the virtues of ambiguity while assuming that the NATO action brought the region closer to resolution and long-term peace.