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EU and NATO faced with double standards over South Ossetia and Kosovo

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The war in South Ossetia has made transparent the double standards of the European Union and NATO, given that they are strongly supporting the territorial integrity of Georgia, while only six months ago these two organizations have refused to support the territorial integrity of Serbia, calling the unilateral secession of Kosovo a “unique case” in the world.

Except at the EU and NATO, the formula of Kosovo as a “unique case” was not accepted in any other organization – be it in the United Nations, the OSCE, the Council of Europe, or in any regional organization in the world, such as the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Conference, the African Union or the Organization of America States.

The day after the the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo, on February 18th, the EU practically made official the “double standard” for Serbia, by supporting the territorial integrity of all states, except Serbia in the case of Kosovo.

In the last paragraph of the conclusions from the meeting of the EU foreign ministers, it is said:

“The Council reiterates the EU's adherence to the principles of the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act, inter alia the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity and all UN Security Council resolutions. It underlines its conviction that in view of the conflict of the 1990s and the extended period of international administration under SCR 1244, Kosovo constitutes a sui generis case which does not call into question these principles and resolutions.”

In a translation from Eurocratic language it means that the EU is supporting the territorial integrity of all states except Serbia over Kosovo.

The “uniqueness” of Kosovo, or more particularly of Serbia, is being defended by generalist formulations such as the “conflict of the 1990s” and the “extended period of international administration”.

However, these formulations do not prove anything about either the nature of the conflict nor about the administration.

The Ploughshares foundation project found that at the time of the Kosovo conflict in



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1998-99, a total of 40 armed conflicts, each with 1,000 victims at least, were being waged in the world. None, except Kosovo, led to unilateral secession.

Also, the “extended period of international administration” existed in many situations in the world, including in Eastern Slavonia after the war in Croatia, where the UNTAES mission led to the reintegration of this territory in the Republic of Croatia, not to its secession.

French foreign policy chief and current chairman of the EU Council of ministers Bernard Kouchner said soon after that the EU “did not have any choice”.

“When two communities cannot talk, but only want to talk through arms, it is better to separate them”, Kouchner said.

Six months after, in the case of South Ossetia – where the Georgian and the Ossetian side are also clearly talking through arms – the French presidency of the EU has called for a solution which must guarantee the territorial integrity of Georgia.

Among those who warned about the policy of “double standards” was professor of international law at the VLB university in Brussels, Bruno Coppieters.

« The EU is speaking about a unique case in Kosovo because it is impossible for it to claim that it has legitimate authority to make a detour from the principle of territorial integrity in Europe », the professor said.

The EU should, thus, have “one single position towards all similar cases in the world”.

His colleague Dmitry Trenin from the Carnegie foundation said that “Kosovo will become a symbol of new divisions at the global level”.

« From that point of view, the period after the Cold War is finally ending and we are entering a new phase of rivalry of great powers, the so-called ‘Era of Rival States’ », Trenin said.

He said “independence day in Pristina was also celebrated in Sukhumi in Abkhazia, Erbil in Kurdistan or Taipeh in Taiwan”.

« By recognizing the unilateral independence of Kosovo, a taboo will be broken ... all those who are favoring independence in the world will be encouraged by the fact that the only thing that remains to be done is to convince the USA and Europe that their fight is a just cause”, Trenin warned.