** United Nations Office in Belgrade**

**Daily Media Highlights**

**Thursday, 6 March 2014**

**STORIES FROM LOCAL PRESS**

* **Serbian Government requests UN SC session (*Tanjug*)**
* **Serbs in north Kosovo threat to cease cooperation with the EU (*RTS*)**
* **Dacic: Serbia will provide assistance to Ukraine if necessary (*Tanjug*)**
* **Reaping the Kosovo seed in the Crimea (*Novosti*)**
* **President Nikolic on a visit to Tunisia (*Radio Serbia*)**

**STORIES FROM REGIONAL PRESS**

* **Niksic, Sorensen: Set of anti-corruption laws again under procedure (*Fena*)**
* **HDZ B&H, HDZ 1990, HNS agree on joint approach to RS elections (*Oslobodjenje*)**

**RELEVANT ARTICLES FROM INTERNATIONAL MEDIA SOURCES**

* **Serbia Calls EU to Help Release Kosovo Serbs (BIRN**
* **Serbia Parties Lure Foreign Guests to Campaign (*BIRN*)**
* **Serbia to launch a Balkan power exchange in third quarter 2014 (*Reuters*)**
* **The undeluded going astray in Bosnia (*TransConflict*)**
* **Time to Try a Third Way in Bosnia (*BIRN*)**
* **Croatian Ex-President Urges New 'Dayton' For Bosnia (*BIRN*)**
* **Macedonia's lawmakers dissolve parliament, early vote likely in April (*Reuters*)**

**LOCAL PRESS**

**Serbian Government requests UN SC session (*Tanjug*)**

The Serbian Government will request a session of the United Nations Security Council over the announcement of the formation of Kosovo armed forces and the deterioration of the security and political situation in Kosovo and Metohija, outgoing Serbian Minister without portfolio in charge of Kosovo and Metohija Aleksandar **Vulin** has stated. At a press conference in the Serbian Government, he voiced deep concern of the government over the deterioration of the security and political situation in Kosovo and Metohija, starting from the stoning of Serb pilgrims in Djakovica, to banning Serbian citizens from entering Kosovo, for which, as he said, we still couldn’t here anywhere a clear and specific condemnation of such scandalous and vandal events.

Vulin said that the announcement of transforming the Kosovo security forces into a Kosovo army must be of concern for the entire international community. “That is unacceptable and in violation with Resolution 1244, which clearly states that there can’t be an army in the region of Kosovo and Metohija. That is a territory under the UN administration and there can be only one armed force, and this is KFOR,” said Vulin. He pointed out that the Serbian Government is requesting an urgent session of the Security Council with the topic of the respect of Resolution 1244 and the latest events in Kosovo and Metohija. According to him, it seems violence has become an everyday thing in Kosovo and Metohija, directed towards the Serbs. In regard to that he mentioned the arrests in Strpce, detention of Serbs despite the written guarantees of the Serbian Government, the ban to a Serbian minister from entering the region of Kosovo and Metohija and yesterday’s incomprehensible, impossible to justify, ban to the representatives of the Democratic Party of Serbia.

**Serbs in north Kosovo threat to cease cooperation with the EU (*Tanjug*)**

The councilors of four municipalities in northern Kosovo requested that the recently detained Serbs be released pending trial, and Serbian officials to be enabled to enter Kosovo and Metohija. They held a joint session in Zvecan, where they also stated that the announced formation of the Kosovo army poses an open threat for the security of the region and the Kosovo Serbs. North Mitrovica Mayor Goran **Rakic** has stated that the municipalities will be forced to cease cooperation with the EU Office in Pristina and EULEX if the international structures in the province do not fulfill their minimal requests. Rakic also requested the international community and Pristina representatives to enable all officials from Belgrade, primarily the Minister in charge of Kosovo Aleksandar **Vulin**, to enter the province. “Our only ally and associate is the Serbian Government and the state of Serbia. We will talk to everyone, the international community and provisional institutions in Pristina, but our cooperation will depend on whether our stands will be respected by those with whom we talk. The Serb people and we, their legitimately elected representatives, are concerned over the announced formation of the Kosovo army and we see this as an act of open threat for the security of the region and the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija. This is unacceptable and in violation with UNSCR 1244 that doesn’t envisage the existence of an army in the province. That territory is under the UN administration and there can be only one armed force KFOR,” said Rakic. The session in Zvecan was not attended by Albanian councilors, 54 were present out of 72. The Chairperson of the North Mitrovica municipal assembly Ksenija **Bozovic** requested Pristina and the international community to stop immediately with the arrests, intimidations and constant raising of tensions in Serb regions in Kosovo. “We request that Oliver **Ivanovic** and other arrested Serbs be released urgently pending trial, respect of human rights, freedom of movement, security to all residents in Kosovo, and for the international community to stop applying double standards towards the Serb community as compared to the Albanian community,” she said. The councilors stated in the session conclusions that they are requesting that light be shed on the murder of their colleague Dimitrije **Janicijevic**, who was murdered in January. The session was attended by certain mayors of the municipalities south of the Ibar River where the Serbs are in power, but also by the head of the provisional body in Strpce Ivan **Redzic** and the leader of the Serbian (Ruska) Citizen Initiative Vlada **Kostic**.

