** United Nations Office in Belgrade**

**Daily Media Highlights**

**Tuesday, 25 March 2014**

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**LOCAL PRESS**

**Nikolic: Kosovo can’t leave Serbia in this century (*FoNet*)**

“It is time for Pristina to realize that Serbia doesn’t have to anything in regard to Kosovo that they would like, and Kosovo will certainly not leave Serbia, at least in this century,” said Serbian President Tomislav **Nikolic.** “Serbia will do what it has to do, in line with the interests of its citizens and state, which are clearly defined,” Nikolic told the press after the opening of the reconstruction works of the Pancevo-Belgrade railway. He has stated that he doesn’t see the talks in Brussels as Serbia’s “fitting into” the rules prescribed in Pristina “but fitting of both Belgrade and Pristina into some rules that both should respect.” “If Pristina intends to cooperates with Serbia so we can find the best possible solution, then it must give up on senseless moves such as demonstrating force by arresting certain people on indictments that are either invented or could not exist in any legal state,” he said. According to Nikolic, it is time to start talking in the upcoming Belgrade-Pristina talks “about the bad things occurring now.” He announced that Belgrade’s delegation will continue talks with Pristina “perhaps in a changed composition” and that they will be attended by Prime Minister Ivica **Dacic** and Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandar **Vucic** “ as obviously the main candidate for the future prime minister.”

**Vulin: UN to publish report on consequences of bombing (*Tanjug*)**

Outgoing Serbian Minister without Portfolio in charge of Kosovo and Metohija Aleksandar **Vulin** urged the United Nations to publish a report on the 1999 bombing of Serbia with depleted uranium ordinance. “I request that the UN publish a report on where depleted uranium bombs were falling so that we can at least know where our soil, water and air will remain destroyed for the next thousand years,” Vulin said in Leposavic at a ceremony marking 15 years since the start of the NATO bombing campaign. The sounds of air raid sirens and the bombs that were heralded by those sirens are echoing throughout Europe today - from the Crimea and across northern Italy, all the way to Catalonia, Vulin said. “What has been done in Kosovo, to this small, honorable and proud nation, is repeating where you do not expect it to. They have admitted that they were killing us with no regard for justice and law, also admitting what they never said - that they were killing us without regret,” Vulin said, adding that not a single apology has been heard from those who committed the aggression against Serbia. He said that “Serbia must adopt a law on the rights of war veterans and their descendants” to thank those who “defended and protected it” throughout the NATO bombing campaign. “In that way we will show that we remember and for how long we will remember. We have no way of knowing whether the big powers will bomb some small country again, but we do have a way of knowing how those who defended us from the bombing will live,” Vulin said. He laid a wreath at a monument outside the building of the Leposavic municipality in a tribute to those killed in the NATO bombing campaign.  
Leposavic Mayor Dragan **Jablanovic** reminded those present of the victims of the bombing campaign and once again called for Serbian unity. “We do not want some Albanian quasi-state to come to life here in Kosovo and Metohija, supported by the global power-wielders who bombed us. If the Serbs unite - and now is the right moment for that - they will succeed in their struggle. There can be no state here other than the one that has existed forever, the one that exists now and will exist in the future, and that is Serbia,” Jablanovic said.

**Fila: Hague scenario in Kosovo (*Tanjug*)**

The legal team for the defense of the leader of SDP Civic Initiative Oliver **Ivanovic** pointed to the lack of transparency in the investigation, assessing that The Hague scenario is present in Kosovo and that Serbs are arrested before any evidence is sought against them. Ivanovic’s defense counsels and members of his family appealed once again that he be released pending trial, adding that the Serbian government has given guarantees that he will be at the Kosovo court’s reach at any moment. Attorney Toma **Fila** assessed there had been no reason whatsoever for Ivanovic’s detainment. I think that the arrest of Serbs in Kosovo will continue as there is an intention of arresting and undermining eminent Serbs in the province so Serbs would be forced to leave, emphasized Fila.

