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International Diplomacy and the Crisis in Kosovo

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Abstract

This article examines key elements of international diplomacy and the Kosovo crisis. From very early on, it is shown, the Kosovar Albanians were

accorded differential treatment by the international community in relation to the other national minorities of the former Yugoslavia. Whether warranted or not, this approach helped ensure that Kosovo would fail to become a major international concern, thus allowing the conflict to smoulder for years. The explosion of pent-up frustration we are witnessing today in Kosovo is only one consequence of these actions. Another is that the scope for moderate solutions has narrowed. Genuine democratization of Serbia may enlarge the political space required to restore credibility to compromise solutions but the prospects for such a development in the short term are weak. The international community favours a solution to the conflict which would preserve Serbia's territorial integrity, just as it did earlier with respect to Yugoslavia. But if the Albanians' desire for independence cannot be sublimated or if the granting of autonomy to Kosovo is used as a cover for the Serbian leadership to pursue its campaign of violence, then persistent opposition to any adjustments to Yugoslavia's boundaries may be a prescription for further tragedy in the region.

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