**Dacic: Serbia will provide assistance to Ukraine if necessary (*Tanjug*)**

Serbian Prime Minister Ivica Dacic said on Tuesday that he wishes Ukraine and its people to recover from the crisis, and that Serbia will be constructive and provide assistance if necessary.

“The developments in Ukraine are deplorable and I wish the country and its people to recover from the crisis. Serbia, a former part of Yugoslavia, knows what that means, and expects that everything will be resolved peacefully,” Dacic told reporters while attending the Kopaonik Business Forum. Russia and Ukraine are friendly countries to Serbia, Dacic said, recalling that the two countries have historical ties. “Apparently there was a plan beforehand to bring about a chill in these ties in an artificial manner. Serbia wants to be constructive and will provide assistance to anyone should that be necessary,” Dacic said.

**Reaping the Kosovo seed in the Crimea (*Novosti*)**

Russian president’s message – that the population of the Crimea also has the right to self-determination if this was already permitted to the Kosovo Albanians, provoked guesses in the direction of a possible change of Moscow’s orientation towards the Kosovo status, but in the opinion of experts, this interpretation is not at the expense of Serbia nor does it mean redefinition of the position towards the southern Serbian province. At the same time, drawing a parallel with Kosovo has also brought out the dilemma on whether the self-declared Kosovo independence six years ago was a “unique case” as part of the international community advocated at the time, thus, blowing wind in Kosovo sails. According to Dusan **Prorokovic**, the executive director of the Centre for Strategic Alternatives, tensions in the Crimea are proof that Kosovo is not a *sui generis* case as Serbia has maintained from the very beginning. The resolution of the Ukrainian crisis, he opines, will be in Serbia’s favor because it will require the definition of a single criteria. “Once things return to the bed of single standards, then they should be applied in the Balkans where Serbia is a victim of the asymmetrical approach of the West,” Prorokovic told ***Novosti***. Either everybody will return to the principle of respecting borders or the issue of borders will open up throughout the Balkans, primarily in FYROM and B&H. Marcelo **Kohen**, a Professor of International Law at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, who was also a member of the Serbian legal team before the International Court of Justice in The Hague in the Kosovo case, tells Novosti: “Washington, London, Paris and Berlin are reaping what they have sown. They lack moral credibility to advocate territorial integrity and non-intervention after they supported Kosovo’s secession and Maiden activists in Kiev. Not to mention the military interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan and other cases.” Professor on International Relations Predrag **Simic** doesn’t interpret Putin’s comparison as an indication of Russia having second thoughts regarding the Kosovo status, but as a continuation of the Russian-American game: “In 2008 Putin told the U.S. to decide whether it respects international law or it chooses on its own to whom they will recognize the right to self-determination. The decision of the U.S. was to recognize Kosovo, and the decision of Russia was to recognize Ossetia and Southern Abkhazia. That is why the Crimea-Kosovo parallel is Moscow’s consistent stand and I am pretty sure that Russia will continue to support what Serbia wants in Kosovo and Metohija. The eyes of all separatists in the world are fixed on Kosovo and Metohija, while Scotland, Catalonia, Basque, Transylvania or southern Slovakia are only some of the examples.

**President Nikolic on a visit to Tunisia (*Radio Serbia*, by Cmilja Vitorovic)**

Serbian President Tomislav **Nikolic** has stated that there are no open-ended issues between Serbia and Tunisia, but efforts should be invested so that excellent political relations are accompanied by economic cooperation, which is currently not the case. After he met with Tunisian President Moncef **Marzouki**, Nikolic said that the political dialogue be expressed through promotion of economic cooperation of the two countries with the aim to further strengthen friendly relations between the two peoples.