**Lazanski: NATO committed a war crime in 1999 (*Radio Serbia*)**

NATO air strikes against FR Yugoslavia in 1999 represented an act of aggression and a war crime against peace. By bombing Yugoslavia, NATO also breached the UN Charter and numerous provisions of the international law. In addition to military facilities, many civilian ones were targeted and struck as well. NATO used ammunition with depleted uranium and cluster bombs to a large extent and there can be no justification for something like that, military analyst Miroslav **Lazanski** tells International Radio Serbia. He warned that NATO inflicted immense damage on Serbia and the Serbian people, which damage has been estimated at between 35 billion and as much as 80 billion Dollars. The Serbian territory and subterranean waters have been contaminated with depleted uranium, the decay of which lasts more than two million years. Serbia has also been deprived of 15% of its territory. Kosovo and Metohija was taken from Serbia and such a psychological situation has been created among people that it will be hard to forget that, emphasizes Lazanski. Regardless of all the paths we have taken towards EU integrations and various alliances, a deep wound and injury will remain in our souls, as the Serbian people were allies with the Americans, the British and the French in both world wars, underlines Lazanski. The global diplomacy, or rather, the Western one, would not leave enough time for discussion on the Kosovo issue, but undertook a military solution right away - the bombing and aggression against Yugoslavia. On the other hand, there are so many neuralgic points in the world which have been the subjects of negotiations for years, such as the dispute between the Israeli and the Palestinians, India and Pakistan, etc. Basing the Kosovo issue on the Rambouillet talks only and insisting that the issue be solved immediately clearly shows that someone wanted to exert military aggression against FR Yugoslavia on the 50th anniversary of NATO, stresses Lazanski. Today, the EU and the West abhor Russia’s intervention in Crimea and the fact that someone can use military forces in order to change borders in Europe in the 21st century. They did not pose the same question 15 years ago. As time passes, I believe there will be more and more Western politicians who, upon leaving office and retiring, will admit too late that, back in 1999, they were wrong and that injustice was wrought upon Serbia. It was then when Pandora’s Box of infringement on the international law began. There was a rule applying to several military interventions worldwide after 1999 – whoever has adequate military force can refer to the Kosovo case and resolve matters the way it suits them. The question is – who will be the next after Crimea, says Lazanski. We, for our part, should remember all that happened and invest efforts to strengthen Serbia as much as possible in future, said Lazanski. He believes that Serbia’s current position towards NATO is quite satisfying and that cooperation within the Partnership for Peace program suffices for the time being. According to him, any other type of stronger integration or admission to NATO must be a matter of a referendum.

**Kurkulas: Crisis in Crimea doesn’t block Serbia (*Novosti*)**

The stand of the EU member states towards Kosovo is very well known and I don’t expect it to be changed over the events around the Ukrainian crisis. On the other side, the Greek stand towards that issue will always stem from the respect of international law,” the Presiding of the EU Council of Minister and Deputy Greek Foreign Minister Dimitris **Kurkulas** tells ***Novosti*** in response to the question whether Brussels and Athens will change their stands towards Kosovo and Metohija after the outbreak of the crisis in the Crimea.

**Can the Black Sea crisis slow down Serbia on the EU path?**

“The current crisis will not have negative impact on the accession process of Serbia and other Balkan countries. The conditions for accession and specific steps have already been harmonized in the accession road map. Serbia has achieved significant success by opening negotiations in January. Their pace will depend to a large extent on Belgrade’s ability to fulfill requests. Greece has always been a loyal supporter of Serbia’s EU perspectives, and it will continue in the future as well.”

**What should be Serbia’s biggest focus?**

“It should continue with the necessary reforms, primarily because citizens will benefit from them. That is not simple, especially in conditions of recession, but this is the only way to guarantee sustainable growth in the long term.”

**Will the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue resume at a satisfactory pace?**

“Belgrade has achieved impressive results in the dialogue with Pristina and the international community admitted this as well. The credit that your country gained must not be lost and the dialogue should continue.”

