PART I:

SOME REFLECTIONS ON CO-OPERATIVE SECURITY

Challenges of Co-operative Security in a Post [Violent] Conflict Space

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Abstract

In this article, I examine the prospects and challenges for co-operative security in the Balkans in the wake of recommendations for Kosovo's final status offered recently to the UN Security Council by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari. On the assumption that Ahtisaari's proposals represent a *zero-sum* gain for the Kosovar Albanians and corresponding loss for the Serbs, I recommend a *reframing* of his plan that may be more likely to lead to sustainable peace, security, and stability in the Balkans, with implications for similar conflicts elsewhere.

Introduction

Examining the state of affairs in the Western Balkans at the time of this writing (spring 2007), we can observe that the region is in its 12th year of *negative peace* (Galtung, 1969, 1996) following the cessation of violent conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina achieved by forceful NATO action and the Dayton Peace Process led by Ambassador Richard Holbrooke (1998). Both NATO and the Dayton Peace Process were spurred – indeed, "shamed" – into action by the genocidal massacres of thousands of Bosnian Muslim boys and men perpetrated by Serb forces at Srebrenica during 11-16 July 1995 (Honig and Both, 1996; Rohde, 1997).

Despite the relatively successful maintenance since 1995 of this condition of "non-violence", Bosnia is nowhere near the *positive peace* (Galtung, op cit.) that many in the international community had hoped would be in place by now.

Recently, the region has also seen fairly inconclusive ("failed") negotiations between Serbia and Kosovo regarding Kosovo's "final status" conducted within the context of the six-nation "Contact Group" (comprising Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Russia and the U.S), with some additional ominous developments of late.

The upshot of these developments is that conditions may be "ripe" for a resumption of ethno-political warfare in the Balkans, especially in Kosovo.

The Kosovo Condundrum

Martti Ahtisaari's recent recommendations to the UN Security Council call for "*phased independence*" for Kosovo. During a period of time following a successful vote on his proposal in the UN Security Council - which is in doubt because of Russia's threatened veto – the current UN protectorate status of Kosovo (in place since 1999) would be replaced by EU supervision of Kosovo's progressive movement toward European values and institutions, including eventual EU membership, along with Serbia, so that both would once again be members of the same overarching framework (Patten, 2007).

While Ahtisaari's plan represents a *compromise* that falls short of what both Kosovar Albanians and Serbs wanted – *full independence now* for the Albanians and *"substantial autonomy"* for the Serbs – it is basically a *zero-sum* gain for the Albanians and loss for the Serbs. Hence, the Ahtisaari plan devotes much text to reassuring Serbs that their human rights and other concerns would be guaranteed in an "eventually independent" Kosovo.

However, if, in the eyes of Serbs, the Kosovar Albanians are awarded anything resembling "eventual" independence, or if the Albanians are denied even the "phased" independence implicit in the Ahtisaari plan, then there is likely to be a resumption of hostilities in the Balkans.

My objective in this paper, therefore, is to explore how to avoid a resumption of hostilities in the Balkans, initially between Kosovar Albanians and Serbs, and Albanians and Belgrade, that could possibly spill over to Bosnia-Herzegovina to upset the delicate, fragile "negative peace" there, and perhaps even to Macedonia which has a sizeable Albanian population.

As one step toward realizing this objective, we will consider some frameworks that might be helpful in *"reframing"* the Kosovo challenge as a problem that *can* be solved.

Enhancing Prospects for Violence Prevention in the Balkans: Some Useful Frameworks

One framework that comes to mind here is *the "3 levels of conflict reality"* (Sandole, 2002b):

(1)   Conflict-as-*Symptoms*.
(2)   Conflict-as-Underlying *Fractured Relationships* that Give Rise to Symptoms. And
(3)   Conflict-as Underlying *Causes* of the Fractured Relationships.

Kosovar Albanians and Serbs clearly have a "fractured" relationship (level 2) which has been expressed as violence (level 1), whose underlying causes and conditions (level 3) have not yet been addressed, including by the Ahtisaari plan, which may have only served to reinforce the "fracture".

Maire Dugan's *"nested paradigm"* (1996; Lederach, 1997) represents one innovative way for responding to this *symptom-underlying causes* disconnect. Imagine a series of semi-circles, with *"issue"* at the bottom inside the smallest of the semi-circles. Then, surrounding "issue", we have the next semi-circle for *"relationship"*, followed by the next semi-circle for *"sub-systemic"* environment and then, finally, the most inclusive semi-circle of all, for *"systemic"* environment:

- Systemic Environment
- Subsystemic Environment
- Relationship

Issue

While the "issue" of the Kosovo problem is who has sovereignty over the province, one major cause of Kosovo's sovereignty constituting the issue is the fractured Albanian-Serb relationship which, in turn, is further fueled by the Kosovo status issue in a tight, *self-stimulating/self-perpetuating* feedback-loop (Sandole, 1999).

