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# Revising Dayton Using European Solutions

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The controversial outcome of the November general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has raised new questions regarding the effectiveness of the big powers policy toward the country.

In fact, those familiar with the region now almost unanimously agree that after five years of implementation, the much-heralded 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) has failed to ensure a self-sustaining future for the country. Peace has been achieved, but at the expense of internal stability, economic regeneration, and democratization. Politicians and diplomats also support these views, albeit privately. More importantly, over the past two years, they have disagreed on how to revise the DPA in a manner that will allow BiH to function without permanent international tutelage and military presence.

One side, led by the outgoing U.S. administration, would like to see BiH become more centralized and denationalized. This was the preferred option leading into the BiH elections. It appears to have remained the ongoing policy despite the fact that these elections betrayed the expectations of the international community. The international authority in the country was convinced that the so-called multi-ethnic parties would win the elections, which did not turn out to be the case by any stretch of political hyperbole. The other side, led by Henry Kissinger, John Kasich, and some conservative think tanks, would like to see BiH dissolved along ethnic lines, with minimal cost to international taxpayers.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the first formula represents a solution that is untenable and the second, a solution that is unacceptable.

Instead of ideologically charged debates, the formulation of a new BiH policy should focus on recent trends. The chimerical BiH that arose during the war from media reports is not achievable. As has been done throughout the country's history, both nationalists and internationalists have politicized BiH's recent past beyond recognition. The true BiH is the one that reflects the sentiments of the people who live there today. The future BiH should be built on those sentiments.

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Significantly, since the signing of the DPA, the evolving sentiments of the three communities in BiH—Croat, Muslim,<sup>2</sup> and Serb—have been studied systematically by the United States Information Agency (USIA), now the U.S. Department of State Office of Research. Its semi-annual surveys of public opinion are a treasure trove for students of BiH. The rather surprising and divergent trends in the Serb and Croat communities regarding their support for DPA and the unified state are most telling. Therefore, they should be studied as a basis on which to build future plans for BiH. Contrary to popular belief, the data show that secessionist forces are primarily internally motivated rather than externally driven. Moreover, decentralized governance is integrative, as opposed to disintegrative, in its impact.

With the new priorities in Washington, Brussels will most likely be left with the responsibility of revising DPA, given BiH's eventual EU membership perspective. It should not be a difficult task, however, if Brussels is consistent, non-ideological, and realistic in the solutions it proposes.

### **DENATIONALIZATION AND CENTRALIZATION FAILS**

Denationalization and centralization is a formula that has been tried in BiH twice over the past 100 years, both times without long-term success. In the 1880s, the country's first Western protector, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and its version of today's High Representative, Benjamin Kallay, were the first to try to coalesce BiH's three distinct groups into a single nation they called Bosnian or Bosniak. Using both sticks and carrots, Kallay instituted anti-nationalist measures that would brand him a human rights pariah today. He promoted the creation of a new identity through forceful assimilation policies. While some of the sticks were quite unusual, others were surprisingly similar to present-day policy tools.

Kallay effectively outlawed organizations using Serb and Croat prefixes, especially in politics and the media. He severely limited all forms of national manifestations such as celebrations, the singing of nationally distinctive songs, and the use of flags and symbols. Also, a draconian trade regime was instituted with neighboring states. For instance, BiH merchandise trade with Serbia was reduced thirty-fold in six years, from 8.3 million dinars in 1889 to 269,000 dinars in 1895.

Additionally, Kallay built border crossings with Montenegro that were so conspicuous and fortified that some writers referred to the border regime as a "Great Wall." He designed plans to resettle Tyrolians to Herzegovina. Like today, Herzegovina was ethnically homogenous, with Serbs in the east and Croats in the west. Because of national affinity and geographical proximity, both communities tended to identify with neighboring states. Kallay wanted to make Herzegovina more ethnically diverse in the same way that Bosnia already was.

