

Kosovo Independence: “End of Europe”

Top political analysts on Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov’s Kosovo warning

By [Global Research](#)

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MOSCOW, February 15 (RIA Novosti) – *RIA Novosti asked a number of top political analysts / experts to comment on the words of Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who has said that Kosovo’s independence could be the beginning of the end for Europe, and that official recognition of its sovereignty will threaten global security.*

What, we asked, will be the geopolitical consequences of Kosovo’s unilateral declaration of independence?

Alexander Rahr, a political analyst at the German Council on Foreign Relations and a member of the Valdai International Discussion Club, said:

Kosovo’s unilateral declaration of independence, and especially its recognition by European countries, would open up a Pandora’s Box. It may create a precedent for other separatist republics and autonomous regions, which would demand similar action and the same rights that may be granted to Kosovars.

Lavrov has a legal point. Basques may demand secession from Spain, Tiroleans could secede from Italy and Hungarians from Romania. North Caucasians may demand secession from Russia, and Bavaria may insist on independence from the Federal Republic of Germany.

But the West thinks that Lavrov is dramatizing the situation, because separatism mostly stems from economic problems, while Europe hopes that its economy is strong and stable enough not to give rise to separatism.

But the threat does exist, and Lavrov’s words, which are not considered important today, could become significant a few years from now.

John Laughland, co-author of the book ‘Russia: The New Cold War?’ and a member of the Valdai International Discussion Club, said:

As you know, I support the Russian position on Kosovo because it has the merit of coherence, whereas the West’s position is inconsistent and self-contradictory. The West (EU + US) supports the independence of Kosovo but opposes the independence of Flanders, Northern Cyprus, of Republika Srpska in Bosnia, of Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia etc. The West also opposes the division of Kosovo, whereas only Serbs live North of Mitrovica. Independence for Kosovo will stimulate similar calls for independence in Western

Macedonia and the Presevo valley. It may indirectly cause unrest in the Caucasus too.

Moreover, Kosovo will not actually be independent. The EU will take over from the UN its protectorate functions. Elaborate plans have been made for sending thousands of EU officials and police to “post-status” Kosovo, while the 16,000 NATO troops will remain. Kosovo would have had more real independence within Serbia than it has had under the UN or will have in Europe.

Lavrov is right to say that the independence of Kosovo will be the beginning of the end of today’s Europe because the current status of Kosovo is fixed by a UN Security Council Resolution (1244). If the EU and the US override that resolution, which says Kosovo is part of Serbia, they will have once again demonstrated their contempt for international law and shown themselves to be unreliable international partners.

Kosovo resembles Bosnia in the period 1878 – 1914. In 1878, the Treaty of Berlin put Bosnia under provisional Austrian administration while stipulating that it remained part of the Ottoman empire. In 1908, Austria violated the terms of the Treaty and annexed the territory directly. Serbia protested, but in vain. Ten years later the Archduke Franz-Ferdinand was assassinated by a Serb patriot in Sarajevo. The rest, as they say, is history.

Jan Carnogursky, prime minister of Slovakia in 1991 and 1992, an expert on Kosovo and a member of the Valdai International Discussion Club, said:

The recognition of Kosovo’s independence would be a tragedy for Serbs, for whom Kosovo is a foundation and an inalienable part of their national history.

The Serbian state was born in Kosovo and adjacent territories in the 9th and 10th centuries. Serbian orthodoxy is also rooted there, since St. Savva, the most revered saint in Serbia, founded many monasteries in Kosovo in the early 13th century. The province was also the core of the Serbian state during its prime in the mid-14th century.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Kosovo’s independence could be the beginning of the end for Europe. This is a dramatic, although essentially correct, view of the problem.

Moscow has never approved of the Western policy toward Kosovo and former Yugoslavia as a whole. Although it played a key role in stopping the war in 1999, Russia was the only member of the Contact Group that was not assigned its own sector of responsibility in the province. When the Russian paratroopers made their march to Pristina in June 1999, Serbs were jubilant, because they have always viewed Russia’s presence as the best guarantee of their rights.

Unfortunately, developments in Kosovo show that geopolitics can easily defeat moral and legal principles in the 21st century. The secession of Kosovo from Serbia without the agreement of Belgrade would create a precedent for Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transdnestr and give Moscow a moral right to recognize the independence of post-Soviet breakaway republics.

Daniel Vernet, director of the international relations desk at Le Monde and a member of the Valdai International Discussion Club in 2004, said:

I think [Lavrov's] words are too dramatic. The decision on Kosovo's independence is far from ideal; but given the current situation, it is the lesser of many evils. If I remember correctly, it is the policy that [Slobodan] Milosevic pursued since 1989 that is to blame for the current situation.

As for geopolitical consequences, I don't think anyone would benefit from using Kosovo's independence as a pretext for destabilization in the Balkans or adjacent European regions. I think that common sense will dominate and the international consequences of Kosovo's independence will be minimal.

James George Jatras, director of the American Council for Kosovo, said:

It appears that within days the UN-supervised Albanian Muslim administration in Kosovo will issue a unilateral declaration of independence followed by recognition by the United States and other countries. Serbia of course will reject such a development, as will Russia, and almost certainly China, whose vetoes in the Security Council the US would have circumvented.

It still seems underappreciated the extent to which the US action would shred any semblance of legality in the international system. It may be the first time a group of countries has purported to separate part of a state's territory without its concession of that fact. (To be sure, many countries have been defeated and occupied and forced to sign treaties ceding land. Even Edvard Benes signed away the Sudetenland in 1938. No Serbian hand will ever sign away Kosovo). International guarantees of territorial integrity such as the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act would be a dead letter.

The US action is also a heavy blow to perhaps the only part of the UN system with any real value: the Security Council, which has helped prevent any major war since 1945, much like the 19th century "Concert of Powers" helped ensure that no general war occurred in Europe from 1815 to 1914. Indeed, devaluing Russia's standing in the Security Council by thwarting its veto is a big "plus" for Washington, whose message to Moscow is intended to be: "Whatever you might think, this is still 1999. We can do as we please and you can't stop us."

The US action — supported by our utterly slavish "allies" in Europe - will not settle Kosovo's status. Kosovo's current status is clear: it is part of Serbia with an international presence to which Serbia has reluctantly agreed. After a unilateral declaration of independence and some countries' recognition, a competition would be kicked off between recognizing and non-recognizing states. Despite Washington's absurd claim that Kosovo would not set a precedent, a government of any multiethnic state would recognize Kosovo at its peril. Kosovo would never become a member of the UN.

Serbia would recover control of the northern area of Kosovo and perhaps some of the enclaves. This would not be a prelude to partition, however, but the liberation of part of what then would be the illegal occupation of part of Serbia by an illegitimate, criminal, separatist regime in Pristina supported by aggressive foreign powers. It would be up to the Albanians and their supporters to decide whether to kick off a new cycle of violence by attacking the Serbs, who would live in fear that the remaining third of their pre-war population would be eradicated and the rest of their churches destroyed.

The Albanian-controlled areas of Kosovo would sink even deeper into the black hole of

organized crime (drugs, slaves, arms) and jihad terror under a “government” composed of war criminals and kingpins in the Albanian Mafia. Far from stabilizing the western Balkans, instability would be perpetuated by alienation of Serbia, the only country of any consequence in the region.

Altogether, we are looking at the perfect “train wreck,” as even proponents of independence are calling it: shattering the international legal system, US-Russia confrontation, violence on the ground, criminality, human rights violations, and a new frozen conflict. Who could ask for more?

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