** United Nations Office in Belgrade**

**Daily Media Highlights**

**Tuesday, 18 February 2014**

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**LOCAL PRESS**

**Office: Kosovo will always remain part of Serbia (*Tanjug*)**

The Office for Kosovo and Metohija has announced that, six years after the unilaterally and illegally proclaimed state of Kosovo, Serbia will never recognize independence of its southern province and that for any leadership in Serbia, either the present or a future one, Kosovo and Metohija will always remain part of the Republic of Serbia. Six years ago, on 17 February 2008, the so-called independent state of Kosovo was proclaimed, by force and without the consent of the UN Security Council for the first time in the territory of modern Europe. Founded on ethnically motivated murders, the perpetrators of which have not been identified to this very day, on the desecration of Serbian Orthodox sanctities, on the retailoring of history, on the deprivation of Serbs of any basic rights, that formation is never going to be a state, the Office’s announcement reads. The destruction of Serb property has not been stopped yet and privatization is still being conducted to Kosovo Albanians’ advantage, while the property of the Republic of Serbia is becoming the property of the self-proclaimed state overnight. Until identical criteria for all the people in Kosovo and Metohija have been established, until all the criminals, regardless of their faith or nation, have been found and brought to justice, no mutual reconciliation or trust can be established, the announcement of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija reads.

**Vulin: No Serbian government will ever recognize Kosovo (*Politika*)**

Minister in charge of Kosovo and Metohija Aleksandar **Vulin** attended a Serbian Statehood Day ceremony in Zubin Potok, where he said that no Serbian Government would ever recognize independence of Kosovo. Today we are celebrating our courageous soldiers, warriors and those who wrote and fought for the Constitution, those who bore the fate of our people bravely and who made sacrifices and we must try to be like them, he emphasized. He said he hoped the candidate of the Serbian (Srpska) list Goran **Rakic** would win the forthcoming mayoral elections in Kosovska Mitrovica and that the formation of the Union of Serb Municipalities would then start.

**Office: International community must renew investigation (*Novosti*)**

The Office for Kosovo and Metohija has demanded of the international community to immediately renew the investigation into the attack on a “Nis ekspres” passenger bus in Livadice, which was mounted on 6 February 2001, and in which 12 Serb passengers were killed and 43 injured. The direct perpetrators of this and other crimes committed against Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija and those who ordered that crimes must be found as only thus can we hope that ethnically motivated murders in Kosovo will not remain unpunished and that the criminals are not going to be amnestied by time, it was emphasized in the Office’s announcement. On 16 February 2001, in Livadice near Podujevo, a mine was laid under a bridge on the motorway and a bus going to Gracanica, and accompanied by KFOR soldiers, exploded. 12 Serb passengers were killed and 43 were injured in the explosion.

**Serb lists demand OSCE to correct irregularities (*Novosti*)**

The campaign for the Kosovska Mitrovica mayor has kicked off and it will last five days, while the atmosphere of fear and distrust is visible almost everywhere. The last doubt was caused by the final election list that has been increased over the past two weeks with 514 voters, 476 of whom are Albanians. The mayoral candidate of the Serbian (Srpska) Civic Initiative for northern Kosovska Mitrovica Goran **Rakic** suspects that the ethnic structure of the election body is being changed: “I demand from the international community and the OSCE to revise the election list. We have been informed that the election list has 28.429 registered voters, i.e. around 500 voters more, mostly Albanians. Compared to the last elections, a significant number of Serb voters have been erased and Albanians have been registered instead.” The final election list was also condemned by the SDP Civic Initiative: “We are especially concerned with the fact that the registration in the election list had been conducted illegally by an unauthorized institution and that the OSCE and other international organizations didn’t oppose the violation of regulations and manipulations with the election list. Under such conditions it is illusory to speak of the regularity of elections, so participation in them is also brought into question.”

