

Democracy and Security

in Southeastern Europe

The Lead Story The European Union and Bosnia-Herzegovina: Managing Crisis



Vlado Rzinović
Kurt Bassuener
Bodo Weber
Ines Sabalić
Zrinka Bralo
Kristina Hemon
Arbër Vllahiu
Michael Tatham
Vedran Džihic
Sead Turčalo
Rn Jacobs
Zlatko Dizdarević
Muhamed Jusić
Harun Karčić
Eldar Sarajlić
Kathrin Quesada
Maja Dimc
Bojan Dobovšek
Jasmin Porobić
Nerzuk Ćurak
Ian Kershaw
Edina Bećirević
Dragan Gajin
Rsim Jusić
Slaven Kovačević

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Editor-in-Chief:

Vlado Azinović

Deputy Editor-in-Chief:

Edina Bećirević

Technical editor:

Sead Turčalo

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Alma Hrasnica

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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



Vlado Azinović
Editor-in-Chief

Instead of an editorial...

The Allure of Analogy

For years now, each new political crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina has seemed more difficult and more profound than the previous, and the space between, in which they can be overcome, seems to be shrinking. As if according to some rule, this chain reaction is accompanied by ever clearer proof of increasingly compulsive politics and irresponsibility among local political elites. In an environment in which constants are rare, one that remains is the relative indifference of the Bosnian public to this process of collapse of what is left of the country, as well as of its lingering social values and norms. However, just as the deepening of this crisis is not surprising, nor is the apathy of the public toward their own destiny. The threshold of tolerance for the ever more obvious collapse of the Dayton architecture of the country was established in the last war: "It's still all right... There is no shelling and we have electricity" was a typical collective reaction here. This cognitive mechanism – a denial of reality – may just be the last line of defense for citizens in BiH against seemingly insoluble political and increasingly more serious security challenges.

An escalation in inflammatory political rhetoric has very possibly created a situation today in which an isolated act of violence, spontaneous or planned, could irreversibly destabilize Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The introduction of buzzwords and terms such as "political genocide", "majorization", and "ethnocide" into public discourse, regardless of the frustration and perceptions of injustice that prompt it, are overwhelmingly reminiscent of the early 1990's, when terms such as "threatened nations", "unprincipled coalitions", and "Viennese loyalists" (all allusions to various ethnic groups, on the eve of the breakup of the former Yugoslavia), could be heard frequently and without restraint in public. Of course, the context is somewhat different today, and this time, different people are "threatened". While it may not be entirely parallel, the obvious analogy suggests that little has been learned here over the last twenty years.

There is insufficient plausible evidence that the process of internal erosion in BiH could have been slowed even in the case the country had received significant help from outside. The involvement of the European Union in the Bosnian crisis has been limited by the complex process of the harmonization of common foreign policy positions within the Union, but also by the particular interests of some of its members and indifference on the part of others. The announcement of European sanctions for leaders "whose activities undermine sovereignty, territorial integrity, constitutional order and the international character of Bosnia and Herzegovina or threaten the Dayton Peace Agreement" is encouraging, but without a common EU strategy in Bosnia it is clear that existing limitations relativize their usability. It seems that the political challenges generated within a little over 50,000 square kilometers, among less than four million inhabitants, determine the extent of desired but yet-unreachable foreign policy cohesion in Europe. And without it, more resolute and engaged involvement by the United States is less likely to ensue.

The European Union today does not appear to be any more ready to offer efficient solutions to the political and security challenges produced by the deepened crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina than it was in May 1991, before the then European Community's involvement in an attempt to prevent the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia, when Jacques Poos pompously declared that such intervention "marked that the time had come for Europe." There is no need to detail the postscript to this European effort and to Poos's priggish statement. A lack of vision, will, and unity among the 27 members of the EU, at least when it comes to their attitude toward Bosnia and Herzegovina, has, through nostalgia for this 20-year old pronouncement, evoked another, maybe equally inaccurate historical analogy.

However, the value of analogy, called "the core of cognition" by American Professor of Cognitive Science Douglas Hofstadter, is not subject to geographic limitations. Inspired by images from the streets and squares of Arab cities, journalists and analysts have hurried in the last few weeks to find adequate analogies to help us understand the motives, significance, and possible scope of the "Arab revolutions".

No doubt, these analogies have been chosen well, and some of their congruence might make even the most engrained skeptics accept the historical determinism according to which "there is no present or future, only the past, happening over and over again, now."¹

Therefore, as social and political rebellion spread through the Arab world – with a "scent for the geography of grief and cruelty,"² – the most commonly recognized analogies have been to significant European revolutions which have, in their times, and more or less successfully, shaken the foundations of feudal monarchies (1848) and the Soviet communist empire (1968 and 1989).

