

Endgame in Kosovo? The Destruction of Yugoslavia Continues

By [Jake Hess](#)

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The coming 'final status talks' on Serbia's southern autonomous province will complete the Western conquest of the Balkans

A decade ago this month [Nov 2005], a US-sponsored conference to end the Bosnian war opened in Dayton, Ohio. The peace treaty that resulted effectively concluded the first round of the Western-fueled breakup of Yugoslavia [1], the south Slav federation that led the Nonaligned Movement during the Cold War. A thoroughly partitioned Bosnia, comprised of Serbian and Muslim/Croat "Entities", was placed under the rule of a Western-installed colonial governor. This so-called "High Representative" and its wide-ranging powers was supposed to have a temporary mandate. In December 1997, it was extended indefinitely. [2]

Since its creation, the Office of the High Representative has rapidly accumulated vast power over the functioning of the Bosnian state, including executive authority to remove elected officials, dissolve regional legislative assemblies, appoint politicians, censor the media, and otherwise rule by decree. In effect, the "international community" has "assumed complete legislative and executive power over [Bosnia]", according to David Chandler, the leading critic of Dayton. [3]

Following the standard pattern, Western financial interests have trailed close behind their military Trojan Horse. The European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, through a proxy called the Commission on Public Corporations, is overseeing the privatization of Bosnia's public services. [4] Though the process has proceeded 'slowly' - to the unending chagrin of international financial institutions - no less than 1,284 companies were privatized between 1999 and 2003 alone. [5]

Bosnia has become a model for the West: not of 'humanitarian intervention', as the official story would have it, but of conquest. By this time next year, a Dayton-style colonial regime will almost certainly be running Kosovo, Serbia's southern autonomous province. After six years of NATO-EU occupation - ushered in by a ruthless US-led bombing campaign in 1999 - the UN Security Council recently gave its blessing to the opening of negotiations on the future of the province. But the Western rulers of Kosovo have already settled on a solution; these 'talks' will simply provide diplomatic gloss for their diktat.

You remember NATO's 1999 war against Yugoslavia. It was sold to Western public opinion as a 'humanitarian' response to Slobodan Milosevic's (non-existent) 'genocide' in Kosovo. In truth, it was simply a continuation of the US-European destruction of Yugoslavia, a process that began much earlier. For, even after the secessions of the early 1990s, a rump Yugoslav Federation of Serbia and Montenegro held on - and continued to resist the spread of

Western colonialism in the region. Milosevic's regime was not a member of NATO, the WTO, IMF or World Bank; 75% of its industry was state or socially owned. The West was not about to tolerate this defiant holdout against its rule.

The ensuing invasion settled the matter quite handily. As during the first Gulf War, American fighters systematically bombed civilian targets far outside the supposed battlefield. 14 Yugoslav tanks were destroyed, compared to 372 industrial centers - not one of them foreign-owned. [6] The Yugoslav Red Cross reported the following when the carnage subsided:

"the vital facilities of the Yugoslav economy have been destroyed. Destruction of factories, business and manufacturing plants amounted to over 100 billion US Dollars. The destruction of the petrochemical industry, as well as the biggest artificial fertilizer factor has caused inestimable damage to agriculture and the life of the whole Yugoslav community, and it will be impossible to repair these consequences for years. The NATO bombing of the Yugoslav road and railway networks has destroyed and made inoperable over 50 bridges, all airports, numerous railway and bus stations." [7]

A vast network of 'international' organizations, led by NATO and the EU, assumed control of Kosovo when the war ended. UN Security Council resolution 1244 then provided legal cover for their military occupation. As in Bosnia, a corporate invasion followed: the Kosovo Trust Agency recently boasted of a "record achievement...with the announcement of six rounds of privatization", including a "record selling bid" worth 5m Euros. [8] A coveted jewel is the enormous Trepca mine complex - estimated value \$5bn - which, when captured by the Nazis, supplied the German arms industry with 40% of its lead. A 775-acre permanent military base, Camp Bondsteel, has also been established. [9]

The West's Next Colony: Kosovo under 'Conditional Independence'

Kosovo, despite its obvious domination by NATO and the EU, is still officially part of Serbia. That is about to change. Western planners are envisioning a Kosovo under "conditional independence" - legally free from Serbia, factually an international protectorate run like Bosnia. Jurisdiction will be transferred from the United Nations, where it is currently, to the EU and NATO. In effect, "independent" Kosovo will be the West's newest colony.

At this point, the West is still trying to assume the posture of an 'honest broker', committed to striking a deal acceptable to all parties. But a steady stream of press reports have already let the cat out of the bag. As a "senior European diplomat" told Reuters, "conditional independence is the central consensus in the international community"; "the most obvious analogy would be the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia." [10]

The same arrangement was recently suggested by Kai Eide, Kofi Annan's Special Envoy to Serbia and Montenegro. Eide was commissioned to prepare a review of the situation in Kosovo and suggest whether or not final status talks should begin. He suggested they should, and even made a few underhanded proposals about what the outcome should be.

