

Globalization and National Identity: Lessons we did not learn from the crises in Southeast Europe*

Miroslav Tuđman

University of Zagreb, Croatia

The disintegration of Yugoslavia

The process of national liberation of Croatia, Slovenia, and then Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina began with the first free and multi-party elections in 1990. The disintegration of Yugoslavia was a bloody and difficult process, as the Milosevic regime was not prepared to surrender Serbian hegemony within the multi-national Yugoslavia. This process resulted in many related wars waged by Milosevic: the seven-day-war in Slovenia, the four-year-war in Croatia, a somewhat shorter one in Bosnia Herzegovina, and finally the NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999. Former Yugoslavia, that is, Southeast Europe, became the strategic center of the European periphery (as General Wesley Clark recently stated)¹.

I was a direct witness to these crises, as I served as a volunteer soldier during the War of the Homeland from its very beginning in 1991. As a professor of information science at the Philosophy Faculty at the University of Zagreb, I worked together with other colleagues in 1991 and 1992 on the composition and configuration of the Ministry of Defense and the Croatian Army.

From 1993 on, my task was to organize the Croatian Intelligence Service (HIS) and Intelligence Community². I was the

* Paper prepared for Round table on "Intelligence and national security at the beginning of the 21st century", Dubrovnik, Croatia, October 27-28, 2000.

director of HIS and the head of the Intelligence Community of the Republic of Croatia on two occasions: from 1993-1998 and from 1999-2000. Croatia's Intelligence Service was from the very beginning a partner of the Western countries - most often NATO countries - , not only providing support to international forces on the southeastern territories of Europe, but also an understanding of the crisis which has, in some ways, repeated itself during the last ten years: from the independence of Slovenia and Croatia, to the NATO intervention in Kosovo, and the fall of Milosevic in October, 2000.

Having in mind the large scale engagement of the international community, and especially the United States, in the resolution of this crisis on the territory of former Yugoslavia, I don't believe it necessary to list the participants or talk about how the events developed and were finally brought to their final phases.

But as one of the direct participants in and witnesses to these events, I would like to share my views and warn that there is a virtual "blockade" to a lasting resolution of the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in Kosovo. Although I do not wish to generalize, I nonetheless feel that the same errors are being made in the international community's efforts to establish a "new world order" in other multi-national crises: Northern Ireland, Chechnya, the Israel-Palestinian conflict, and so forth.

Instead of theoretical and academic analyses which attempt to be "objective", and taking into consideration what actually happened – that is, the objective repercussions of certain actions – I would like to call attention to what did not happen and what could have happened if the criteria, vision and ways of thinking had been different. I would especially like to pose the question as to why the resolution of the crisis took a direction which has not led to a lasting resolution? The presence of 100,000 NATO troops on the southeast European territory illustrates the fact that the crisis remains unresolved.

Without diagnosis of the crisis

Why did the crisis last so long and why, in spite of the progress made, was no lasting resolution achieved?

It is a fact that the international community has at its disposal reports, data, and information which are increasing daily, but there is still no resolution to the crisis. And we cannot expect a lasting resolution because there is not even a consensus on an international level on what constitutes the essence of the crisis. We have information and facts, but lack a knowledge and understanding of the core issues. Most of the actors lacked a basic understanding of the reasons for the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and therefore are incapable of formulating a means for resolving

the crisis in Kosovo or in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They are unable to even predict the repercussions of the Hague Tribunal's activities, or to properly regulate their relations with Serbia and Montenegro.

I am convinced that, first, without an accurate diagnosis (causes and current status of the crisis), an accurate prognosis cannot be made (ways and means of resolving the crisis). Second, the globalization of multi-national crises results in the imposition by the international community of resolutions which endanger the parties' national identity; by doing this, the international community only suppresses or postpones, but does not resolve, the conflict. (Examples are the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Kosovo, and Northern Ireland, as these parties are in conflict because they feel their national identity or some vital national interests are being endangered.)

It follows from the first thesis that we lack accurate knowledge about the causes and reasons for the crisis. The second thesis points to the fact that the international community does not recognize the rights of the parties in conflict to realize their national values and interests (as in the case of Kosovo), or else imposes upon them a political resolution which expresses the interests and values of the international community, thereby invalidating the arguments and values of the parties in conflict (for example, Bosnia and Herzegovina).

I would like to use the following arguments to illustrate my theses. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, significant changes took place in Europe: the dissolution of the Communist system and the Warsaw Pact; the disintegration of many multi-national states - the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia - and the emergence of new, national states; the end of the Cold War and the transformation of NATO; and war on the territory of former Yugoslavia, accompanied by the inaction of European, or, rather, North Atlantic security mechanisms.

The Communist system the West had fought against for fifty years collapsed over the summer like a house of cards, but not due to economic or military breakdowns. Even today, there is no commonly accepted interpretation of this collapse³. The reasons given for the disintegration of multi-national states are even less precise and accurate.

What we can say is that at the onset of the crisis, the international community did not have a true picture of the state of the internal relations and conflicts which led to the breakdown of the Communist system and of multi-national states. This explains why there were huge differences and misunderstandings within the international community on how to understand and describe the situation, and problems in accepting the vision and goals of national independence in the case of the Czechs and Slovaks,

Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Montenegro.

