

Kosovo Powder Keg

Ten years ago, the Kosovo Liberation Army, an Albanian paramilitary organization, launched its rebellion against the Yugoslav government and was duly labeled a terrorist

group by the U.S. government. Last month, the Albanian majority of Kosovo declared independence in a formal move to separate the province from Serbia. Washington supported the declaration and has recognized Kosovo.

Serbia has vehemently protested the declaration as a violation of its sovereignty and international law, and a crowd of protesters broke into the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade and set part of it ablaze. Russia immediately denounced Kosovo's independence as a violation of the UN Charter, called for an emergency session of the Security Council and most recently threatened the use of force to prevent the region's separation.

If intended as a blow to Russian prestige, the U.S. strategy has backfired. No conceivable American interest has been served by the recognition of Kosovo.

Since the late '90s, Kosovo has functioned as a pawn in the outdated and unnecessary U.S.-Russian rivalry over Eastern Europe. Now, in a futile quest for the approval of global Muslim opinion, America and the EU have not only increased tension with Moscow but stirred up the opposition of other states, such as Spain and China, who have their own unresolved separatist conflicts and see the precedent of Western-backed Kosovo independence as a threat to their interests.

The U.S. is making an internal political dispute into an international question and an occasion for conflict that draws in outside powers. The Russians are likely to respond by issuing retaliatory recognitions of their Abkhaz and South

Ossetian puppet sub-states in Georgia.

Kosovo, which has existed in political and diplomatic limbo, governed by a mixture of UN-approved NATO occupation, anarchy, and majoritarian tyranny, is set to become a new failed state. The remaining Serb minority has suffered from pogroms as indiscriminate and brutal as any meted out against Albanians under Yugoslav rule, and their churches and monasteries have been looted and desecrated in a systematic effort to eradicate Kosovo's Serbian past.

Kosovo's independence also represents a major break from the past, for unlike some other modern Balkan states, it does not draw on any ancient traditions of statehood. Unlike the Yugoslav republics that have broken away over the past 20 years, Kosovo has belonged to the modern state of Serbia since 1912. Not satisfied with reaping the bitter harvest of artificial states in the Near East created after WWI, Washington has cheered the creation of another in Europe.

Post-1945 borders in the rest of Europe have remained generally stable, and their preservation has been one of the causes of European peace. Any new revisions of the political map have the potential to encourage political upheaval and violence, especially in parts of central and Eastern Europe where nationalism is resurgent, arbitrary post-WWI boundaries are still resented, and ethnic groups are scattered across numerous national jurisdictions.

If Washington believes that the Serbs will eventually forget their attachment to

Kosovo, it will show that it has learned nothing about the importance of culture and history. The province holds a supremely important place in the memory of the Serbian people as the spiritual center of Serbian Christianity and also as the location of the 1389 defeat at Kosovo Polje by the Ottomans. It is known among the Orthodox as the Serbs' "earthly Jerusalem," possessing as much significance in their history as the title suggests. Severing the Serbs' political connection to Kosovo is the strangest way to repay America's ally in both world wars—it is as if we had bombed Britain on behalf of the IRA and supported the creation of an independent Ulster, while at the same time depriving the British of the centers of their religious life.

Most troubling of all is that Washington's recognition demonstrates not only that terrorism will be rewarded, but also that its political results will be actively supported by the West. It promotes the mistaken Wilsonian idea of self-determination in an era when the nation-state is already under strain from the forces of globalization and the threat of non-state actors. Our government is encouraging the same forces that are already tearing Pakistan and Iraq apart. If it is good for Kosovo, why not Baluchistan?

The potential for significant instability around the globe is real and directly counter to America's security interests. Any assumption that Kosovo's independence will go uncontested in the future is dangerous fantasy. On the contrary, supporting Kosovo's separation will send the Balkans back down the treacherous road to open warfare. In the long line of the Bush administration's many foreign policy blunders, the partition of Serbia will stand out as one of the worst. ■

Four Score

Failure to join the European Union hasn't harmed the holdouts.

By Neil Clark

"THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY." The favorite refrain of totalitarians throughout history is now uttered by the serial globalizers who insist that membership in sovereignty-sapping bodies such as the EU and NATO is the only option for any self-respecting European country. If you have not surrendered your sovereignty, then you're missing out. But is this really true?

Now it might just be a freak coincidence that the four countries in Europe who have best preserved their national sovereignty—Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Belarus, none of whom are in the EU and only two of whom are in NATO—are all doing quite well. Much better, in fact, than European countries who have handed over law-making powers.

Consider Switzerland, a country that gets bad press from Europhiles for not wanting to join the EU and from serial warmongers for resolutely staying out of military conflicts. The demise of Switzerland has long been predicted. We were told that once it was forced to reduce its banking secrecy, there would be a big outflow of capital and the Swiss franc would lose its position as the world's most secure currency. Moreover Switzerland's high-wage economy would not be able to compete in the cut and thrust of the globalized system. Poppycock. Switzerland stands at number six in the list of the world's richest countries, above the U.S., Japan, and Britain. Uncompetitive? The World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report currently ranks Switzerland's high-wage economy as the most competitive in the

world. GDP growth is currently 3 percent, unemployment is only 3.3 percent (compared to the EU average of 7 percent). If Switzerland is suffering from staying out of the EU and the European Economic Area then suffering has never been so comfortable.

Switzerland's non-interventionist foreign policy—the country has not been involved in a war since 1815—has had a direct impact on its prosperity. Bombing and invading other states every few years tends to get rather expensive, as one look at the U.S. deficit evidences. The Swiss' admirable stance of minding their own business also means that, unlike Britain and the U.S., the country doesn't have to spend a fortune protecting its citizens from terrorist attacks.

There is a simple way to tell whether a country is following an interventionist foreign policy: the level of security at its main international airport. Heathrow, since Britain signed on to the Gospel of Scoop Jackson, has become a nightmare: the place is now more like Colditz than a civilian airport. Zurich, by contrast, is how British airports used to be. "Is that it?" my wife and I wondered recently as we passed through the splendidly low-key security. Then we remembered that we were in a country that doesn't attack others.

Switzerland's stubborn refusal to join the EU has led to its demonization. The passionately pro-EU *Independent* newspaper last year ran a headline: "Switzerland: Europe's Heart of Darkness?" drawing attention to a racist anti-immigration poster designed by the Swiss

People's Party. While the poster, which showed three white sheep kicking a black sheep off a Swiss flag was indefensible, the media's double standard toward Switzerland is glaring. The Swissophobes, in their determination to portray the country as the next Third Reich, ignore the fact that SPP's crude nationalism has strengthened the Left, with the Green Party getting almost 10 percent of the vote—one of the best showings of any Green party in Europe.

When it comes to democracy, it's the rest of Europe that should be learning from Switzerland—not the other way round. Switzerland practices the most direct form of people power on the continent. Referenda have been an integral part of the constitution since 1848. One can understand Swiss bewilderment at how surrendering legislative powers to unelected commissars in Brussels would make their country better run.

Norway, like Switzerland, is thriving. In 2006, it officially became the richest country in the world, and it has reached its lofty position by doing exactly the opposite of what the globalizers prescribe. While Britain, another European country that discovered oil off its coast in the 1960s, frittered away the revenues paying people not to work, Norway looked to the future, setting up a State Petroleum Fund. The fund is now worth over \$210 billion. Norway, unlike Britain, has maintained control of its destiny—and control of its own waters by staying out of the EU. Britain, a country built on coal and surrounded by fish, shut down its coalmines and signed up