**U.S. and its European satellites will not admit the mistake of 1999 (*Politika*, by Dragan Vukotic)**

**In your book “**[**Fools’ Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO, and Western Delusions**](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/158367084X/counterpunchmaga)**”you have brought a different stance about NATO bombing of Yugoslavia than many of your intellectual colleagues in the West. What prompted you to make such an unpopular conclusion?**

“Long ago, as a student of Russia area studies, I spent several months in Yugoslavia living in a student dormitory in Belgrade and made friends there.  I turned to such old friends for viewpoints rather than to the sources consulted by Western reporters.  And I have a lifelong interest in US foreign policy.  I began my inquiry into Yugoslav conflicts by reading key documents, such as speeches of Milosevic, the Serbian Academy memorandum and works by Alija Izetbegovic, noting the inaccuracy of the way they were represented in Western media.  I was never under instructions from editors, and indeed my editors soon refused to publish my articles.  I was not the only experienced observer to be excluded from Western media coverage.”

**Although subsequent events have confirmed that the operation of illegal bombing of one country without permission of the Security Council was completely wrong, the mainstream western media and politicians still refer to successful „Kosovo model“. Can you please comment on this matter?**

“For them, it was a success, since it set a precedent for NATO intervention. They will never admit that they were mistaken.”

**When it came to the preparation of the “humanitarian intervention” against Syria, Obama administration reported they were studying “the NATO air war in Kosovo as a possible blueprint for acting without a mandate from the United Nations”. (Please comment on this)**

“This is not surprising, since setting such a precedent was one of the motives for that air war.”

**In one of your articles you asked the question about what the ICC stood for in the case of Libya. You recalled the “familiar pattern” with the case of ICTY and Yugoslavia. What do you really think of those instruments of international justice and their role in international relations?**

“In the context of the present world relationship of forces, the ICC like the ad hoc tribunals can only serve as instruments of United States hegemony.  Those criminal tribunals are used only to stigmatize adversaries of the United States, while the main role of the ICC so far is to justify the ideological assumption that there exists an unbiased “international justice” that ignores national boundaries and serves to enforce human rights. As John Laughland has pointed out, a proper court must be the expression of a particular community that agrees to judge its own members.  Moreover, these courts have no police of their own but must rely on the armed force of the United States, NATO and their client states, who as a result are automatically exempt from prosecution by these supposedly ‘international’ courts.”

**What is, in your opinion, the main purpose of declaring the so-called humanitarian intervention? Does it have more to do with the domestic public opinion or with the international partners?**

“The ideology of Human Rights (a dubious concept, incidentally, since “rights” should be grounded in concrete political arrangements, not on abstract concepts alone) serves both domestic and global purposes.  For the European Union, it suggests a “soft” European nationalism based on social virtue.  The United States, which is more forthright than today’s Europe in proclaiming its national interest, the ideology of Human Rights serves to endow foreign interventions with a crusading purpose that can appeal to European allies and above all to their domestic opinion, as well as to the English-speaking world in general (Canada and Australia in particular).  It is the tribute vice pays to virtue, to echo LaRochefoucauld.”

**You often use the term “US and its European satellites“. Please explain.**

“‘Satellites’ was the term used for members of the Warsaw Pact, and today the governments of the NATO member states follow Washington as obediently as the former followed Moscow, even when, as in the case of Ukraine, the United States goes against European interests.”

**How do you see current goings on in Ukraine and Crimea, especially in terms of US-Russia relations?**

“US-Russian relations are determined primarily by an ongoing U.S. geostrategic hostility to Russia which is partly a matter of habit or inertia, partly a realization of the Brzezinski strategy of dividing Eurasia in order to maintain US world hegemony, and partly a reflection of Israeli-dominated Middle East policy toward Syria and Iran.  Between the two major nuclear powers, there is clearly an aggressor and an aggressed. It is up to the aggressor to change course if relations are to be normal.

**What specifically do you have in mind?**

“Simply compare.  Is Russia urging Quebec to secede from Canada so that the province can join a military alliance led by Moscow?  Evidently not.  That would be comparable, and yet mild compared to the recent U.S. gambit led by Victoria Nuland aimed at bringing Ukraine, including the main Russian naval base at Sebastopol, into the Western orbit. The material reality of this political orbit is NATO, which since the end of the Soviet Union has systematically expanded toward Russia, which stations missiles whose only strategic function would be to provide the United States with a hypothetical nuclear first strike capacity against Russia, and which regularly holds military manoeuvers along Russian borders.