In order to magnify the similarity of current events with examples from the past, media jumped the gun meteorologically and labeled the Arab rebellion, which started in December and continues, the "Arab spring", in the model of the "People's Spring" or the "Spring of Nations" (1848), and the "Prague Spring" (1968).

Revolutionary elation has been transferred from Arab squares to reports and analyses in which, mostly with excitement, it has been suggested that nothing will ever be the same following this spontaneous democratic rebellion in the Arab world. However, analogies with the past testify to the fact that revolutions can rarely quickly and irreversibly eliminate the causes that prompted them.

After the European Revolutions of 1848, the old order was brought down, but in its place – as a consequence of the insecurity that marks every transitional period – some odd political hybrids emerged, which were both modern and authoritarian in nature. In France, this period was marked by the arrival of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, who was first appointed President of the French Second Republic (1848), but later became the French Emperor (Napoleon III). In Prussia, this era ushered in Otto von Bismarck, first as Prussia's Prime Minister, and then, after 1871, as the first ("Iron") Chancellor of a new and united German Empire.

As a result of the revolutions occurring now in complex Arab nations, similar political hybrids could again emerge. Custody of newly discovered democracy in Egypt could, for example, be entrusted to the country's army, as was the practice in Turkey until recently. And, the fall of Gaddafi's regime could bring an era of tribal conflicts in Libya.

Revolution, as a rule, calls for international intervention. The People's Spring in 1848 in the Habsburg Monarchy was ended through military intervention by Russian Tsar Nikolai I, which earned him the nickname "the policeman of Europe". The Prague Spring, in Czechoslovakia in 1968, ended with the rush of Soviet tanks. Saudi Arabia was quick to send its army to end the rebellion in neighboring Bahrain recently, but it was more hesitant when it came to providing military support to Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh. Rebellion in Libya has seen military intervention by the West, in this case to help the rebels. Every era, it seems, has its own policemen.

History shows that, although they emerge in waves, in the end revolutions are strictly local, and the local context determines their dynamics and final outcomes. After the fall of communism in 1989, democracy prevailed and grew its roots in Eastern and Central Europe, Georgia, and the Baltic countries – but in some of the former Soviet republics, such as Belarus and Uzbekistan, new, post-communist dictatorships were established, or oligarchical and authoritarian systems that we see elements of to this day in Putin's Russia.

These examples from the past point to the fact that revolutions usually mark just the beginning of attempts to initiate shifts in existing realities. One of the most persistent defenders of the old, conservative order of Europe, Austrian diplomat Prince Metternich, said after the 1848 Revolution that it had not completely killed off “old Europe”, and it had not fully conceived of a “new” one either. “Between the end and the beginning, there will be chaos,” he anticipated and, as it turned out, he was correct.

Almost a century and a half later, with sufficient time passed for reflection, the Revolution of 1848 was summarized by British historian A.J.P. Taylor in a now well-known sentence: “History reached its turning point and failed to turn.”

Events that are yet to come will provide the full context to Arab revolutions as well. Whether it will turn out to be a truly historic turning point will not depend merely on Arabs. The outcome of the Arab Spring will also be determined by attitudes of the West, which has relied on authoritarian regimes in the region to maintain security over the past decades. A combination of foreign military and financial aid, political repression, and corruption has enabled the survival of these regimes, but in the long-term, these elements have choked the development of a middle class, and have deepened social and economic stratification and injustice.

The speed with which the West, under the pressure of graphic images from Tunisia, Egypt, and Yemen, has deployed support for protesters, confirms that in protecting its own interests, it will follow the dictate of pragmatism as its sole guide. Despite lessons from the Arab Spring, that dictate will compel some 110 billion dollars of the US Federal Budget to be invested just this year in supporting the regimes in Afghanistan and Pakistan, which are far from model reflections of democracy and human rights.

The Arab rebellion has not yet produced a universally-articulated political concept, nor has it affirmed new political leaders. The process of post-revolutionary consolidation, with an uncertain outcome, is still ongoing.

However, developments in the Arab world could also have an unexpected added value. The final disappearance of repressive regimes and the establishment of more just societies could abate the powerful seeds of dissatisfaction that have inspired and instigated a series of radical and militant movements in the region, including al-Qaeda. Islamic fundamentalists have so far perceived the secular and authoritarian regimes of the Middle East as their closest enemy. Their far away enemy has, of course, always been the US, the generous help of which contributed significantly to the staying power of these regimes for decades, justified by US leaders who have claimed that, without them, the region would be taken over by extremists. Fear over extremism has served as an excuse for the repression of millions of people stripped of their freedom and dignity. Feelings of injustice – political, economic, or social – are usually the main driver of mass dissatisfaction that can lead to violence. The Arab rebellion could be the phenomenon that ends the vicious circle of violence in which its causes and consequences have become so intertwined they are hard to separate anymore.