**Serbia’s engagement in peacekeeping missions highly praised (*Tanjug*)**

UN officials spoke in high terms of Serbia’s participation in international peacekeeping missions, said Vladimir **Bozovic**, state secretary at the Serbian Ministry of the Interior (MUP), who had recently visited the U.S. In a statement to ***Tanjug***, Bozovic said on Friday that UN officials noted that Serbian military and police peacekeepers in international missions are highly professional. During the talks, they addressed a new strategic framework for UN missions in which Serbia wants to take an active part, he said. Bozovic conferred with Trond Egil **With**, police adviser with the Permanent Mission of Norway to the UN, about the model of Serbia's participation in peacekeeping missions, and underscored that the Serbian Interior Ministry can offer highly qualified staff, but that due to budgetary constraints, it seeks assistance from Norway as a partner. With voiced the country's willingness to consider such a model. In talks with UN officials, Bozovic said that there should be no reduction in the number of UNMIK and EULEX troops as interim institutions in Kosovo and Metohija, prosecution and police are not ready to tackle the organized crime and corruption. Bozovic also met William **Elliott**, special representative of Interpol to the UN, with whom he discussed the prospects for accepting Interpol documents and MUP initiative to recruit a seconded liaison officer. In the meeting with Director of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) Office Jehangir **Khan**, Bozovic presented the efforts that Serbia has so far invested in the fight against terrorism, stressing that Serbia and all relevant services are ready to contribute to the fight against terrorism within the UN.

**Incorrect congratulations (*Politika*, editorial by Zorana Suvakovic)**

Two simultaneous messages from Washington, which were signed by U.S. Secretary of State John **Kerry** on behalf of President **Obama**, were sent to the interim provincial institutions in Pristina and the Serbian state Government in Belgrade before the weekend. In the first “the people of the Republic of Kosovo are congratulated the sixth anniversary of independence” and assurance is expressed that, along with “continued courage, persistence and patience,” the province of Kosovo will achieve its European aspirations as “integral, free and peaceful.” The second message sends “best wishes to the people of Serbia” on the occasion of the celebration of the country’s Statehood Day, congratulates Serbia the “opening of negotiations on accession and assuming the key step towards EU membership” and commends the agreement on normalization of relations reached in April 2013.

The content of the first message denies, abates and obliterates the best wishes on the occasion of Serbia’s holiday. One cannot congratulate a country a statehood day while at same time congratulating its province’s anniversary of unilaterally declaring secession. Beyond that, Washington ignores certain facts concerning the laws governing the EU. Both messages incorrectly interpret the agreement on normalization of relations between the Serbian state and the Kosovo provincial authorities, reached with the mediation of Brussels, which as per EU practice is status neutral, while the U.S. treats the agreement as a document decided upon between two states. The U.S. administration easily breezes over the fact that five EU member states have not recognized the secession of Kosovo, while the President of the European Commission Jose Manuel **Barroso** recently precisely recalled this circumstance. In an interview for the BBC he said that “it would be difficult, if not impossible for an ‘independent’ Scotland to become an EU member” if it breaks away from Great Britain at the referendum in September, and, in this sense, he drew a parallel with the Serbian province of Kosovo, whose independence has not been recognized “by Spain, for example.”

Advocators of Scottish independence claim that Barroso’s pointing to the similarities between the province of Kosovo and the country of Scotland is “absurd.” They also accuse the EC President of comparing the process of unilateral secession (of the province of Kosovo) with Scotland, which has reached an agreement on the referendum with London. In November, however, the Spanish community of Catalonia will have a referendum on secession, despite Madrid’s opposition. The truth is that 16 countries have recognized Kosovo’s secession over the past year, so this number has increased to 106 states, but because of separatist movements and scheduled referendums on secession it is illusory to expect Spain and Cyprus, Greece, Slovakia and Romania to change their minds now and recognize the self-declared secession of the province. Barroso is right when he warns that it is “almost impossible” for a new potential EU member to receive “approval of all others” but also when he says that there are similarities between the separatism of the province of Kosovo and other secessionist movements. The Catalonian government even advocates the idea of organizing “plebiscite elections” instead of an un-Constitutional referendum and then to declare unilateral independence in the parliament, following the “Kosovo recipe.” Both scenarios would take Brussels into a labyrinth where parts of territories would be lost and millions of inhabitants would unilaterally fall outside the EU. Washington’s wishes are not realistic, unless the rules, according to which the EU functions, are to completely change in the near future.