The underlying premise of the "nested paradigm" is that, in this case, efforts to deal effectively with the *jointly determined* Kosovo status issue and fractured Albanian-Serb relationship must be located within the sub-systemic and systemic environmental domains. This suggests that we – the "concerned international community" – need a coordinated, multi-track, multi-actor, multi-sectoral approach to deal with the three levels of conflict reality as well as all four spaces of the nested paradigm, simul-taneously and/or in sequence, to capture the complexity of the problem (Sandole, 2002a, 1999; Diamond and McDonald, 1996). What might this look like?

A Hypothetical Narrative for Solving the Issue of Kosovo's Final Status

While the world's sole surviving superpower remains fixed on global terrorism, civilizational clashes, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (*systemic*), another complex challenge is playing itself out in the Balkans – a geographic area of the international community's once primary con-cern (*subsystemic*) – but which is passing largely unnoticed. This is the question of the final status of the Serbian province of Kosovo – the last remaining problem from the genocidal dissolution of former Yugoslavia which consumed most of the 1990s.

As indicated, the lines have been drawn between the Kosovar Albanian position of (a) *full* independence versus Belgrade's position of (b) "substantial autonomy" for the province where over 90 percent of the population is comprised of ethnic Albanians, most of whom are Muslim (*relationship/issue*). Former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Kosovo, has responded to this complex issue by recommending what amounts to "phased independence" under European Union (EU) auspices as the only viable way out for the Kosovo problem (*systemic/issue*).

The Ahtisaari proposal deals primarily with Serb concerns because the proposal represents basically *a zero-sum gain* for the majority Albanian population of Kosovo and corresponding *loss* for the Serbs who, therefore, need to be sold on the proposal more so than the Albanians (*systemic/issue*).

Serbia's apparent regression in recent months back to the conspiratorial climate of the Milošević years, painting Serbia as a victim of global and regional forces beyond its control, might lead it, or some of its more nationalistic citizens, toward an aggressive reaction should Kosovo – the Serbs' "Jerusalem" – be granted independence under any circumstances.

That at least some Serbs might respond with violence to even a "phased independent" Kosovo has been suggested by the recent formation of a nucleus of a Serb paramilitary unit under the banner of Knez Lazar, the 14th century Serb leader defeated on the battlefield of Kosovo by the Ottoman Turks (WP, 2007). Although members of this group have recently been arrested by Serb authorities (Bajraktari and Daly, 2007), Kosovo remains for many Serbs a potent, vital component of their *identity* (Dragnich and Todorovich, 1984).

On the other hand, if the dominant Albanian population of Kosovo does not receive even "phased" independence, which is less than the status they have demanded, then they are likely to declare unilateral independence or otherwise be the source of renewed hostilities in the Balkans, with potential for spillover to less-fragile (but fragile nevertheless) Bos-

nia-Herzegovina and elsewhere in the region (e.g., Macedonia) (*subsystemic*).

This turbulent double-bind – "damned if you do and damned if you don't" – is reminiscent of the decisionmaking nightmare faced each year by the security forces in Northern Ireland during the "Marching Season" when nearly 3000 parades take place celebrating Unionist (Protestant) victories over Republicans (Catholics) reaching back hundreds of years: if the security forces allow the marches to proceed, then the Catholics will rebel. If they ban the marches, then the Protestants will riot. Such is the emotive power of "historical memory" (Sandole, 2006): what Vamik Volkan (1997) calls *"chosen trauma"* and *"chosen glories"*.

In other words, framed in traditional "zero-sum" terms, each of the two original "either/or" options produces a loser as well as a winner (*relationship/issue*), with significant implications for renewed violence in this historically turbulent region of Europe and elsewhere (*systemic/subsystemic*).

Is there not a way out here for Kosovo and other clashes between territorial integrity (sovereignty) and self-determination in the "conflict-habituated" world (*systemic/subsystemic*), or are we stuck with a failure of imagination and another descent into genocidal ethno-political warfare?

Let's suppose that we (the "concerned international community") were to conduct a "thought experiment" and hypothesize that *both* the Kosovar Albanian preference for "full independence" *and* the Kosovar Serb/Belgrade position for "substantial autonomy" would follow *similar trajectories* for a significant portion (10-15 years) of the total time required for effective *post-conflict peacebuilding* to take hold (15-25 years) (Lederach, 1997). Let's also suppose that the *"phased self-determination"* reframing of the Ahtisaari plan for *"phased independence"* would capture this *common trajectory* (10-15 years).

