

MILOSEVIC: DÉJÀ VU ALL OVER AGAIN?

**Briefing on the Yugoslav leader's
latest manoeuvres**



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Executive summary

In the past few weeks the Belgrade authorities have sacked a number of key public officials. The two most prominent were security chief Stanistic and head of the army general staff Perisic. The firings triggered much speculation in the international media about the stability of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's regime. According to one interpretation, the sackings signal a fundamental weakness in government ranks, with Milosevic moving pre-emptively to oust potential rivals to his authority. Alternatively, the sackings may represent an attempt by the Yugoslav President to further consolidate his power base and to effectively rule with the backing of Yugoslavia's military and security establishments. Both Stanistic and Perisic were seen as Milosevic's opponents on several key policies, notably Belgrade's handling of relations with the Kosovo Albanians. Both Perisic and Stanistic, reportedly moderates not favouring the use of severe force against the Kosovars, have been replaced by Milosevic "yes-men" regarded as proponents of a violent resolution of the Kosovo question. If this is even in part the case, Stanistic's and Perisic's sackings do not necessarily reflect a weakness in Milosevic's rule. Instead, the sackings may only signal Milosevic's resolve to return to force as a means of regional problem solving.

At the same time, relations between Milosevic and Montenegrin President Milo Djukanovic have been deteriorating rapidly. For his part, Djukanovic has emerged as one of the most articulate critics of Milosevic's iron-fisted rule, coming to advocate autonomy and some Western-style economic reforms for his republic. For this, he has received Milosevic's condemnation, and in recent months Djukanovic and his supporters have publicly raised the spectre of a violent crackdown against their government. Prompting such open discussion has been the wave of recent sackings, and the replacement of officials not unsympathetic with Montenegrin aims with blind Milosevic loyalists. For his part, Perisic has had close personal relations with Djukanovic while the new military command reportedly shares no sympathy for Djukanovic's reforms.

Whether or not the sackings signal a weakness in the regime, an imminent violent showdown with separatist Kosovars, an attempt to bring down Djukanovic's government, or some combination of all these, what appears clear is that Milosevic has attempted to prop up his regime with the support of the military and security establishments. In time, he may no longer even need to rely on the backing of his party loyalists in the federal and republican legislatures. For now, in the Serbian legislature, he appears to thrive on the support of the ultranationalist Serbian Radical Party (SRS), headed by accused war criminal Vojislav Seselj. It is Seselj who is psychologically preparing the Serbian public for violence and confrontation, and when Milosevic is ready to refashion himself an advocate of regional peace, it is likely Seselj and his party which fall out of favour and out of government. Seselj's ouster will probably be Milosevic's "signal" to the West that he, as was the case with the Bosnian peace process, is prepared to play a key role in a regional peace process to end a conflict he himself crafted.

If it is Milosevic's aim to govern with the backing of the military and security forces, then eventually any real or potential opposition political victories may be nullified upon Milosevic's orders. The real question that emerges is just how stable or long-lived can any future opposition government be if, at any moment, it can be harassed out of existence or overthrown by Yugoslav troops?

Introduction

In recent weeks, President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) Slobodan Milosevic has sacked a number of senior officials. The two most well-known and prominent were secret service head, Jovica Stanisic, and chief of the general staff, Momcilo Perisic. What they had in common was purported opposition to Milosevic's regime.

Some observers have speculated that both Stanisic and Perisic were ousted because they posed a real threat to Milosevic's hold on power. According to this interpretation, the sackings demonstrate the existence of fundamental opposition to Milosevic and lay bare the weaknesses in his administration. Alternatively, Milosevic may be in the process of consolidating his power while preparing for violent conflict in Kosovo or Montenegro. Perisic and Stanisic would likely have attempted to moderate the use of force. Meanwhile, Milosevic is also likely hoping to determine the course of any future regional conflict, and in doing so set himself up as an indispensable partner in subsequent peace talks.

The security chief

Stanisic was fired from his post on 27 October 1998. While the reasons for his ouster remain unclear, it has been widely reported that he has a lengthy record of opposition to Milosevic's policies. It was Stanisic, a purported moderate, who used his influence to avert a bloody crack-down against mass demonstrators who filled streets across Serbia's major cities in the winter of 1996-1997, demanding Belgrade's recognition of opposition coalition *Zajedno* victories in November 1996 municipal elections. *Zajedno* protests grew, involving on some days a million supporters on Belgrade streets, and culminating in calls for Milosevic's resignation from Serbia's presidency¹. Moreover, it is believed that Stanisic had a generally calming effect on Bosnian Serb politics, ostensibly urging former Bosnian Serb president and indicted war criminal Radovan Karadzic to accept the conditions of the Dayton Peace Accord².