**Nis Express Bombing: Memory and Faith (*Politika*, by Edward Tawil)**

The great 13th Century Persian Sufi poet, **Rumi**, wrote that, “Whatever comes, comes from a need, a sore distress a hurting want. …And every need brings in what’s needed. Pain bears its cure like a child.” On this day 13 years ago a bus of displaced Serbs returning to Kosovo to mark the Orthodox day of the dead, under KFOR escort, was blown up by a road-side bomb, killing 12 and injuring dozens more. It is an atrocity that remains unpunished and is slowly dissipating into forgetfulness, except for the memory of the surviving loved ones. And memory is in fact the theme of this text, the need to search for a path to memory that leads to healing, the search for a path to memory that prevents a severing of people from themselves, from their identity, leading to distortion and the living of a lie. Rumi profoundly understood and poetically expressed that pain is often the midwife to the healing of a broken soul; however that pain must be acknowledged and the memory of the source of that pain must be integrated as a part of one’s past, as a segment of one’s identity. But of course it does not just end there, for in order to heal from a past trauma, it is not enough only to remember, but to interpret the memory itself, in other words to use one’s free will and consciousness and act on that memory within the framework of a larger system of meaning. As the theologian Miroslav **Volf** so poignantly put it, “The memory of suffering is a precondition for healing, not the means of healing itself. The means of healing is the interpretative work a person does with the memory.”

I remember the Nis Express bombing for I was a young and idealistic UN official stationed in Novo Brdo, responsible for community and minority rights when it occurred. I remember the Nis Express bombing for I personally knew some of the victims on the bus. I remember the Nis Express bombing for the subsequent white-washing of this atrocity and its quiet journey to oblivion shattered the illusions of that young idealist about the universality of human rights in a world of unequal power relations, but has not shattered his faith and morality. It certainly has not shattered my unshakeable belief in the necessity of memory as a means not only of acknowledgement of a past wrong, but as a means of salvation through the painful work one must carry out on the memory - to bring it some meaning, to seek out an opening for healing and ultimately reconciliation with the past and with one’s enemy. Remembrance of a past atrocity must not only be a private act by surviving loved ones locked within the pain of their isolation. Acknowledgement must be a public act, an open and public act in which all can grieve in a spirit of solidarity and where suffering can be the bridge that binds us to the universality of our common humanity. Where there is no memory there can be no justice and the field is open to a grand lie. “If no one remembers a misdeed or names it publicly,” wrote Volf, “it remains invisible. …the victim is not a victim and the perpetrator is not a perpetrator; both are misperceived because the one’s violence and the other’s suffering go unrecognized. A double injustice occurs, the first when the original deed is done and the second when it is made to disappear.”

As an Armenian, I understood the primordial importance of memory in the face of negation and neglect of a monstrous crime. Memory was the last shield behind which to ward off oblivion that would mark the triumph of evil. Memory was not only an obligation to mark faith with one’s fallen family and ancestors (in my case of the Armenian Genocide), for this can easily collapse into a trivial and vengeful tribalism, but a necessary tool for a painful journey to justice that must encompass not only the victim but the perpetrator as well. Thus after many years in Kosovo, and in the absence of any public acknowledgement of the Nis Express atrocity, I humbly chose to mark faith with my morality by having a memorial stone created in memory of the victims. I remember seeking out some of the family members who remained in Kosovo to ask their permission for the stone and to inscribe the name of their loved ones on it. The intention was to place it at the site of the atrocity near Podujevo to offer the victims and others, a point of memory and reflection. They all kindly obliged but looked at me with a bewildered puzzlement. In one such encounter in Laplje Selo, sitting with a surviving parent in a front garden, I remember feeling his overwhelming burden of grief, compounded by an emptiness that seemed to crushingly mock his loss; “go ahead,” he told me listlessly, “but this can go nowhere, it will not be allowed, there’s no point”. Mixed in with the pain was a fear that somehow this act could have negative repercussions on the surviving families.

In the end, the small monument was not allowed to be put up. I have long since left Kosovo to pursue my life and work elsewhere, and to my knowledge, the memorial stone is in storage in the Patriarchate at Pec. Is the storage of this stone to be the metaphor of the memory of this atrocity? Shall this crime dissipate into oblivion and lay the field open to a lie? The stone itself is not important but the public acknowledgement of this crime, in a spirit of true solidarity with the victims, is. “In order to expose crimes and fight political oppression many have become soldiers of memory,” wrote Volf. On this day, I choose to be a soldier of memory and publicly remember the victims of the Nis Express atrocity in the hope one day of a public acknowledgement of the crime, and finally, true justice and reconciliation.

