

Kosovo Independence threatens what is left of International Law

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International law, which has never been in good health, is on its deathbed once again, not long after almost succumbing to a grave illness provoked by Washington's Iraq war launched in stark disregard of the UN Charter.

The new disease is called Kosovo. Cristina Gallach, the spokesperson for Javier Solana, the European Union's High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, said the EU would take matters into its own hands and make a decision on Kosovo if Russia continued to say "no."

"Russia has maintained its position, but Kosovo is a European problem," Gallach said in an interview published in the popular Serbian newspaper Vecerne Novosti Tuesday.

"The Balkans' future depends on Europe, not Russia. Therefore, the EU will make a decision if need be, but only with the UN Security Council's consent," Gallach said, according to RIA Novosti.

Russia threatened to veto a UN Security Council resolution that would effectively set the Serbian province, which has a majority ethnic Albanian population, on the path to sovereignty.

Since Russia's right of veto cannot be revoked according to the UN Charter, and the stance of Moscow and Belgrade on the Kosovo problem is firm, Gallach's words can only mean that the EU plans to ignore Russia's veto, the UN Charter, and the principle of the inviolability of borders which has guided the international community since World War II.

I don't know for sure if Ms. Gallach has adequately interpreted the position of her boss and the EU as a whole, but if she has, then the EU policy is misguided.

How long will the UN live if everyone starts violating its charter?

The EU has no regard for Serbia either, as it believes the Serbs are guilty of bringing forth Slobodan Milosevic and must therefore be made to pay for their blunder. (I wonder what would have become of Germany if the international community had assumed a similar stance regarding Germans for allowing Hitler to come to power?)

The advocates of sovereignty for Kosovo close their eyes to the fact that there are many similar hot spots in Europe. They believe that the policy of double standards is the only correct one, that Kosovo is unique, and no parallels can be drawn with Abkhazia, South

Ossetia and Transdnestr, breakaway republics in the former Soviet countries of Georgia and Moldova.

Ms. Gallach has not taken time to think that the people in those republics are no less deserving than Kosovo Albanians. Geography is the only thing she cares about. For her, Kosovo Albanians have a right to independence because Kosovo is adjacent to Western Europe, whereas Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transdnestr border on Russia and hence have no right to independence.

Milosevic's unwise policy provoked a never-ending exodus from the Balkans, with Albanians fleeing the wrath of Serbians and later coming back to slaughter them. Tentative estimates say 200,000 people have fled the province.

How many more will have to abandon their homes if the European bureaucrats get their way? There are 180,000 non-Albanians in Kosovo, all of them potential victims or refugees. Who will guarantee their security if Kosovo gains independence, especially since the province has already become Europe's "gray zone" controlled by criminals and drug barons?

Will the EU, which has failed to rid Kosovo of drugs, protect its women and children who are not Albanians or Muslims? Have we forgotten about the cowardice of the Dutch peacekeepers, whose "lack of initiative" helped set the stage for the mass killing in Srebrenica? None of them have been called to account.

Have European politicians ever thought about the "Kosovar identity," which can be interpreted as the dream of Kosovo's Albanian extremists to take over the adjacent European regions predominantly populated by Albanians? Have they noticed that this will concern the territorial integrity of Macedonia, Montenegro and northern Albania? So, Serbia is not the only country concerned here.

In other words, Kosovo is not ready for independence politically, economically, or in terms of security. Neither are Serbia, Russia, and Europe ready for it to be independent. The only ones who claim to be ready are irresponsible EU bureaucrats, Albanian nationalists, and the Bush administration. But Washington also claimed to be ready for the Iraq war, if I'm not mistaken.

The old order is crumbling before our very eyes. Russia has firmly upheld the territorial integrity of Georgia and Moldova, in line with international law and even though its relations with these states are far from ideal. What should it do now, support separatist tendencies on its border? Or withdraw from the UN?

This reminds me of the demise of the League of Nations and of the run-up to World War II.

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