

Joachim Rücker

Present Challenges for Kosovo

The representative of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) first describes the situation in Kosovo after the resignation of Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj from his post and voluntary surrender to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Most remarkably, the security situation in Kosovo has remained quiet. Concerning the fulfilment of standards, Rücker observes that Kosovo has been making substantial progress. Yet, considerable risks remain and much is still to be done. The persistent feeling of insecurity of the Kosovo Serbs and the severe economic stagnation remain most serious concerns. Rücker also calls on the Kosovo Serbs to actively participate in the shaping of Kosovo's future. Dialogue will be all-essential on every level and should be embedded in a regional process encompassing both Belgrade and Kosovo and their neighbours.

Michael Schaefer

Kosovo 2005 aus deutscher Sicht

The Political Director in the German Federal Foreign Office outlines in his contribution his view that 2005 will be a "key year" for deciding Kosovo's final status. He expresses his hope that the implementation of standards, having received a new dynamism under Prime Minister Haradinaj, will be continued by his successor without delay. The "review process" to be taken up in summer 2005 will not automatically lead to negotiations about status. Substantial progress is still required in improving the security, free movement and return of the Kosovo Serbs. In securing democracy and strengthening minority rights, decentralisation is seen as the key issue. Any solution to the status question should be based on a consensus of all parties involved, including Belgrade. Consequently, for the sake of its own interest, the Serb side should abandon its policy of boycotting the dialogue process. The European perspective should be both the framework for Kosovo's future and an incentive for Belgrade to constructively participate in the search for a solution of the Kosovo question.

Gjylnaze Sylja

Kosova Needs a New Status

The author, chairperson of the governing AAK Parliamentary Group, calls for an end of dual administration in Kosovo. The UN, having been slow in dealing with Kosovo's problems, should recognize the interim role that UN Security Council Resolution 1244 has mandated to her. The transfer of competencies in all areas, particularly in the field of justice and internal security, is overdue. In the future, only external security should be secured by the international community. The process of rendering Kosovo independent has to be accelerated. Mrs. Sylja also sharply criticizes the ICTY concerning the indictment against Prime Minister Haradinaj, who is considered to be a hero to his people and not guilty of what he is accused for. The indictment is considered to be based on political reasons rather than considerations of justice, namely giving Belgrade an incentive to hand over its indicted war criminals.

Slobodan Samardzic

Status Instead of Solution – a New Danger for Kosovo and Metohija

The Political Advisor to the Serbian Prime Minister laments the fact that the Kosovo Serbs have been exposed to ethnic cleansing. With the exodus of the Kosovo Serbs, the multi-ethnicity of the province is put into danger and – consequently – the UNMIK mandate is on the verge of total failure. Because elementary standards haven't been met, it is too early to open the issue of future status. In all aspects of Kosovo's future, Belgrade's active role in negotiations is seen as indispensable for Belgrade and the Kosovo Serbs alike. According to the author, talks on decentralisation are of paramount importance for the Kosovo Serbs, as they will show how much the international community and the Albanian majority do care about a multi-ethnic Kosovo.

Rolf Ekéus**Establishing a Multi-ethnic Society in Kosovo**

The High Commissioner on National Minorities of the OSCE presents in his contribution some lessons of his mandate for Kosovo. To him, a multi-ethnic society is the only model securing a peaceful future for the region. In order to achieve reconciliation and integration of ethnic groups, education is seen as the key factor. Reforms should be based on a review of the curricula, on multi-lingual classes, etc. Good governance is another prerequisite, with sufficient employment of persons belonging to minorities in public service. Decentralisation should be used as an instrument to avoid secession and partition.

Leon Malazogu**A Political Fulfilment of Standards**

"Standards before status" has long been the mantra, according to the author who is Research Director of a major think tank in Prishtina. As the International Contact Group is gradually ruling out some negative options from the table, the path to status may be approaching. After the last show of determination not to allow Kosovo to be partitioned, a panicky Belgrade turned to plan C, silently acknowledging that Kosovo will be independent of Serbia but hoping that there is still time to obstruct the international recognition of Kosovo. Prishtina may still become independent, though unlikely, as long as Belgrade tacitly threatens with instability.

