

Personal stance of Mr. Milan Pajević, International Security and Affairs Center - Following Belgium's warning that Serbia's EU accession and Kosovo status are closely related matters, and the message by the British ambassador that Serbia should follow the example of two German states

Lower the Rhetoric Towards West

We could not afford the attitude of “winners” against EU countries that recognized Kosovo status, since they are our most important partners

- The main idea on the model of cooperation between Serbia and Kosovo, and even the model of two German states, is that both should establish cooperation in the most important aspects, and in the spirit of tolerance. Common ground should be found between Belgrade's stance in not recognizing Kosovo independence, but so that neither Serbia nor Kosovo have to suffer the consequences.

The road to EU membership should not be endangered, since only Europe without borders is the right framework for overcoming national divisions and frustrations in the Balkans. If cooperation is seen through the prism of European integration, then both sides should be assisted on their path to the EU, in accordance with already achieved reforms. Therefore, the solution comes down to a need to maximize cooperation in different areas, which are key to establishing a normal life for the citizens.

The German model could only serve as a pointer because it could not be applied automatically and to the letter. The political elites of Priština and Belgrade must seek a model similar to that of Germany, but taking into consideration the situation on the ground. The German situation was different, the state was divided, there were many other elements and the context was different. The EU representatives are suggesting various forms of cooperation, but in very general terms. Nobody is going to offer detailed solutions, but rather just point to already existing models. The Serbian leaders should have the wisdom to, from different suggestions from abroad, formulate an enforceable solution with the main goal of Serbia efficiently continuing its road towards the EU.

Furthermore, it should be clearly stated that in this moment nobody is neither formally asking Serbia to recognize Kosovo independence, nor requiring for Serbia to choose between the EU and Kosovo. What is being expected is the beginning of communication among politicians, and the normalization and fostering of relations. However, it is very possible that in one moment, some of those 22 countries will address the Kosovo question as well. Whether it will come to that, depends on the political momentum of Serbia. This means that more attention should be paid to political rhetoric that Belgrade uses on the international scene. Messages such as ones that Serbia will, once the International Court of Justice issues its opinion, convene a meeting at the UN General Assembly over a new Kosovo resolution where it will advocate in gaining a majority votes against European states. These kind of messages directly irritate our European partners who should be deciding about numerous phases that are facing Serbia's EU integration processes. Serbia could continue its politics of non acceptance of Kosovo's independence, but it is very important to choose an appropriate public tone when announcing these kind of political messages. Not all messages sent from Belgrade should be perceived as a threat, and the political behavior should be in accordance with Serbian (not personal) realistic long-term interests. Otherwise, the result could be counter productive, and as a consequence the influential European countries that recognized Kosovo would condition Serbia to recognize the Kosovo status.

If we remain an active, but also become a wise partner for the Kosovo issue, the upcoming decisions on EU integrations, such as SAA ratification and membership candidacy, will follow accordingly. The French minister of foreign affairs Bernard Kouchner, in his recent visit to Belgrade, openly sent the message to Serbia to focus on the EU, and not on the UN, in terms of its immediate future. Serbia must not get carried away with the idea that it will “win over” the EU states that recognized Kosovo, because those states are our most important long-term partners, and also those who decide about all stages of our European integration.