



Sergei Markedonov, Sergei Romanenko

KOSOVO: A PRECEDENT OR AN EXCEPTION?¹

From: Sergey Romanenko  
To: Sergey Markedonov  
Subject: A role model?

Dear Sergey!

Thank you for your agreement to participate in our discussion. It is not a secret for both of us that there two key issues to be resolved in the course of academic discussions and political negotiations on the possible status of Kosovo. Answers to these questions are crucial for, at least, mitigation, if not resolution of the conflict. The first question is whether the Kosovo case is a precedent, i.e. a principle and a model to be used in settlement of other similar situations related to national self-determination. The second question is to what extent it may catalyze the development of similar processes in other European (and non-European) countries.

Positions of the parties actually clash around these issues. On the one hand we have the official position of Serbia supported by Russia. On the other hand, the United States and most of the EU nations back their viewpoint. The answer is the key to determine further logic of the argument.

In my opinion, the Kosovo case is an example of self-determination aggravated with ethnic violence on both sides. However, it is the national self-determination of two ethnic communities that lived together for a long while, shared the same territory and regarded it as their Motherland.

I also assume that the importance of the Kosovo issue is artificially exaggerated – each party does it to pursue its own political goals.

Yours,

*Sergey Romanenko*

From: Sergey Markedonov  
To: Sergey Romanenko  
Subject: Balkanization

Dear Sergey!

Thank you for your comment. It raises a number of fundamental issues of practical and methodological character. First of all, the issue of “precedent” in Kosovo.

To my mind, the answer is not as complicated, as it may seem at first sight. Those who want to see the precedent in Kosovo will see it anyway. And they will interpret its self-determination



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in the appropriate manner. It has nothing to do with formal law. It is useless to resort to logic or historical (sociological, ethnological) facts in this case. Those who use this case for their own political ends will not be persuaded by analysts, will not share their conclusions. It happens simply because analysts and politicians have different tasks in this situation.

I have the temptation to say – to avoid the Kosovo case, one should not have unilaterally and actively supported self-determination in the former Serbian autonomy. One should have thought out the implications of such step, ramifications for the Balkans or for the South Caucasus. Now it is too late to provide rational (and mainly reasonable) arguments that such ethno-political bread is not baked in one oven and cannot serve as a global solution.

However, I would like to note the potential “one size fits all” character of the Kosovo case. Self-determination in this situation is ethnic by nature (the struggle for it and political dividends from success are the prerogative of the Kosovars, i.e. Albanians, and not a benefit for all ethnic groups). And such approach allows other secessionist leaders to regard the Kosovo case as some sort of a precedent.

Such scenarios exist in political ideology and practice of *de facto* states in Eurasia (Abkhazia, Transnistria, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh). Their leaders and unrecognized foreign ministers try to convince external observers that their republics have more grounds for gaining independence than Kosovo. As a matter of fact, we can speak about Balkanization of the post-Soviet space. Under the term “Balkanization” I mean the use of the Kosovo precedent as a tool in struggle for ethno-political self-determination. One has to note that despite negative attitude of the United States and the EU to such logic, the leaders of the “CIS-2” will hardly abandon this precedent.

By the way, the Kosovo precedent can also be noticed in the rhetoric of European ethnic movements (Basques, Catalonians, or Corsicans). The *Times* was right to make a bold forecast – by 2020 we might have 11 new states on the territory of the today’s European Union.

Yours,

Sergey Markedonov

From: Sergey Romanenko  
To: Sergey Markedonov  
Subject: Re: Balkanization

Sergey,

You wonder if Kosovization (which must be a modern synonym of Balkanization, or its special case) jeopardizes the world, or whether we simply try to customize this model to all other existing ethno-political conflicts. By the way this is a dangerous thing – it is impossible from academic point of view and counter-productive from practical point of view to confine the variety of ethno-political conflicts in Europe and in the world to the situation that emerged on a small territory in Southeastern Europe. All talks about the Kosovo precedent, as well as its uniqueness are abstract to a great extent and proceed from simplified understanding of present-day ethno-political processes.

Proponents of both approaches absolutize (in their own way) this specific case limited in time and space and having particular historical roots. It would be completely wrong to demonize the Balkans and to assume that this region is an exceptional core of all global contradictions and negative example for the entire Europe.