Regressive measures targeting the Serb and Croat identity, culture, and history were supplanted by an assertive public relations effort to define a new Bosnian

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identity. "These people must resolve whether they are Croats, Serbs, or Bosnians, or Serbo-Croats; until this is resolved, allow me, a person who belongs to a different nationality, to answer this question, and call the residents of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnians," Kallay proclaimed at the meeting of the Austro-Hungarian government in Vienna on October 19, 1892.<sup>3</sup> Supported by grants from the Empire, assimilation activities were most evident in the media, education, and politics. Kallay's stick, like today's high representative's, came with the power to appoint and remove all public officials, and to make and interpret law.<sup>4</sup>

The second attempt to unify the three communities came from the post-World War II Yugoslav communist regime with the support of the Western powers. The unifying identity espoused by the communists was not Bosnianism, but Yugoslavism.

The anti-national measures imposed by the communists were even more severe than Kallay's policies. BiH's communist regime was known as the most dogmatic and repressive of all the governments of the six former Yugoslav republics. Along with virtually eliminating the concept of nationality from public discourse and relegating it to the status of a "provincial" identity in qualitative context, the communists centered their activities on discrediting the Croat and Muslim identities. Their preferred approach was to falsely associate them with World War II collaboration, religious fundamentalism, and genocidal tendencies.

In the 1990s, these well-established stereotypes were used by the last remaining communist regime in Belgrade to rally the Serbs into a war against the Croats and later against the Muslims. An all-out attempt to demonize these identities was a cause of later bloodshed. Efforts to do the same today to the Serb or Croat identities are unlikely to bring about positive consequences in the future.

Despite this legacy, Wolfgang Petrisch, today's high representative, and other international actors are often tempted by assimilation ideas coming from well-meaning, activist NGOs and similarly intentioned Westerners who consider Dayton a failure. For instance, on June 28, 1998, during a discussion in the foreign affairs committee of the European Parliament, one member lectured the Bosnian-Herzegovene president Alija Izetbegovic that all people in his country were Bosnians rather than Muslims, Serbs, or Croats. Not surprisingly, President Izetbegovic demurred, adding that attempts to create a new common identity for Serbs and Croats are futile.

Intolerance among the Western policy elite for nationalism is not new. Bertram Wolfe, in his classic work *Three Men Who Made a Revolution*, recognized this as a problem in international relations: "People born to a great nation take the right to use their language, to choose their own officials, to follow their own creeds, and pursue and determine their own way of life, quite for granted, like the air they breathe, no longer realizing how precious these rights may be to [those who do not have them]." He goes on to conclude that international policymakers then look to

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discredit nationalism and expect the subject peoples to simply outgrow it, a policy of wishful thinking that inevitably ends in failure.

Instead of building a nation, the new human rights legislation, and other international documents regarding BiH, limit the Western policy variables to merely building a state. The international community has in fact stated that its only goal in BiH is to build a state. Even this effort, however, may end in failure.

The international community should certainly dismiss all thought of forceful assimilation in BiH, be it via incentive programs, election laws, or other legal engineering. For instance, former U.S. ambassador to Croatia, William Montgomery, often spoke about the need to build a common "political identity" among BiH's three nations. This goal does not in itself constitute forceful assimilation, and is therefore a threshold that should not be crossed.

A third attempt to denationalize BiH would also fail. The two identities under pressure today, Serb and Croat, are both too well developed and entrenched, while the third identity, Bosniak or Bosnian, is new and largely undefined. Moreover, if it takes on values based mostly on Islam as a way of life, it will alienate those Serbs and Croats that have difficulty identifying with some Muslim values.

More importantly, centralization of government based on a "one man, one vote" principle in a country that votes strictly along ethnic lines would create a one-party state run by its largest voting block—the Muslims. Such a move would be vigorously resisted by the Serbs and Croats. Moreover, it should be unacceptable for the West to design governmental institutions that virtually ensure the creation of a one-party state.

Much has been said about the rise of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in BiH. It has been labeled a multi-ethnic party in the West. It is indeed a tolerant party, but its non-Muslim contingent is very small. Moreover, it is a regional party with support from cities in central and northern Bosnia with a Muslim majority. As BiH is effectively a rural country where identity is even more important, the party's cosmopolitan image is limited. In this aspect, BiH is no different than other rural parts of Europe.

The November elections reaffirmed the fact that the SDP is a traditional BiH party, meaning it is based on ethnicity; in other words, it is a Muslim party. It received only one quarter of the nationwide vote and this came almost exclusively from the Muslims. Only about five percent came from the majority Serb and Croat areas and this small percentage most likely came only from the Muslims living in those areas.

