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Altogether, I spent nearly 8 years as political representative of the United Nations in Serbia, and another three years in Zagreb and in Sarajevo. Periods separated for me by time in Haiti, East Timor and New York, and western Sahara and for Serbia by the trauma of the NATO bombing, the departure of Milosevic, the dawn of a new and largely democratic order blighted by the murder of a Prime Minister, and the painful and lonely business of tidying up the remaining historical flotsam left on the beach at the end of the Balkan storms: Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia and the Hague.

I arrived in Zagreb in July 1995 to be the political Director of UNPROFOR. UNPROFOR was badly led, with an impossible mandate, lacking consistent support from the International Community, and facing life and death problems on a daily basis, while ill equipped to respond to them. The Srebrenica massacre happened two weeks after my arrival as Political Affairs Head, and I witnessed in my first two weeks an amateur, confused and self important civilian leadership, with a poor chain of command to Headquarters, failing time and again to meet even the most modest expectations of the frustrated largely professional and increasingly embittered and disloyal, Military Command, and some hard working and well informed civilian field staff. Ironically perhaps it was the UN military leadership, which when asked by history to step up to the plate, doomed the people of Srebrenica thus adding to a level of instability in the whole of the former Yugoslavia which lasts to this day

The leadership of UNPROFOR, arguably the most important Peacekeeping Mission in the history of the UN until that time, was characterized by all the seven deadly

sins elegantly identified by Lakhdar Brahimi (some years later) as having fatal consequences for a peace process: ignorance; arrogance; partiality; impotence; haste; inflexibility; and false promises.

As Kofi Annan wrote later;

"Through error, misjudgment and an inability to recognize the scope of the evil confronting us, we failed to do our part to save the people of Srebrenica from mass murder."

It was in Zagreb at that time that it first became clear to me and others that this had been a collective failure of the International System, and that if UN Peacekeeping were to survive, gain respectability and become an effective instrument for meeting serious challenges to International Peace and Security then the Secretariat, the Security Council and Member States would need to focus on providing the right mandates, the right means, and the right level of political support to Peace Operations Above all, they needed all to learn that peace could be kept only when it was there to keep.

In my first Belgrade incumbency I watched and commented on the beginnings of the epic struggle of the Serbs to rid themselves of Milosevic, a process which the NATO bombing in fact delayed not accelerated. The logic of that intervention was an unrecognised harbinger of the policy of muddleheaded compromise and inconsistency that was to follow. A policy which led to the involvement of the UN in its fifth major operation in the Balkans, and my return to Belgrade years later to deal with Kosovo.

My first stint in Belgrade was, at Kofi Annan's request. The first of three such appointments, as it turned out, and the most interesting and challenging among them. Slobodan Milosevic, had attempted simultaneously to hijack both the

Serbian nation *and* the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and in so doing had destroyed much of the structure (and many would say the soul) of both. I met and dealt with Milosevic alone and in company many times. The last time I met him alone was in the lovely drawing room at Beli Dvor. A truly surreal experience.

Like many of his ilk, he had a superficial charm, and he managed to deceive a number of people in international public life into believing that he was a man who could be dealt with, a man who could see reason and could deliver. In truth, he was none of these things. He was a small man in every way. He was truly amoral: A man for whom the ends would always justify the means. Milosevic was like a man who sets fire to his neighbour's house and then claims some credit for helping to put out the blaze. The constant attention from the International Community and its leading players, gave him the oxygen to continue. I regret now having provided some of that oxygen, and not being more successful persuading others that isolation would have been wiser than inclusion.

Perhaps the greatest irony of the NATO bombing was that it kept Milosevic in power longer, maybe six months or a year longer than would otherwise have been the case.

The last year of my second Belgrade stay was made up of a large amount of effort in support of the Ahtisaari process, intended to address with more finality the Kosovo problem by reaching an understanding which would entail the end of Security Council tutelage and encourage a graceful hand off to the EU. However, this was a flawed political process from the start, in many ways just as flawed as the Rambouillet process before it, with one party being given a "private message" that it need not negotiate and the other a "private message" that independence was already a done deal internationally.

I can remember no process of negotiation in my own career that involved such relentless pounding at a square peg to fit a round hole. The fundamental lack of good faith in the Ahtisaari process doomed it from the outset, it was an awkward quickstep danced in the gilded ballrooms of Vienna, with a crescendo in the red brick simplicity of Oslo Town Hall. Much noise and pomp, hardly any substance. . Better outcomes could certainly have been achieved, but were not even attempted. How sad that Ahtisaari, a man of considerable achievements for Peace should be honoured with a Nobel Prize which would for ever be linked to his failure, and the dishonesty of the process.

