

Independent State of Kosovo The Contribution for Stability in the Region

The great changes in Europe in the past decade, following the end of the cold war, the collapse of communism and the fall down of the Berlin wall, have opened the perspective of expanding democracy - the new world order - over the rest of Europe. Until then, Europe was living under a dual system of completely disparate values: Western Europe with liberal democratic values and Eastern Europe with totalitarian-communist values resting on the motives of territorial expansionism.

The defeat of communism was followed by disintegration and integration tendencies causing a change of the European political map in compliance with the will of the people. As a result, Germany was unified, many new states were born, others are on their way, whereas forceful state structures such as in the Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia collapsed.

This new era of the regeneration of the European family, which may be named also the era of the victory of the principle of self-determination, was not easily absorbed in the Balkans as its history had been built on the domination and supremacy of some nations over others.

In the process of the Balkan changes, the disintegration of former Yugoslavia appeared to be a most complex project. This is mainly because of the fact that former Yugoslavia was perceived by the international community as a rather strong multiethnic state but in reality, it was extremely fragile.

The initial refusal of the international community to acknowledge the legitimacy of the disintegration of former Yugoslavia and the hegemonic aspiration of Serbia, demonstrated in four aggression wars against other federation-forming nations, have placed the disintegration process in the track of wars and tragedy. Macedonia was born peacefully, but other states such as Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Kosova (although not yet formally recognised), were born through wars of self-determination.

In managing the former Yugoslavian crisis to this stage, the involvement of the international community was evolving progressively as the crisis was deepening, but it remained mainly reactive. Thus, while the Bosnian war ended after three years, the Kosova war was brought to an end after a year and a half. In this process, the USA and NATO became determinant factors, following the evident failure of all other international mechanisms in giving adequate answers to the problems.

Since the disintegration process has attracted most of the energy of international mechanisms, only a little energy was left for an appropriate monitoring of the development of the new states. As a consequence, we are today entering the new phase with both the remaining unresolved problems from the past as well as the newly emerging problems.

Having in mind the current situation and noticing that some of the major security issues have been put behind, it does not seem speculative to say that there are real achievements but that the political and security agenda of the Balkans still remains burdened.

Therefore, it is essential that there be forward looking and comprehensive action by the peoples of the Balkans and the international community to address the continuing sources of underlying tensions.

On the global level, the current problems may be seen as belonging to two major groups: The first group includes the unresolved final status issues for Kosova and Montenegro, and the second group includes the problems related to the fragility of democratic institutions throughout the region, unresolved constitutional issues, minority rights issues, unpunished war criminals, the issue of unreturned refugees, corruption and crime and the economic blockade.

The right answer to the first group of problems rests on the finalisation of the disintegration process of former Yugoslavia. This means to acknowledge the independent state of Kosova and to respect the will of the people of Montenegro.

The reality created after the falling apart of former Yugoslavia - the third failed experiment of this century - has not left any ground for the fourth one called FRY. All Slav nations have left Serbia despite of the same origin. Montenegro is on its path to independence, too. Therefore, it is nonsense for Kosova and Albanians as non-Slav nations to be asked to remain with Serbia, especially after experiencing the genocidal war. An independent state of Kosova is a normal and realistic outcome. As soon as this reality is understood by the international community, the Balkans will be moving more quickly towards sustainable peace and stability, which would be beneficial for both Serbs and Albanians.

The independent state of Kosova should act under a KFOR and UNMIK protectorate for some time. The final status of independence gives Kosova a clear agenda, which is a precondition for overcoming post war challenges and for being able to join the mainstream movement of integration and globalisation. The independence of Kosova shall create appropriate conditions for Kosova to develop the enhanced democracy to which its people are committed, as they have shown through the successful first free municipal elections last October.

The interim protectorate would also help Kosovars prove their commitment to the rule of law, the respect for human rights and the right of minorities. Good inter-ethnic relations are perceived as an element of democracy. Therefore, the efforts for its advancement are in the process, in this regard, Albanian-Serb relations in Kosova present the most sensitive issue, having in mind the Serb genocide against Albanians in the past decade of war and occupation. In spite of it, the policy lines of Albanian political factors are future-oriented. Delivering the right policy for minorities, including the Serb minority, is seen directly linked to a better future of Kosova. In terms of confidence building measures, there is already an established dialogue with Serbs within the framework of the Airlie Conference and US-support, which has given some results such as the integration of Serbs in some municipal structures throughout Kosova although they did not take part in the elections. Further integration efforts go in the direction of having Serbs and other minorities participate in the forthcoming national elections in Kosova, guaranteeing constitutionally and consistently their legal position according to international standards. The logic of enclavisation and divided life which is in its worse manner manifested in the town of Mitrovica, have no future.