**REGIONAL PRESS**

**Fule: EU concluded its mission regarding Sejdic-Finci decision (*Srna*)**

 The EU has concluded its engagement in the process of implementing the *Sejdic-Finci* decision, and now, it is exclusively a matter for the B&H institutions, the EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan **Fule** said in Sarajevo. “This is a moment for politicians in B&H to take initiative in this case,” Fule told a press conference after the meeting with the Presiding of the B&H Council of Ministers Vjekoslav **Bevanda**, the Republika Srpska (RS) Prime Minister Zeljka **Cvijanovic** and the B&H Federation Prime Minister Nermin **Niksic**. Fule said that B&H is presently violating its international obligations, and that its political leaders are responsible for this. “This is a disgrace for the politicians in B&H, because they approached the realization of the ruling of the Strasbourg Court in an irresponsible manner,” said Fule. According to him, the meeting with B&H leaders in Sarajevo was very disappointing. Fule thinks that the implementation of the *Sejdic-Finci* decision is not a conceited or virtual issue, but an international obligation of B&H on its EU path. Fule didn’t respond to journalists’ question as to who in B&H was hindering the implementation of this decision and who was dedicated to this process all the time. He said he would inform the EU High Representative Catherine **Ashton** and the EU Foreign Policy Council about these stands. Fule said that the withdrawal of the EU from the talks on finding a solution for implementing the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in the *Sejdic-Finci* case does not mean the cessation of the EU’s engagement in B&H. Cvijanovic, Niksic and Bevanda didn’t address the press following the meeting with Fule.

**INTERNATIONAL PRESS**

**Kosovo marks independence amid better ties with Serbia (*AFP*, 17 February 2014)**

Kosovo on Monday celebrated six years of independence marked by a historic improvement of ties with former foe Serbia, which was coaxed along by an EU-brokered deal last year.

Prime Minister Hashim Thaci told a special parliamentary session that "our vision of an independent Kosovo is one of a democratic country... ready to find its place within the family of free nations".

Several thousand people gathered in flag-bedecked streets in Kosovo's capital Pristina to watch a military and police parade to be followed by a fireworks display.

But there were some party-poopers.

Kosovo veterans of the 1998-1999 conflict with Serbia said they were staying away because of "dissatisfaction" with the general situation.

And many ordinary people in Kosovo bemoaned their limited economic prospects in one of Europe's poorest regions.

According to official figures, more than 30 percent of Kosovo's 1.8 million people are unemployed. The World Bank puts that figure at almost 40 percent.

"I'm happy that we are turning six, but my joy is overshadowed as I don't see any opportunity to find a job soon," Beqir Krasniqi, a 27- year-old lawyer, told AFP.

The deal signed last year under EU pressure has eased tensions and opened the way for both Serbia and Kosovo to contemplate joining the European bloc.

Although Serbia steadfastly refuses to recognise the independence of its former, majority ethnic-Albanian provice, it has normalised ties to a degree allowing it in January to open EU membership talks.

Kosovo also has agreement to enter talks on an EU stabilisation and association deal -- a lesser pact that is first step on a long path towards possible EU membership.

More than 100 countries, including the United States and most of the European Union's 28 member states, have recognised Kosovo since it proclaimed independence from Serbia on February 17, 2008, following the 1998-1999 war.

The latter ended with a NATO bombing campaign against late Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic's forces.

**EU urges Bosnia to change its constitution (*AP*, 18 February 2014)**

The European Union has again urged Bosnian leaders to eliminate discrimination from the constitution and simplify the bureaucracy both issues rooted in the peace agreement which ended the 1992-95 war that now prevent the country from moving toward EU membership.

The EU Enlargement Commissioner, Stefan Fuele, is meeting with Bosnian leaders on Monday amid protests against unemployment, corruption and privatization now in their third week.

Protesters are calling for expert governments to be formed and a revision of the privatization. Eighty percent of the industries sold to private owners subsequently collapsed.

The peace agreement that ended Bosnia's 1992-95 war introduced a constitution which gives only Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats full political rights, and it installed multiple layers of government which are a burden on Bosnia's shattered economy.

**Bosnia peace cracks under 20-year pact (*New York Times*, by Alison Smale, 18 February 2014)**

*Dayton Accords led to hydra-headed presidency and multiple layers of govt to appease all sides. The system of governance that was to follow never came*

But while the destruction evokes the Balkans turmoil of the 1990s, when more than 1,00,000 people died, it is not a result of war. Rather, Bosnians, diplomats and analysts say, it is an unintended consequence of what ended the conflict: the 1995 Dayton Accords, which were negotiated under muscular diplomacy by the US and bought nearly 20 years of peace but imposed what turned out to be a dysfunctional government structure that has impeded economic progress and left citizens increasingly angry and frustrated.

