



KOSOVO

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Why India must oppose Kosovo's independence?

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I am not sowing a new idea. I am just sharing the concerns and apprehensions expressed in several world capitals over the unilateral declaration of independence by Kosovo, a breakaway Albanian Muslim majority province of Serbia.

Normally a distant Muslim province of two million people of which 10 percent are Orthodox Christian Serbs should not bother us. So far, it has certainly not bothered the government of India and our Great Political Parties.

However, history has put the Balkan people, especially the Serbs, at the cruces of civilisations. The Turks finally defeated the patriotic Serbs at the battle of Kosovo in 1389 and began its advance into European heartland. The Serbs have never got over it, as most patriotic Indians cannot forget the dubious defeat of Prithwiraj Chauhan at the Second Battle of Tarain.

Serbia was the most advanced segment of Eastern Europe. The Turks patronised the pliable Bosnians and converted them to Islam and persecuted the Orthodox Christians in Serbia. The last gasps of the Cold War initiated the disintegration of Yugoslavia: Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia-1991; Bosnia-Herzegovina-1992; Montenegro-2006 and now the unilateral declaration of independence by Kosovo on February 18, 2008, when the territory is still under UN administration.

The proud Serbs are yet to forget the bloody bites of history. European historiographers agree: the Serbs do not forget their history.

The US has probably seeded another poison-tree that might lead to the Third World War. Sarajevo in Bosnia had sparked off the First World War. Sarajevo was the scene of several important battles between Allied resistance fighters and the Germans in World War II

These new ethno-religious states are somewhat like the creation of Israel after unplanned withdrawal of British mandate in 1948, and the creation of Pakistan after their planned escape from India in 1747. Creation of new nations based on religion and redrawing national boundaries of several states had started after the First World War. After the Second World Order, the Big Powers assumed this task as a matter of international policing privilege.

Kosovo had been on the boil since 1989. The turmoil during the last decade in which the NATO assumed the role of Big Protector of Islamic minority in the Balkans



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paving the way for creation of Bosnia had encouraged the Kosovar Albanians to wage a jihad-type struggle with Turkish, Iranian, Pakistani and Al Qaeda backing. These very pro-jihad forces had also interfered in Bosnia.

Kosovo has not only committed a crime against Serbia by unilaterally breaking away; it has also committed a crime against the UN by flouting its mandate under transparent encouragement of the US and its major allies, France, Britain and Germany. These countries have already recognised the illegitimate country and its illegal government.

Serbia has lodged a complaint with the Security Council, where China and Russia are likely oppose the US and EU action. Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic has said Kosovo's declaration of independence was illegal and illegitimate. Speaking at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, he said those who had recognised Kosovo had set a dangerous precedent.

Condemning the positioning of a EU Mission in Kosovo as an act of flagrant violation international law, he said: "By the actions of some European member-states, every would-be ethnic or religious separatist across Europe and around the world has been provided with a tool kit on how to achieve recognition."

It is clear that Pristina's declaration of independence has divided the world capitals. The UN has again been proved to be an ineffective international mechanism for conflict resolution.

Russia has reacted with reasonable alarm. It described Kosovo's proclamation of independence as a "gross violation" of international law and criticised the European Union's sending of a "Rule of Law Mission" intended to help stabilise Kosovo. The mission comprises some 2,000 people who would train and mentor police, judges and customs officials.

Kosovo's move appeared as a litmus test of attitudes in Asia and elsewhere toward secession from mother countries.

Russian concerns have been echoed by China, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. China criticised Kosovo's declaration of independence from Serbia while Taiwan welcomed it. China is worried about similar action by Taiwan, which has recognised Kosovo. China is also concerned about its western Xinziang area, where Uyghur Muslim rebels are fighting a 'liberation war' for over three decades. The Tibet issue too has the potential of troubling Beijing again.

Sri Lanka has voiced concern out of fear that the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) might follow the Kosovo example and might even be recognised by some world capitals.



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Indonesia has already lost East Timor and is worried about the Aceh province, where rebels want to secede from the mainland regime.

Thailand is involved in fighting the Muslim minorities in the three southern provinces. International Islamic Jihad is patronising the Thai Muslim rebels.

These are not the only areas where the seemingly affected ethno-religious groups can take Kosovo style action. Similar situations exist in Darfur region of Sudan and the Shan, Kachin and Rakhine (Arakan) provinces of Myanmar. What would the US and UN reaction be if these ethno-religious groups break away and declare independence? Would they come to their help, send an EU Mission, establish embassies and open up UN aid missions? This may sound filmy, but after Kosovo everything appears to be possible.

If this policy of the US and its allies is accepted as part of the new global political order, the Chechens, Dagestanis and Ingusetians should also have solid international support to breakaway from Russia. Russia has already indicated that the Kosovo principle can be applied to Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh of Georgia and Armenia. These regions are already trying to merge with Russia. They might as well declare unilateral independence.

Would the US and its allies now go for three separate nations in Iraq - Sunni, Shia and Kurdish? Would the UK agree to create a separate Northern Ireland and give full political rights to the Catholic Irish community?

Can the US and the EU recognise the unilateral declaration of sovereignty by Balochistan and Balawaristan (the Northern Areas of Pakistan-part of greater Kashmir)? If they do, what would remain of Pakistan? Washington should not aid Islamabad to suppress the Balochis and Balawaris while it abets secession by Kosovo. India exists as a nation as all ethno-religious and linguistic subnationalities have mutually agreed to make it a nation-state, rising above narrow considerations. However, Pakistan continues to incite and abate sections of misdirected Kashmiri and mainland Muslims for seceding from India.

The Kashmir Media Service (February 20, 2008), a pro-separatist website, quoted the pro-liberation leaders like Syed Ali Gilani and Shabbir Ahmad Shah of the All Party Hurriyat Conference and chairman of Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front Muhammad Yasin Malik as saying that the sacrifices of the Kashmiris would not be allowed to go waste. They cited Kosovo as a ray of hope and urged the international community to resolve the Kashmir dispute.

Would the US and EU now accept a unilateral declaration of independence by the pro-Pakistani Kashmir leaders? Can New Delhi prevent them?



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Western media like the *International Herald Tribune*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Moscow Times*, and *The Jerusalem Times* etc have highlighted that besides Kashmir, disaffected Sikh groups, ethnic and tribal groups in the northeast are also keen to secede from India.

Can India afford to cope with these insurgencies, separatist movements in addition to fighting the 'proxy war' launched by Pakistan and the marauding guerrilla actions by the Maoist groups? Would the US and EU come forward to support the NSCN, ULFA and PREPAK etc in the northeast?

Why not? Kosovo has written new international laws for all the simmering separatist movements.

The government of India has so far remained silent about the Kosovo developments basically out of fear that any opposing statement would erode its 'secular' image, annoy its targeted vote banks and displease its supposed friends in the comity of Muslim nations.

It is time for India to stridently oppose unilateral declaration of independence by Kosovo, while under UN administration. India should openly support Russia and China in the UN and ask Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to explain to the world body as to how the US and allies could bury the UN mandate and agree to the creation of another nation on ethno-religious considerations.

Kosovo would not be the last, in case the Big Brothers are allowed to use the NATO as a mandated force of the neo-imperialists. Who could prevent the NATO to frog-leap to Kashmir from Afghanistan?

This new world order is likely to lead to greater world-disorder.