Expressing satisfaction that Marzouki invited him to the first working and friendly visit to Tunisia, Nikolic said that this is a historic visit because it marks the end of the period lacking the political dialogue at the highest level, despite the fact that the two countries have no open-ended issues. Friendly relations between Serbia and Tunisia have lasted for more than half a century, established at the time of the Non-Aligned Movement and strengthened by the recognition of Tunisia shortly after its independence in 1956, Nikolic reminded. He said that a number of issues of bilateral and inter-state character were discussed during the meeting, and it was noted that the dialogue improved significantly at all levels. Nikolic underlined that Serbia is grateful to Tunisia for its principled position in regard to the unilaterally proclaimed independence of Kosovo and expressed hope that it will be continued, and that Tunisian officials will help in presenting the position of Serbia within the region and the African continent. Nikolic said that excellent political relations between the two countries are not accompanied by the appropriate level of economic cooperation. In 2013, trade exchange between Serbia and Tunisia amounted to only 39 million dollars, which is merely 0.1 percent of the total trade between Serbia and other countries in the same period, said the president of Serbia. Nikolic said that Serbia is politically stable and attractive country for foreign investments, as well as ready for cooperation through the establishment of joint ventures, particularly in the manufacturing industry. We are ready to offer Tunisia our free markets, as well as knowledge and expertise in many areas. I am convinced that the time has come for not only political cooperation, but also when we will help each other so that the two peoples live better, Nikolic said. He noted that the two countries can appear together in the third markets, especially because Serbia has free trade agreements with Russia, Turkey, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, as well as agreements with CEFTA and EFTA. The Serbian President said he also discussed the marking of the centenary of the outbreak of World War One, and Serbia’s deep connection with the people of Tunisia. Historic alliance with France, the hospitality of the Tunisian people, and the fact that many Serbian soldiers were buried in Tunisia remain etched in the memory of the Serbian people, said Nikolic. He thanked the Tunisian Defense Ministry and management of the National Military Museum Manuba for enabling the exhibition “The Serbs in North Africa, 1915-1919”.

The Serbian delegation includes Foreign Minister Ivan **Mrkic**, Minister of Culture Ivan **Tasovac** and presidential advisors. After the meeting of the two delegations, a number of bilateral agreements were signed.

**REGIONAL PRESS**

**Niksic, Sorensen: Set of anti-corruption laws again under procedure (*Fena*)**

The Prime Minister of the Federation B&H Nermin **Niksic** has stated in Sarajevo following the meeting with the Head of the EU Delegation in B&H Peter **Sorensen** that the set of anti-corruption laws, after it had been harmonized to the greatest extent in the talks with the EU Delegation, will be placed again on the agenda of the Federal Government at the end of the month, after which it will be forwarded for parliamentary procedure. The set of anti-corruption laws has been unanimously determined by the Federal Government but didn’t receive support of the FB&H parliament. Ambassador Sorensen also said that the previous objections by the EU to these laws have started to be resolved, so the stands have been drawing closer. However, he said this would not prejudice the debate in the parliament. He also welcomed the efforts made by the Federal Government to improve the business environment in the FB&H, because, in his opinion, this is the key for attracting local and foreign investments, new jobs and the foundation of further reforms.

**HDZ B&H, HDZ 1990, HNS agree on joint approach to RS elections (*Oslobodjenje*)**

Representatives of the HDZ B&H, HDZ 1990, and the Croatian National Alliance (HNS) agreed at a meeting in Banja Luka that with a joint approach to the upcoming elections, they can protect the interests of the Croat people in the Republika Srpska (RS) and enable equality of the position of Croats in institutions at the entity and state level, the HDZ B&H said in a statement. During the meeting, they stressed that the interest of Croat parties in the RS is that the position of vice president, as well as two delegates to the RS National Assembly, is won by candidates from parties with the Croatian sign. “The joint interest is to increase the number of delegates from Croat parties in the Council of Peoples, from the three at present to five,” the statement reads.  
Davor **Cordas** (HDZ BiH), Ivo **Kamenjasevic** (HDZ BiH), Tomislav **Tomljanovic** (HDZ), Djuro **Ivanovic** (HNS), and Mijo **Perkunic** (HDZ 1990) participated in the meeting.

**INTERNATIONAL PRESS**

**Serbia Calls EU to Help Release Kosovo Serbs (*BIRN*, by Marija Ristic, 6 March 2014)**

The Serbian government said it is putting pressure on the international community to allow Kosovo Serbs arrested for alleged war crimes to be released ahead of their court cases.