The long-simmering frustrations of Bosnians erupted a week ago not only in Tuzla but also in a dozen other towns and cities across the country, including the capital, Sarajevo — resulting in the largest social unrest in nearly 20 years in the country.

Ethnic divisions fuelled almost four years of war in the 1990s. Today, if there is one thing that unites many of Bosnia’s 3.8 million people — Bosniaks (or Muslims), Serbs and Croats — it is their disgust with the hydra-headed presidency and multiple layers of government that developed to appease the nationalist sentiments of all sides.

Tuzla, an impoverished industrial city of 200,000, has the highest unemployment rate in the country — around 55 per cent — and it was the fount of the anger that erupted last week.

The system established under the Dayton Accords has only helped cement “corrupt, nepotistic and completely complacent elites”, said Damir Arsenijevic, 36, a psychoanalyst who is now a prime mover in nightly Tuzla discussions about the way forward.

Workers in Tuzla had protested for months against the botched privatisation of four factories, once part of a proud array of industry stretching back to pre-Communist days. Pictures showing police officers beating protesters drew more crowds into the streets in Tuzla, Sarajevo and two other towns where government buildings were burned.

“Our leaders do not even take it as alarming that 63 per cent of young people here are jobless,” said Edin Plevljakovic, 23, a student in Sarajevo. “We have neither strong politics, nor a very potent elite,” he added.

John C Kornblum, a retired US ambassador who drafted the Dayton Accords as diplomat Richard C Holbrooke negotiated them, noted that the complex mechanisms they put in place were intended primarily to secure peace, but they were also supposed to be replaced in three years with a streamlined governmental structure.

A serious attempt at change in 2005, he said, was hindered in part by non-governmental organisations, reinforcing the Bosniak leaders’ desire for a unified state, which the Serbs and Croats will not allow.

Diplomats have tried in vain to get Bosnians to heed a 2009 ruling by the European Court of Human Rights, which in effect challenged the three-way set-up of the national presidency, made up of a Bosniak, a Serb and a Croat, as discriminatory. In addition to the presidency, the country consists of a Muslim-Croat Federation, a Serbian Republic, 10 cantons in the federation and the separate city of Brcko.

Until the 2009 ruling is observed, Bosnia’s structure means it cannot advance towards the European Union, which neighbouring Croatia joined last year and Montenegro and even Serbia are waiting to do.

“I’m a Croat Catholic, but that is what I am at home,” said Sonja Kladnik, 78. “I’m also a citizen. I am sick and tired of this Serb, Croat, Bosniak. We have seven or 10 or however many levels of government and three presidents. Enough with this nationalism!”

The protesters are demanding governance by technocrats outside Bosnia’s parties. They have prompted the resignations of four cantonal governments, but so far no broader change.

Emina Bursuladzic, 58, seems an unlikely rebel. Like many others in this largely rural country, with little tradition of street protest and an abiding horror of bloodshed after the war, she disavows the violence. But over the past seven months, she has fought to preserve the remnants of Dita, once the provider of detergent for all of Yugoslavia. She and her co-workers stood vigil outside the local government offices, trying in vain to sue the owner they say came in 2008-09 and stripped their chemical plant almost bare.

It was not just the months of unpaid wages, or the plundering of the workplace Bursuladzic has served for 38 years that stirred her ire, she said. It was the humiliation. “People inside this building used to look out the window and laugh at us,” she said.Her co-worker Snjezana Ostrakovic, 29, bitterly recalled standing in temperatures well below freezing and accosting a local government worker, who she said simply ridiculed her pleas for help in feeding her two sons, 5 and 2.

Tuzla’s industry was built on coal and salt mines. The factories, now dilapidated shells, almost certainly had no future anyway. But locals are furious that they seem to have been sold off cheaply to the well connected, who then reaped profit by hawking scrap or land. As elsewhere in Eastern Europe, privatisation has enriched a few. In Bosnia, what’s worse is that it followed a war.

**Protests in Bosnia (*The Economist*, 15 February 2014)**

*The latest troubles in Bosnia may wake up the country’s inept leaders*

“WHY is there no sex in state firms and government offices?” demands a Bosnian protester in a clip that has gone viral. The answer: rampant nepotism means everyone is related. Protests that began in the northern city of Tuzla on February 4th have spread across the country. They may fizzle, but they might just signal the beginning of the end of Bosnia’s post-war system of governance.