Most recently, reports surfaced that a rift between Stanisic and Milosevic widened over the former's refusal to endorse Belgrade's handling of the Kosovo question, which erupted in violence in February 1998 as Belgrade opted to use force against the separatist ethnic Albanian Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK)³. Stanisic's replacement, Radomir Markovic, holds no pedigree in offering resistance to demands placed on him by the ruling Milosevic family. Markovic, himself a general in

¹ Vuk Draskovic of the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO), Zoran Djindjic of the Democratic Party (DS), and Vesna Pestic of the Serbian Civic League (GSS) provided the main leadership for the *Zajedno* coalition. For an account of the protests and their impact on Serbian politics see, for example, Open Media Research Institute (OMRI) Analytical Brief #AB 528, "Serbian President Confronts Protests," 21 January 1997.

² *Die Welt*, 25 November 1998.

³ An estimated 300,000 people were turned into refugees as a result of the Belgrade crackdown in the predominantly ethnic-Albanian province while hundreds lost their lives. See, for example, AP, 26 November 1998.

the police force, remains a confidante and close personal friend of Mira Markovic, wife of the Yugoslav president and head of her own influential political organisation, the Yugoslav United Left (JUL).

Head of the army

The case of Momcilo Perisic provides an even starker example of an authority figure thought to be in conflict with the government. As head of the army since 1993, Perisic was leader of the only state institution to have escaped the direct control of the Milosevic family. According to some reports, not only did Perisic harbor no sympathy for Milosevic and Mira Markovic, but cultivated contacts in the west and may have even discussed openly the prospects of forming a government in a "'post-Milosevic' era."⁴ At its most extreme, speculation about Perisic's ambitions may be heard on Belgrade streets and places him reporting to NATO officials while being paid for such services by western governments.

The news of Perisic's dismissal surfaced on 24 November, and received scant attention in Yugoslavia's state-run media. A Tanjug report of that day hinted that the sacking was in reality a simple rotation, and noted only that Perisic would be replaced by Gen. Lt. Dragoljub Ojdanic. The account added only that the former chief of staff would be eased into a new post as "military adviser" to the federal government. International media, however, explained that relations between Milosevic and Perisic, always on shaky ground, had deteriorated in the past several months to the point where any reconciliation was no longer possible. As with Stanistic, the case, at least in part, revolved around Perisic's opposition to Belgrade's handling of relations with the Kosovo Albanians.

Roughly a month prior to his firing, Perisic went public with direct criticism of Milosevic, blasting the Yugoslav president for clinging to outmoded policies that ensured the country's isolation in the international community. According to Perisic, a lasting solution to the Kosovo question was not to be found in engaging the military. He added that the purpose of the armed forces was to provide national defence and not to be used as an instrument for terrorising civilians. He also issued a stinging blast against the Milosevic's political legacy, stating it amounted to nothing but "Serbs having fought a war since 1991 while still not having a single ally anywhere [in the international community]. Not even the Russian Federation has declared itself our ally... You just don't fight a war against the whole world."⁵

What it means

The recent sackings prompted the international media to speculate about the stability of Milosevic's grip on power. According to one sound interpretation of events, their significance lies in their demonstration of how feeble the Yugoslav dictator's authority has grown. A piece appearing in the 1 December 1998 issue of *The Daily Telegraph* noted the dismissals might constitute the best evidence yet that the "regime is

⁴ *Die Welt*, 25 November 1998.

⁵ *Blic*, 20 October 1998.

shakier than at any time since the former Yugoslavia descended into chaos eight years ago." The report went further, stressing the regime's "ebbing competence is further damaged by the dismissals...Analysts say that Mr. Milosevic is increasingly isolated and paranoid, and is handing ever more positions to his wife and her supporters, who share his penchant for power but lack his political acumen."