Serbian Prime Minister Ivica Dacic said that he was putting constant pressure on the international community while maintaining regular contact with the family of Oliver Ivanovic, a Kosovo Serb leader arrested in January for alleged war crimes.

“This issue is constantly avoided [by the international community]. We are not asking as a government to discharge anyone from their responsibility, we only ask for them to be released to defend themselves at liberty,” Dacic told journalists on Wednesday.

Dacic said that the Serbian government would provide guarantees that Ivanovic and Dragoljub Delibasic, a retired police colonel who is also in custody in Kosovo, would be available to the Pristina authorities if they are released.

Both men were arrested on suspicion of involvement in alleged war crimes during the fighting between ethnic Albanian rebels and Belgrade’s forces in 1999, as well as killings that took place after the Kosovo conflict ended.

Delibasic is suspected of “incitement to commit the offence of aggravated murder by depriving other persons of life because of national motives, committed in co-perpetration with Oliver Ivanovic, the alleged leader of the ‘Bridge Watchers’”, The EU rule-of-law mission EULEX said in a statement after his arrest.

The ‘Bridge Watchers’ were hardline Serbs who patrolled the main bridge in Mitrovica dividing the town into Serbian and Albanian sectors.

The attacks by Serb assailants in 2000 saw [ethnic Albanians murdered and driven from their homes in Mitrovica](http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kosovo-to-bring-to-justice-prepetrators-of-war-aftermath-in-mitrovica-victims-ask_blank).

Ivanovic meanwhile has asked several times to be transferred from prison in Pristina to the town of Mitrovica in the Serb north of Kosovo, but the court has dismissed his motions.

On Wednesday, he started a hunger strike after he was rejected for the third time.

“A political and completely pointless legal procedure that would be doomed to fail in any reasonable institution is being staged against me. The prosecution is aware of that, but their intention is to exhaust me, discourage me and eventually break me,” Ivanovic said in a letter published by Serbian daily *Politika* on Wednesday.

He added that he didn’t feel safe surrounded by Albanians, and was not even using his time when not locked up to go to the jail’s exercise yard.

“Because all of that, I decided to go to hunger strike,” he said.

**Serbia Parties Lure Foreign Guests to Campaign (*BIRN*, 5 March 2014)**

As early parliamentary elections near, the competing parties are keen to boost their standing by attracting foreign visitors to their rallies and conventions.

Foreign politicians are coming to Serbia to support the various political parties at their final conventions ahead of the early parliamentary vote on March 16.

Radomir Nikolic, president of the board of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party, said his party summit will have guests from both East and West.

"The presence of prominent foreign figures sends a positive message to the people that Serbia is acceptable as a political partner and has someone in the world to cooperate with," Nikolic said. However, he did not reveal the names of any expected foreign guests.

Last year, former Italian foreign minister Franco Frattini and Alexander Babak, a special envoy of Russian President Vladimir Putin, attended the Progressives' fifth birthday party.

The opposition Democratic Party said centre-leftist friends in the world might well be helping the party out in its campaign.

"We are in constant touch with the Party of European Socialists and the Socialist International, helping each other whenever necessary, even in campaigns," Aleksandra Jerkov, spokesperson of the Democrats, said.

The Socialist Party has already welcomed guests from Russia. A Putin envoy attended a special pre-election convention held by the Socialist-led coalition at the weekend.

The opposition nationalist Democratic Party of Serbia also started its election campaign with a Russian guest present - Artyom Turov of Putin's United Russia party.

**Serbia to launch a Balkan power exchange in third quarter 2014 (*Reuters*, by** [**Ivana Sekularac**](http://blogs.reuters.com/search/journalist.php?edition=us&n=ivana.sekularac&)**, 5 March 2014)**

KOPAONIK, Serbia - Serbia has teamed up with European exchange EPEX Spot to launch a regional spot power bourse in the third quarter this year to introduce competition, develop reliable prices and security of supply in the region, its grid operator EMS said on Wednesday.

Paris-based EPEX will hold a 25 percent stake in the SEEPEX exchange, with EMS owning the remaining share, EMS general manager Nikola Petrovic said on the sidelines of an economic forum in the Serbian mountain resort of Kopaonik.

The Belgrade-based bourse would become fully operational in the first quarter of 2015, providing the Balkan country's efforts to liberalise its energy market with a view to joining the European Union go ahead as planned.

In the initial phase neighbouring Montenegro, Macedonia and Bosnia will join SEEPEX, Petrovic said. There are also plans to link the regional market with that of Hungary, which has already linked day ahead trading with the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

The bourse will first start trading day ahead power, while intraday trading will be introduced in 2015.