You fairly noted that “under the term “Balkanization” I mean the use of the Kosovo precedent as a tool in struggle for ethno-political self-determination.” However, I would add to this the conflict of geopolitical interests of the so-called Great Powers. If one speaks about external factors, unambiguous support from outside of the idea of independence (*de facto* of mono-ethnic statehood), especially self-proclaimed independence, means support to nationalist radical movements on both sides. Meanwhile, there is a need to back moderate, compromise-prone groupings – this was the goal of establishment of the troika (Russia, the EU and the

United States). By the way unequivocal foreign support of Serbian territorial integrity also gives impetus to national radicalism on both sides.

Figure 1. Explosive effect of Kosovo



Kosovo: what is next? Sri Lanka, Republika Srpska, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria, Chechnya, Palestine, Karabakh, Crimea, the Basque Country, Northern Ireland, Kurdistan, Xinjiang, Tibet, Quebec, Darfur, Pamir, Chiapas...

Source: Oleg Khromov, [www.caricatura.ru](http://www.caricatura.ru), published on January 20, 2008

And one more thing. Why has Kosovo been chosen among the variety of ethno-political conflicts of the last twenty years as an exemplary model and nearly the engine of all other crisis situations? If one wants to have a precedent, he may remember the velvet divorce of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the recent agreement in Northern Ireland, peaceful disintegration of the Soviet Union, etc.

I may repeat myself, but all ethno-political conflicts have the same nature, but different causes. Hence, I don't think it is reasonable to speak about fatal impact of Kosovo on other regions. It would be wrong to assume that everything that happens in one country should necessarily reoccur in other states.

Yours,

SR

From: Sergey Markedonov  
To: Sergey Romanenko  
Subject: Pavlov's dog or *sine ira et studio*

In your first letter, Sergey, you mentioned the exaggerated significance of the Kosovo issue due to political goals of the parties. It is true. But I would dwell on your assumption further. The importance of self-proclaimed independence of Kosovo (as well as of unilateral recognition) is exaggerated as well.

Let us put emotions aside. Isn't it clear today that Kosovo is an ethnic property of Albanians and Serbia has no real resources to Serbize the region? I think that Russian diplomats could be more balanced and rational in their statements. Their position could be – unless the UN Security Council recognizes Kosovo, one cannot speak about recognition of state independence of this territory.

After all, today 24 states recognizing Taiwan do not recognize China. And Beijing survives and doesn't bother about these trifles. And obviously, the recognition of Kosovo by Washington or Europe should not transform us into *the Pavlov dog*, whose reflex is to recognize *de facto* states in the CIS.

It is not in our interests to see Tbilisi using force to restore its jurisdiction over Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Moreover, in such case Russia could apply symmetric response (since any escalation of conflicts in the South Caucasus affects the Russian North Caucasus, Northern Ossetia and four Adyg-speaking entities in the western part of the region). But recognition of *de facto* states would immediately mean confrontation with the United States and the EU and creates potentially hazardous precedents.



I am not going to reiterate conclusions about possible secession of Tatarstan or Chechnya – there are no realistic grounds for that today. It would be enough for someone to visit the notorious *Kavkaz Center* website, which has recently informed about elimination of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria and its transformation into one of the provinces of the Caucasian Emirate. So this is not the case.

But the situation in the world changes very quickly and once created the precedent may work out in the future and not always to our benefit. I may remind you of the right to secession guaranteed by the Soviet Constitution. In the 1960s and 1970s the very appeal to this right seemed a fantasy. But in the late 1980s this clause became the factor of *Realpolitik*. Therefore, Russia should be more flexible, should not tie its policy to Kosovo or to Abkhazia, should keep its hands free and have multiple choices. Otherwise we may become a *Kosovo-dependent Great Power*.

Yours,

Sergey M.

From: Sergey Romanenko  
To: Sergey Markedonov  
Subject: Aliens and violence

Let us analyze the particularities of the situation in Kosovo (regardless of its influence or non-influence on other states). First of all, Kosovo is a result of internal crisis of the already non-existing countries – ethno-territorial Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (the late 1980s) and its successor – the Union of Serbia and Montenegro (collapsed in 2006). Beside, one has to remember the crisis of the Serbian state after two world wars and under the Milosevic regime in the late 1980s. All these crises are still far from being resolved.

The Kosovo status is a problem of integrity of a poliethnic state, i.e. Serbia. Belgrade faces a tough issue, typical of any poliethnic or multinational state – how to defend the integrity. It can be achieved with centralization, unification and enforcement or with the provision of maximum freedom, including national freedom.

