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Keynote speech:

# **Multiethnic State, Ethnically Homogeneous State and the Future of the Nation-State in the Balkans**

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## **I Introduction**

Approaching and testing the capacity and effectiveness of the nation-states in the Balkans is a long-term research necessity for many reasons:

First, despite the tendency of making the state boundaries less and less significant in the era of new information technology, global economy and new communications

capabilities the nation-state will remain the key organisational unit of the international system and the features of national sovereignty will continue to dominate and influence the management toolbox of international relations and domestic politics. Hence, any form and nuance of the nation-state in the Balkans will have a decisive meaning for dealing with the political and security agenda of the region.

Second, the wars on the territory of former Yugoslavia in the last decade had various reasons – confessional (between the Serbs and the Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina); ethno-religious (between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo), and ethnic (between Serbs and Croats and between Serbs and Slovenes). The influence of such factors of conflict as Islamic and Orthodox Christian extremisms, traditional animosities among Balkan people for historic reasons, separatism and exploiting the war situations for criminal purposes significantly added to the complexity of the causes for the wars in the western Balkans. The mixture of ethnic, cultural, confessional, historic and other causes for war in that region necessitate the answer of the question: Can the state structures of the countries of the Balkans withstand further pressures of the same kind?

Third, different great powers' geopolitical interests clash in the Balkans since the end of the Cold War – to the greatest displeasure of the Balkan people, sensing new efforts of fragmenting the Balkans from the outside. Generally the dividing line between the great powers is the West/Russia, though we witnessed disparities among the Western powers at the beginning of the 90s when the new sovereign post-Yugoslav republics were recognised internationally and on the eve of the failure of the diplomatic efforts in Rambouillet. Logically, the question is: Shall the Balkan states keep strong enough and

discard the efforts of nourishing polarisation on ethnic, religious and civilisation grounds among the Balkan people? Is the option of integrating the Balkan states in the EU, and those who wish – in NATO too, a powerful pole of gravity for the individual Balkan states?

Fourth, many countries in the region undergo a transition from authoritarian and totalitarian political as well as centrally-planned economic systems to democratic and market economic system. A unique historic situation appeared for the first time in the last fifty years: all Balkan states are homogeneous from the perspective of their political, constitutional and political programmes, striving for more mature democratic systems and economic organisations. Will the Balkan states be able to utilise this opportunity of coming to terms with their neighbours and concentrate on domestic economic and social issues?

Fifth, will the states of South-East Europe pass the test of qualifying for EU membership, joining an advanced socially, politically, technologically and economically family of European states? Will they have the needed state capacity to interact as equals within the Union?

Giving a clear and practical answer to the question what options the individual Balkan states will choose – a multiethnic or an ethnically homogeneous state, will help us in responding to these four issues of highest political interest.

## **II Multiethnic State or Ethnically Homogeneous State – a Wrong Dilemma for the Balkans**

The questions of multiethnic co-habitation and of ethnic homogeneity are important for the Balkans, Europe and the world due to their linkage with the regional stability and with the effectiveness of the respective states. They are relevant also for another reason too: the instinctive reactions to save the ethnos and the nation in the processes of integration and globalisation. Opportunistic policies of external powers for geo-political reasons may also contribute to the over-highlighting of the issue.

The history of the Balkans shows that focusing on ethnic homogeneity or purity has generally pushed the region and its peoples to suffering and disasters. There has been no difference if the events that were unfolding have been due to incapacity to fulfil the ambition, because of external powerful pressures that have nullified the local efforts or as a result of the combination of the first two factors.

The wrong start of the processes, linked with multiethnic existence and its antagonist – ethnically pure organisation of the state, has been given and further programmed by the Berlin Treaty of 1878. All hopes, dreams and purposes of that period for the Balkan countries have been contingent on the achievement of territorial expansion and re-union with ethnic brethren in neighbouring states in the context of the concept of national sovereignty. The failure was similar to the failures of other European countries, trying to improve their national fate through territorial re-definitions and expansions. Getting

richer and more powerful at that time has been connected with acquiring vaster territories.