The protests in Tuzla were started by workers from five privatised companies that went bust after they had been stripped of their assets. By February 8th the protests had spread and violence had broken out. Several government offices, including the presidential building in Sarajevo, were set on fire. The violence and beatings by the police were widely condemned. But as Damir Arsenijevic, an activist in Tuzla, comments: “Tough luck.” The damage caused is nothing, he says, compared with the “billions stolen from people”, by Bosnia’s politicians. In Tuzla and three other regions the leadership has quit.

It is not surprising that Bosnians are angry. Eighteen years after the end of the war the people are poor, the politicians are rich and corruption is rife. To get a job as a cleaner in the hospital in Tuzla, the current bribe is said to be €2,000 ($2,700). For a job in one of the country’s main telephone companies it is €10,000. The unemployment rate stands at 27.5%—though the black economy helps the jobless get by.

Part of the problem is the legacy of the Dayton peace deal that ended Bosnia’s war in 1995. The country is divided into two “entities” (plus an autonomous district, Brcko). The Bosniak-Croat Federation is itself divided into ten cantons that compete with local governments. The result is a system that pays large salaries to politicians and civil servants in a country of just 3.8m which, some say, needs only a mayor.

Most of the protests have been in Bosniak areas. Politicians are lashing out at “hooligans” and concocting conspiracy theories in which mysterious agents whip up trouble on the orders of foreigners or other ethnic groups. Yet Mladen Bosic, leader of the opposition party in Republika Srpska, the other, mainly Serb, part of the country, says its government and president “are shoving their heads into the ground and acting like ostriches” if they deny that people are even more disgruntled than in the Bosniak-Croat zone. Small groups protesting in Republika Srpska have been intimidated by Serb nationalists.

So far protesters have been resolutely anti-nationalist. Now something extraordinary is happening. Led by Tuzla, so-called “plenums” of fed-up citizens, unemployed workers and intellectuals are springing up to make political demands. On February 11th elected members of Tuzla’s cantonal assembly met its plenum to discuss the idea of a government of non-party experts. In the ethnically divided city of Mostar, Croats and Bosniaks are also working together in a plenum.

If the plenums take root, if new leaders emerge and if they focus on realistic demands, something might really change. Over the past few years leaders in Bosnia have endlessly debated minor constitutional tweaks while managing to avoid debate about economic and social reforms. “It is not going to be the same old story any more,” insists Mr Arsenijevic. It may be too early to talk of a Bosnian spring, but it is still only February.

**Has International Intervention Helped or Hurt Bosnia? (*The Atlantic*, by David Rohde, 17 February 2014)**

*The answer matters for world leaders faced with conflicts in countries like Syria and Ukraine*

Over the last two weeks, Bosnia has experienced its largest social unrest in nearly 20 years. Thousands of demonstrators have taken to the streets to assail the country's political elite.

"These are the most dramatic—and in some ways the most important—protests that have happened since the end of the war," said Larisa Kurtovic, an expert on post-war Bosnia and professor at DePaul University. "It's full of risk, lots of risk, but also possibility."

She hopes the demonstrations show that Bosnian citizens have finally turned against corrupt political parties that have ruled the country since a brutal 1992-1995 war killed 100,000 people. More broadly, the protests have reignited a debate about whether interventions by the international community are the solution in Bosnia—or part of the problem.

European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton may visit Sarajevo this week amid calls from some in the 28-nation bloc to intervene. At the same time American, European, and UN policymakers are wrestling with how—and whether—to act in Syria, the Central African Republic, Ukraine, and other conflicts.

A 1995 American-led NATO intervention in Bosnia ended the killing but nationalist parties—Muslim, Serb, and Croat alike—gained sweeping control of state-run enterprises, government jobs, and the issuing of lucrative state contracts. These new political elites now function as mafia-like economic syndicates, tightly controlling companies, cash, and jobs. That has stunted the country's economy and politics. Irrespective of how voters may feel about a party's corruption or nationalist agenda, they are likely to choose the group that promises to secure them a livelihood.

Kurtovic, the DePaul professor, said she hoped Bosnia's government officials would realize that citizens are now demanding both political reform and more social and economic justice. "What needs to change is the fundamental understanding among the political elites," she said. "That the government is supposed to serve the citizens, that the citizens are not there to be milked for their taxes."

Paddy Ashdown, a British politician who has long championed aggressive international action in Bosnia, said the international community should force Bosnia's political parties to accept long-stalled reforms to the 1995 Dayton peace accords. Ashdown fired scores of local politicians when he served as the top international official in Bosnia from 2002 to 2006.