If that were, indeed, the case, then we could implement the *phased self-determinati*on <u>reframing</u> of the Ahtisaari plan, in lieu of either of the two

original positions, for 10-15 years, and by the time either of the two original options – *if actually implemented* – would have diverged into either "full independence" *or* "substantial autonomy", Kosovo would have been absorbed into the European Union where it might not matter too much who "owns" it, especially if *all* Kosovars had access to the security and recognition of their *identities* and in general, to the "good life" traditionally experienced in *"virulently enthnocentric systems"* only by dominant majorities at the expense of marginalized, often oppressed minorities.

Opting for "phased self-determination" for *all* in Kosovo would allow the *content* of Kosovo's final status to be determined by a dynamic *process* over time, rather than allowing the more contentious (a) full independence or (b) substantial autonomy options, *or* even (c) Ahtisaari's plan to drive the process in zero-sum terms.

Facilitating this process, the Regional Cooperation Council ((RCC) for the Balkans will be in place as of March 2008, replacing the current Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (*systemic/subsystemic*) (Altmann, 2007). The RCC represents a basis for enhancing cooperation among Balkan countries and between them and the European Union, probably the *preeminent peacebuilding institution* on the planet (Leonard, 2005)! This, plus a fund from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for *regional conflict transformation*, would help to create new *inter-ethnic identities* that would either preempt or absorb the "us/them" ways in which Albanians and Serbs tend to view each other (*relationship*).

This admittedly "ambitious" reframing of Ahtisaari's proposal does not dismiss, but rather builds upon it to render the process culminating in Kosovo's final status as less likely to lead to a resumption of genocidal conflict in the Balkans. It is also compatible with French President Sarkozy's recent attempt to persuade his G8 counterparts at their annual Summit in Heiligendamm, Germany, to delay for six months the UN Security Council vote on Kosovo's final status in order to provide more time to Pristina and Belgrade (*systemic/relationship/issue*) for further negotiations (Dempsey, 2007). This is also what the Russians want, to

preempt their threatened veto should the vote come up, in their view, prematurely (*systemic*).

That the EU has recently decided to restart negotiations with Serbia's new pro-reform government about its eventual entry into the EU, a year after the EU ceased such negotiations because of Serbia's apparent resistance in locating and handing over to the Hague Tribunal indicted war criminals (such as General Ratko Mladić, responsible for the Srebrenica massacres of July 1995) is a further sign that such a reframing could actually succeed (*systemic)* (Castle and Bilefsky, 2007). With *both* Kosovo *and* Serbia in the EU, "ownership" of the province should really become a moot point (*systemic/relationship/issue*).

But should ownership remain an issue, Serbia could continue to retain *de jure* sovereignty over Kosovo while the dominant Albanian population enjoys *de facto* sovereignty by "leasing" the province from Belgrade (*relationship/issue*) with funding provided by the international business community which would benefit from stability in the region (*systemic*). In addition, there would be guarantees for all the safeguards for the human rights of Serbs and other minorities in the province provided by the Ahtisaari plan, plus a promise for Kosovo's eventual entry into the European Union along with Serbia and other states of the Western Balkans (*systemic/subsystemic*) (Altmann, 2004).

This raises the prospects for the effective use of still another framework, the *"three pillar framework"* (3PF), in order to map out this overall process of "phased self-determination" in greater detail, perhaps as a basis for developing architecture along the lines of the *"new European peace and security system"* (NEPSS) (see Sandole, 2007, Chs, 2-3; 2002a; 2004; 1999, Ch. 7).

Conclusion

In this article, I have addressed some challenges remaining for co-operative security in the Western Balkans – the site of vicious inter-

ethnic warfare that accompanied the genocidal collapse of former Yugo-slavia during much of the 1990s. I characterized these challenges as pri-marily the failure of the Kosovo status negotiations, and efforts by the UN to salvage them.

In this regard, I observed that the recommendations for solving the prob-lem of Kosovo's final status, made recently by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari to the UN Security Council, amount to a *zero-sum* gain for the dominant Albanian population of the province and corresponding loss for Kosovar Serbs and Serbs in Serbia (and worldwide), with impli-cations for renewed ethno-political warfare in the Balkans and else-where.

Accordingly, I offered a potential "way out" of the Kosovo conundrum by reframing the Ahtisaari plan. This reformulation could feature in fur-ther negotiations between the parties in the context of the "Contact Group," as French President Sarkozy recommended at the recent G8 Summit in Heiligendamm, Germany and as the U.S. and European members of the UN Security Council subsequently agreed (Turner, 2007).

This reframing would be far more likely to succeed than the Athisaari plan as currently formulated – the difference being between "phased *independence*" for the province (which sets off alarm bells in Belgrade and Moscow) and "phased *self-determination* for *all* in the province (which, although still vague, may be *sufficiently hopeful* to merit further attention).

Clearly, bold thinking *and* action are now needed more than ever before, for Kosovo and Serbia (*relationship/issue*), the Balkans (*subsystemic*), and Europe and the world in general (*systemic*)!

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