In the post-Cold War period the countries and people of the Balkans share similar hard problems: how to deal away with the region's retarded modernisation – economic, infrastructure, social and political, and how to adapt successfully to globalisation. The most important instrument of treating and coping with these issues is the state machine of each of the individual countries. The transformation of a state into an ethnically homogeneous or pure one is totally irrelevant and counterproductive to becoming compatible in the European integration process to the more advanced states as well as to better adapting to the global economy and world in general. Insisting on ethnic homogenisation is providing no answer to the broader need of accelerating the national changes in order to adequately adapt to the faster evolving nations of the world in the process of globalisation, nor to the expectations of the people to catch up with the countries, that are moving already on a faster track of social, technological, economic and cultural progress.

The dilemma 'multiethnic state or an ethnically homogeneous state' leads to no efficient response to the historic deficiency of most of the Balkan states – progressing within a time-dimension that is already long in the past for the rest of the Western nations. It is hardly an answer to the wishes of the people to catch up as soon as possible with the neighbouring Balkan states that are already on the faster track of history. The tragedies brought by the wars Serbia waged throughout the last decade show that the 'Serbian'

national question will hardly find solution in the ethno-nationalistic conceptual dimension. We are close to beginning to believe that Serbia, after the smooth changes of October 2000, has discarded this option of catching up with the more developed economically and technologically nations of Europe and the world.

Does the solution of the 'Albanian' national question make a difference? No. The unattainable purpose of having one state for all Albanians from Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia and Greece definitely shows that the conflicts, in which Albanian people are involved, have roots far away from the creation of a single ethnically pure country. The same Albanian people, living in five different states have a similar agenda of political, social, technological and economic modernisation as the Serbs and the rest of the Balkan population. The progress of the individual countries, in which they live will guarantee them the upgrading to the level of civilisation achievements the most developed nations of the world share as well as qualitatively new conditions of keeping the community of Albanian people in a qualitatively new environment of integrated nations in Europe, yet with own and specific identity.

The ethnically homogeneous state does not and cannot provide the answers to the questions from the agenda, whose implementation will boost the people and the states from the Balkan region to the orbits of the rest of the EU nations. What can the nation-states in the same region do for attaining that goal without ethnically homogenising themselves, but providing the chances for progress to the multiethnic states they are individually in different proportions?

### **III The Nation-State in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Global World – the Balkan Aspects of the Issue**

Very often in the Balkans one can hear declarations how important it is to make our national societies more adaptable to the processes of globalisation, otherwise we shall miss our chances for progress. There does not exist, however, a broad, encompassing, forward-looking and working concept among the political and intellectual elites of the region of how to accommodate the national functioning and development to the powerful global tendencies of social evolution. This is, unfortunately, true for the security studies community in South-East Europe as a collective and interacting entity. Let me share my thinking on these issues.

Most generally ‘globalisation’ means the process of dissolving of information, humanitarian, economic and environmental issues into qualitatively new territorial and spatial frameworks – of the whole globe or planet. The world is becoming more and more compressed and due to the closer contacts and interactions of the individuals and of the social organisations has the tendency to behave and react as a single organism.

This process has certain side-effects that are not yet effectively and in a coordinated conscious way managed by the people and the states: wealth and opportunities are not distributed equally; the balance of power is unequal and is another source of division; the cultural, religious and ideological differences have the potential to escalate into harsher antagonistic confrontations. Thus globalisation leads, from a security study’s perspective

to a change of the frameworks of conflicts – less defined by the nation-state's borders, and closer to the very fabric of societies and nations.

Both the process of globalisation and its side effects are reflected on the attitude of the nation-state domestically, regionally and on a global scale. The pressures of the regional and global environments need to be channelled positively by the nation-state and at the same time the citizens of the individual country have to be protected and their chances for prospering – strengthened. The nation-states will remain for the foreseeable future the most important actor of the international arena and the central institution for dealing with the societies of the individual nations. In the era of globalisation the nation-state continues to be the indispensable mediator among the internal political and social players and the external demands of the global environment. The unique capacity to adopt laws, implement them and guarantee the vibrancy of both processes as the key factors of social management will continue to work for the preservation of the nation-state as the international system's unit that practically creates the future of the world and its order.

However, nation-states are not immune to the pressures of globalisation. In varying degrees and forms the present nation-states are reacting to the conflicting demands of the global markets, international organisations, powerful states and trans-national corporations. Some of the states successfully adapt to these challenges, but others are hardly able to bear the burdens of the increasing demands of the global world.

What is the destiny of the Balkan nation-states in this situation? Can they survive the strains of the changing situation? Should they join or abstain from the evolving process? Is there a chance for that at all? What are the criteria of measuring the costs and benefits of being part or staying away from the processes of globalisation? What should they do after making the choice to join the global processes? The questions are many and all deserve to be treated, if not answered right away.

