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Belgrade and Banjaluka: Together for Partition of Bosnia

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Regardless of the party in power, Serbia's strategy for Bosnia-Herzegovina is a constant. Belgrade has not given up its strategic goals in Bosnia-Herzegovina: the safeguard of Republika Srpska as laid down in the Dayton Peace Agreement. Serbia therefore seizes every opportunity to insist on the status quo and invoke the Dayton Agreement as "the only legal and legitimate international act" defining relations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. A recent Banjaluka gathering in fall 2009 under the auspices of the Center for National Strategy and under the baton of ex-praxis philosopher Svetozar Stojanović (close to Dobrica Ćosić and the SANU circle behind the infamous Memorandum) shows that Serbia's strategy remains the same—even at the ultimate cost of the Bosnian Serbs' defeat. Republika Srpska can only survive with support from Belgrade and Moscow. The past fifteen years Belgrade's strategy has been aimed at incorporating Republika Srpska into Serbia's economic and cultural space, and in this Belgrade has been successful. A climate in which the younger generation looks to Belgrade rather than Sarajevo has been created. The international community is also responsible because of its inconsequential implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. While the international community could have prevented the permanent establishment of ethnically pure entities, its policy for the return of refugees as well as its insistence on due cooperation with the tribunal in The Hague have been ineffective. The potential of the Dayton Agreement for creating a functional state of Bosnia-Herzegovina has thus been lost. Republika Srpska can only survive as an entity according to its current configuration in places where Serbs had been in the majority before the outbreak of the 1992 war. Belgrade has not demonstrated adequate readiness to influence Republika Srpska for a more active engagement in constitutional revision leading to a functional state. On the contrary, Belgrade parrots the mantra that it will "support everything the three peoples agree on." Russia takes the same tack and, of course, so does Republika Srpska. Milorad Dodik is trying to win over the Bosnian Croats to support his plan for a third entity; the support of the Bosnian Croats would strengthen his position for a federalization of Bosnia-Herzegovina. A proportion of the Bosnian Croat population agrees with him given that their position in Bosnia- Herzegovina has not been optimally settled. However, Croatia's position is different from Serbia's. Among other things, Croatia is aware that "the Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina are gradually departing" and that only a constitutional rearrangement can put an end to this process. For the time being, the idea about three entities, including two with mixed populations, is in play. Milorad Dodik insists on a referendum in Republika Srpska and its right to self-

determination—and this corresponds fully with Belgrade's strategy. This could be a dangerous scenario leading to a conflict in which the Serbs in Bosnia could lose everything, much as Serbs in Croatia did. A lobby group for the safeguarding of Bosnia-Herzegovina needs to be re-constituted: a group that would actively search for the solutions that contribute to the establishment of a functional state for Bosnia-Herzegovina. Some international actors are now so disinterested in the matter that they cynically suggest endorsing the reality in the field. The EU's decision to leave Bosnia- Herzegovina out of the Shengen visa regime stigmatizes Bosnian Muslims further. Postponement of the plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina to enter the EU provides Belgrade with another pawn to play in that it makes possible to question constantly membership in NATO—of Serbia and Republika Srpska, i.e. Bosnia. The fact that NATO was the main instrument of reconciliation in post-WWII Europe should not be forgotten. This policy of accommodation has been exhausted in Bosnia; it has become utterly counterproductive in that it only fuels the ability of Republika Srpska to engage in constant blackmail.

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