The improvement of the relations with Serbs in Kosova depends also on some factors such as the release of Albanian prisoners and missing people in Serbia, the punishment of war criminals in the The Hague Tribunal, the acceptance of a new reality of Kosova by Serbs and the avoidance to live in ambiguity. On the other hand, the global improvement of interethnic relations is certainly interlinked to a strengthened international support for the economic revival of Kosova - the creation of job opportunities, as well as the improvement of mechanisms of better security for all citizens of Kosova.

Investing into the independent state of Kosova is of manifold benefits for Kosova itself as well as for the region. The independent state of Kosova is a factor of peace and stability in the region, because it is a guarantee for the respect of international charters and for the promotion of dialogue and cooperation, as it was proved through a decade-long non-violent movement of its people and an acceptance of war only when imposed. The independence of Kosova means a respect of the will of its people grounded on the legitimate right to self-determination. Under the conditions of the disintegration of former Yugoslavia. The legal status of Kosova in former Yugoslavia as one of eight federal units with a veto power on all decision making levels was an expression of the right to self-determination and succession. Due to this fact, the international recognition of Kosova borders is in compliance with international principles,

because the territorial integrity of Kosova and its borders were constitutionally defined and guaranteed, in the same manner as those of other federal units which got international recognition. The other important fact is the former Yugoslavia - the country which Kosova was a federal part of - has ceased to exist.

An independent state of Kosova would contribute constructively to the resolution of the crisis in Macedonia. This will create confidence among Albanians in Macedonia that their issue will be justly settled. It will also make the Macedonian government discontinue the prolongation logic and act more responsively in terms of accomplishing constitutional changes in favour of the state forming status of Albanians to which they are legitimately entitled. The Macedonian government needs to change its ethnic state reasoning and commit itself to building a multiethnic state. The changes should occur through a dialogue for which three elements are critical: That the dialogue be brokered and guaranteed by the international community; to be inclusive in terms of Albanian representation by both the political and military factor, and to start immediately. To find a just solution it is important to comprehend that the problem of the Albanians in Macedonia has originated ten years ago and beyond. To this problem the Macedonian leadership has failed to give an adequate answer so far.

An independent state of Kosova presents also a contribution to the peace process in the Presheva valley for a just solution of the rights of the Albanians there.

An independent Kosova will be a reliable partner in building peace and stability in Southeastern Europe as well as an active factor in synergetic efforts of advancing the political and security agenda of the region. In this context, it is important to outline that the Kosova vision on the settlement of the question of divided nations - among which is also the Albanian question - rests on the formula of the integration of Southeastern Europe into the European Union and Euro-Atlantic structures. By having Kosova, Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and other states in the European Union, the borders will loose their traditional sense, and perspectives for modern economic cooperation will be open.

The integration of the region of Southeastern Europe into the Euro-Atlantic community is a key project for sustainable peace and stability in the region. The essential element of this project is that the post-conflict countries should integrate as whole. Any attempts of applying the policy of selective integration of individual countries will be a source of tensions. To build stable states in Southeastern Europe, the key principle is a balanced support by the international community. These peoples have for a long time suffered from a policy of exclusion and domination. Therefore, they need equal consideration.

In this regard, the recent exclusion of Kosova from international regional activities including the Summit of Zagreb and the Summit of Skopje have been discouraging. While the exclusion of Kosova and Albanians from the signing of the Agreement between Skopje and Belgrade concerning the borders of Kosova were not only illegal, provided that Kosova is actually under UNMIK sovereignty, but also provocative to the Albanians in Macedonia and critical in triggering their armed reaction for the dissatisfaction accumulated in the last ten years.

In contrast to the past decade, there is a need for new ways of addressing the remaining political and security problems of the Balkans. This, first of all, means a proactive, quick and decisive approach. The resolution of existing problems cannot be prolonged for another decade. For it will be dangerous, having in mind the potential threats of new conflicts.

Peace building and prosperity in the region directly depend on the support of the international community. The role of the USA, the European Union and NATO is critical. The pact of stability, SECI and other initiatives present a concrete supporting programmes for the region, but so far they have not made the expected progress. Obviously, there is a need to

review the actual approach, particularly in the economic sense, thinking along the lines of " a new marshal plan ".

The nations of Southeastern Europe need accelerated economic advancement, in order to be able to enact self-management and compatible integration in the EU and the transatlantic community.

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