

## **Kosovo Plan Resurfaces**

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DOS has stolen a march on the opposition by raising again the issue of a Serb "entity" in northern Kosovo.

A proposal to create Serb and Albanian entities in Kosovo is being considered by the Serbian leadership in Belgrade. The plan by Serbia's deputy premier, Nebojsa Covic, has so far been denounced by the Albanians and received a mixed response from the Serbs.

Covic has suggested the creation of two entities in Kosovo: a Serbian one in the north, protected by the Yugoslav army and police; and an Albanian one in the centre and south, under the protection of international forces (See [Entities, Not Division](#)).

The plan, Covic said, would not be a permanent solution but a first step on the path to the region's eventual integration into the European Union.

Covic is one of the most capable and widely respected members of the Democratic Opposition of Serbia, DOS. Largely credited with resolving the security crisis in Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja last year (BCR No.261, 04-Jul-01) and a key organiser of Milosevic's ouster, he has established close relations the UN Mission in Kosovo, UNMIK, and NATO, while retaining a high approval rate in Serbia. He is currently head of the Yugoslav state coordination team for Kosovo.

By backing Covic's plan, the government of Serbia and the DOS defused accusations that they had lacked initiative over Kosovo since the fall of Milosevic, while pre-empting opposition attempts to use the issue as a stick with which to beat them.

There are currently three political views in Serbia over the future of Kosovo. The first, known as 'maximalist', categorically rejects the possibility of the division of Kosovo, insisting that it all belongs to the Serbs. The second, the so-called 'liberal-nationalist option', accepts its reality, while seeking to salvage whatever it can from such a division. The third, and the least influential, holds that Kosovo is irrevocably lost.

The liberal-nationalist option embraced by Covic at the Sava Centre takes into account both Serbia's cultural-historical rights and the Albanians' ethnic rights in Kosovo. Only by reconciling the two through long-term dialogue, it maintains, can a final resolution be achieved in Kosovo. Serbian prime minister Zoran Djindjic, who heads the Democratic Party, shares Covic's conviction.

Yugoslav president Vojislav Kostunica, who leads the Democratic Party of Serbia, DSS, supported Covic's appointment as head of the Kosovo coordination team, although there were initial reservations that a federal function was thus being put under Serbian government control. Marko Jaksic, a senior DSS official and a leader of the Kosovo Serbs, publicly accused Covic of being a NATO stooge. However, the national-liberal option prevailed in the DSS.

Covic's Kosovo proposal triggered stormy reactions from both the left and right in the Serbian opposition. The Party of Serbian Unity, founded by the late Zeljko Raznatovic 'Arkan', rejected any discussion of the division of Kosovo, while the Serbian Radical Party of Vojislav Seselj denounced "DOS traitors and mercenaries".

The reaction of parties representing Kosovo Serbs was more interesting. While the hostility of the factions

in the Serbian National Council, SNV, supporting Marko Jaksic continued unabated, the other northern Kosovo faction, headed by Oliver Ivanovic, called Covic's plan 'interesting'. The SNV of central Kosovo, headed by Bishop Artemije, openly supported the plan and hailed Covic's appointment.

The Kosovo Albanians, for their part, were unanimously disapproving. Adem Demaci, former political representative of Kosovo Liberation Army, said that any attempt to divide Kosovo along the lines described by Covic would signal the "beginning of new bloodshed in which the international community would be involved". UNMIK has also expressed its "categorical opposition" to the division of Kosovo over the past few months.

Covic's outline plan is far from original, being based on ideas published last year in the book Kosovo before the Judgement of History, by Branislav Krstic, an architect persecuted during Milosevic's rule. Formerly appointed to a UNESCO committee charged with making an inventory of Serbian and Albanian monuments in Kosovo, Krstic concluded that, while Serbs could not consider as 'historical territories' areas where there had been an Albanian majority, nor could Albanians claim all of Kosovo as their own.

Krstic's ideas, in turn, owed much to the work of a former Yugoslavian president, the writer Dobrica Cosic. In 1968, Cosic asserted that only two forms of statehood were possible in Kosovo - Yugoslav and Albanian - and they were mutually exclusive. Cosic was seriously reprimanded by his party comrades and subsequently expelled from the Communist League.

Three years ago, he again presented his plan for the demarcation of Kosovo in letters addressed to then French president Jacques Chirac and Russian prime minister Viktor Chernomyrdin. In them, he proposed that the northern part of Kosovo should go to the Serbs, the southern to Albanians and that Pristina should have the status of a district.

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