While many traders see the region as potentially lucrative, they cite barriers limiting market growth that include a lack of transparency, difficulties in getting trading licenses and the need to win numerous auctions to move around power.

Almost 10 percent of Serbia's electricity market was opened up in 2013 and 27 of the country's biggest industrial consumers were required to buy power on the open market.

Smaller commercial users have been able to buy on the free market since the start of 2014. Households may also follow suit in July, six months ahead of initial plans, officials have said.

Ljubljana-based BSP Southpool, run by international derivatives exchange Eurex and Slovenian power market operator Borzen, offers spot power trade for the Slovenian and Serbian markets but liquidity there has been poor.

(Writing by [Maja Zuvela](http://blogs.reuters.com/search/journalist.php?edition=us&n=maja.zuvela&); Editing by [Michael Kahn](http://blogs.reuters.com/search/journalist.php?edition=us&n=michael.kahn&))

**The undeluded going astray in Bosnia (*TransConflict*, by Wolfgang Petritsch and Cristoph Solioz, 5 March 2014)**

**The process of integration into the European Union, which has been stagnant for a decade now, has exposed, the sad reality of a total lack of political will on the part of Europe.** Today like yesterday, the undeluded­­ — those who claim to know what is really going on and reject out of hand any slightest prospect of emancipation — are still wide of the mark, and in Bosnia in particular.

Global warming is without any impact on the “Bosnian spring”. The crisis that has been eating away at the country for over ten years now knows no seasons. The same is true of the street demonstrations, not to mention the proliferation of self-generating citizens’ groups that emerge on a daily basis in Sarajevo and Tuzla, where the movement first got under way.

By a quirk of fate, the return of the (Yugoslavian) self-governing tradition is out-performing both the nationalist parties and the many western ‘civil society’ development programmes which, at their very best, have given rise to ‘offshore’ companies in the form of NGOs that often represent the only job-possibility. Faced with the scale of this social movement, the experts who kept trotting out the same line about the non-existence of any civil society have got little return for their pains.

We would be better placed to understand what is today being heralded as a new social movement if we were to look back at the scale of the April 1992 pacifist movement, and then, during the war, the size of Tuzla’s Citizens’ Forum which united some ten thousand citizens in proactive solidarity. This same forum was to serve as the lynchpin of the Citizen Alternative Parliament (GAP) of Bosnia, founded in August 1996, which went on to form the umbrella for upwards of thirty different citizen initiatives across the nation.

Hot on its heels, the Sarajevo Law Centre set about a process of critical appraisal of the Dayton Agreement (GFAP), which at that time everyone expected would soon be amended, rewritten, or even abolished. When the first round of elections backed the power of the nationalist parties, the opposition forces came together time and again in a shadow government, finally bringing the ‘Alliance for Change’ to power in January 2001; though sadly it proved too fragile to last. And here we shall close our list of the initiatives that we saw being devised and established against all odds by the activists of Bosnia.

Alas, it is true that this potential for expertise and engagement on the part of local players was never on a sufficient scale to compete with the power of elites who were more corrupt than nationalist, and who always knew how to play on the presence and support of an “international community” that at times was as naïve as it was obliging.

Today, it is plain to see that the vote-catching antics have run out of steam, hence the harsh criticism being levelled at the corruption of the political class as a whole, regardless of regional origin and allegiance. Even so, at a more fundamental level it is the country’s political architecture, negotiated in Dayton in 1995, that now finds itself in a state of collapse.

The “international community” bears as much responsibility for this lamentable situation as do the local representatives. Not only has the “state graft” been rejected, but with one clumsy initiative after the next (the last to date being the 2010 “Butmir package”), both Washington and Brussels have contributed to plunging the country into a situation of Kafkaesque dimensions. The process of integration into the European Union, which has been stagnant for a decade now, has exposed the sad reality of a total lack of political will on the part of Europe.

To those who are still pleading that change must come from outside the country, that it must be imposed, need to understand that democracy cannot be imposed. A more viable alternative is possible: one that resolutely empowers local stakeholders. It so happens that Bosnia has experience in such exercises, limited though they were. In the wake of the creation of the Partnership Forum and the Civic Forum in July 2001, by the then High Representative, these two new set-ups were able to kick-start the process of constitutional reform in the two entities. They were concluded on 27 March 2002 with the Sarajevo-Mrakovica Agreement. In this negotiation process, which included experts and representatives from public interest groups, local players led the process, assisted by international experts. Likewise, further agreements have been reached since then, notably on military reform and the status of Brcko district.