Local independent Belgrade media also concluded that the sackings indicated the regime might be unravelling. According to Radio B 92 accounts, it was the Perisic firing which showed how deeply "the ruling couple" feared a military "coup" by elements within the officers' corps dissatisfied with Belgrade's mishandling of "political and economic woes."⁶

Leaders in the West have also emerged who have gone on record saying that the latest are signs of Milosevic's weakness and perhaps offer some hope that the Yugoslav dictator may be on the verge of quitting the political scene. Speaking on 30 November 1998, State Department representative James Rubin said that Milosevic was "the problem" in the former Yugoslavia and that Washington would not "lose any sleep if [Milosevic] were to pass from the scene."⁷ On 2 December Rubin added squarely his voice to those suggesting the recent sackings represented a disintegration of the dictatorship, saying that "Milosevic's grip on power is weakening" and cited the sackings in the intelligence and military establishments as evidence of the Yugoslav president's "desperation and distrust."⁸

Milosevic's thinking

No doubt Milosevic regards the latest dismissals in quite a different light. Rather than as a reaction to any problems with his regime, Milosevic likely sees the firings as the vehicle through which to renew his authority within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The dismissals are perhaps also the first in a series of steps which Milosevic may undertake to reinvent himself as the principal figure who can provide the international community with a guarantee of regional peace.

The domestic political scene was arguably conducive for the firings and for Milosevic they may have been a necessary precondition for further repression. Insofar as the current Yugoslav political landscape is concerned, there exist striking parallels with the situation in Serbia back in 1992-1993. It was after the Serbian parliamentary elections of December 1992 that an ultranationalist regime came to power. Milosevic's own Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) deputies controlled only 101 of the Republic of Serbia's 250 legislative seats but were supported by 71 deputies belonging to the Serbian Radical Party (SRS), headed by the ultranationalist paramilitary leader and accused war criminal Vojislav Seselj. In Bosnia, accused war criminal Radovan Karadzic was Bosnian Serb president and presided over aggression there.

⁶ Radio B 92, 25 November 1998.

⁷ RFE/RL South Slavic Service, 30 November 1998.

⁸ Cited in Frank T. Csongos, RFE/RL Report: Yugoslavia: US. Says Milosevic's Grip On Power Is Weakening, 2 December 1998.

Fast forwarding to today, the Serbian parliament is again in the hands of the SPS, SRS and Milosevic's wife's JUL. Following Serbian parliamentary elections held on 21 September 1997, the SPS-JUL controlled leftist coalition took 110 seats with the SRS claiming 81.⁹ After much wrangling, Seselj not only agreed to back Milosevic, but on 24 March 1998 became deputy premier in a new 35 member government approved by the legislature.¹⁰ The presence of the SRS in coalition portends conflict to be sure, but today the sensitive areas appear to be Kosovo and Serbia's sister republic in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), Montenegro.

The Kosovo case¹¹

During his rise to power as Serbian President, Slobodan Milosevic appealed to Serbian ultranationalists by invoking the image of Kosovo as sacred Serbian territory, an area which would remain for time eternal an integral part of Serbia. 28 June 1989 was the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, in which defending Serb forces were defeated by the advancing Ottoman armies, and Milosevic then used the opportunity to fashion himself into the main defender of the Serbian nationalist hysteria he himself had awakened.

While Milosevic himself has made public statements that harked back to his role of defender of the Serbian nation, reminiscent of his rhetoric at the anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, very often it has been Seselj who has assumed the role of most prominent and aggressive defender of the Serbian hegemony over Kosovo. In a 7 April 1998 statement, delivered during the course of the parliamentary debate dealing with the approval of a Milosevic plan¹² to reject international mediation of the Kosovo crisis, Seselj observed that rejection of such mediation would amount to a veto of a "[foreign] plan from hell for the breakup and destruction of Serbia and the Serbian people." One of Seselj's SRS deputies made comments even more cutting, observing "[Washington] supported our enemies, and now it wants to destroy the Serbs. If we accept mediation, we will be signing [our own] surrender."¹³

In October 1998, Milosevic, under threat of NATO bombing, reached an agreement with US special envoy Richard Holbrooke and NATO representatives on the withdrawal of police forces in Kosovo. In response, however, it was Seselj who articulated what Milosevic had in mind; namely, that the agreement was likely little more than a tactical retreat, and not to be construed as Belgrade's renunciation of ethnic cleansing. "All armed terrorists [UCK] will be disarmed and brought to justice. The withdrawal of police [from Kosovo] does not mean the end of the fight against terrorism," Seselj said at a 29 October 1998 press conference.¹⁴

⁹ Tanjug, 25 September 1997.

¹⁰ BETA, 24 March 1998.