#### **WHAT IS INTEGRATIVE?**

The USIA studies of Croat, Serb, and Muslim sentiments show that, contrary to popular opinion, moderate nationalism and decentralization policies are

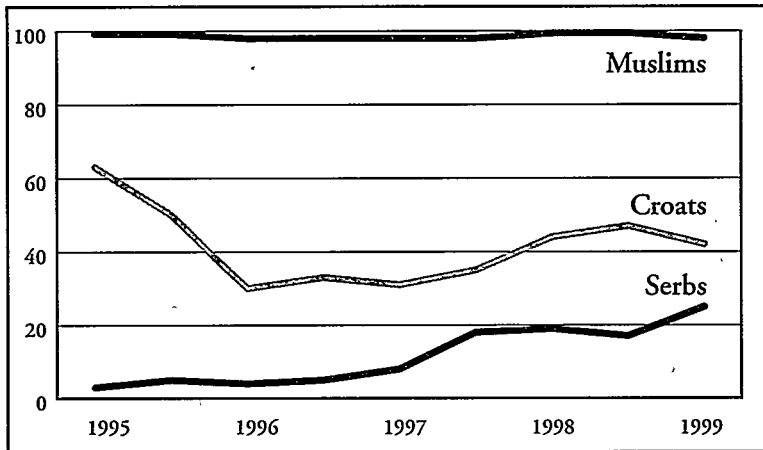
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integrative in their impact, and the currently preferred policy of denationalization and centralization is disintegrative. Witness the intransigent response of the Croat community following the eleventh-hour election rule change by the international authorities which was intended to minimize the election chances of the leading Croat party, thus excluding it from the new government.<sup>5</sup>

As Jacques Klein, the United Nations special envoy to BiH, pointed out recently to the Council of Europe, identifying with Bosnia is a fundamental problem for many of its citizens. According to the 1991 census, only three percent of BiH's population considered itself Bosnian. Most consider the term Bosnian an administrative one, with national identity centered on either Yugoslavism/Serbism or Croatism. That has changed of course, primarily among the Muslims, but the majority of Croats and Serbs still identify with Zagreb and Belgrade, not Sarajevo. The obvious question then arises and revolves around the best way to temper these allegiances. How can Sarajevo become attractive to these two communities? The answer lies in the diverging paths of the Serbs and the Croats.

While the Muslim support for DPA and the unity of BiH remained strong and unchanged during the five-year period since Dayton (1995-1999), the sentiments among the Serbs and Croats evolved in surprising directions. The support for a unified Bosnian-Herzegovene state among the Croats declined dramatically, from two-thirds to one-third, during this time period. Meanwhile, among the Serbs, support grew steadily from a mere one in twenty in 1996 to almost one in three at the end of 1999.

#### PERCENT SUPPORT FOR A UNIFIED STATE<sup>6</sup>



Common wisdom would explain the change in Serb sentiments by the fact that Yugoslavia, under Slobodan Milosevic, was struggling under international isolation, thus becoming less attractive. Yet, during this period Croatia was sliding

into similar isolation under Franjo Tudjman. Logic would lead us to conclude that the Croats, like the Serbs, should have grown less interested in belonging to Croatia and more disposed to belonging to BiH. This did not happen, however. In fact, the situation that developed suggests that the sentiments are generated by internal rather than external factors.

The recent government changes in Yugoslavia and Croatia reinforce this view. After the election of the Western-leaning opposition in Croatia, the Croats in BiH became even more homogeneous in their views and voted for a party that was critical of Dayton. Meanwhile the Serbs continued to move more and more toward pro-Dayton parties.

Clearly, the specific structures of the DPA itself are responsible for the Serb change of heart and the Croat discomfort. The DPA has allotted the Serbs a stake in BiH with which they can identify. Therefore, they are willing to get involved to protect it, even if they have to be in Sarajevo. That stake comes in the form of institutions, built in and around the Republika Srpska entity. Regrettably, the DPA did not grant the same arrangement to the Croats. The Croats cannot even get their own language television frequency, let alone a tax base. Furthermore, there is no administration that can provide them with the status of an equal political player or give them the resources necessary to protect their cultural heritage.<sup>7</sup>

The DPA structure of the Muslim-Croat Federation entity makes the Federation a *de facto* Muslim entity. This explains in large part the continual Muslim support for the DPA. The Federation has a government that will remain perpetually in the hands of the Muslims because of the aforementioned unique voting pattern that operates along ethnic lines. In the Federation, Muslims outnumber Croats by a great margin.