Another important fact is that Islam is an integral part of the Arab identity, which makes it an integral part of recent revolutions. A qualitatively different and unprejudicial understanding of Islam and its place in the Arab and Muslim worlds in general, would enable the West to establish partnerships and new models of common, even global security, in the region, on new foundations and with authentic governments.

Finally, let's consider another analogy. When thinking about Islam's place in the Arab world, the West could recall the role of the Catholic Church in the overthrow of totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe, especially in Poland in the late 20th century. When Karol Józef Wojtyła, the newly appointed Pope John Paul II, spoke in front of the masses that had gathered to greet him on October 16, 1978 in St. Peter's Square, his first words were: "Do not be afraid!" The message was also meant for the millions who were not in the Square, but who lived in constant fear of repression, secret police forces, and gulags. If we were to choose the most crucial of all the important revelations from the Arab rebellion in the past months, it seems it would be that which has been articulated through the statements of hundreds of protesters who, almost with one voice, have said to the cameras and microphones of world media: "We are no longer afraid."

Islam cannot be separated from the Arab rebellion and its liberating power. A number of factors will determine its place in post-revolutionary societies, but it is certain that in new circumstances, the role of Islam will have an additional value. A possible confirmation of this can be seen in the words of Egyptian Grand Mufti Ali Gooma, who said in an op-ed for The New York Times: "Having overthrown the heavy hand of authoritarianism, Egyptians will not accept its return under the guise of religion. Islam will have a place in Egypt's democracy. But it will be as a pillar of freedom and tolerance, never as a means of oppression."³

The West has been reiterating for years that it is looking for partners in "moderate" Muslims and that it is fighting for the "hearts and souls" of those who have yet to moderate their views. Likewise, one could expect that a part of the Muslim world would also want to find a reliable partner in the West and to establish with it relations of a higher quality, based on respect and equality – a partner which will not, for the sake of its own interests, willingly turn a blind eye when those interests are supported by the injustices suffered by somebody else. The establishment of such relations is now an opportunity of this generation, and one so important that we have few appropriate historical analogies.

NOTES:

¹ Eugene O'Neill, *A Moon for the Misbegotten*

² Fouad Ajami, "How the Arabs Turned Shame Into Liberty," *The New York Times*, February 26, 2011.

³ Ali Gooma, "In Egypt's Democracy, Room for Islam," *The New York Times*, April 1, 2011.

Only US Engagement Can Pull Bosnia Back from the Brink



By: Kurt Bassuener

The US has been frustrated by the current situation in Bosnia, but has also remained aloof, engaging episodically and then retreating. A shift seemed to be at hand with the visit of Vice President Joe Biden in May 2009, but the State Department dropped the ball...

Events are moving in a perilous direction in Bosnia and Herzegovina – and at a dangerous pace. While international eyes trained on the country are transfixed by the ongoing crisis in the Federation, the Republika Srpska has accelerated and intensified its efforts to dismantle or destroy state institutions, with essentially no opposition by the international community that spent well over a decade working to establish these very institutions. The situation is dangerously close to a breaking point, as local political actors increasingly doubt that the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) will uphold its responsibility to prevent state dissolution. This makes the occurrence more likely of not only interethnic violence, but also of the political miscalculations that could generate such events.

While the spotlight is currently on turmoil in the Federation, the government of Republika Srpska continues its preparations for *de facto* and *de jure* independence. In this effort, RS President Milorad Dodik is working from much the same script as Montenegro did when it was still a part of the joint state of Serbia and Montenegro – Dodik is ensuring the dysfunction of state institutions while developing those under his control in anticipation of independence. This effort has been ongoing since his arrival in office before the 2006 elections, and he has brandished the threat of a referendum since just after Montenegro's successful independence vote. In recent weeks, Dodik upped the ante by saying that Bosnia would fall apart just as Yugoslavia did¹ and by stating that he intended to hold a referendum on the legitimacy of the Court of BiH and the State Prosecutor's Office,² furthering his campaign to disassemble state institutions, particularly in the justice and economic sectors. His government is threatening to cease paying VAT receipts into the Single Account and is preparing to begin selling off state property to fund its growing fiscal deficit. Dodik pointedly and publicly refused the Brčko Supervisor's requests for written assurances that the RS will fully comply with the Final Award in the future, calling them "inappropriate and offensive" in an open letter. And the RS Assembly's Security Committee Chair, Nenad Stevandić, called on March 17th for the RS to develop its own intelligence service.³

Government formation in the Federation has been stalled since soon after the October 2010 elections, with the

The author is a Sarajevo-based Senior Associate of the Democratization Policy Council

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