¹¹ For a full examination of the Kosovo crisis, please refer to earlier ICG reports, in particular *Kosovo Spring*, *Kosovo's Long Hot Summer* and *State of the Balkans*. (Available by mail from ICG or via the ICG Website at www.crisisweb.org)

¹² The Serbian Parliament voted to approve the plan on 7 April 1998 by a margin of 193-4.

¹³ Quoted in RFE/RL Newswire, 8 April 1998.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 30 October 1998

For the moment, Milosevic appears to be pursuing a two-track policy on Kosovo. According to Western reports "behind the scenes... Belgrade seems to be going along with the US. mediation." What remains an open question, however, is whether or not Belgrade "is taking [talks] seriously or playing for time."¹⁵ Emphasising Belgrade's reluctance to step away from the ethnic cleansing option is Seselj, who has said of US negotiators that "in a most flagrant way they are interfering in the internal affairs of others."¹⁶

Montenegrin concerns

Meanwhile, relations between Serbia and the FRY on the one hand, and Montenegro on the other, have been strained and growing worse since Milo Djukanovic broke with former Montenegrin President and current FRY federal Prime Minister Momir Bulatovic. In December 1997 Montenegrin elections, Djukanovic defeated Bulatovic for the republic's Presidency. Bulatovic's supporters alleged electoral fraud, and a judicial ruling, based on a case brought by Djukanovic, is still pending.

For his part, Bulatovic has cast his political lot with Milosevic. Djukanovic, on the other hand, has emerged as one of Milosevic's most articulate critics within the FRY and continues to press for greater autonomy for his republic. His platform consists of economic and political reform that would ideally result in a lifting of the outer wall of sanctions against the FRY.

In December 1998 tensions between Djukanovic and Milosevic appear to have reached a new high. The federal government's efforts at blocking Montenegro's plans of market reform have prompted officials in the republic to lash out. Radomir Sekulov, a consultant for the information ministry has observed that "the Montenegrin government will not give up its intention of creating its own economic policy and taking measures to counteract any moves by the illegal federal government that could damage its economy." Meanwhile, Djukanovic has himself backed such stances, reportedly going on record saying Montenegro may seek to leave the federation if Milosevic continues to block reforms and endorse policies that continue to put the FRY at odds with the West.¹⁷

Predictably, Milosevic appears to be signalling an intent to crack down should Montenegro pursue reforms, and his staunchest ally in this game is Seselj, who summed up the federal position noting "Montenegro is trying to aggravate relations at the federal level, trying to block the activity of the federal state, and this already largely smacks of separatist intentions."¹⁸ 13 January 1999 will mark the first anniversary of Bulatovic's street protest against the Djukanovic victory, and speculation and concern is rife in Belgrade and Podgorica that Bulatovic's backers may return. This time, however, they may attempt to provoke conflict, providing

¹⁵ Reuters, 3 December 1998.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Milosevic with the pretext for toppling Djukanovic by declaring a state of emergency in the republic.

A marked man?

Milosevic has made clear that his quarrel is largely with Djukanovic, suggesting that the Montenegrin president's removal from the political scene would be the precondition, insofar as Belgrade is concerned, for improved relations with the republic. Belgrade's genuine displeasure with Djukanovic is generally made public indirectly and through a critique of his economic policies. On 28 November federal finance minister Dragisa Pesic said Montenegro ought to forgo its independent economic policies, declaring "[they] bring nothing good to citizens, or to the economy of Montenegro."¹⁹ Pesic added that the federal authorities' dispute with Montenegro was not really of an economic but "primarily of a political nature,"²⁰ hinting that Djukanovic's presidency was the irritant for Belgrade.

Meanwhile, Djukanovic continues to ally himself with Milosevic's critics and opponents. In the wake of Perisic's ouster, Djukanovic met with opposition Democratic Party (DS) leader Zoran Djindjic and both condemned the firing. Djukanovic, who has a history of close personal relations with Perisic, observed that the general's sacking amounted to little but an attempt by Belgrade to exert a not too subtle pressure on Montenegrin politics and autonomy. Djindjic's observations were even more to the point, acknowledging "we jointly concluded that Perisic's replacement represents a destabilising factor for Yugoslavia."²¹