The existence of a recognizable institutional stake has brought along positive changes in the Serb community. It has brought forth progressive politicians like Mladen Ivanic and Milorad Dodik, who have become assertive opponents of those extremist politicians who dominated the Serb community for years. Their two pro-Dayton parties received 25 percent of the vote in this election, compared to only seven percent two years ago.<sup>8</sup> Political life in the Serb community has become pluralized, with no one political party in the position of dominance. Most importantly, the public discourse in the community has been tempered by the appearance of tolerant media outlets.

As for the Croat community, it has hunkered around the much-maligned Croatian Democratic Union (HDZBiH). A rare Croat politician, like Kresimir Zubak, who dared to step out with unqualified support for the DPA and the international community, has been dismissed into political oblivion. The USIA surveys show that Zubak initially garnered 13 percent of the vote. The November election results, however, show that he can now count on a mere two percent. The pro-Dayton Croat politicians have no popular support, as they have nothing to offer

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the electorate given the current political structure. They agree that their community would also become diversified and open if it were given the same institutional stake that Serbs and Muslims already have.

### **CAN WE TRUST THE DATA?**

There is no reason why we should not accept the USIA data as legitimate. But, are the interpretations credible? Do they meet the common sense test, particularly given the prevailing view that denationalization and centralization is the best solution for BiH?

The theories of Albert Maslow, an American sociologist, would say that the interpretations are quite valid. In the 1940s, Maslow popularized a school of thought that is used today in American business schools to teach organizational behavior. He argued that human beings are motivated by the desire to satisfy their needs in a certain hierarchical order. First, their physiological needs must be fulfilled; second, safety and security needs must be taken care of; third, affiliation needs have to be addressed; fourth, esteem for self and others come into play; finally, self-actualization is realized. According to Maslow, a person has no motivation to advance by overstepping any of the levels. As a society is nothing more than an amalgamation of individual interests, the same hierarchy of needs can also apply to distinct communities and states.

Therefore, a society which cannot satisfy the economic and security needs of its members nor provide them with a sense of identity and belongingness will be hard-pressed to make gains in higher order areas of human rights and democratization. Scarce resources and lack of security can manufacture horrific demons in people and societies. The absence or denial of identity can do the same. The stage for the wars in the territory of the former Yugoslavia was set by a collapsing planned economy, a discredited communist security system, and the rejection of a hollow, common-Yugoslav identity.

### **KEY POLICY VARIABLES**

In light of these facts, the future BiH policy should not be driven by blind animus toward national identity issues and patriotic politicians. Instead, it should feature ways to minimize the appeal of extremist nationalists who are driving toward the disintegration and division of BiH. Indeed, the policy should strive to strengthen moderate nationalists who are ready to work towards reintegration and co-existence. The appearance of moderates like Ivanic and Dodik should serve as a lesson. Their appearance would not have been possible without the institutional stake that the DPA gave them to play with.

The goal of creating a single, a-national, or conversely multi-national, civil society in BiH is unachievable. What is achievable is three tolerant national civil

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societies, living side by side. The focus should not be on delimiting perfect internal borders, but on building institutions that the two largely anti-unity communities—Serb and Croat—can identify with.

The Muslim community already has a *de facto* entity because of its institutional dominance in the joint Muslim-Croat Federation. The Muslim community, however, is not entirely open and pluralistic, fearing that openness will only cost it more territory in an eventual division. This defensive posture, with its associated uncertainty, limits Muslim prosperity and cultural development. A disgruntled Croat community will only prolong this stagnation indefinitely. The only path towards a tenable BiH is to have satisfied Croat and Muslim communities in addition to moderate leadership within a Serb entity.

The three prevalent societies in BiH are essentially similar, but their heritage also leaves them with particularities that should be treasured and allowed to develop. This is especially true for the Muslim society, which is uniquely Western despite its Eastern cultural and religious heritage. It will only be free to grow and prosper if its adjoining communities are comfortable and nonbelligerent.