"The international community has to act now," Ashdown said in a CNN interview Wednesday. "If they don't act now, I greatly fear that a situation where secessionism will take hold could easily become unstoppable."

But Alida Vracic, a 35-year-old Bosnian who heads a Sarajevo think tank called Populari, said Ashdown-style international activism is the problem in Bosnia. She and a younger generation of Bosnians argue that a large international role has allowed local politicians to escape accountability.

"Paddy Ashdown acted as the ultimate boss, sacking politicians from office, 80 in a day, and not using domestic institutions that the international community had set up in the first place," she said in an email. If EU officials had become gradually less assertive at the time, she said, "maybe, just maybe Bosnian politicians would finally start making hard choices and compromises themselves."

Some older Bosnians who lived through the war agreed. But they cautioned that there are times when extremists—armed with power, wealth, or weapons—will ignore the will of the majority and carry out sweeping abuses. In those situations, the threat of outside military force is needed.

Hasan Nuhanovic, a 45-year-old Bosnian Muslim whose father, mother, and brother were executed by Serb forces after the 1995 fall of the town of Srebrenica, said international pressure is still needed in Bosnia. Nuhanovic argued that only outside powers can stop long-running efforts by Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik and Bosnian Croat nationalists to block the emergence of a unified Bosnian state.

"I think they should send some troops back to Bosnia," Nuhanovic said in a telephone interview. "Just to send a message. 'We are still here. We are watching.'"

The debate reflects a sea change that has occurred in the international presence in Bosnia over the last decade. After President George W. Bush pulled American peacekeepers out in 2003 and Ashdown's tenure ended in 2006, the European Union—led by Germany and France—radically scaled back the international effort.

A hands-off EU approach reduced the number of international peacekeepers to less than 1,000. EU officials say the smaller international presence forced Bosnians to finally hold their own leaders responsible for the country's anemic state.

Ashdown and others said the scaled-back international effort allowed nationalist parties and corruption to flourish. In the CNN interview, he warned that nationalists could manipulate the unrest—whatever demonstrators' original intent—and reignite ethnic divisions. "At the moment, its citizens are complaining about poverty and lack of movement and dysfunctionality of the state and corruption amongst politicians," he said. But events "could move to something far worse very quickly."

Vracic, the younger Bosnian, argued for less international action. "The international community should have left Bosnia ages ago," she wrote, "and remained present in small doses, with smart, sophisticated policies."

Experts agree that having the international community present in "small doses" in "smart, sophisticated" ways is the right approach. But they caution that it is maddeningly difficult to achieve. At the same time, simply ignoring instability is fraught. In an increasingly interconnected world, conflict and chaos quickly reverberate across borders and economies.

 This post originally appeared on Reuters.com, an Atlantic partner site.

**Bosnia presents a terrifying picture of Europe's future (*The Guardian*, by Igor Štiks, 17 February 2014)**

*The ordinary people of Bosnia-Herzegovina are showing Europe how to avoid sleepwalking into a disaster to rival that of a century ago*

Exactly 30 years after the Olympic flame was lit in Sarajevo in 1984, the city was in again in flames. In recent weeks, protesters have stormed government buildings in an explosion of anger over their social situation, rampant poverty, moribund economy, and the stagnant social and political life. When the flame was lit back in 1984 I was seven and lived just across from the Olympic stadium. We could not sleep for two weeks, the flame was that powerful. But, we were at the same time very happy: it was a flame of prosperity, peace and endless possibilities.

Back then Sarajevo was projecting an image of what the European Union wanted its members to become: prosperous, diverse and secular with functioning industries, social equality, enviable social mobility and consistent growth. The European Union, as we now know, has failed to live up to that ambition.

There is another scene from the past too. Ten years after the Olympics, Sarajevo was in ruins, the exact image of what Europe thought it had left behind: a besieged and destroyed city, the victim of resurgent nationalism and sectarianism, Bosnia's landscape dotted with concentration camps and mass graves. Europe watched without doing anything, as if the image it believed to have left for ever in its past was too mesmerising.

And now again, Sarajevo and Bosnia are holding up a mirror to Europe, to its present and to its future. Bosnian cities resemble London in the summer of 2011 and the suburbs of Paris in 2005: an explosion of anger and the anarchic destruction of all symbols of political, social and economic power. Almost 20 years after the Dayton peace agreement, it seems as if local elites and international players have both reached a consensus only on one point: how to rapidly restore capitalism in the country. Yet it is mass privatisation that has led to almost total de-industrialisation and the dependence on imported goods and services financed by the debt slavery of citizens and their weak state.