Russia has done nothing against the United States, and recently provided President Obama with a face-saving way to avoid being voted down in Congress in regard to military action against Syria – action which was not desired by the Pentagon but only by the fraction of Israeli-oriented policy makers called “neocons”. Russia professes no hostile ideology, and only seeks normal relations with the West.  What more can it do?  It is up to Americans to come to their senses.”

**REGIONAL PRESS**

**Events in Ukraine cannot be linked with B&H (*Oslobodjenje*)**

The Presiding of the B&H Presidency Bakir **Izetbegovic** spoke with the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to B&H Aleksandr **Botsan-Harchenko** about the bilateral relations of the two countries, the current political situation in B&H, and the crisis in Ukraine after the Crimean referendum. Botsan-Harchenko informed Izetbegovic of the official positions of the Russian Federation connected with the latest events in Ukraine and the development of events in Crimea. Izetbegovic said that B&H is monitoring with concern the crisis in Ukraine, stressing that the position of the country is based on clear principles of foreign policy, founded on the principles of the UN Charter, OSCE documents in Europe, and international law. He emphasized that changing internationally recognized borders bears with it a danger to peace and stability in the world, and in this context B&H advocates respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity in its relations with other countries, and is in favor of constructive dialogue in seeking peaceful resolution for all open issues. Botsan-Harchenko said that the Russian Federation consistently respects the territorial integrity and sovereignty of B&H, and considered that the events in Ukraine and in Crimea cannot be linked to our country, the B&H Presidency said in a statement.

**Croatia trying to keep region on EU radar with Bosnia proposal (*Dalje*)**

A majority of European Union member states believe that a different approach towards B&H is necessary and Croatia has offered “a proposal for talks,” Croatian European and Foreign Affairs Minister Vesna **Pusic** said on Monday. The Croatian government has sent to Brussels a non-paper in which it proposes dealing with the Bosnian political crisis by opening a negotiation process which will enable B&H to gradually become ready to meet all the EU membership requirements, instead of waiting that it meet the requirements before being allowed to negotiate membership. “We offered a base, a proposal for talks,” Pusic told reporters regarding the non-paper. “There is absolute awareness among all or a huge majority of the member states that a different approach is necessary. We will see if this is that approach, but it will certainly help in having our region and B&H on the radar of all member states, which is important in the conditions we are in.” The proposal will also be a base for conclusions on B&H which will expand the approach and make it more efficient, Pusic said giving a talk at a communication management college on Croatia and the EU in relation to the geopolitical relations in the wake of the Ukrainian crisis. Elections for the European Parliament have been called for May 25 and Pusic, a member of the People’s Party, a member of Croatia’s coalition government, said it was particularly important that people went to the polls and that the campaign was not dirty. “If the campaign is dirty and aggressive, it will be counterproductive, it will demotivate people. People are sick of meanness and negative messages. It's important to show, notably in this context of changed geopolitical conditions, to what extent this European framework is important to us, that it’s good and gives us security,” Pusic said. “I would say to everyone, if they wish this country well, to keep away from fighting and dirty campaigns and to try to tell people why this is good for them and what can be done with it,” she added. At the talk, she said the European Parliament passed 50 per cent of all laws by which EU citizens lived. “It’s important that our people go to the polls and recognise the extent to which the whole thing makes no sense without them. Imagine if someone today asked the Ukrainians if they would go to the European elections. Probably all would,” she said.

**INTERNATIONAL PRESS**

**Suspected Balkan drug boss pleads not guilty (*The Associated Press*, by Jovana Gec, 24 March 2014)**

BELGRADE, Serbia — A suspected Balkan drug boss pleaded not guilty Monday to charges that he trafficked 5.7 tons of cocaine from South America to Europe and laundered millions of dollars in drug money."It's all one big lie!" Darko Saric said. "It feels like one of those American movies when someone gets framed, but I hope it will soon end."This was Saric's first court appearance since he was jailed last week after several years on the run. Held under heavy security, the hearing drew much public attention because of Saric's alleged political ties that enabled him to evade justice for years.The 44-year-old has been charged with leading a powerful Balkan criminal organization that smuggled cocaine from Colombia, Argentina and Uruguay through the Balkan countries to western Europe. He allegedly laundered at least 22 million euros ($30 million) by investing in the privatization of state companies, factories and hotels in Serbia and Montenegro.Saric told the judges that "I knew some powerful, rich people in positions. They are still there and I am here."Serbian authorities have said that Saric surrendered after he was located in an unidentified country in Latin America with the help of the U.S. and other international intelligence agencies.He had been on the run since October 2009 when a shipment of 2.7 tons of cocaine that he allegedly organized was disrupted near the Uruguayan Atlantic coast in an international police action that included U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agents.Eleven of Saric's alleged gang members are standing trial in Belgrade, while 18 others are on the run. All of his property, including luxurious houses and apartments in Belgrade, has been impounded by Serbian authorities.The Balkans is one of the main drug-smuggling transit routes.