No matter what happens, "an international presence - military and civilian" will be 'needed' to implement the settlement. [11] That is, the current occupation will continue regardless. "The EU...will have to play the most prominent role", because "they will have the leverage and will be able to offer prospects in the framework of the European integration process"; in other words, the EU will accelerate the restructuring of Kosovo's economy along 'free-

market' lines. NATO, of course, "will also have to continue its presence." [12]

Eide then explicitly says the UN will step down from its current position, and notes the "lead role" will be "taken by others" - NATO and the EU, if his report is any indication. A "High Representative - or similar arrangement" will have to be "considered", and be "firmly anchored in the EU" with the participation of other outside powers, "in particular the US". This political "reconfiguration" will take place in a "coordinated manner" - meaning, it will be rubber stamped by the UN. [13]

As has happened in the past, the US and EU are teaming up to pursue their common imperial ambitions: the United States will back Kosovo's extrajudicial break from Serbia, and NATO will continue to supply the military muscle in the aftermath. Senior State Department official Nicholas Burns recently briefed the Senate on the matter. Though he made pretensions of objectivity, "diplomats said [Burns'] testimony was a clear signal the US looked favorably on independence", according to the Financial Times. [14] Commenting on the same affair, Reuters said the testimony "focused mainly on how independence [for Kosovo] would be achieved". Diplomats speaking on condition of anonymity said "Washington favors... 'supervised independence'". [15] As an added bonus, Richard Holbrooke - the former State Department official and architect of the Dayton Accords - expects 'independence' for Kosovo to lead to the dissolution of the Serbo-Montenegrin union, effectively demolishing the last vestige of south Slav unity. [16]

No doubt, Belgrade already knows it has lost Kosovo - the Serbian Jerusalem - forever. During the 'negotiations', it will seek to extract maximum concessions from the West in exchange for acceptance of the fait accompli. Serbia really has no choice but to consent to its own dismemberment. If it tries to resist, Brussels and Washington will simply isolate the pro-Western regime by denying it EU and NATO membership. [17] The country was devastated by sanctions in the 1990s; they're in no position to resist now, and nor do they have the means to in the first place.

This kind of national fragmentation is precisely what Yugoslavism was founded to prevent. Only by uniting the Balkan Slavs in a strong union, the argument went, could they hope to defend their interests and beat back foreign intrusion. The imperial powers always agreed. A century and a half after it was born, the "south Slav dream" has finally been killed; and all over Washington and Brussels, diplomats are smiling.

Jake Hess, 20, is a student activist based in Boston. He welcomes feedback at jakehess@hotmail.com.

Notes:

[1] The somewhat vague term 'Western' is often used in this article. It refers to the US, NATO, EU, and various associated institutions. Further clarification is often neglected because in many ways the conquest of Yugoslavia has been a joint project of these bodies.

[2] For a detailed critique of the Dayton Accords, see David Chandler, "Bosnia: Faking Democracy After Dayton", (Pluto, 2000). For a more concise treatment of the same issues, see Chandler's essay "Bosnia: Prototype of a NATO Protectorate" in Tariq Ali, ed., "Masters of the Universe? NATO's Balkan Crusade" (Verso, 2000).

[3] Chandler, "Bosnia: Prototype of a NATO Protectorate", pg 274.

[4] Kate Hudson, "Breaking the South Slav Dream: The Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia", (Pluto, 2003), pg 105.

[5] Agency for Privatization in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, "Results of privatization in the period 1999-2003", press release, 30 June 2004.

[6] Neil Clark, "The spoils of another war: Five years after Nato's attack on Yugoslavia, its administration in Kosovo is pushing through mass privatization", The Guardian, 21 September 2004.

[7] Quoted by Hudson, pg. 133.

[8] SEE Online, "Kosovo Trust Agency record achievements", 06 November 2005.

[9] John Pilger, "Calling the Kosovo Humanitarians to Account", the New Statesman, 13 December 2004.

[10] Matthew Robinson, "Kosovo destined for independence, but on probation", Reuters, 12 October 2005.

[11] Kai Eide, "A Comprehensive Review of the Situation in Kosovo", United Nations report, 07 October 2005. Full text available online at www.kosovo.com/images/eide_oct0705.pdf

[12] Eide, pg. 16.

[13] Eide, pages 15 and 16.

[14] Guy Dinmore, "US backs Kosovo incentives for Serbs", Financial Times online, 09 November 2005.

[15] Saul Hudson, "US: Serbia can't join NATO without Kosovo Solution", Reuters, 08 November 2005.

[16] S. Hudson, "US: Serbia can't join NATO without Kosovo Solution".

[17] Reuters, "Independence only way forward for Kosovo: Holbrooke", 08 November 2005. Holbrooke says: "I cannot see any final status for Kosovo other than independence...in the end, the Serbs will have to choose between Brussels and Kosovo, its as brutal as that".

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