The foundations of the Balkan nation-states are not strong enough to match those of the more developed West European and North American states in their ability to withstand the conflicting demands of globalisation. The economic, technological, infrastructure, political and social retardation are the features that mostly hinder the ability of Balkan nation-states to adapt as equal parties to the global challenges. The incapacity to oppose the pressures, stemming from the global environment have already led to disintegration of state structures and collapse of state power in South East Europe. The negative consequences of that have been not only for our own nations, but also for the neighbouring countries and to some extent – for Europe as a whole.

The turn to democracy by all Balkan states already provides a better environment to start dealing with the persisting issues of the adaptation to globalisation.

First, the Balkan nation-states can start re-formulating the whole spectrum of political, organisational, conceptual and security tasks, especially the relationships with the neighbouring Balkan countries. Discarding the traditional “hatred attitudes” is the priority requirement of surviving as a viable ethnic or national ingredient of the European

and the planetary civilisation. The top-orientation criterion for the political and intellectual elites in choosing between the multiethnic and the ethnically homogeneous nation-state should become the level of internalisation by them of the essence of the needs and conflicting pressures of the global economic, information, humanitarian and environmental space. The modernisation of the Balkans is already so much belated that no Balkan nation-state should continue to over-emphasise the “monumental”, “historic” importance or “greatness” of the own nation at the expense of the other neighbours. As already mentioned, the political agenda of the ethnic groups and nations in a global society has dramatically changed, if the instinct of surviving is still alive. The new democratic Balkan nation-states can concentrate on more fundamental political questions and leave to other national subjects the burdens of direct running of the economy. Democracy allows also the transfer of authority from the nation-state to more people and social institutions.

Second, the nation-states in the Balkans can improve their chances of adapting to globalisation by various forms of co-operation among themselves and with global institutions. The Balkans will never be an attractive economic area unless all nation-states of the region join the World Trade Organisation as equal partners. By co-operating the nation-states of the region can economise and consolidate their own resources and invest them in shaping a better future for their people.

A third, extremely promising way of dealing with the burdens of adapting to global society is joining the European Union. This institution has found a certain balance between the supranational and the national and has also successfully supported its members in their efforts to accommodate to the demands of globalisation. At the last

Nice summit of the EU leaders the rights of the nation-states were reasserted. The integration in the EU will not lead to the disappearance of the nation-state and its sovereignty. In the process of developing supra-nationality in an integrating Europe the nation-state continues to be the main political actor and inter-governmental relations – a key tool in making decisions and in their implementation.

Hence, in the on-going process of differentiated integration of South-East Europe in the EU the individual nation-states will matter more and more depending on their effectiveness and not because of the ethnic homogeneity of their populations.

Fourth, without stability the nation-states of the Balkans will not be able to cope with the tasks of adapting to globalisation. This is why cooperating with NATO and the Partnership for Peace is crucial for the future of the Balkan nation-states as contributing global actors. The cooperation with NATO, the EU, the OSCE, the Council of Europe are indispensable also in dealing with active and flexible ethnic groups, living in different neighbouring Balkan countries and using the achievements of globalisation for destructive or criminal purposes. By utilising the information, communication and transport assets of the global society they tend to reproduce local processes of globalisation. The overcoming of the state boundaries becomes the first target of such ethnic communities. Once being confronted by the nation-states they strike back by illegitimate and even criminal activities. This evolving battle in the Balkans throughout the 90s of the last century and in the beginning of the present one has turned into a major security problem for the nation-states in the region and for the European and international communities.

It is only through the processes of national social, political and economic progress and of an adequate adaptation to globalisation of the individual nation-states in the Balkans, especially by the boosting engines of European integration, that the opportunistic political or criminal practices of illegitimate local globalisation will be dealt with.

#### **IV Conclusion**

Concluding, a “comforting” suggestion to all Balkan people and nations can be extended: “Greatness”, the eternal dream of the poor Balkan nations, is achievable, however, upon a new scale of values and measurement. The closer the Balkan nations get to the economic, information, cultural and spiritual driving forces of the global, planetary civilisation, the greater they are going to be – no matter the quantitative contribution to these forces. The advantage history has presented to the Balkan nation-states and people are the European Union and the Euro-Atlantic security space, part of which we are gradually becoming.