**Kosovo and Crimea: US/EU Double Standards (*Huffington Press*, by David Morrison, 24 March 2014)**

Question: Why was it permissible for the US and most EU states to recognise Kosovo as an independent state in 2008 (contrary to the wishes of Serbia) but, according to these states, it is not permissible for Russia to recognise Crimea as an independent state in 2014 (contrary to the wishes of Ukraine)?

Kosovo

In 1999, Yugoslavia consisted of two republics - Serbia and Montenegro (which seceded in 2006). According to Serbia's constitution, Kosovo was an integral part of Serbia, but with an overwhelmingly Albanian majority that favoured separation from Serbia, and a Serb minority that opposed separation.

That Kosovo would remain an integral part of Serbia was one of the principles enshrined in the agreement of 2 June 1999, which brought to an end NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia and the withdrawal of Yugoslav forces from Kosovo.

Point 8 of the agreement envisaged "substantial self-government for Kosovo, taking full account ... of the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia". Kosovo was to have "substantial self-government", but was not going to be allowed to secede.

The Security Council endorsed the agreement on 10 June 1999 when it passed Resolution 1244 by 14 votes to 0 (with China abstaining). This reaffirmed "the commitment of all [UN] Member States to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia".

So, in June 1999, there was no question of an independent state of Kosovo being recognised by the international community, was there?

But, on 17 February 2008, the Assembly of Kosovo declared Kosovo to be "an independent and sovereign state" with the unanimous support of those members present. 11 Serb representatives boycotted the proceedings.

The following day, 9 states (including France, the UK and the US) recognised Kosovo as an independent state. Today, over a hundred states have done so, including 23 out of the 28 members of the EU. These states were undeterred by earlier commitments by the Security Council, binding all UN member states, to support the territorial integrity of Serbia, or by the fact that, according to the Serbian constitution, Kosovo was an integral part of Serbia.

Crimea

On 11 March 2014, the parliament of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, with the support of 78 out of its 100 members, resolved that it would declare Crimea to be an independent state, if the people of Crimea voted to join Russia in the referendum to be held 5 days later. The vote to join was overwhelming and so the parliament declared Crimea to be an independent state, which was recognised by Russia. The parliament then applied to join Russia and the application was accepted.

The US and the EU have been asserting that the declaration of independence by Crimea's Parliament is illegal under Ukraine's domestic law. It is true that the Ukrainian constitution states: "The Autonomous Republic of Crimea is an inseparable constituent part of Ukraine." (Article 134) and "Alterations to the territory of Ukraine shall be resolved exclusively by the All-Ukrainian referendum." (Article 73).

But the Serbian constitution stated something similar with regard to Kosovo in 2008 and the Serbian authorities were vigorously opposed to the proposition that Kosovo had a right to declare independence. This hasn't stopped the US and most EU states recognising Kososo's independence.

The question arises: why was it permissible for the US and most EU states to recognise Kosovo as an independent state in 2008 (contrary to the wishes of Serbia) but, according to these states, it is not permissible for Russia to recognise Crimea as an independent state in 2014 (contrary to the wishes of Ukraine)?

US Vice President, Joe Biden, described Russia's acceptance of Crimea's request to join as a "blatant violation of international law" and "a land grab". In reality, what has happened is a voluntary union with the enthusiastic support of the people of both Crimea and Russia - and that cannot possibly be contrary to international law.

Israel

As for land grabs, Israel has occupied the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Syrian Golan Heights, against the wishes of the indigenous people, for almost 47 years (and annexed East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights). In all that time, the US has made no attempt to isolate Israel politically or to sanction it economically for this land grab.

