

News Release

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STUDY RECOMMENDS SOLUTION FOR NORTHERN KOSOVO

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“Mostar Plus” most viable model for Mitrovica

The National Defense University’s Center for Technology and National Security Policy today released a study that examines potential solutions for Northern Kosovo (including Mitrovica). The core of the project consisted of case studies of three earlier attempts at conflict resolution in volatile Balkan areas – Mostar and Brčko in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Eastern Slavonia in Croatia. The extensive research effort included a workshop of Balkan experts and staff visits to Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The study assesses several issues currently being negotiated in the Final Status Talks in Vienna, Austria.

The NDU study suggests that the most viable model for Mitrovica might be a “Mostar Plus” model, one in which Mostar’s experience of very slow ethnic and structural reintegration is accelerated and intensified. The Serb minority will need substantial autonomy in its own area, while ties with Belgrade are gradually reoriented to Pristina in phases. International pressure would be needed on Pristina to protect its Serb minority against Albanian extremists. NATO troops would need to play a more active role in Northern Kosovo.

The Kosovo Final Status Talks proceeding since February have made limited progress in reaching an agreement between Pristina and Belgrade, with the most contentious issues still ahead. UN Special Envoy, former Finnish President Marti Ahtissari and the six nation Contact Group will convene the next session between Serbia and Kosovo to address local governance and minority rights. These two issues are the most critical to resolution of the situation in Northern Kosovo where the largest concentration of the minority Serb population resides, in Mitrovica and the surrounding areas.

If the Contact Group continues to exclude formal partition of Kosovo, these case studies represent the three basic options for Mitrovica: de facto partition with slow reintegration (Mostar case), rapid reintegration (Eastern Slavonia case) and ethnic integration within an international zone (Brčko case).

Mostar's de facto partition is an option that some Kosovo Serbs might eventually support, with many ethnically separate institutions providing governance and services on opposite sides of the Ibar River. Pristina would govern both municipalities with substantial local autonomy and with no formal legal ties to Belgrade, but informal ties would continue.

The Brčko model would require a special administrative zone in which a strong international Supervisor would be key to success. International support for such an arrangement appears lacking and acceptance by the local population is doubtful, in part because too much time has passed and parallel structures have taken root.

Applying the Eastern Slavonia model by rapidly dismantling parallel structures and ties to Belgrade would almost certainly trigger violence and considerable Serb flight to which the US should not be party.

The overwhelming US interest lies in sustained regional stability, including a stable Kosovo. Kosovo will be the big winner should independence without partition and without violence be the outcome of the Final Status Talks. Under those circumstances, Pristina authorities must accept a solution for Mitrovica that is less than their current negotiating position. Long term international political, economic, and military commitment will be needed to nurture stability, including continuation of American troops in KFOR to guarantee the success of a Mostar Plus solution.

The study can be found on the Center for Technology and National Security Policy website (select Defense Technology Paper 34) at:

http://www.ndu.edu/ctnsp/Defense_Tech_Papers.htm

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The National Defense University educates military and civilian leader through teaching, research and outreach in national security strategy, military strategy, and national resource strategy.

The Center for Technology and National Security Policy (CTNSP) examines the implications of technological innovation for U.S. national security policy and military planning. CTNSP combines scientific and technical assessments with analyses of current strategic and defense policy issues, taking on topics to bridge the gap. The Center has produced studies on proliferation and homeland security, military transformation, international science and technology, information technology, life sciences, and social science modeling.