The UN could and should have done rather better in Kosovo, but compromises contained in the Security Council Resolution, and the arrival of the first UN personnel on the ground coinciding with the mass exodus and harassment of the Kosovo Albanian population by the Serbs, had resulted in a Mission that was, right from the start, significantly listing toward preparation of Kosovo Independence. Illusions of progress were maintained through Reports to the Security Council which were often very economical with the truth. UNMIK was, I believe, the most institutionally dishonest Mission in the history of UN Peacekeeping.

As it has in many other places, the United Nations came into the dual role of mediator and administrator in Kosovo not by choice. When the world's great powers run into difficulties, they tend to assign the most intractable issues to the UN. Particularly the extraordinary role of a "transitional administrator." This responsibility is taken on with ambivalence by the United Nations as an organisation. Member States, also hesitate to invite the Security Council, with its coercive authority, into delicate questions of internal governance. For the wealthier Member

States, there is also concern that expansion of any UN role along these lines can only incur further demands on resources. This reluctance has meant that the UN has never been formally equipped to undertake administrative functions; when it does so, as in Kosovo, it does so in an ad hoc manner. And when, as in Kosovo, the Secretary General seven times in seven years chooses the figure of a new Administrator from a very mixed bag of politicians and bureaucrats, only two with UN experience and none from Peacekeeping, then the inbuilt deficiencies of the UN system are made worse.

In Kosovo, the political context itself was much more delicate, and less clear cut, than in other cases in the world where temporary UN administration has been deployed. Politically, the Security Council's mandate for Kosovo offered no definitive indication of the "end-state" of Kosovo, it simply postponed the issue. The late night, hasty adoption of Resolution 1244 with its now notorious ambiguity – affirming the de jure sovereignty of the FRY (now Serbia), while performing the de facto excision of any practical vestiges of this sovereignty – had predictable results.

Whatever the final outcome, Kosovo will, I believe, fundamentally influence integration processes in the EU, in NATO, in the global economy,

each of which is directly linked to even wider dynamics: the post-Cold War relations of East to West; the United States and Europe; Russia and Europe.

Thus the people of Serbia and Kosovo have found themselves looking for resolution of their own conflict while at the same time face to face with the changing tides of high politics.

In the discussions on Kosovo's future status which took place in Vienna's gilded palaces, and now in Brussels the condition of Kosovo's Serb

population has been recognised as a sine qua non of success. But the

continuation of insecurity for the Serb population still threatens to

turn on their head each and every one of the justifications for, and

achievements of, the international intervention in Kosovo.

It is the continuing need to justify that intervention by those most closely involved, Clinton, the British, and others that has directly and indirectly led to the continuing vilification and isolation of Serbia.....almost regardless of changes made in Serbia and by Serbia.

The shadow haunting international policies in Kosovo, remains the real possibility of Kosovo becoming mono-ethnic. Should this come to pass, the credibility of international policies, not only in the Balkans but elsewhere, will be fundamentally undermined. Belatedly, the opening of discussions on future status brought these issues back into the light, at the centre of the entire effort, where they belong.

Serbia's strategic importance in the future of Europe should make its emergence from isolation one of Europe's highest priorities. Yet, Europe's vision of Serbia seems frozen in time, drifting with an international policy born when Belgrade was at its most isolated under the Milosevic dictatorship.

I believe the Serbian people are more aware of the facts of the Kosovo issue than most outsiders presume. They are aware that the difficult circumstances of Kosovo were not created in the last 12 years, that the sum of huge political errors upon more errors added up to produce the given circumstances. Fortunately, the Serbian people also seem to know instinctively that, whatever is to be done, their present interests lie in peace, striving to improve their own prosperity rather than perpetuating an historical grudge. Yet they also want to be convinced that their state and nation is being given fair treatment.

Part of the discussion of Kosovo's future status is about facing

basic truths. Serbia has had no direct role in governing most of Kosovo

for the past 12 years, and the Kosovo Albanian population will likely

never again consent to governance from Belgrade. None of us are afforded

the luxury of indulging in what is after all a philosophical argument

whether the Serbian State (whichever iteration) "forfeited" its rights in

Kosovo. The present facts speak for themselves. The question for all of

us has been how to move beyond the recent cycle of conflict toward a future

that will be different. One which has the potential to make life better

for each individual, regardless of the side on which they sit. From here,

I always argued for more creativity from my colleagues in the UN and further

afield, I am hopeful that, at the end of the day, this will prove to have

made a difference.

During my time representing the United Nations in Serbia, I have

witnessed the best and the worst sides of diplomacy. I have realised that, ironically perhaps, the United Nations, as a mediator of conflict, has fewer tools with which to work than do many countries. However what the UN does have is the experience of committed people, and the moral stance that people and States are better served pursuing their interests through peaceful means rather than by violence. The strength of the UN is derived from a basic faith in the superiority of dialogue, that this is the only road to balance and to ensure the real future interests of all are met. But, in order for this strength to be expressed, a deep understanding of the positions of both sides must be built up.

