

---

# A Peace Plan for Kosovo

DAMJAN DE KRNJEVIC-MISKOVIC  
AND RUSSELL J. LENG

---

*The peace proposal that follows grew out of discussions between the authors in February of 1999, about four weeks before the first NATO bombs fell on Yugoslavia. It was submitted to several national newspapers as an op-ed article before the war began and during the first few days of the conflict. As the situation deteriorated in Kosovo, we made some changes in the tone and language of the piece, but the substance of our proposal has remained the same.*

*We believe that the events that followed the NATO bombing—the human tragedy in Kosovo, the physical destruction of Yugoslavia coupled with the crippling of the opposition to Milosevic, NATO's open-ended commitment to keeping an uneasy peace in Kosovo and, above all, the irreparable misery and bitterness that now infect both ethnic groups—validate the wisdom of our initial proposal. Had it been adopted, our peace plan might have averted some of the worst effects of this catastrophe.*

What will follow the war in Kosovo? The stated long-term objective of NATO's massive bombing campaign was to provide a secure environment for returning refugees and others to Kosovo. Achieving that goal without incurring an open-ended commitment to a large occupying force will require a peace settlement that comes as close as possible to meeting the most vital interests of both sides. Given the recent developments in Kosovo, the only solution that can meet that criterion is partition.

Both sides have legitimate claims to parts of Kosovo. From the Yugoslav perspective, Kosovo is not only a province of Serbia, but also the site of many of the

---

RUSSELL J. LENG IS THE JAMES JERMAIN PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL ECONOMY AT MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE. HE HAS WRITTEN EXTENSIVELY ON INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT AND CRISIS BARGAINING. HIS RECENT WORKS INCLUDE: *Interstate Crisis Behavior, 1816-1980; Reciprocity vs. Realpolitik* (CAMBRIDGE U. PRESS, 1993), AND *Bargaining and Learning in Recurring Crises: The Soviet-American, Egyptian-Israeli, and Indo-Pakistani Rivalries* (U. OF MICHIGAN PRESS, 2000). DAMJAN DE KRNJEVIC-MISKOVIC, HIS FORMER RESEARCH ASSISTANT, IS A FELLOW OF THE BELGRADE INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES AND IS COMPLETING A GRADUATE DEGREE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE AT BOSTON COLLEGE. HE HAS WRITTEN ON THIS ISSUE IN THE SERB OPPOSITION PRESS, AND HIS ARTICLE, "THE CONCEPT OF A LITTLE PEOPLE: THE SERBS, SELF-CONCIOUSNESS, LIBERTY, AND EUROPE" IS FORTHCOMING IN *Commentaire*.

---

most important historical and religious symbols from the founding period of Serb history. It has become something of a cliché to say that Kosovo is the Jerusalem of the Serbian people, but like many clichés, the expression originates in historical reality. The Albanian claim is based on the principle of self-determination: 90 percent of the province's population is comprised of ethnic Albanians whose leaders view Yugoslavia as an authoritarian alien power. This fundamental difference in outlook is why the Rambouillet compromise was not acceptable to either side. The Albanians signed the plan only because it was clear that the Serbs would not. Today, whatever faint hopes there may have once been for sustaining an autonomous Kosovo within Yugoslavia have been consumed in the flames of war.

It is imperative that the West be prepared with a more realistic settlement now that the fighting has stopped. The Contact Group would be wise to follow the approach adopted by the Allied powers at the end of World War II by keeping the peace settlement separate from the punishment of those guilty of crimes against humanity and war crimes. The guilty must be punished, but it would be a mistake to create an unstable peace that would sow the seeds of *revanche* solely to punish Serbia. The first priority should be a settlement that has the best chance of leading to long-term peace and stability in the region. To that end, we propose five mutually reinforcing points:

First, Kosovo must be partitioned into two parts. The Serb portion must be connected to the rest of Yugoslavia by road and rail and include Serbia's most important historical and religious sites. The remainder of Kosovo should be ceded to an autonomous Albanian entity that would remain under the trusteeship of the United Nations during a specified transitional period. The Albanian entity share borders with Albania and Macedonia and establish its capital in Pristina. Additionally, the new entity need to encompass enough fertile land for agricultural self-sufficiency.

Second, each of the partitioned territories must be contiguous. Given what has happened during the current conflict, peace in what is now Kosovo will require the separation of the two contending groups by a single continuous border.

Third, the Albanian entity must have the exclusive right to tax and spend within its territory, to educate, to police, perhaps even to print money. It should also be permitted to operate its own international airport. During the transitional period, it should not be able to issue separate citizenship papers, maintain a standing army nor develop an independent foreign policy. At the end of the transitional period, having met certain conditions, the Albanian entity should be granted statehood.

Fourth, those responsible for the crimes against humanity and war crimes must be brought to justice through trial at the Hague Tribunal. Following the precedent established at the end of World War II as well as after the Bosnian civil

---

---

war, indictments against those accused of war crimes, including the Yugoslav president and the Kosovo Liberation Army leadership, should be pursued. NATO should not assume responsibility for removing Milosevic from power. If he remains president of Yugoslavia while under indictment for international crimes, however, the country should be subject to economic sanctions imposed by the United Nations. The sanctions should not be economically crippling, but rather, designed to isolate Yugoslavia from selected key sectors of the international economy for as long as Milosevic remains in power.

Fifth, the process of resettling refugees and rebuilding Kosovo will have to be supervised and financed by international humanitarian and peacekeeping missions. NATO peacekeepers, with the possible addition of Russian troops, should supervise the border between the newly created Albanian entity and Yugoslavia.

The brutal consequences of the escalation of violence to war and mass displacement of persons in Kosovo have made reconciliation virtually impossible. One of the tragic lessons of the Bosnian civil war is that refugees will not return to homes that lie in neighborhoods containing their former enemies. Nevertheless, the role that the international community will play in the implementation of the plan we have outlined is one that many will find morally distasteful. Individuals and families will feel forced to abandon their homes and land in order to obtain security. Yet this is the price that must now be paid to achieve long-term regional peace and stability. The reality of politics forces us to choose the lesser of two evils because the consequences of our earlier actions were not properly thought through.

The reality of the Kosovo problem today is that there is no common ground, figuratively and literally, on which to achieve an integrated solution. Any viable solution must contain costs to both sides. We have proposed a peace settlement that passes the test of regional geopolitical viability, satisfies the vital interest of both parties and avoids a risky open-ended military commitment by the West. Once implemented, the likelihood of armed conflict will substantially decrease as both sides come to accept the new status quo. If this can be achieved, the price of long-term stability in the Balkans will not have been too high. ■