The same problem emerges (but vice versa) for the Albanian movement in Kosovo – how to achieve self-determination and national statehood, including full independence and sovereignty. This can be done by keeping the territory within the poliethnic state (autonomy, federation or confederation) or through secession, even with the use of armed struggle.

Albanians living outside independent sovereign Albania make a national minority in Serbia (they are an absolute majority on the territory of Kosovo), Macedonia, Montenegro, and Greece. Just like many other nations in the Balkans, they pass through the process of national self-determination. Therefore, the crisis has an evident regional dimension.

The paradox of the Kosovo situation is that the inter-ethnic conflict is caused by primarily internal reasons, mostly by the history of national self-determination. However, the resolution of the crisis has a huge external dimension, external factor is decisive, and any new borders would mean new conflicts in the future. It seems that the mechanics of settlement has not changed much since the 1878 Berlin Congress.

One has to note also two characteristic features of the political mentality in the Balkans. First of all, politics is regarded through the prism of ethnic identity as a series of interactions between ethnic communities, which are the only subject of law. Secondly, each national movement (and the state established by such movement) strives for complete coincidence of borders of the ethnic group (sometimes such borders are exaggerated without any specific grounds for this) and its state. This is considered to be a restoration of historical, social and national (as well as confessional) justice.

Both parties consider Kosovo to be their ethnic territory without *strangers* (other ethnic groups). Due to national psychology and ideology of Serbia, the secession of Kosovo is a

national tragedy. For Albanians non-secession would be the similar tragedy. None of the parties regard Kosovo as a poliethnic territory or entity.

Under these circumstances, ethnic violence applied by both parties and reminiscences of such violence further deteriorate the situation. Such memories of violence and crime (both at individual and mass level, mainly uninvestigated and unpunished) are components of national mentality and historical memory and, hence, make part of politics. Both parties, due to their historical development, lack the culture of democracy and consensus. This is why procedures democratic by form (elections, referenda, etc.) and political negotiations are not democratic by substance and remain a tool to continue the conflict instead of seeking compromises.

To a large extent, this is a ramification of state terror on the part of Serbia against the Albanian national movement, as well as of anti-state terror on the part of Albanian national movement in Kosovo and proto-state structures.

S. Romanenko

From: Sergey Markedonov  
To: Sergey Romanenko  
Subject: Brothers in arms

Dear Sergey,

In your latest message you consider a few matters. They include the external perception of Kosovo (among politicians and in the expert community), the ratio of the general and the particular, and the issue of ethnic violence in conflicts in the Balkans (or it would be better to speak about absolutization of violence by all parties of the Yugoslav tragedy). As for the general and the particular, I would only say that supernormal perception of the ex-Serbian autonomous region as some pattern occurs due to simple Eurocentric approach. In late 2007, for example, an Indian tribe in five American states proclaimed the need for secession from the United States, but this news had no effect (even on the websites of devoted opponents of America).

I assume that the secession of Quebec would not cause such harsh reaction as all intrigues around Kosovo. This is the reason for numerous *de facto* mistakes. Kosovo is portrayed (even by experts) as the first case of breaching the inviolability of borders after the 1975 Helsinki Agreements (as if there was no Eritrea, Bangladesh or East Timor). And it seems that Europe still shapes the primary agenda in the world – here I have to agree with you that not much has changed since the Berlin Congress.

I would like to focus on the problem of ethnic violence, which you analyzed in detail. I agree that internal problems (internal domestic dynamics as such) is more important for the latest crisis in the Balkans than any geopolitical games around the region. Without internal prerequisites for crisis, it would be ridiculous to speak about destructive role of external forces. Nonetheless, one has to note that such mediocre indulging in stunts by Great Powers in the Balkans in the past and today (and Lord forbid, in the future) only encouraged ethnic violence.

Now and then political games, transitory interests of Great Powers (which use ethno-political movements for their ends) strengthen the theory and practice of ethnic cleanliness. And here we touch upon an important issue mentioned by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry “You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed.”

Germany and Austria should bear responsibility for Croatian democrats, the United States should take care of the Kosovar freedom fighters, and Russia should think of its Serbian Orthodox brothers. Lack of adequate understanding of the Balkans by the Great Powers, their inability to forecast the future (wasn't it clear what swift recognition of Croatia in 1991 or Kosovo in 2008 would mean?) enroot ethnic violence. Their support of this or that movement has created (creates and will create) wrong interpretations and high expectations in the Balkans. If Washington, Brussels, or Moscow stands for us, we can do whatever we want and all our sins (including ethnic cleansing) will be pardoned.

