

Wrong choice in Kosovo: The EU supports a Mafia State

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A recent Council of Europe report says that during and after the 1998-99 Kosovo conflict, militia leaders of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) tortured and killed hundreds of Serbs and political rivals in secret Albanian hideouts, removed their organs for sale and dumped their bodies in local rivers.

The report added that these people were also heavily involved in drug, sex and illegal immigrant trafficking across Europe. Yet while all this was going on, the NATO powers had decreed that Serbia should be bombed into accepting the KLA as Kosovo's legitimate rulers — rather than the more popular Democratic League of Kosovo headed by the nationalist intellectual Ibrahim Rugova advocating nonviolent independence.

Recent years have not been kind to Western policymakers. They have shown an almost unerring ability to choose the wrong people for the wrong policies. Think back to the procession of incompetents chosen to rescue Indochina from the communist enemy. Does anyone even remember their names today? Yet at the time they were supposed to be nation-savers.

Before that the United Kingdom, United States and Australia had banded to try to prevent Lee Kuan Yew from being elected prime minister of Singapore. He was seen as a crypto-communist. They preferred the incompetent pro-British Lim Yew Hock.

Then we saw the West, and Japan, throw their support behind the hapless Afghan President Hamid Karzai as the strongman to defeat the evil Taliban whom the U.S. had once embraced as the good Taliban.

If not for the end of the Cold War, we almost certainly would be seeing the U.S. and U.K. today once again backing Middle East dictators against their protesting masses.

And now we discover that the people chosen to take over Kosovo from Serbia were not quite the heroes they were made out to be at the time.

Western involvement in the breakup of the former Yugoslavia had more than its share of such mistakes. The Serbian forces resisting the breakup were accused of war crimes and ethnic cleansing. But anyone aware of that nation's troubled history should have realized that the Serbian minorities in Croatia and Bosnia would not accept domination by the successors to their former pro-Nazi oppressors.

Retaliations and violent resistance, including even the shocking Srebrenica killings, were inevitable. Besides, the final result was that close to a million Serbs had to seek refuge in Serbia itself. So who had been cleansing whom?

Kosovo too had seen wartime ethnic cleansing against Serbs by pro-Nazi elements. The cleansing continued during the 1990s as U.S.-trained KLA guerrillas targeted Serbs isolated in rural districts and towns (by then Belgrade's efforts to give the province autonomy had failed on the rock of ethnic Albanian noncooperation).

When Belgrade finally sent in troops to resist the guerrillas, it was accused of war crimes even though the illegitimate force used was much less than what we see when most other Western nations, the U.S. particularly, intervene against guerrillas they do not like.

When many ethnic Albanians fled temporarily *after* the NATO bombing intervention, that too was supposed to be Serbian ethnic cleansing.

Even after gaining power, the KLA violence and cleansings continued. Their victims included the Jewish and Roma minorities and ethnic Albanians who had cooperated with Serbia's attempt to offer autonomy. The trafficking of drugs, women and body organs continued, right under the noses of the U.N. forces sent in to maintain order. Rugova supporters were eliminated.

The U.S., U.K. and Germany bear most of the blame for this horror; Germany especially should have realized the passions that would be unleashed by any sudden breakup of the former Yugoslavia. But they seemed more interested in the geopolitical gains.

In exchange for helping the KLA, the U.S. got to add the strategic Bondsteel military base in Kosovo to its global base network. And the feisty U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright got to play world leader at the 1999 Rambouillet conference by decreeing that the dashing, handsome KLA leader Hashim Thaci was far preferable to the elderly, unpretentious Rugova as Kosovo's future leader, and that Serbia should be bombed if it did not agree. Belgrade's agreement to Rugova as leader of an independent Kosovo was dismissed as irrelevant.

One wonders how the Serbs saw this performance. Two generations earlier, they had been the only European nation with the courage to resist Nazi attack. They had been bombed and massacred as a result. Now they were to suffer again at the hands of the NATO-supporting European nations, most of whom had spinelessly succumbed to, or had even collaborated with, that former Nazi enemy.

True, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has now resolved that it is "extremely concerned" over the recent KLA revelations. But is that not rather too late?

And will we see apologies from the people behind the past policies, particularly from the likes of former U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair who still boasts that his firm resolve against Serbian "ethnic cleansing" in Kosovo led him to support the U.S. in Iraq? I doubt it.

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