In their different way, Serbia's leaders, the Kosovo Albanian leaders, and we as international mediators have consistently failed to reach the standard of dialogue that is demanded. Each of us should think very hard about what can happen in the future if this is not remedied. Serbia's leaders have fallen short in accounting for policies of the past. They cannot simply avoid them by explaining that, as individuals, they were not involved in creating them. There is nervousness about being blamed, understandably, but true leadership demands risk. The alternative is more harm to Serbia itself, and reinforcement of stereotypes rather than a change of prism. As a diplomat working in Serbia, I have to

remind my interlocutors too often that there are two sides. It is often not easy to be a friend of Serbia, which I consider myself to be. Instinctive defiance of external forces, one of the prominent characteristics of Serbian culture, is frequently also one of its most destructive. There is a frequently voiced, and mostly unfounded suspicion that most offers of assistance are not what they seem.

Serbia's leaders have too often been psychologically unwilling to accept the real limitations they face, and to make reasoned judgements based upon those limitations.

To no less extent, the present Ethnic Albanian leaders in Kosovo have fallen short of accepting the responsibilities required within a peace process. This too a product of nervousness, a shortfall in leadership that doesn't bode well for their own future. Too little pressure has been placed upon them to acknowledge the most basic tenet: that in pursuing their own interests and ends, they are not excused from dialogue. Their own best hope for the future requires putting the past more clearly behind them, no less than this is the case for Serbia. Alas, most of their international mentors arrived on the scene when the Albanians were cast very firmly and rightly in the role of victims. The new arithmetic of Kosovo has done little to change this perception and nothing at all to encourage real dialogue and even negotiation.

Thus we, the international mediators, have fallen short as well. Too

often into the easiest trap, which is seeing this conflict only through the lens of one side. This kind of laziness undermines one of the UN's most fundamental principles, that it is our role to help the parties in any conflict to communicate, not to dictate terms nor to hide from the facts by relying on simplistic or biased assumptions. There has been far too little real dialogue by international decision-makers with Serbia's leaders, a shortcoming which unfortunately has only reinforced suspicions and prejudices, inside and outside of Serbia. Head of Mission of UNMIK Jessen Petersen visited

Belgrade four times. Ahtisaari three. The psychological dimensions have been substantially neglected in the present negotiation process; this has been a very costly omission, and a process which started with the public proclamation, in 'Private messages', of a forgone conclusion was doomed to reinforce the view of Serb politicians that the theatre in which they were being asked to perform would do little for them externally and nothing at all internally..

But perhaps the greatest omission of all has been a refusal by those most directly concerned, the common institutions of Europe, to acknowledge the level of continuing commitment required in this part Europe, if the European ideal means anything at all.

A significant strategic objective was set forth right at the beginning of the intervention: Namely, to integrate Kosovo into a functional regional community (including Serbia and Albania); a community that would promote efficiency in development funding, create the foundation for political cooperation, and provide all regional states with a realistic road map to EU integration. These lofty but important objectives, set in the world political context of late 1999, receive far shorter shrift in the weary economically battered world of early 2013. The drive to resolve Kosovo status has coincided with an exhaustion of EU idealism.

Since the 2004 referenda on the European Constitution, we have witnessed a distressing shift away from the prime directive to produce stability in the Balkans, and its replacement by the prime expedient to avoid any appearance of sliding backwards, or any obvious manifestation of instability, whilst at the same time not frightening taxpayers, and the constitutional naysayers, with the prospect of a further ‘European Grand Project’.

The prevailing wind in Brussels has set against any major project or initiative which might risk further alienation of the people from the European Idea. While still claiming to develop policies that would be more “inclusive,” and to involve the citizens of Europe more directly, in

practice the EU apparatus has come closer to a standstill. Thus in Kosovo the EU appears now to be as much or more the “reluctant administrator” as was the UN in the spring of 1999.

The EU has pronounced that it wishes to see democracies in Kosovo and in Serbia which are capable of respecting the principles of human and minority rights, and are economically viable. What in that is not most sincerely to be wished for? However, Statesmen know that wishing itself is not sufficient. What is at stake in the Balkans is no less than one of the keys to the EU’s survival as a geo-political project. Is Brussels ready to step up to the commitment that its own future interest requires?

The jury is still out,. A reactive and ill-resourced transition period, allowing the balance of hostilities to shape the next chapters in the Kosovo drama, will do credit neither to the United Nations nor to the European Regional capacities, still in their infancy. Far too little is being done now to safeguard a huge investment. This is a failure of will and purpose which will be judged in the future to have made absolutely no political, economic, or human sense. It is hard to believe that we have not learned more from this decade plus of interventions in the Balkan Peninsula.