SM



From: Sergey Romanenko  
To: Sergey Markedonov  
Subject: One size fits all?

Dear Sergey,

Let us get back to the issue of extrapolation of the Kosovo experience, as it may directly affect Russia. Hence, we have to decide for ourselves, which parameters make the post-Soviet space similar or comparable to the post-Yugoslavian one.

The existing comparisons in our mass media (notably matching the patterns of post-Soviet and post-Yugoslavian problems) are hardly flawless or correct. The same relates to any parallels made between Kosovo and other similar regions.

Kosovo is compared to any part of the world! The shortlist would include Bosnia and Herzegovina (even though both regions belong to former Yugoslavia, just like Macedonia, I would be very cautious in making direct parallels without substantial reservations), South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Transnistria (I assume, all three conflicts differ much from each other), Cyprus, The Basque Country, Scotland, Belgium, Corsica, and so on. A Serbian delegation once even suggested to troika to use the Hong Kong experience.

If one takes a purely legal, i.e. abstract, stance, we can compare all those cases only if we speak about autonomy and self-determination in general. And thus, any of them can be exemplary for others. However, thorough analysis of historical, ethnological, and political reality denies such approach. Each conflict has its own reasons, form, logic, pace of development, and external factors. So any settlement of such historically-rooted conflicts would be unique. Even if all countries vote unanimously in the United Nations and agree that this corn should be measured by some universal bushel.

I believe that this is the logic of history. Formal legal recognition of the situation as a precedent would not help in resolution of other conflicts, will not allow us to apply a simplified universal scheme to a variety of historical, ethnic and political conditions.

S. Romanenko

From: Sergey Markedonov  
To: Sergey Romanenko  
Subject: It's the end

In this case it becomes clear that regardless of Kosovo's future, alleged final decision will not be the end of history for the Kosovo crisis. The latter will simply shift into another phase. First of all, there is neither consensus among leading global actors (the U.S.A, China, the EU, and Russia), nor among the neighbors of the autonomous region. Any *final* solution, on the contrary, would result in numerous interpretations and really unpredictable consequences. Who has analyzed the would-be reaction of the Albanians in Macedonia and Montenegro, Serbs in Republika Srpska in Bosnia, population of the CIS-2, or European ethnic secessionists? Who can give 100 percent prediction of such reaction?

Hence, Kosovo may be regarded as a test for the international community. To say *a priori*, without significant evidence that Kosovo has the right to recognition for political reasons, while Nagorno-Karabakh or Abkhazia have not, means to practice "Tastes differ" approach at the global level. It would be advisable (in connection with Kosovo and not only Kosovo) for the members of the world elite to elaborate criteria of recognition of the breakaway state entities.

The primary criterion would be the ability of the entity to operate as a state. The second factor would be the ability of the parent state to control the rebellious territory by any means other to deportations or ethnic cleansing. In other words, reintegration should be called impossible, if it inevitably causes an armed conflict. The third feature would be the existence and depth of democratic procedures in the separatist entities.

It seems that Kosovo or CIS-2 republics are far away from the fulfillment of the abovementioned criteria, even though they demonstrate some positive progress. In any case, adequate and safe (in its implications) solution on Kosovo should be based on some general and jointly agreed rules of the game. They should be shared by the majority, if not all states in the world. Otherwise Kosovization would become one of the leading international political trends.

*S. Markedonov*

From: Sergey Romanenko  
To: Sergey Markedonov  
Subject: Two-edged sword

I fully agree with you, Sergey, that taking into account dramatic experience of the 19th and 20th centuries, reintegration should be called impossible if it may result in an armed conflict. The tragedy and paradox of Kosovo is that any solution – be it conservation inside Serbia, or self-proclaimed independence – would be an act of ethnic violence, be it terrorist attacks, clashes, cleansing, sanctions, or whatever. Does not it mean that national oppression is possible, justified and legalized, if it is authorized by the international community? Can the state that suppresses some part of its population be considered democratic?

We think it is right to claim for democratization of the breakaway territories that strive for independence. But what about the level of democracy in the existing parent countries, what about democratization of their authorities? Why did not we make claims for democracy to Slobodan Milosevic, but make such claims to Hashim Thaci?