On the contrary, successive US administrations have protected Israel politically (by, for example, vetoing more than 40 resolutions critical of it in the Security Council). "May the bond between Israel and the United States never, ever be broken", Biden said at Ariel Sharon's state funeral last January.

Far from imposing economic sanctions on Israel for its land grabbing, the US has showered it with military aid. Today, it receives over $3bn per annum, more US tax dollars than any other country in the world, even though its GDP per head is around the EU average. (And the EU has given it privileged access to the EU market for its exports through an Association Agreement).

Ukrainian constitution

The US and the EU protest that the Ukrainian constitution has been breached by Crimea's secession from Ukraine. On 22 February, the constitution was breached when the democratically elected President of the Ukraine was removed from office without following the impeachment procedure laid down in Article 111 (see How William Hague deceived the House of Commons on Ukraine). Did the US and the EU protest then? Of course not - since they wanted the removal of the President. So they pretended that the proper constitutional procedures had been followed.

**The pathology of power: A Bosnian account (*Pakistan Today*, by Anna Calori and Farhad Mirza)**

The muffled news reports of the recent protests in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been received by the European spectrum with a typical anxiety concerning the potential for ethnic violence in the Balkans.

Hugely participated and occasionally violent, these demonstrations first took spark in February, when workers in the north-eastern city of Tuzla came out on to the streets in significant numbers. From there, the wildfire of discontent caught on to all the other main urban centres in Bosnia (mostly within the Federation), and beyond (with demonstrations in the Serbian-majority city of Banja Luka, as well as in Zagreb).

Starting off as an indignant critique of the critical economic situation faced by Bosnian citizens (youth unemployment is at over 60%, and the average salary at the lowest in the region), the protests were further flanked by a broader dispute over the country’s dysfunctional institutional setting.

Almost twenty years after the Dayton Peace Agreements, the supposed ethnic guarantees provided by the two entities within which the country has been divided (Federation of BiH and Republika Srpska), together with the fragmentation and malfunctioning of the municipal entities have proved a catastrophic lack of coordination between the state’s economic institutions.

However, this “institutional” focus diverts attention from the issues at stake on ground level, as concisely presented by the citizen’s plenum assemblies. While the EU is already hinting towards a diplomatic, if not a military intervention to prevent the situation from escalating towards the route of an ethnic conflict, it is necessary to once again look at the local level, and understand why the phantom menace of ethnic clashes is closer to Europe’s obsession with Star Wars, than it is to reality.

Once a prominent industrial town, Tuzla has been at the heart of Yugoslavia’s mining and manufacturing production. The breakup of Tito’s Federation, followed by a civil war that was gravely mismanaged by international forces, brought together a ruthless process of privatisation and de-industrialisation, sided with issues of corruption at almost all levels.

Tuzla’s working class has been historically characterised by a legacy of positive inter-ethnic relations going back as far as the Austro-Hungarian period, and subsequently solidified by its left-wing, pro-Yugoslav tradition – which renders superfluous, even today the talk of “ethnic coexistence”. The city’s collective memory as a (non-ethnic) unicum, together with its still strong Yugoslav identity finds its codification in the survival of a rather solid working-class identity.

And it’s no coincidence that the “spark” from which “the fire flared up” has precisely been lit by Tuzla’s workers, protesting against the failed privatisation of many of the city’s main industries, and claiming back their unpaid salaries, pensions and healthcare.

Workers’ and citizens’ movements across the country quickly internalised theses claims, and began a series of protests questioning the mismanagement of economic resources at large. Political elites and governmental institutions have been rightfully held accountable for the failure of economic reforms. Hence, the very structure of governmental and institutional “three-entities” framework has been widely questioned.

There is, therefore, a direct link between the economic issues at stake and the arguments for a long-term institutional renovation, and it doesn’t take an expert to notice that.

However, when looking at the immediate reactions among the Jedis of EU diplomacy, they seem to stick to their processed and digested understandings of “the Balkans”. Not only “the Balkans” are a powder keg of never-soothed ethnic tensions, but also their peoples are somehow stuck in a never-ending process of inexplicable trauma-recovery.