Likewise, these Serb and Croat communities will remain peaceful if they are given a stake that will allow them to identify with BiH. In some ways, that stake should be at least as attractive as being part of neighboring countries. Progressive Serb and Croat leaders in BiH need a proper substitute for the neighboring states in order to defend BiH before the electorate. If that stake is denied, however, the communities will continue to fall prey to extremist leaders who will turn to separatism at every opportunity.

The future discussions on BiH should therefore focus on building attractive institutions for all three communities, no matter what territorial or administrative form they take.

Moreover, a countrywide civil society can be established only when all three communities become comfortable in terms of identity and belongingness. Countrywide pluralism will follow only after three smaller, multi-ethnic, citizen federal units are established.<sup>9</sup> Denying institutional identity to any of the three will only keep BiH a perpetual protectorate that both Maslow and Wolfe would condemn to certain failure.

## THE ROLE OF THE EU

How can the DPA be amended to bring about these results? The EU has the formula and the incentives. At this point, the U.S. has primacy on BiH policy, but this cannot last forever. Three factors will compel a larger role by Europe: the election of George W. Bush to the White House coupled with U.S. congressional pressure to minimize Washington's involvement in the Balkans; European acceptance of the notion that BiH is in its backyard; and most importantly, the understanding that the

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integration process requires European formulas in public administration. A future EU member has to be internally organized according to EU standards and practices.<sup>10</sup>

In many ways, nationality-based geographical autonomy is a normal form of public administration in Europe. After all, Europe is a union of nations. The U.S., meanwhile, considers itself an a-national society, and scorns talk of ethnic or group rights, even though it allows for them through policies such as redistricting and minority-based incentive programs.<sup>11</sup>

Europe can influence the Dayton revision process in this direction by offering the incentive of eventual EU membership. The prospect of membership has proven to be a key motivator of progress and change in the whole CEE region in the past. It should also work in BiH with respect to all three communities. It is only a question of time before Brussels decides to assume a leadership role, providing BiH with a future instead of a chimera. ■

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Most recently the liberal media has become open to the idea of partition. For instance, *The New York Times* ran two op-eds in January 2001 calling for the division of BiH, an unthinkable move in years past. One piece was written by University of Chicago professor John Mearsheimer (January 11, 2001) and the other was by *The New York Times* foreign commentator Thomas L. Friedman (January 23, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Since 1994 the preferred name for the Muslims is Bosniak.

<sup>3</sup> T. Kraljacic, "Ph.D. Dissertation: Kallay's Regime in BiH (1882-1903), Sarajevo 1981," 229. From *Stenographische Sitzungs-Protokolle*, Wien 1892, 173.

<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, while Kallay was promoting centralization and homogenization in BiH, Viennese social democrats, led by Otto Bauer, were espousing decentralization of the multi-ethnic Empire, with emphasis on national rights through federalization, as a way to keep the Empire unified.

<sup>5</sup> The Croat obstinacy will continue until the community is re-enfranchised into BiH as an equal political player with the other two communities. Short of such a solution, its leaders may be compelled to form a separate multi-ethnic government in areas where they won elections. As an option, they may support regional solutions that would treat all national communities in BiH, Serbia, Montenegro, and Kosovo in a standardized way.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of State Press Release (November 22, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> The DPA provides BiH Croats 'special relations with Croatia' as a mechanism to mitigate this anomaly, but this cannot be a long-term solution. In fact, Croatia has already withdrawn from this DPA obligation.

<sup>8</sup> This is consistent with the USIA findings regarding Serb support for a unified state.

<sup>9</sup> A federal unit can be an association of cantons.

<sup>10</sup> In a January 9, 2001 op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, two top American diplomats make a similar argument regarding the Western policy toward Cyprus. Morton Abramowitz, former U.S. ambassador to Turkey, and M. James Wilkinson, former U.S. special coordinator for Cyprus, argue that U.S. and U.N. creativity in Cyprus has been exhausted and that the EU may provide more muscle in the process, stemming from numerous carrots it has already offered to Greece and Turkey.

<sup>11</sup> Redistricting occurs every ten years in the United States, when states gain or lose Congressional seats due to population changes. Redrawing of districts is based on established geographical features, such as cities. The most influential element, however, is the federal Voting Rights Act, which requires "the maximization" of minority percentages in the districts, in order to allow for fair representation of blacks, latinos, and other minorities.