Admittedly, what is now at stake is on a considerable scale… A complete overhaul of the Dayton Agreement is unavoidable. It has become all too obvious by now, that the reform of the overly complex constitution is a must, with the clear aim of putting in place a functional institutional architecture that will both strengthen the core capacities of the state and introduce a smart de-centralisation process at the level of the regions that still have to be created.

This in turn presupposes an end to the two-entity division of the country (both entities having proven to be as dysfunctional as they are weary) and the abolition of the ten cantons in a Federation that has been bankrupt since 2003.

Whilst the evidence is overwhelming, Bosnian experts have already formulated streamlined political alternatives as far back as 1996. The “international community” has thus far refused to open what they call the “Pandora’s box”. Displaying both misjudgment with respect to myth, and scorn with respect to politics, the western diplomats gave up long before the Bosnian politicians.

Let’s be more specific. Already back in 2007 when the desaster of the Dayton-implementation was looming on the horizon, Milan Kucan, the former President of Slovenia and one of the insiders of Yugoslvia’s break-up had called for Dayton II to be drafted under the aegis of the signatories Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, with international representatives as observers.

This scenario has the merit of reaching beyond the alternatives *external imposition or internal solution. It* sets out in a convincing manner a partnership that would assign a precise role to each party. It needs to be mentioned, that the Sarajevo Foundation Public Law Center (CJP) has been engaged since 2012 in a state-wide public debate with a view to drafting a new constitution. The expertise required is very much present in the country itself.

An alliance between local expertise and the new civic forces such as the Citizens’ Plenum in Tuzla – could very well develop into a public space that could challenge the clueless *nomenklatura*. Bosnia’s social movement is emerging from a state of powerlessness and is opening up new possibilities. That said, a different Bosnia needs a different Europe. Brussels surely wants to avoid finding itself in the same situation in Sarajevo tomorrow, as it is in Kiev today.

***Wolfgang Petritsch****, former High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1999-2002), is currently the Schumpeter Fellow at Harvard University.* ***Christophe Solioz*** *is an author and political commentator. He just published Psychanalyse engagée, entre dissidence et orthodoxie in 2014 (Éditions L’Harmattan).*

**Time to Try a Third Way in Bosnia (*BIRN*, by Srecko Latal, 5 March 2014)**

A new approach, combining a focus of local ‘ownership’ of reforms with a stronger engagement by the international community, could offer a way out of the current dead end.

The blockage of Bosnia’s EU path was formalized at the press conference of the European Commissioner for Enlargement, Stefan Fule, in Sarajevo on February 18, after the last round of negotiations to amend the constitution in line with the European Court of Human Rights’ Sejdic-Finci ruling failed.  
If the news did not get much attention at home or internationally, it was because it long time ago became clear that Bosnia's EU accession process was stuck in the mire of the local political games.   
Whether out of generosity, naivety or some other reason, Fule “ran a few more laps” over the last few months, but since Bosnia’s own leaders did not move forward, he had finally to declare defeat.

This move was even more painful having in mind that it came amid social unrest that has lasted for weeks in towns all over the country.   
The violence that followed the start of unrest in Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zenica, Bihac, Mostar and Brcko, along with footage of clashes between police and protestors, burned government buildings, streets covered with smoke, destroyed vehicles and scattered furniture, recalled the wartime events of not so long time ago. Bosnia was briefly again on the front pages of world newspapers.  
Regardless of the loud but not so clear message of the social unrest, most local politicians have maintained their usual attitudes and behaviour, however.

The main Croatian and Serbian parties have been trying to blame the Bosniaks, using speculation, rumours and conspiracy theories to intimidate their own ethnic groups and prevent the spread of the protests to their areas.   
Meanwhile the Bosniak politicians have blamed each other and competed to give empty promises and unreal proposals.   
The fact that Bosnian leaders have refused to compromise even in this atmosphere, and have stuck to their maximum claims, shows the complexity of the problem.   
That, as well as recent statements of some leaders - making it clear that they are not interested in IPA funds, and stating that Bosnia does not need a European path if it leads to the dissolution of the Bosnia - shows that this is not just a failure of a series of negotiations that can be replaced by some other negotiations. It shows that the basic concept of the EU integration of Bosnia is now being challenged.