A widespread paranoia for a return to uncontrollable ethnic tensions is precisely what’s moving EU diplomats towards diplomatic, if not yet military, intervention. According to Stefan Fuele, EU Enlargement Commissioner, “The European Commission will focus on new initiatives to promote better economic governance, a national economic reform program and action to tackle the country’s […] unemployment”.

What the Commission does not specify is exactly what has led people to take to the streets: How will these reforms be carried out, and towards which model? The EU has already provided a striking and straightforward example of its economic programmes for stability; Greece is not far from Bosnia, neither temporally nor spatially.

What is more insulting, however, is the philanthropic attitude of it all. The EU is the carrier of the “white-man’s burden” in its economic mission, but it is also determined to provide emotional support to the still traumatised Bosnian population. The continuing recurrence of themes of genocide and ethnic cleansing are bound to evoke an idea of a permanently traumatised population. The by-product of this discourse is the pathologisation of an entire population, which, as a consequence, requires permanent and close assistance to overcome its own traumatic past.

It seems that the unspeakable horrors of the events in Sarajevo, from the 1990s way back to 1914 have crystallised Europe’s collective memory on a faded snapshot of Bosnia as a suffering nation. Even now, when Bosnia makes it to foreign newspapers, is usually through the lens of a traumatised body of people on which we can still see the scars of an imposed unity. Only in this way can we be reminded – on the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall – of the evils of their socialist past.

Even here in Pakistan, a country that once considered itself inseparable from the plight of Bosnian Muslims, these recent protests have not received any coverage at all. To this day, Bosnia is reduced to superficial mentions in religious sermons and drawing-room conversations about global conspiracies. It is seldom invoked without the talk of the violence it endured in the 1990s.

Back then, Bosnia was used as Pakistan’s poster-nation in its expeditions in Indian-held Kashmir, calling on all Muslims to fight back against of ethnic operation. However, somewhere along the line, Bosnia ceased to be a political orphan in desperate need of help, and took a more nuanced position between imposed narratives, and in doing so, it has now become an irksome candidate for imperial molestations.

Bosnia has been displayed as a symbol of socialist failure, as an example of the global oppression of Muslims, and now as an irrelevant and pitiful country, incapable of overcoming its traumatic past without being shepherded by its proxy ‘allies’.

The uprising there is a fight back, not only against 20 years of imposed political and economic failures, but this interventionist attitude as well. Bosnians are now refusing to be typecast as victims of their own nature, and have realised that behind the Jedis of neo-liberalism, there is a whole ‘Empire of Evil’.

**"Black February" brings record unemployment in Croatia (*Xinhua*, 23 March 2014)**

ZAGREB -- The unemployment rate in Croatia reached 22.7 percent in February, the worst in the past 12 years in the country and one of the highest unemployment rates in the European Union (EU), official figures indicated.

According to the latest statistics published Friday by the National Statistics Bureau, the 22.7-percent unemployment rate in February is 0.3 percent higher than the figure in January.

The Croatian Employment Agency said there were 384,376 unemployed persons in February. The total work force in the country with a population of 4.3 million stands at 1.7 million.

The unemployment rate in Croatia averaged 18.22 percent from 1996 until 2014, reaching an all time high of 23.6 percent in January, 2002, and a record low of 12.2 percent in July, 2008.

The National Statistics Bureau in Zagreb announced that February is the sixth month in a row that has an increase in unemployment. This negative trend is expected to stop in March as the seasonal employment starts and the employment numbers get better.

People who will be employed in tourism industry, the vital part of the Croatian economy, will improve the national statistics.

Labor and Social Care Minister Mirando Mrsic said on Friday that he is looking forward to the change of trend, as it means the unemployment rates will start dropping from March onwards, until the end of tourism season in October.

Croatia has the second worst record in youth unemployment in the EU. Only Spain has the worst numbers as Croatia has 40 percent of unemployed youth.

With the EU borders opened and the wider possibility of getting employment abroad, Croatia is faced with the post-EU entry brain drain.

The economic perspectives are gloomy too as Moody's Investors Service on Friday changed the outlook on Croatia's Ba1 government bond rating to negative from stable.

Finance Minister Slavko Linic said it is hard to expect any different rating unless Croatia achieves economic growth and implements structural reforms.

