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POLITICAL UNITY AS A PREREQUISITE TO STATE SUSTAINABILITY

Political science is keen on definitions. How shall we define the state and on what political basis will we legitimise its existence, on what principle shall we delineate its borders, what is the changing nature of sovereignty, etc.

In the post-cold war period an array of new questions arose, pertaining to the fragmentation of the Soviet Empire and the Yugoslav Federation and the emergence of urgent national claims latent in the cold war period.

Thus, states emerged through civil war and secession and there appeared the necessity for defining or constructing a whole new environment referring to their internal organization (New Constitutions, power-sharing arrangements in the government) and also defining their relations with the new international environment. However, ethnic claims and ethnic rivalries albeit leading to the emergence of a new state proved a two-edged sword and undermined the existence of these states.

Trying to reverse contending principles into converging realities is not an easy task. In the former Yugoslavia, specifically in Bosnia and Herzegovina, self-determination and the inviolability of state borders, both legally accepted principles of the international community, confronted each other. To cope with this complex reality the international community tried to forge concepts and patterns of ethnic co-existence, which sometimes reflected the great power interests while at other times exposing inadequacy between challenges and means to confront them. The Bosnia war and Dayton agreement best illustrate the above points. As H. Kissinger points out in his recent book, "In this manner, the United States, at the Dayton negotiations in 1995, drifted toward insisting on a multiethnic, unified Bosnian state despite the fact that, until it was created in 1992, Bosnia had never been an independent state. For at least five hundred years, Bosnia had been a province at the frontier between the Austrian and Ottoman empires. NATO's 1992 recognition of an independent sovereign state of Bosnia inevitably called into being a civil war, not a country. Given that past, insistence on a multiethnic state at the end of the civil war in effect committed NATO to a permanent occupation role to preserve the peace."

Nevertheless, Dayton is the present reality and the future of Bosnia is at stake. What are the conditions of its survival? And who is going to be accountable for its collapse? Does Bosnia and Herzegovina comprise the necessary elements for a viable state? And what are these elements?

Conditions for the formation of a state are twofold: one referring to the external international environment and one pertaining to the internal forces of the state and the juridical conditions for its existence. What this paper argues is that a part of the general, international or regional setting that can sustain a state, the most important condition of state viability, consists of the internal political dynamic on which the secret of its creation depends and provides the cultural basis, symbols, beliefs, customs and geography which hold this state together. Political unity is defined as the common belief of a community of people who occupy a certain geographical area and constitute a distinct entity determined by history, race, ethnicity or any other freely expressed, subjective- but nonetheless legitimate- political option. Political unity is the synonym of state allegiance and chosen citizenship. If citizenship is to mean a more active and participating concept rather than a status of 'rights and obligations', which is not inconsistent with inter-ethnicity, we conclude that political unity is an indispensable condition

for the sustainability of any state. The absence of such unity keeps denuding the state of its political bases, therefore rendering it a mere institutional structure, an empty framework sustained by external or simply non-viable internal forces.

The existence of 'weak states' in the Balkans presupposes the existence of a policy which implies that those states are or remain weak. The existence of small states does not necessarily mean that they are not viable. From Singapore to Cyprus there is evidence that a state, however small, can be viable.

There is always a comparative advantage to be exploited, given either by geography or geology, or constructed by the civil and human capital of the specific country. In the Information Age, where Science and Technology dominate the Economy (based on services and computer application) human capital is the major factor of the surplus – value. The absence of a large State Market is not a handicap in a globalised economy. Isolation is the problem, not the size.

Human capital takes years to build and needs stable institutions (education, economic structures etc.), but all these presuppose a necessary condition: political will. In the Balkans, however, we are even prior to that stage, we need to know on what basis the states will be formed. Moreover, if the state does not manage to hold together for a decade one should not start to call into question its politicians, its economic performance or its international pressures, but its state fundamentals. The latter consists of a political unity based on colour, ethnic origin, religion, geography or any other criteria. In this context it is preferable to refer to the notions of phantom-states, artificial states, imposed states, convenient states, keen states rather than to weak states.

For example, if Montenegro were to be created as an independent state, would it owe its existence to its heroic past under Prince Nicolas or rather to the anti-Milosevic campaign of the West? The same – more or less – applies to Kosovo's future status.

The new "Macedonian" State is the best example of neglecting the condition of political unity, on which I have insisted. In that particular country, everything seemed to be favourable. Its pivoting centre in the Balkans, in terms of trade, communication and population movements; its pro-Western attitude; its position as an oasis of peace in the area and its fame as a multi-ethnic success story. All collapsed, not just because of Kfor favouritism or other secret plotting, nor even west indifference but because the basis of the new Macedonian state was not what it was supposed to be, the multi-ethnic, citizen-based state serving the whole of its society. It seemed like a state that constitutionally imposed an identity even for Slavs. When Belgium and Quebec still struggle about ethnic or linguistic balances, why do we think that Skopje could be better off? Recent events in Albania, too, (Tropoja incidents) illustrate the flaws of the political unity due to specific social factors which we do not intend to discuss in the present paper.

I intend to comment on the failures of international organisations concerning institution building and legitimising state structures, specifically in Bosnia and Republika Srpska.

The international community is confronting a major dilemma: according to its mandate it is bound to secure the function of democratic institutions on the one hand, and, on the other hand, it has to impose on those institutions the terms of their function. In other words its mandate can be described as 'imposing democracy' which, in my view, is a contradiction in terms. The role of the international community is best illustrated by the powers of the High Representative (OHR) to impose laws and dismiss public officials. It is considered that such legislative power is an important tool for building the state institutions. The experience of this political arrangement shows the limits of what the international community can achieve without the support of the leaders and institutions of the two entities. Due to the failures of the

implementation of the peace agreement, there is a tendency to believe either that ethnic conciliation in Bosnia is impossible and the international community should withdraw, or that the International Administration should take stricter measures and temporarily impose a real protectorate. Neither of these two is, of course, the best option.

