

**PART IV:**

**THE HUMAN SECURITY DIMENSION OF CO-  
OPERATIVE SECURITY**

# Justice – a Precondition for Co-operation?

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## **Serbia must take a realistic stance**

Serbia has finally put together a new government after three months of hard bargaining about its composition. But the truth is that the agreement on the DP-DPS coalition had been reached well ahead of the 21 January elections. It had been hammered out by an informal circle led by Dobrica Ćosić, the circle which had also certified both Koštunica and Tadić. The new government exactly mirrors the state in which Serbia is. A week ahead of the government formation the gist of the Serbian political landscape was laid bare. The scare-mongering attempts of Vojislav Koštunica, manifested in his choice of the Radical Party Deputy President Tomislav Nikolic – Radical Party leader Vojislav Seselj awaits trial in the Hague – for the parliament speaker, in fact, failed. The Nikolić-Tadić-Koštunica threesome, who stage-managed that conspiratorial election of Nikolić's, has since lost a lot of public support. Tomislav Nikolić's easy resignation and quick approval of the new government indicated that an earlier deal had been struck. But it is obvious that memberships of all the three parties were not aware of that deal, for the parliamentary debate was obviously genuine and not stage-managed, judging by the nature, scope and viciousness of the insults which all the three parties threw at each other.

Due to the foregoing, Boris Tadić faced a major intra-party discussion, for part of his party's top echelons was against continuation of cohabitation with the DPS and deals with the Radical Party. An ultimately easy formation of government also indicated that so much shilly-shallying in the previous three months had not been necessary. The party which stands most to gain from such a development is the coalition led by the Liberal Democratic Party President Chedomir Jovanovic. That party has raised some issues which to date had not been tackled in the Serb Par-

liament. In those terms the Serb parliament acquired a new quality and that party undermined the parliamentary unity on all key issues, namely, Kosovo, co-operation with the Hague Tribunal, regional relations, steady and firm pro-EU orientation.

What is at play now? As usual the Serb political class “excelled” in calculating how to handle Kosovo at the moment of the debate on its future status and in how to avoid faster accession to European membership. In May 2006 EU-Serb negotiations were suspended due to the non-arrest of Ratko Mladić. Co-operation with the Hague Tribunal is one of the key conditions for opening up EU prospects for Serbia. The Kostunica-led government and other Serb strategists used that suspension to launch a thesis that Serbia should not become an EU member. That strategy is based on allegations that by 2015 or later, when Serbia is most likely to become an EU member, the Union itself shall have fallen apart. The thesis of an uncertain EU future is book-ended by a thesis of Serbia as a neutral country, with some reliance on Russia. Russia considerably assisted in the profiling of that thesis, when it suddenly took a pro-active stance on the Kosovo issue. However, it is clear that the former engagement was due to Russia’s wish to affirm its role of big power in international relations.

An economically strengthened and politically consolidated Russia has recently recovered part of its geo-strategic importance. Its internal development and notably its use of its gas and oil reserves as tools of foreign policy gave rise to suspicions as to the real nature of Putin’s regime. On the other hand Russia is increasingly seen as an ally by the Serb political elite. But at play are other interests too. Large numbers of “successful” Serb businessmen have strong links with the Russian tycoons and most of them have made their base in Moscow. They are in fact the ones favoring and even covertly advocating stronger ties between Serbia and Russia, the West having allegedly “failed to truly help Zoran Djindjić,” “Serbia is not competitive”, etc.

Advocacy of stronger ties with Russia is also closely related to the Kosovo issue, and Russia’s role in the UN Security Council. Belgrade hopes to delay the resolution of Kosovo status through Russia, and thus attain

its true goal, the division of Kosovo. That division has been advocated for the past 30 years as the only option for Belgrade. Hence the following strategy of Belgrade in Kosovo over the past 8 years: prevention of integration of Serbs into Kosovo institutions, demonization of Albanians and undermining of international efforts. Belgrade was by and large successful in that goal. The EU and US-backed Ahtisaari plan also contains some elements of division, for it promotes excessive decentralization. On the other hand, it is obvious that Belgrade is interested only in the territory, and not in the fate of Serbs and Albanians. However this division does not cover cultural and religious heritage of medieval Serbia, so often invoked by Belgrade in its Kosovo arguments, or in its vocal adherence to the so-called historical principle. Belgrade is interested only in mines, above all in Trepcha, forests and property which during Milosevic regime was transferred to Serbia. The latter was the main cause of the obstructed process of privatization in Kosovo.

The gist of Serbia's problem is its inability to accept reality, not only in Kosovo but also the one from the past, namely that its 90's war and the failed state-expansion campaign. However, that project has not been routed, in view of Serbia's continuing aspirations towards Bosnia, Montenegro and part of Kosovo. Those illusions are just illusions, but as long as new generations are fed on such ideas, Serbia shall remain a deeply frustrated country, unable to become outward-looking. Hence the urgency in resolving the Kosovo issue. In other words, an urgent resolution of that issue is not important only because of Albanians and Serbs, but also because such a development would wind up or rather wrap up the process of disintegration of Yugoslavia and the issue of state borders in the region.

Stubborn adherence to the 19th century ideas in the past 30 years, has quite naturally separated Serbia from European processes and dominance of the Euro-Atlantic political idea. Therefore major efforts are needed to get Serbia back on the EU track. In the past 7 years the EU tried to keep Serbia on that course and was the principal motivator of the European option in Serbia. The assassination of Zoran Djindjić was for Serbia tantamount to a loss of an authentic pro-European reformer. In this context it is also noteworthy that Serbia's membership in CEFTA

and PFP resulted rather from the international community's decision to make Serbia stay the European course, than from Serb political resolve to join the two organizations.

Due to the election results Serbia found itself at a junction: either to effect a total break with the Milošević legacy or to definitely cement its current position which has kept it blocked for a decade. Objectively there is a potential for Serbia's final opting for transition and Europe, but the former requires massive mobilization of citizens. On the other hand the destructive potential of conservative camp is also important. That large camp harbours war criminals, still protects the criminal policy of Slobodan Milosevic and renders help and protection to all Serb war criminals and profiteers. Added to that, parts of army, police and intelligence services still impact the creation of reality in Serbia. They are a principal hurdle on the pathway to constituting a normal political scene in the country. Koštunica is the measure of strength of that camp, which is currently weakened, but still able to wreak havoc and anarchy. That camp uses the issues of Kosovo and the Hague Tribunal as nationalism-generating tools. They propagate nationalism as the only ideology, all the while using it to thwart changes and kick-off of the internal political and public dialogue on responsibility for the 90's war policy.

Having in mind all limitations of its society and political elite, Serbia demonstrated its maximum potential. Therefore it is difficult to expect from Serbia a well thought-out Europe-looking policy and responsibility, especially the one related to war and war crimes. Xenophobic nationalism and denial create a powerful concoction which enables society to escape into a mythological reality. The Serbian anti-European stand is deeply rooted and EU conditionality may not be sufficient to make Serbia take a U-turn and embrace a more liberal line. Therefore, new approaches and time, which shall spawn new generations, are needed for Serbia to face up to the reality and legacy of the Milošević era.