The paper suggests that Prishtina fulfils most of the standards politically by adopting a number of mechanisms that empower the voice of communities at the central level and at the municipal level but without compromising the ability of the majority to govern. Such a move would make Kosovo by far the friendliest entity in the Balkans and certainly among the friendliest ones in Europe towards minorities, and regardless of the technical fulfilment of the standards, it would fulfil these at a political level, which requires less money but more courage. Such a course of action would increase the chances that the international community can positively reward the ambitions of the Kosovar Albanians for statehood, and it would also take away the only humanistic argument that Belgrade has for obstructing this status and for advocating territorial autonomy for the three northern municipalities.

Wolf Preuss

Der EU-„Stabilisation and Association Tracking Mechanism“ (STM)

STM started in March 2004, as the author, senior adviser of the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation on the Stabilisation and Association Process, explains. It aims at bringing Kosovo closer to the criteria of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA), including the approximation of the *Acquis Communautaire*. In view of the not yet defined final status of Kosovo, it is, however, not directed towards the conclusion of a SAA. The STM process may lose momentum if it takes too long. It is therefore necessary, also in enhancing its credibility, to be accompanied by concrete and visible measures of the EU to strengthen the economy and infrastructure of Kosovo.

The European Partnerships, introduced at the EU-Thessaloniki Summit in June 2003, created a valuable basis for setting firm policy targets with deadlines attached, laid down in an Action Plan, to be monitored annually by the European Union.

The monitoring of the implementation of these policy targets by the Provisional Institutions of Self Government (PISG) needs further strengthening of the respective institutional capacities in all Ministries concerned. At the same time, it is a valuable management tool for the Head of government in following up the implementation of political decisions. In order to have the necessary political support, the coordination of the STM process should remain within the Prime Minister's Office. Also the coordination within the different EU offices in Kosovo requires careful attention.

Joachim Rücker

The State of Kosovo's Economy and the Perspectives of its Development

Whereas great progress was made in building the prerequisites for a sound economic development, Kosovo has shown a very poor economic performance. Low growth rates, high unemployment, structural deficiencies, lacking skills, a big trade imbalance, and other factors add to a picture that is anything but bright. Not surprisingly, Kosovo is unable to attract the necessary domestic and foreign private investments.

The author further suggests some of the measures necessary to change the course of economic growth. The much-needed mid-term economic development strategy should concentrate on sectors with sufficient potentials, like the energy and coal mining sectors. After all, the unresolved status poses constraints on the level of investments.

Marc Stegherr

Kosovska Mitrovica – interethnischer Brennpunkt des Kosovo

The town and region of Mitrovica, which is split up by the river Ibar into a mostly Serbian inhabited part in the north and an almost thoroughly Albanian part on the southern banks of the river, is considered a highly dangerous place where the dire consequences of the Kosovo conflict, the uncertainty and the opposing ideas concerning the future status of Kosovo are almost regularly leading to violent clashes – the last one from March 2004 is still remembered, as it spread from Mitrovica all over Kosovo. Mitrovica is an interesting case study because there, the problems Kosovo and the international missions are confronted with on the eve of status talks appear highlighted on a smaller scale but in a most immediate, i.e. aggressive fashion.

Wim van Meurs

Europäische Politik für den Balkan und Kosovo neu gedacht Überlegungen zum Report der Internationalen Balkankommission

In April 2005, the International Commission on the Balkans (ICB) presented its long-awaited findings for a rethinking of European policies for the future of the Balkans and most prominently for the deadlocked question of Kosovo's future status. Albeit not an official institution, the political and academic standing of the ICB members guarantees the Report a substantial strategic impact.

Essentially, the authors argue that the EU should start to think of the enlargement process as a strategic instrument rather than a reward for reforms accomplished. According to the Report, only opening a track towards EU integration for the Balkans has the potential to unravel Kosovo's Gordian knot by providing the Kosovars with a framework for conditional statehood and Serbia with an appealing compensation for the loss of Kosovo without destabilising the region as a whole. In 2005, as a decisive year for the Balkans, the Report with its creative and bold recommendations could not have come timelier.