Deputy Prime Minister Branko Grcic said on Saturday "the government is doing everything possible to implement structural reforms and start the economy. We need healthy environment to stimulate growth and turn things in right direction."

**Croatian Parliament approves revised budget aims to limit deficit (*Xinhua*, 22 March 2014)**

ZAGREB -- Croatian Parliament on Friday approved the rebalanced budget for 2014 after several months of debates.

With the new and revised budget, the revenue has been increased by 4 billion kunas (721 million U.S. dollars) to 117 billion kunas. Projected expenditures have been increased by 100 million to 130.7 billion kunas. The highest amount of the extra revenue will come from the restructured pension system.

While introducing the new version of the budget, Finance Minister Slavko Linic said higher revenues and savings need to be ensured, "with the final aim to reduce the deficit and public debt, in line with the recommendations of the European Commission (EC)."

Croatia, joined the European Union (EU) in July 2013, is struggling to observe EU's limits on budget deficit. As a newest EU member, it has s three-year period to ensure its deficit under 3 percent of the GDP.

The new budget aims at 0.2 percent growth in 2014, instead of the previous 1.3 percent. The Government expects the growth will be stimulated by the foreign investments.

Croatia plans to increase revenue by imposing higher health contributions, a higher lottery tax and concession fees.

The government will also draw on part of the profits of public companies and reduce the number of beneficiaries of private pension funds. There will be no bonuses for public sector employees and the subsidies for agriculture, ship building and railways.

Linic said this is one of the hardest budgets while admitted that it will take years to bring the national economy back to balance and growth.

"We really need a few years to put Croatia back on the production track, higher exports and that, to put it simply, we have the economy which is functioning and investing," he said.

Croatia has been in the recession for the past 5 years and the EU now expects it to cut all the expenditure that is damaging the wanted goal of 3 percent of the GDP.

On Thursday, after holding talks in Brussels with European Commissioner Olli Rehn, who deals with finances and monetary issues, Croatian Prime Minister Zoran Milanovic said it would be "too radical, from the social as well as from the economic point of view" if Croatia cut the deficit in the first year to the extent requested by the European Commission.

"The EC has its position, it works with 28 member countries and must therefore have a tougher stance. But we have our own interests and are working seriously.

"The correction of 2.3 percent of GDP in the first year, as requested by the EC, is huge. We can bite the bullet, but not the whole cartridge-belt," Milanovic said.

**Opposing views between Austria and Slovenia (*New Europe*, by Karafillis Giannoulis, 14 March 2014)**

Austria wants recognition of German speaking community in Slovenia

Despite the good relations between Austria and Slovenia, Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz asked from Slovenia to recognise the German speaking community living in the country.

On 13 March, the Slovenian Foreign Minister Karl Erjavec hailed the very good relations between Austria and Slovenia but he declined to accept Vienna's demand. “The recognition of the German-speaking group needs revising Slovenia's constitution, which requires two-thirds majority in parliament,” Mr. Erjavec told reporters after meeting with Mr. Kurz and added that Slovenia guarantees to the German-speaking group all the rights under Slovenian laws.

The Slovenian Minister also said that there is a problem in the definition of the German speaking minority. Mr. Kurz acknowledged the fact that the German speaking groups in Slovenia do not live in a single area like the Italian and Hungarian minorities, but he said that his government hopes for Slovenia to recognize the German-speaking community, and to offer it status similar to the other two minorities.

Still, the Austrian FM thanked the Slovenian government for providing appropriate funds in the community, in particular for cultural projects. According to the Slovenian President Borut Pahor in 2012, the Ministry of Culture doubled its funding for the German speaking community while the draft National Programme for Culture 2014-2017 pays particular attention to constitutionally unrecognised communities, including the German-speaking ethnic community in Slovenia, and in particular the German-speaking settlers in Koèevje. The German speaking community in Slovenia consists of around 2,000 people, accounting for only one percent of two million population in the country.

Economic ties between Austria and Slovenia are very deep as Austria is one of Slovenia's most important trade partners and the leading investor. Austria's investments in Slovenia are accounting for 48 per cent of all foreign investment in the country. The two ministers called for stronger cooperation at the regional level, especially with regard to the future Alpine macro-region.

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