The result is that ethno-nationalist elites, greatly responsible for war, were rewarded in peace not only by ethnic partition, but also with all the wealth of the territories they control. This was the elite that the international community and the EU, through their marginal politicians sent as "high representatives", treated as their main partners. Citizens were to be kept at bay.

But there is one big difference with the riots seen in other European cities, and this is where Bosnia speaks directly to Europe's current predicament: this is not a rebellion of discriminated and ghettoised groups, territorially contained on the outskirts of big cities. It is a rebellion of the whole population that has been subjected to economic impoverishment, social devastation and political destitution. In this, Bosnia is an image of Europe's future: ungovernable populations, exhausted by austerity measures and left to their own devices after the collapse of remnants of the welfare state – a state with no prospect for growth, run by elites of dubious, if any legitimacy who deploy heavily armed police to protect themselves against ordinary citizens.

However, Bosnia-Herzegovina today sends yet another image. Throughout the country popular assemblies – or plenums – have been established, and an especially laudable example is the Tuzla plenum, which has become so significant that it is now in a position to make appointments to local government. We are talking about ordinary people who are desperate and angry but at the same time determined to struggle for a better life in spite of all the institutional obstacles. They are not merely shouting slogans about what democracy should look like but are putting participatory democracy into practice instead.

Bosnia is showing us scenarios of unrest in other European cities, but also a way out, through the struggle of its citizens for social justice, equality and democracy. In fact, Bosnia is offering an image of what Europe must become in order not to sleepwalk again into a disaster as it did a century ago, when the assassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo marked the beginning of the first world war. Europe didn't listen then just as it did not follow the image that Sarajevo's Olympic flame was projecting in front of my window in 1984. Will it fail to understand the message Bosnian citizens are sending now? Will Europe engage in putting down this flame only to see it erupting in some other corner of the continent, very soon, when it might be too late?

**The fight for freedom comes to Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Daily Caller*, by Admir Cavalic, 17 February 2014)**

Last year, the Economist ranked Bosnia and Herzegovina among the most likely countries to experience social unrest in the 2014. At the time, no one took such predictions seriously. Unfortunately, it was only a matter of time before the Southern European country, ranked 101st in the Heritage Foundation’s Index of Economic Freedom, erupted in violence.

It started in Tuzla Canton. As the most populated canton in the country with the highest level of unemployment, after four formerly state-owned companies went bankrupt, it is no surprise that the social revolution ignited in this northeastern corner of the country. Thanks to Bosnia’s slow judicial system, former workers from the companies are still waiting for months of unpaid wages. As a result, Bosnians have taken to the streets to blame the cantonal government and courts for such injustice.

Under orders from the prime minister of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the cantonal government have heavily cracked down on protesters over the past week as a result. Police patrolled the streets, targeting businesses and citizens alike.

The government’s aim was not to bring order, but rather to collect the money desperately needed to fill the Tuzla’s budget. The canton has had to rely heavily on borrowing since the beginning of the fiscal year, so the government finally resorted to stealing from the pockets of workers, entrepreneurs and ordinary citizens. Inspectors closed small- and medium-sized businesses, and police charged several dozen euro fine for illegally crossing the street to satisfy the budget’s appetite. The canton government has even made some ridiculous proposals to institute a tax on solar energy and require taxi drivers drive the same color cab (in a country where taxi drivers use their own cars for work). Both proposals have since stalled, but they demonstrate nonetheless that something stinks at the top of the cantonal government.

These events have culminated in protests by thousands of citizens before the courts in Tuzla and finally the government headquarters of the canton. Bosnian citizens knew the right address for their demonstrations. Soon the Orwellian police forces began violating the rights of citizens without regard, only to protect the huge state apparatus. Fortunately, their thuggery only strengthened the protests. Finally, the police gave up and dropped their weapons. After three days, the Prime minister of Canton resigned, and the same is expected for other ministers.

This is a major step in the right direction for Bosnia and Herzegovina. The uprising showed that the cause of protecting the common man’s rights is alive and well. As with the Arab Spring, the demonstrations started from state repression against citizens, businessmen and workers. Now we hope for a long-awaited reforms aimed at strengthening the common man versus the state apparatus. This can only be achieved through the ideas of freedom, which Tuzla has readily embraced.

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