I will permit myself only one sadness and that is the lack of vision shown by the Contact Group and others over the years, coupled with reactive rather than proactive statements and policies, in an

area worth so much more real attention and care.

So where are we now in April 2013. After all these years of external intervention in the Balkans.

Well we could be closer to dealing with the Kosovo problem. Lets wait and see.

Bosnia is lasting witness to the legalized respectable ethnic cleansing of the Dayton Agreements.....it continues to be a disaster, with little hope of surviving as a nation state. Here the US and others continue to blame the Serbs for any failure because to do otherwise would prove euro atlantic intervention to be a failure.

Even Brcko hasn't yet been sorted out. How difficult was that?

Croatia is following Slovenia into the European Union, Slovenia on the brink of economic failure, and Croatia moving straight into the Brussels intensive care ward. Danke Deutschland.

And poor old Macedoניה, still without a real name, and, in my view heading toward ethnic conflict on a scale that will demand another international intervention.

So what now for Serbia. Answer. Make the most of the process and wait.....

Should Serbia join the European Union.

In this new era, Europe is reeling economically and is divided politically. The idea of Europe codified in Maastricht no longer defines Europe

Europe primarily defined itself as an economic power, with sovereignty largely retained by its members but shaped by the rule of the European Union. Europe tried to have it all: economic integration and individual states. But now this untenable idea has reached its end and Europe is fragmenting. One region, including Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, has low unemployment. The other region on the periphery has high or extraordinarily high unemployment.

Germany wants to retain the European Union to protect German trade interests and because Berlin properly fears the political consequences of a fragmented Europe. But as the creditor of last resort, Germany also wants to control the economic behavior of the EU nation-states. Berlin does not want to let off the European states by simply bailing them out. If it bails them out, it must control their budgets. But the member states do not want to cede sovereignty to a German-dominated EU apparatus in exchange for a bailout.

In the indebted peripheral region, Cyprus has been treated with particular economic savagery as part of the bailout process. Certainly, the Cypriots acted irresponsibly. But that label applies to all of the EU members, including Germany, who created an economic plant so vast that it could not begin to consume what it produces — making the country utterly dependent on the willingness of others to buy German goods. There are thus many kinds of irresponsibility. How the European Union treats irresponsibility depends upon the power of the nation in question. Cyprus, small and marginal, has been crushed while larger nations receive more favorable treatment despite their own irresponsibility.

It has been said by many Europeans that Cyprus should never have been admitted to the European Union. That might be true, but it was admitted — during the time

of European hubris when it was felt that mere EU membership would redeem any nation. Now, Europe can no longer afford pride, and it is every nation for itself. Cyprus set the precedent that the weak will be crushed. It serves as a lesson to other weakening nations, a lesson that over time will transform the European idea of integration and sovereignty. The price of integration for the weak is high, and all of Europe is weak in some way.

In such an environment, sovereignty becomes sanctuary. It is interesting to watch Hungary ignore the European Union as Budapest reconstructs its political system to be more sovereign — and more authoritarian — in the wider storm raging around it. Authoritarian nationalism is an old European cure-all, one that is re-emerging, since no one wants to be the next Cyprus.

Europe is returning to its normal condition of multiple competing nation-states. While Germany will dream of a Europe in which it can write the budgets of lesser states, the EU nation-states will look at Cyprus and choose default before losing sovereignty.

So no Serbia should not join the EU.....tomorrow. But Serbia has the luxury of time. There is much in the joining process that is good and inevitable if Serbia is to move forward. The Rule of Law, property rights, and a whole plethora of regulation. Serbia should take all the help that is available to succeed in the process. It will take at least seven or eight years,. And then lets see where Europe is.

As for NATO the same is true. Serbia has never been a member of a military alliance. And certain holes in Belgrade's urban landscape have tended to harden attitudes anyway. In truth despite brave pronouncements in Lisbon NATO doesn't know where it is going. Surely no sensible person gets on a bus, if the driver doesn't know where he is going (VOZE MISKO) (I have always said that in order to truly understand Serbs everyone should see Koto tamo peva)

So no don't join NATO, but take full advantage of the process. Partnership for Peace of which Serbia is already a member is an incredibly generous scheme.

So there you have it. My personal account of years of my life spent explaining, justifying, promoting and occasionally being driven mad by Serbia. A few thoughts on the future. A future I intend to share with you, since I live in Stari Grad, and will continue to do so.

Of one thing I am certain. Serbia is the key to stability in the Balkans and has a great future. I am proud to be a friend of Serbia.....most of the time.