Until very recently, Djukanovic, while trying to push the envelope with Belgrade, has stopped short of advocating outright independence. No doubt clear in his mind has been the relative power relationship, and the awareness that Belgrade has not ruled out the possibility of violence against the republic. Hence he has been careful to put a distance between his harsh criticism of Milosevic and any support for Montenegrin statehood. Back on 22 October the Montenegrin President in fact stated that independence would hinder and not help Montenegro, exposing it to "a great many internal pressures."²²

And like Perisic, Djukanovic has been an outspoken critic of the use of military force in Kosovo, opting instead to advocate that the problems of Kosovo be resolved through "democratisation." While arguing for the territorial integrity of the FRY, he has observed that "the problem [of Kosovo] is a democratic problem which can only be resolved through the democratisation of Serbia and Yugoslavia."²³

What appears to have pushed Djukanovic into considering worst possible case scenarios has been Ojdanic's appointment. All military structures in Montenegro are under federal jurisdiction, and, according to reports in the Belgrade independent

¹⁹ Tanjug (citing Vijesti), 28 November 1998.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Glas, 28 November 1998.

²² RFE/RL South Slavic Service, 22 October 1998.

²³ BETA, 25 November 1998.

media, Ojdanic's blind loyalty to the Milosevic regime would enable him to carry out aggression against Montenegro if simply ordered to do so.²⁴ This has evidently caused concern and even prompted Djukanovic to come to the conclusion "that in case Belgrade decides to use force... he would not hesitate to seek help from the international community, including foreign military aid. In that case a complete rift would ensue between the two Yugoslav federal units, while armed strife could spread throughout Montenegro."²⁵

Milosevic taking control

What remains in no doubt is that following Perisic's firing, Milosevic moved with lightning speed to begin consolidating control over the military and state security structures. On the one hand, the Yugoslav President is daupling a carrot, garnering loyalties by dispensing favors. The federal parliament has voted to increase spending for the cash-hungry military, allotting some 70% of expenditures in 1999 for the army.²⁶ The nearly \$1.58 billion represents a 63.5% increase over spending in 1998.

On the other hand, Milosevic has apparently engaged the stick, no doubt using implicit extortion to extract loyalty and obedience from some quarters. In one move, reportedly not covered at all by the Yugoslav state media, Perisic's firing, along with the sackings of all loyal to his command, was accompanied not only by Ojdanic's promotion, but by that of Veselin Sljivancanin.²⁷ Sljivancanin, who has reportedly been named aide for security in the Yugoslav army, is wanted by The Hague's war crimes tribunal for his role in the atrocities committed in the Croatian city of Vukovar in 1991. While Yugoslav military sources have reportedly confirmed the news of Sljivancanin's appointment, Belgrade did not publicise the development lest doing so would "antagonise the west."²⁸ For Milosevic, being able to hold out the specter of The Hague undoubtedly ensures the control over Sljivancanin and those like him.

The Next Move

The real question that remains open is precisely why Milosevic chose this moment to act against the military and security establishments. As explained above, three possible reasons, or some combination thereof, may hold the key. Namely, Milosevic might have felt threatened by Stanistic and Perisic, moving now to sack them. On the other hand, Milosevic may be preparing for a showdown with Djukanovic, whose close ties with Perisic may have precluded Belgrade from being able to engage the services of the army in case of a violent confrontation. Finally, Milosevic may be readying for a new fight with the UCK, and Perisic's and Stanistic's cautioning against the use of force in Kosovo may have made them redundant.

²⁴ BETA, 26 November 1998.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Danas, 4 December 1998.

²⁷ Radio Mostar, 29 November 1998.

²⁸ Ibid.

Irrespective of precisely where Milosevic next attempts to foment a crisis or launch a wave of repression, what seems most likely is that he is following a tried and true pattern of behaviour: namely, he will destabilise regional politics, invariably by resorting to military adventures (involving ethnic cleansing), and then present himself to the international community as the mediator holding the key to regional peace.

Beginning back in 1993 this was precisely the tactic Milosevic, then Serbia's President, used to convince the international community to involve him in talks that ultimately produced the Dayton peace plan for Bosnia. One of Milosevic's first steps at that time was to break formally with the SRS, which, as explained above, supported the SPS in the Serbian legislature. Through a series of convoluted political manoeuvres, Milosevic forced early elections and eventually reformed a government of the SPS supported by a "moderate" splinter party, New Democracy, which *de facto* functioned as little more than a wing of the Socialist Party.²⁹ Within two years, Milosevic refashioned his image and portrayed himself as the cornerstone of regional peace.

