

Democracy and Security

in Southeastern Europe

The Lead Story

Syria:

Dictatorship and Global Ideological Frictions



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Atlantic Initiative

The Atlantic Initiative (AI) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization, established in Sarajevo in 2009 by a group of academics and journalists concerned about the future of Bosnia-Herzegovina, particularly the slow pace of its accession to NATO and the European Union.

We believe that Bosnia's integration into NATO and the EU is of crucial importance for the country, but are equally convinced that lively and informed public debate before and during this process is sine qua non for its successful completion. In that spirit, we wish to initiate, encourage and enable this debate through a wide range of activities on various platforms in order to reach and involve multiple audiences.

The journal "Democracy and Security in Southeastern Europe" is only one of our projects under this stated aim, carried out in partnership with the governments of the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Norway. We are thankful for the encouragement from several non-governmental organizations in the region and particularly grateful for the support of the NATO HQ Sarajevo, the Bosnian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Bosnian Ministry of Defense and the George Marshall Alumni Association in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

*For more information on the Atlantic Initiative, please visit our web page:
<http://www.atlantskainicijativa.org/>*

EDITORIAL



Edina Becirevic

The argument that an oversimplified view of the world – one in which precise lines are drawn and, in every corner of the globe, friends and enemies are defined – is a risky one rightfully dominated the discourse of Cold War critics. For, such a world was clearly and ideologically partitioned, and it was beyond comprehension to find points of concurrence between the radical right and radical left. Led by inertia, theorists continued to oversimplify matters even after the Cold War was over. But whether they ascribed to the school of thought that celebrated a “triumph of liberal democracy” (Fukuyama) or a “clash of civilizations” (Huntington), they all felt the need to understand and learn the meaning of our imminent reality. The content of this issue illustrates that finding such meaning is an increasingly difficult task. In his article, “Leftist Icon takes a Right Turn on Bosnia and Herzegovina,” Nerzuk Ćurak points out how close the radical left and radical right have become; a closeness that has been expressed in the deeply disappointing recommendation of Slavoj Žižek to resolve Bosnian problems “pragmatically” by dividing the country in two and allowing the Republika Srpska to join Serbia. Ćurak reasonably concludes that this suggestion implies Žižek has decided to put his weight behind counter-revolution, as many other of today’s extreme leftists have – thinkers who, driven by blind criticism of American interventions abroad, have succumbed to intellectual apathy and have disregarded efforts of the international community to preserve the multiethnic character of a country such as Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The sad truth is that, over the last six years, any efforts of the international community to save Bosnia and Herzegovina have failed due to the fact that ethnicity has been the prime focus of policy formulation. For years, international officials have treated with equity those who want to divide the country and those who insist on its integrity and its unquestionable statehood. Coalitions of an ideologically absurd and, above all, immoral nature have aggravated the position of those who seek division. So now, attempts to understand the situation and rank the responsibility of domestic actors requires a much stronger intellectual and analytic efforts than before. This is why the High Representative’s latest speech to the UN Security Council is so important; because Valentin Inzko has demonstrated a full understanding of the root causes of the crisis, which is the first step toward a real solution.

A veteran analyst of Bosnia and the region, author Kurt Bassuener goes even further, offering some very simple and achievable solutions in his article, “Catalyzing Democratic Change in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The West Must Enforce Dayton to Make it History.” The article, though sensible and well-reasoned, will nonetheless represent an insult to the vanities of many international officials who simply are not ready to admit that Bosnia and Herzegovina needs a new strategy. Bassuener places his hope in the two world capitals of Washington and Berlin, and in the initiatives of Barack

Obama and Angela Merkel. Numerous examples from history suggest that the personal engagement of a president is indeed important to change foreign policy strategies and resolve crises; Bassuener's warning that the collapse of the Bosnian state and the tragedy that would ensue can be prevented only by the most powerful leaders in the world is thus far from naive.

In that context, the supposition that foreign policy does not actually exist but is rather a matter of domestic policy that overflows across international borders could be useful. This postmodern interpretation of security is intellectually inspiring, but economic and political crises in Europe and the return of Russian influence on the global stage both bear a resemblance to traditional geostrategy – and the risks of growing Russian influence in the region are becoming an increasingly crucial reason for the Americans to fully engage in the Balkans.

The editorial board of this magazine has maintained that the speedy accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina to NATO, which would provide a security umbrella that is needed for successful reform, is a precondition for continued life of the state. During her recent visit, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton strongly advocated that Bosnia join the Alliance. It was encouraging to hear Secretary Clinton's words; but it was deeply disappointing to hear the various uninformed interpretations of possible NATO membership models for Bosnia and Herzegovina that circulated after she left the country. The most ridiculous idea was that we might be able to join the most powerful military alliance in the world even if the country is demilitarized. Therefore, Jamie Shea's article, "Keeping NATO Relevant," is important as a background for meaningful and informed debate on this topic.

The content of this issue of Democracy and Security in Southeastern Europe reflects how intertwined global, regional, and local Bosnian realities are. Continued economic crises, a condition of general insecurity, and a lack of clear goals can be seen at all these levels, and this is precisely what makes relationships across the global community increasingly complicated and more difficult to understand.

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