I share the opinion that some general rules of peaceful transformation of borders should be elaborated, since such border changes will occur anyway. However, as soon as one starts to formulate such rules, many questions emerge. First: what is the ability to operate as a state, what is sustainable statehood? Second: who will decide the maturity of such statehood? We hear every day the statements by some Russian experts who argue that Ukraine and Georgia are allegedly not sustainable states and imply that they can be divided. This is an example of “Tastes differ” that you mention above.

The existence of democratic procedures... I would say “yes”, but how can we make compatible, for instance, the present-day pan-European concept of democratic values with Russia’s sovereign democracy?

*S. Romanenko*

From: Sergey Markedonov  
To: Sergey Romanenko  
Subject: Follow the guidelines

Sergey,

Let’s go step by step. First of all, about the sustainability of a state, its maturity and the role of experts in this process. It will not be experts who will take the decision on recognition of a state! This should be done by the international community (mechanisms, forms, etc. make a topic for a different discussion) and political scientists can only influence such decision-making.

One may suggest certain specific criteria to distinguish between a failed and sustainable state (control over the territory, institutionalization of power, transfer of power from one leader to another without coups d’etat or revolutions). And in this case Georgia and Ukraine make totally different examples. Kyiv enjoys jurisdiction over Donbass and over Crimea. Several heads of state changed in Kyiv on the basis of democratic procedures. In Georgia, on the contrary, until recently supreme powers have never been transferred through elections.



By the way putting labels of “failed state” does not always mean appeals to division or annexation. Sometimes it is necessary to provide responsible and qualified assistance. The major issue is to ensure that responsible approach becomes a cornerstone of peacemaking activities.

As far as democracy is concerned, it should be demanded for from both parties (secessionists and fighters for territorial integrity). At the same time, one has to admit that such democracy will hardly resemble the modern European or U.S. system. It is more important to keep the vector, to encourage the trend. There is no need in acceleration of the process. Hence, it would be correct at the initial stage to ask the conflicting parties to ensure predictability and law and order.

Yours,

*SM*

From: Sergey Romanenko  
To: Sergey Markedonov  
Subject: Let's be honest

Sergey,

You are partly right, but such deliberations are mostly theoretical. In reality we should be honest – today's act of the Kosovo drama is over. And one of the major concerns now is how to avoid new escalation of violence. I don't mean official Belgrade or Pristina here – I would remind you of a danger originating from the crowd, in the street. All sorts of semi-legal extremist paramilitary organizations exist on both sides – among the Serbs and the Albanians. The resoluteness in desire to protect “our Kosovo” is beyond any reason and such activities may cause new bloodshed. The scale of such violence would depend on the decisiveness of the authorities and the international contingent.

The will of the Serbian and Kosovar politicians to preserve territorial integrity or to achieve independence does not depend on their personal views or traits of character. Nowadays the public opinion does not let them abandon their bargaining positions – the price is too high.

What can Serbia really do to oppose the independence of Kosovo? The variety of measures has been voiced by numerous Serbian politicians and contains the whole range of responses – from hard line to moderate, from economic blockade to disruption of relations with the countries that recognize Kosovo.

However, all this does not go beyond rhetoric and unrealistic character of such steps is obvious even to Serbia. The nation would find itself in isolation, would lose political contacts required to defend its interests (which are not confined to Kosovo, by the way). The country would be engaged in a new armed conflict, in which the chances to gain victory are slim. Such conflict would split the Serbian society, the major part of which does not want to fight. Serbia would get a reputation of an unreliable economic partner, would exclude itself from world trade and exchange. Belgrade will apparently try to reestablish contacts with Pristina, even though the declaration of independence and its recognition by Europe and the United States make this process extremely difficult.

Yours,

*S. Romanenko*

From: Sergey Markedonov  
To: Sergey Romanenko  
Subject: Responsibility and new barbarians

It seems to me that you have raised an important issue of responsibility. The latter has not become a key thing neither for the Balkans, nor for the Caucasus. The Great Powers, instead

of demonstrating solidarity in containing new Barbarianism, use this Barbarianism to defeat each other.

The West shares the illusion that integration of Serbia into the European family would be a good prize for the loss of Kosovo and would lead Belgrade to the highway of civilization. However, absolute neglect towards the interests of Serbia would rather result in the increase of nationalism and justification of ethnic violence, as the only ways to solve the problem. Such scenario would be lethal for Serbia and would be a serious challenge for the U.S.A and the EU. However, such scenarios should be analyzed and calculated!