Now Milosevic is once more thumping the ultranationalist drum. He again appears to be using the SRS as accomplices in his dirty work. If he should provoke hostilities in Kosovo or Montenegro, he will need not only the ultranationalists' political backing in eliminating opposition on the domestic political front; he will need paramilitary organisations headed by leaders such as Seselj the "Chetniks" or the notorious Zeljko Raznatovic, alias Arkan, who heads the "Tigers," to provide shock troops.

If Milosevic is intent on repeating the strategy he engaged beginning in 1993, he may be counting on the international community's failing to take appropriate action in time, allowing him to dictate circumstances long enough until the need arises to portray himself as regional peace maker. The signal of change Milosevic may send, should he be allowed to continue on his set course, is that of breaking relations with the SRS. As one member of the independent Belgrade media observed:

"The current ruling coalition, which includes the SPS, JUL and the Serbian Radical Party [SRS], was designed to strongly oppose the demand of the Kosovo Albanians and the international community to grant a status of high autonomy to the Serbian province of Kosovo. The political space for maintaining such opposition in the long run practically no longer exists, and the preservation of this coalition is gradually becoming counter-productive...It is expected that the first victim will be the SRS, which became the coalition's member because the ruling leftists wished so, though it is a kind of impostor in the government."³⁰

²⁹ See, for example, "Serbia's New Government," in RFE/RL Research Report, vol. 3 no. 17, 1994; *Borba*, 12 November 1993; *Politika*, 23 December 1993.

³⁰ BETA, 26 November 1998.

Conclusion

The recent sacking of officials in Belgrade's security and military establishments has prompted much speculation about the stability of the Milosevic regime. According to some observers, the firings signal a fundamental weakness in the government and indicate that the dictatorship has been challenged from within. Alternatively, the sackings may be an attempt by Milosevic to complete his iron grip on Yugoslav politics. Indeed, he may be in the process of shifting his power base from the legislature to the backing of a military and security establishment loyal only to his personal rule. If Milosevic succeeds in bringing the military and security forces under his control, opposition leaders and parties will have an even greater task in challenging his authority: any future opposition government (legislative majority), should it run afoul of Milosevic, would run the risk of being forced from office by a pro-Milosevic military and security establishment.

The sackings of Perisic and Stanisic may in fact signal that Milosevic believes he can expect the international community to muster no resistance against a possible plan to govern with the aid of loyal military and security forces. If Milosevic is allowed to consolidate his authority over these state organs, then it is likely he will move to a showdown with either the UCK or Djukanovic. In either case, it is not unlikely that he expects to use the crisis to involve himself in negotiations designed to reestablish regional peace. Should Milosevic intend this, he may opt for the dismissal of the SRS's backing of his government in the Serbian republic's parliament. The sacking of Seselj's SRS will be the signal that Milosevic is preparing to refashion himself, all over again, as the guarantor of regional peace.

Recommendations

- Milosevic has yet to consolidate his rule over the military and security establishments, permitting the international community a narrow window of opportunity to formulate policy *vis-a-vis* Yugoslavia. Whereas Milosevic has in the past been the architect of regional wars, he must not be permitted to once more seize the initiative, this time by exercising unchecked control over the security and military forces as the means for waging another campaign that may begin in either Kosovo or Montenegro.
- Should Milosevic continue signalling his intent to use violence in Kosovo and Montenegro, the international community must be prepared to go beyond using mere threats of retaliation.
- The international community should reinforce its commitment to political pluralism in the FRY. If Milosevic shifts his support base mostly or strictly to the army and security forces, he may strangle what little opposition remains in the country. Moreover, if Belgrade attempts to oust Djukanovic by force, the psychological impact on opposition parties throughout the rest of the country may prove devastating.

- While nearly all opposition party leaders in the FRY may be linked to an unsavoury or less than exemplary past, almost all, with the notable exception of Seselj and Arkan, represent a preferable alternative to Milosevic. While the prospects for opposition government and various leaders' and parties' chances of gaining influence will be the subject of an upcoming ICG analysis, it must be stressed now that the international community should support budding opposition where it has taken root. In Montenegro, Djukanovic has emerged a serious critic of Milosevic's ability to exert his unchecked dictatorship throughout the FRY. Moreover, in recent months Zoran Djindjic has emerged as a politician worth a proverbial sober second look. While he has in the past voiced support for Serbian war criminals, including Radovan Karadzic, he has in recent years evolved into an outspoken critic of the ruling couple.