Both Bosnia and the international community are now awaiting the arrival of the EU High

Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, which has been announced for the coming days. Many Bosnians have great expectations of this visit. Following the progress in negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina, many hope that Ashton has greater authority, a stronger negotiating capacity or even some hidden magic that will finally make Bosnia’s stubborn and irresponsible leaders shift from their positions.

Unfortunately in Bosnia, only few appear to realise that it is the local leaders who finally showed the will to compromise in the negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina. They needed international mediation for this, and Ashton was happy to oblige and did it very well.

But Bosnian leaders, unfortunately, are still far away from any kind of compromise. Because of that, the next visits of Ashton or other high-ranking international officials should be used to clear up matters with Bosnia’s political leaders.

They must be given a clear, loud and official message about the conditions for Bosnia’s European and Atlantic integration. None of them should be allowed to publicly support the European path while effectively doing everything to block that path.

It has taken a lot of unsuccessful meetings for the Europeans to finally realize that some local leaders have played this game for years, but till now their diplomatic culture did not allow to name them and to publicly call them to account.

Naming those responsible for blocking Bosnia’s European path is the first step, but certainly not the last, that the European Union and the international community should make in the process of creating a new international approach towards Bosnia.

A new approach is necessary not only Bosnia but for the wider interest of the European Union. The recent violence in Bosnia, as well as the spread of protests to Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia, shows that political, economic and social problems are smouldering throughout the Balkans - and recent history has taught us that political and economic problems can quickly turn to security ones, which are harder and more expensive to solve.

Debate on the new approach of the international community towards Bosnia and the rest of the Balkans has engaged academic circles, experts and representatives of the civil society for months.

Unfortunately some old, already tried ideas that have not given any long-term results have dominated the discussion so far. Most of these proposals can be classified into two categories; one advocating the return of a more active engagement of the international community through a strengthened role of the Office of the High Representative, and another that maintains that the international community should stand aside and let Bosnian politicians decide the future of the country.

Could it be possible to think of a new approach, a third, middle road, that would still imply local responsibility and ownership of reforms, but involve a stronger and more concrete engagement on the part of the international community?

Past mistakes clearly show that local responsibility and ownership of the processes are necessary to create long-term stability, and that a stronger and more concrete engagement by the international community is still needed to overcome the shortcomings of the Dayton constitution and protect the Bosnians from their political representatives who deny or violate the Dayton agreement.

One key question in the discussion about the new approach of the international community towards Bosnia refers to the need for reform of the Dayton constitution. In this regard there are several conflicting views in the local and international community. Some support quick and broad reform, while others would change Dayton, but slowly and partially. Some others again would either keep the original Dayton agreement or return to the legal situation that existed before the war. The problem with this third opinion is that there is substantial disagreement about what the original Dayton accord was, and what the legal basis in 1992 was.

This theoretical discussion about changing Dayton, which has lasted for more than a decade, unfortunately has lost contact with reality and began to contribute to the tensions in Bosnia.

Looking back at the series of attempts by the international community to mediate talks on amending the Bosnian constitution - from the package of constitutional reforms in 2005, to the so-called Butmir package in 2009 and the negotiations on constitutional reform related to the Sejdic-Finci case - which failed last week - it is clear that no consensus exists in Bosnia on amending the constitution. It is equally clear that the international community has neither the power nor the desire to be so deeply involved in the key domestic issues of an internationally recognized country.

On the other hand, it is clear that the Dayton constitution is too complicated, inefficient and too expensive to stay forever. So, what can be done?

The answer is self-imposed: reform of the Dayton constitution should remain a long-term goal of the local and international community. But in the meantime it is necessary to work on strengthening the economic, social, cultural and democratic capacities of all parts of society in Bosnia in order to approach the issue of constitutional reform - not through the story of vulnerability, division and tension, but through creating a common future, security, tolerance and good neighbourly relations, which were a key part of the centuries-old tradition of the Balkans. Many European countries have experience of constitutional reform, are able to understand this process and can provide help for it.

This distinction between short-term and long-term reforms, and parallel support for both, would overcome one of the biggest mistakes of all the previous international strategies towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, which tried to resolve key issues with quick, short-term solutions.

Any decision about the start and pace of preparations for a new international approach towards Bosnia mainly depends on the most important players – Berlin, Washington and Brussels.

At this moment it is clear that this process is not a high priority, having in mind that both the European Union and the United States are focused on other issues, from Ukraine to the elections for the European Parliament and those for the US Congress and Senate.  
Meanwhile, Bosnia is also preparing for a general election this year, which traditionally means the strengthening of radical rhetoric, the spread of nationalist and secessionist threats, the revival of conspiracy theories and constant shifts of the blame to the others and issues of empty promises about better times to come.

