

NATO operation in Libya sets dangerous precedent for Balkans - Primakov

By [Global Research](#)

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MOSCOW: The threat of inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts remains in the Balkan countries experts define as “the European tinderbox,” which means the Libyan scenario may be repeated, ex-Russian Prime Minister, Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences Yevgeny Primakov said at an international conference in Montenegro on October 17.

The newspaper Nezavisimaya Gazeta published an article based on his speech on Monday.

“I fear that the NATO operation in Libya may cast shadow on the Balkans. Such a scenario is not so unrealistic, and ways to avoid it must be found,” he said.

The precedent set by the NATO operation in Libya is extremely dangerous especially for turbulent regions and countries whose policy does not meet the wishes of NATO, he said.

The threat of inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts in the Balkans mostly exists in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Primakov said.

There had been armed clashes between the NATO KFOR and Serbians who live in Kosovo’s Metohija, and NATO forces sided with Pristina, which wanted to separate Kosovo Serbs from Serbia and to open customs posts on the currently non-existent border, he said.

Primakov recalled the position of Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov expressed at a meeting with NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen in September. Lavrov strongly rejected the opinion that Libya might become “a model for the future.”

Russia has a principled stand on “the problem zones”, which remain since the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, the academician said.

It does not recognize the independence of Kosovo and Metohija and views these territories as an organic part of Serbia.

“If the West welcomes the separation of Kosovo from Serbia due to the independence demands of local Albanians, why not apply the same approach to the compact Serbian areas in the northern part of Kosovo and Metohija?” he wondered.

There is a realistic chance to avoid tensions with the division of Kosovo, he said.

Russia also opposes the transformation of Bosnia and Herzegovina into a unitary state and says this transformation will not follow the Dayton Agreement. “If we speak about the

development of the Dayton Agreement, apparently, it is necessary to strengthen sovereign rights of Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Muslims within the framework of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Any other way will lead to bloodshed," Primakov said.

Those who think that Russia opposes the accession of the Balkan countries to the European Union distort its position intentionally or unintentionally, Primakov said.

"Moscow is perfectly aware of the reasons why the Balkan countries want to join the EU. At the same time, Russia seeks to prevent the weakening of its economic, cultural and political relations with the Balkan countries by their involvement in the EU," he said.

The Balkans are a junction of three civilizations: West European, East European and Asian Muslim. Stability and security of the forming multi-polar world depend on the solution of pressing problems of the peoples populating that special region, Primakov said.

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