The reconstruction programme has resulted in strengthening the local power structures and their capacity to resist the state 'building agenda'. Trying to impose ethnic co-existence, the international community ended up with weak or non-existent institutions, legitimising the opposite of what was intended, i.e. corruption and creation of dominant parallel structures.

A number of questions are being raised:

Was Dayton a still-born agreement? Is political conditionality the political extension of a successful financial concept or one of a Soviet-inspired political blackmail? What are the side effects of the action of the Tribunal? Can countries be punished or re-educated like kids? What about people, do they want to live together? And finally, could in this case discuss the principle "Divide them up so that they reunite"

The implementation of the Dayton agreement leads to the dilemma between administration, management or assistance on the one hand and coercion on the other and this takes us to the discussion of a doubtful concept, namely political conditionality .

Conditionality was a concept forged by the international financial institutions to achieve the effectiveness of financial operations. Loans and general financial support were conditioned by taking specific measures related to the economic situation of the specific country and pertaining to the improvement of balance of payment or other structural adjustments. These measures are heavily criticised as to their long-term efficiency on the economic situation of a country because they drain the resources for public spending. Measures proposed or rather imposed had a certain consistency. It was consistent that a country that had lost its solvency and asked for help would have to conclude a contract that had two parts: rights and obligations, an offer and a counter offer. Both terms of the contract were of economic nature so the deal was clear enough, the argument being that since you take the money I have to be in a certain way assured about the way I will be reimbursed or the way the project will be executed. The inefficiency of the IMF conditions can be discussed extensively but this doesn't mean that conditions are not necessary.

Transposing this into the political field, especially concerning the institutions-building of a transitional period, is a different task. Economic aid should have its own logic. Accordingly, its efficiency should be based on the scope and the way it is bound to be used. These are economic criteria which should be very strict and vigorous so that the undertaken projects can be realised. Now, does this imply that in order to obtain the funds for the reconstruction of the country you should comply with the political will and political and juridical obligations imposed by the international community? Given that you recognise a country and express the will to provide funds for its reconstruction, be consistent to that will and find measures of control to secure the appropriate use of the money. However, imposing political conditions results in an obvious inconsistency that when these are met, the money is going to be allocated without much scrutiny as to its specific impact on reconstruction.

A lot has been said about the action of the Criminal Tribunal. It is true that no reconciliation can be obtained if it is not based on a sentiment of justice. There are, nevertheless, political and economic priorities defying the tribunal procedures. Obstruction of the reconstruction process because of the action of the tribunal is inadmissible.

In relation to the political will to live together the peoples of Bosnia do not have to offer an encouraging picture. If in areas of direct international financing one can detect a will to function collectively in other areas like sports, the ethnic character is vividly preserved. Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot be partitioned because this will lead to the formation of an

Islamic state, an evolution not desired by the European Union leaders. A loose confederation seems to be the best option for the future so that every entity could take its responsibilities. Reconciliation will have to take place globally in the Balkans. The reconciliation process could only be undertaken by powerful politicians sprang out of a genuine political process not an imported strategy especially of a Central Power's Administrator. The Greco-Turkish paradigm of reconciliation after the war in Asia Minor in 1922 demonstrates that it takes politicians of the calibre of Venizelos or Kemal to succeed.

Concerning the future of this region as related to or influenced by its past, I would like to pass on to literature, in particular Ivo Andric and his novel "The Bridge over the Drina" referring to the annexation of Bosnia in the Habsburg empire:

"At first only the army was to be seen. Soldiers sprang up, like water from the earth, behind every corner and every bush. Then, officials began to arrive, civil servants with their families and it seemed that they were coming to prolong for a short time the occupation begun by the army.

But with every month that passed the number of the newcomers increased. However, what most astonished the people of the town and filled them with wonder and distrust was not so much their numbers as their immense and incomprehensible plans, their untiring industry and the perseverance with which they proceeded to the realization of those plans. ...They were never at peace; and they allowed no one else to live in peace. It seemed that they were resolved with their impalpable yet ever more noticeable web of laws, regulations and orders to embrace all forms of life, men, beasts and things, and to change and alter everything, both the outward appearance of the town and the customs and habits of men from the cradle to the grave... All this they did quietly without many words, without force or provocation, so that a man had nothing to protest about.

But in the homes, not only of the Turks but also of the Serbs, nothing was changed. They lived, worked and amused themselves in the old way. Old customs of slavias (personal feasts), holidays and weddings were kept up in every detail...In short, they lived and worked as they had always done and as in most of the houses they would continue to work and live for another fifteen or twenty years after the occupation.

But on the other hand the outward aspect of the town altered visibly and rapidly. Those same people, who in their own homes maintained the old order in every detail and did not even dream of changing anything, became for the most part easily reconciled to the changes in the town and after a longer or shorter period of wonder and grumbling accepted them... Naturally here, as always and everywhere in similar circumstances, the new life meant in actual fact a mingling of the old and the new. Old ideas and old values clashed with the new ones, merged with them or existed side by side, as if wanting to see which would outlive which."

Bridge over the Drina, bridges over Balkan troubled waters, lets hope that the new Balkan bridges will not follow the custom to incorporate any other victims as in the old stone bridges so masterfully described by Ismail Kadare in his novels.

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