This year’s elections are being prepared amid the worst economic and social crisis, where a poor living standard is barely maintained by constant borowing from commercial banks and international financial institutions.

Growing hunger, poverty and unemployment, combined with the neglect on the part of the politicians, have been fomenting tension and anger in Bosnia for years, which exploded earlier this month. Social protests have continued and for the first time citizens are organizing themselves through civil plenary sessions in order to present their demands to local leaders more clearly.

Politicians show little understanding of this, however, which means the situation in Bosnia is likely to remain tense and unpredictable. It emphasises the importance of the urgent creation of modalities for international engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as the rest of the Balkans. Only this will prevent a turbulent spring in Bosnia from growing into an even wilder summer.

**Croatian Ex-President Urges New 'Dayton' For Bosnia (*BIRN*, Boris Pavelic, 6 March 2014)**

Former Croatian president Stjepan Mesic is to advocate a new international conference on Bosnia, so that the country can become a 'citizens's state divided into several multi-ethnic cantons'.

The former Croatian President on Friday is to propose a new Dayton-style agreement on Bosnia in Mostar, where he is due to deliver a speech.

Mesic's proposal involves Croatia initiating the main changes to the 1995 Dayton Ohio deal, which ended Bosnia's 1992-5 war.

The preconception has to be broken, he intends to say, that the Dayton agreeement is untouchable, that ethnic units are necessary, and that what matters is ethnic equality as opposed to citizens' rights.

He will argue that Bosnia should be transformed into "a state of citizens divided into several multiethnic cantons, with a central government and with equality for the three constituent nations, without excluding others".

Mesic will propose that the international community's High Representative to Bosnia should be invested with increased powers once again.

After a year, a new international conference, called "Dayton 2", should be held under United Nations auspices.

Mesic believes that Bosnia's state-level presidency should represent Bosnia at the conference, not representatives of the two entities, or of the constituent nations, "and the least of all the political parties".

After a new territorial and constitutional framework is adopted at the conference, a year would pass before a referendum was held on it, and general elections.

During the following five years, international community representatives would withdraw from Bosnia. At the same time, the country would negotiate with the EU.

Three former High Representatives to Bosnia, Paddy Ashdown, Wolfgang Petritsch and Christian Schwarz-Schilling, have read and praised Mesic's proposal, Mesic's office said.

Ashdown called the proposal "extraordinary and extremely important". Schwartz-Schilling said he "thinks the same as Mr Mesic does, regarding the dangerous situation in BiH".

Petritsch agreed that it would be good for "the regional signatories of Dayton, together with the US and the EU, gather at the round table and reach an agreement on the principles for a new conference".

Mesic's initiative does not represent the official Croatian attitude towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Croatian President emphasised.

Mesic's call for a new Dayton deal comes at a time when many Bosnian Croats are demanding a third entity of their own in Bosnia, alongside the mainly Bosniak Federation and the mainly Serbian Republika Srpska.

Meanwhile, Bosnian Serbs continue to talk of secession and of the eventual complete independence of the Republika Srpska.

**Macedonia's lawmakers dissolve parliament, early vote likely in April (*Reuters*, 5 March 2014)**

SKOPJE - Lawmakers in Macedonia voted to dissolve parliament on Wednesday, clearing the way for a snap election expected in April after the multi-ethnic ruling coalition failed to agree on a candidate for president.

Parliamentary elections had been due next year.

The speaker of parliament must now set a date for an early poll, which local media said would likely coincide with the second round of a presidential election. The first round of the presidential vote is scheduled for April 13.

"Today we allowed the people to check the legitimacy of all parties on the political scene," said Silvana Boneva, a deputy of the centre-right VMRO-DPMNE party, a senior partner in the ruling coalition.

The deadlock within Macedonia's multi-ethnic coalition started after ethnic Albanian Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), a junior ruling party, was angered by VMRO-DPMNE's decision to nominate incumbent Gjorge Ivanov as its presidential candidate.

DUI argued Ivanov, who would run for a second term, was not a "consensual" candidate acceptable to both Albanians and Macedonians, who are ethnic Slavs.

Ethnic Albanians represent a third of Macedonia's 2 million population, and relations with Macedonians have been tense since 2001, when an ethnic conflict almost plunged the country into civil war. (Reporting by Kole Casule; Writing by Aleksandar Vasovic; Editing by Jon Boyle)

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