What do we get instead? Comforting statements that as soon as Brussels welcomes Serbian bureaucrats, all problems will allegedly be solved. Let me say it again – Serbia has no real resources to incorporate ex-autonomy. Its elite has no real understanding of how to live with the Albanians in one country, how to shape a poliethnic community. The Kosovars have no willingness for compromises either, they would like to pursue their line to the end. One destructive position is condemned, the other alike is supported. Does not it strengthen the perception of ethnic violence as the only efficient measure? We have a position, it is ignored at the negotiations, we are treated as a troublesome fly – may be it is high time we used force? I assume that many in Belgrade ask themselves such questions.

And Kosove, therefore, raises a significant issue connected with any peacekeeping strategy. In my opinion, negotiations can hardly be successful, if the parties do not bargain, do not exchange vital things that they value. The Kosovo situation did not show much bargaining. One can hardly see such bargaining in case of Abkhazia or South Ossetia. Everything is predetermined, the status makes the major point at the negotiation table and the conflicting parties are dragged to this talking point (not always in a correct and accurate way).

SM

From: Sergey Romanenko  
To: Sergey Markedonov  
Subject: Lesson for Russia

All this is true, but you would agree that Belgrade would hardly provide official recognition of Kosovo in the near future. Even if the majority of Serbs support such step, it will not be accepted by many, notably in the armed and security forces, where there are still many fans of Slobodan Milosevic and Vojislav Seselj. Any party in power in Belgrade will have to balance between two realities – political and psychological climate of the population and external conditions, including country's objective interest in drifting towards Europe. By the way Kosovo is not the only impediment for such move – one can mention the notorious issue of poor cooperation with the Hague Tribunal.

Russia's veto in the UN Security Council would hardly save the situation. It will not help in returning Kosovo under the Serbian jurisdiction, nor will it change the ethnic composition of the region. Such veto would only deteriorate relations with the United States and the EU and not only as far as Kosovo is concerned. It could be another stone thrown into the UN building and would give impetus to the intense search for solutions beyond the UN framework.

The Kosovo drama is far from being finished. It is important to avoid its transformation into a tragedy. The Great Powers should break the 19th-century tradition and stop playing on contradictions of the politicians in the Balkans, backing the most maximalist trends. Joint support of moderate practical-minded forces that seek compromises should promote the system of long-term security in the interests of all – small and large nations.

The state borders will continue to change. Today the strategic goal of the international community – whatever romantic it may sound – should be to encourage peaceful character of this process in any particular case.

And another aspect of the Kosovo precedent. To my mind, Russia should take into account the Kosovo experience, especially the tragedy of the Milosevic Serbia (a multinational state), and



should not repeat its mistakes. The Kosovo issue should not also become the core and the tool for rhetoric of political speculations in Russia – when the ideology and psychology of inter-ethnic strife is disguised under the pretext of raising awareness of foreign policy matters. Such ideology, regardless of the wishes of its fathers and carriers, jeopardizes Russia's existence as a state.

*Sergey Romanenko*

From: Sergey Markedonov  
To: Sergey Romanenko  
Subject: Both are worse

Sergey, you mention tragic experience of Slobodan Milosevic. I don't want to advocate for him – he has too many defenders in Russia and in Serbia. But it would be biased to put on his shoulders all responsibility for the developments of the early 1990s in the Balkans.

Among those to blame for the tragedy of Yugoslavia are Franjo Tudjman, Alija Izetbegovic, Agim Ceku, or even Hashim Thaci, the winner of the parliamentary elections in Kosovo. It is not a matter of personalities after all, one has to blame ethnic nationalism, ethnocracy and intellectual racism which were political principles in the region. Yugoslavia collapsed not because of the personalities, but because of the principles, principles of blood.

Studying the lessons of the Balkans, Russia should not criticize the xenophobia of the Russians or the xenophobia of the migrant communities, but xenophobia and racism as principles. One has to stop choosing between the Serbian and Albanian ethnic nationalism, xenophobia of the Russian majority or ethnic minorities. As a famous ideologist of national issues said, "both are worse". 

*S. Markedonov*

## **Note**

<sup>1</sup> The polemics took place shortly before the self-proclaimed independence of Kosovo and finished about one week before the event. Further development of the discussion on the Kosovo issue in the Russian expert community can be found in the reviews of recent world events prepared by Yury Fedorov and Dmitry Evstafiev.