

Albania's Attempts to Refocus Kosovo War Crime Tribunal onto Serbia Will Not Work

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Kosovo Albanians via their allies in Tirana are once again attempting to antagonize Serbia, this time through the Self-Determination Movements initiative. The Movement is trying to push through the Albanian Parliament a declaration condemning the so-called "Serbian genocide in Kosovo." The initiative, launched by the representative of the Self-Determination Movement in Albania, Elvis Hoxha, is a response to the trials in The Hague against the Kosovo Liberation Army's (KLA) terrorist leaders. It is an attempt to distract attention from Albania's terroristic role in the 1999 Kosovo War and put it back onto Serbia.

Despite attempts by the Self-Determination Movement to distract indictments against the top KLA leaders, there were nervous reactions in the de facto Kosovo capital of Pristina and in the Albanian capital of Tirana after Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić made a statement comparing the situation in Kosovo to that of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), i.e. an indigenous population being replaced and ruled over by a later migratory and invading force.

Kosovo Albanians are trying through Tirana what they cannot do alone. It is for this reason that the Self-Determination Movement launched this initiative in the Parliament of Albania and not in the Parliament of Kosovo. This would suggest that the Movement is aware that the self-proclaimed independent state of Kosovo does not have international legal subjectivity, which is why they are trying to see the international aspect of this initiative done through Albania. It is in the belief that because Albania is a NATO member it is afforded extra international privileges that Serbia does not enjoy.

Despite the initiative having no factual basis, if it is accepted and a resolution is passed in the Albanian parliament, it is possible that it will be presented before international forums such as the Council of Europe and the United Nations. If the declaration on genocide were adopted in the Albanian parliament, and later possibly in the European one, the image of the Specialized Court in The Hague would be significantly changed and could lead to accused KLA leaders, such as former Kosovo President Hashim Thaçi, being found innocent.

The indictment against the KLA leadership also mentions three military training camps close to Kukës in northern Albania near the border with Kosovo. It is generally known that the first KLA brigades entered the Serbian province from northern Albania where training centers were located. In addition, active officers of the Albanian military commanded KLA forces. We also cannot forget that Kosovo's former Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj is alleged to have been a mastermind behind the kidnapping of Kosovo Serbs who were taken to the infamous "[Yellow House](#)" in Albania where their organs were harvested.

The entire Serbian military, political and police leadership were tried and convicted before the Hague Tribunal because of the war in Kosovo. However, now that KLA figures will be tried for their terrorist and human rights breaking activities, the Albanians are attempting to distract The Hague with cheap tricks. Albanian politicians will try to turn the story around by claiming that Serbia is solely responsible for the crimes in Kosovo and not the KLA leadership and certain political structures in Albania.

Considering that the borders between Serbia and Albania have been open since November 10 within the framework of the "Little Schengen," and that relations between Belgrade and Tirana have never been better, the adoption of such a declaration would lead to a cooling of relations between the two countries. However, despite these attempts by members in the Albanian Parliament, it is unlikely that such a resolution on genocide will be adopted.

Taking into account the insistence of Brussels and Washington that it is necessary for Belgrade and Tirana to raise their level of mutual cooperation, and considering that both countries are EU member candidates, it is doubtful the resolution will be passed in the Albanian Parliament. Given that, except for the former Minister of Defense and the current president of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Albanian Parliament, Mimi Kodheli, none of the key political players in Albania support the initiative for now.

As far as Serbian-Albanian relations are concerned, Tirana has already acted as a doped patron of the Kosovo Albanians. This is not such a significant leap from the usual strategy of Tirana. What can be observed is that Albania's tactics are hot and cold, especially if we remember the constant inappropriate statements made by Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama and other Albanian officials, which replaced the so-called conciliatory rhetoric towards Serbia at international conferences and forums.

According to Mimi Kordelja, a similar initiative existed in 1998. However, it failed due to, as she said, the poor coordination of Kosovo and Albanian politics. Therefore, it appears that Albania is far more emboldened today due to its accession into NATO and its advanced pathway into the European Union.

Serbia for the foreseeable future, despite pressure from liberal forces within the country, is neither an EU or NATO member, or in an advance position in the accession processes. Because of this, Albania has the option to utilize its NATO membership and more advanced pathway towards EU membership to continue pressuring Serbia over the Kosovo issue. This is despite the hopes of Brussels and Washington for the two countries to cooperate under their own liberal vision. Despite the Self-Determination Movements initiative to distract The Hague from KLA crimes, which includes ethnic cleansing, drug and human trafficking, organ harvesting and destruction of historical religious sites, it is likely that it will not amount to anything as it is a cheap attempt to make a mockery of the international court.

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