We can learn a lesson and reach a general conclusion from this: social and political scientists did not predict the dramatic and radical changes in Europe at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, which means that their knowledge was inadequate and obsolete, since the task of knowledge is to predict certain scenarios and events.

Intelligence estimates and resolution of the crisis

My second thesis is that the lack of Intelligence was not the reason for the non-resolution of individual regional crises. Intelligence estimates on the state in the region are exchanged by all partner agencies. I can say with certainty that there are no significant differences among the Intelligence services in their evaluations of the crisis, the roles of individual actors in the crisis, and their motives and goals. The Intelligence services exchange data and are able to verify the type of data from their own sources, so there are no major contradictions in the Intelligence estimates done by Washington, Moscow, London and Ankara on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia or Kosovo. I say this on the basis of my own experience, since the Croatian Intelligence community was a partner in the collection and exchange of not only data and Intelligence, but also evaluations on the crisis in the region and possible ways to resolve it.

Nonetheless, certain governments do not make use of the knowledge of their Intelligence services to effectively resolve crises. Why? Why do Intelligence estimates have no significant influence on the politicians and their understanding and resolution of the crisis? Why don't certain governments (politicians) make more use of Intelligence estimates? This is a practical as well as a theoretical question: what are the practical, real limitations in the application of our knowledge, that is, Intelligence, in the resolution of a crisis?

Knowledge and information enable insights into past and present conditions. Intelligence enables insights into changes and imminent events. Intelligence estimates on national crises attempt to identify actors and their goals. The goals are determined by interests, and interests are determined by values.

By their very nature, regional crises are characterized by conflicts between national interests and goals. I am convinced that an understanding of a conflict which emerges from a conflict of interests and goals can be best understood by becoming acquainted with the values honored by the individual nations, values from which its interests and goals are derived.

On the basis of personal experience, I have become convinced that Intelligence estimates on regional crises (regardless of their accuracy) upset rather than assist governments and international organizations. Why?

A significant indication of historical development in the twentieth century and especially after the Second World War was the process of the integration of contemporary civilizations on an economic, technological, communicational and cultural level. Today our civilization has become functionally integrated. Globalization is the ruling ideology of the developed world, and its main values are human rights, democracy, and the market economy.

Globalization and human rights

But parallel with this process of integration in the contemporary world is the process of individualization on a national level. The world is integrated on one side, but on the other, we have a process of disintegration of multi-national states, and the emergence of new states and new historical entities⁴. Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Ukraine, White Russia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina have come into existence through the process of disintegration. Perhaps even Montenegro or Kosovo will emerge in this same way.

Often this process of the creation of new states is described as an anachronism, as the nationalism of small nations. It is felt that these processes of disintegration destabilize the existing world order because they endanger the balance achieved in European and world integrations, and they are often not acknowledged as one of the basic democratic rights of nations to national independence, freedom and development.

The United States of America, as the leading world power, has a key role in international organizations and NATO, and is therefore able to successfully impose upon these organizations its values and model of behavior. The United States is the ruling world power, but the values which ensure America's national identity and prosperity are not universal.

American policy was guided by the human rights principle as determined by President Clinton's directive⁵, Executive Order 13107, "Implementation of Human Rights Treaties", December 10, 1988. This Executive Order compels all governmental agencies to apply these principles in the implementation of American foreign policy.

However, American policy only acknowledges individual human right and treats them as if they were universal human rights. Individual human rights form the basic principle upon which rests the American globalization policy. Unlike the American approach, Europe acknowledges both individual and

collective human rights: the right to culture, religion, language, nation, etc. The Greek-Turkish conflict on Cyprus, Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Israel, Serbian-Bosnian-Croatian conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, or the Serb-Albanian conflict in Kosovo are essentially about collective, not individual human rights. It is because of their failure to recognize this difference that the NATO troops in Kosovo misdirected the goal of their mission, and, therefore, KFOR is stuck with no prospects of ending its mission for many years.

Individual human rights are not necessarily universal; they differ from culture to culture. Even "everyday" activities such as music fall into the category of entertainment in European culture, but in Indian culture, music is connected to life philosophy. Privacy and public life have different values in different cultures, as do politically nuanced issues such as women's rights, etc. Basic political concepts also create confusion, misunderstandings, and conflicts. For example, three Bosnian-Herzegovinian parties accepted the Dayton Agreement under the condition that Bosnia and Herzegovina be a state consisting of three constitutive nations; that is, a multi-national state. In the English language, the expression multi-national has a different meaning than in Croatian and other European languages (according to the New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, multi-national means: comprising or pertaining to several or many nationalities or ethnic groups⁶). Americans speak of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Bosnia and Herzegovina without showing any understanding for a multi-national Bosnia and Herzegovina. National and ethnic communities in European law are minorities, and that is exactly what the Croats, Serbs and Bosniaks do not wish to be in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This leads to open misunderstandings because the main political and legal problem has redefined itself as a cultural and technical problem.

Each of the three nations in Bosnia and Herzegovina considers itself constitutive, and each member of these nations considers himself endangered in the event that his collective rights are endangered, his right to his language, culture, and religion - not as an individual but as a member of the Croatian, Serbian or Bosniak nation.

The international protectorate in Bosnia and Herzegovina is imposing a resolution which is based on the protection of individual human rights, and this cannot satisfy all three nations. A flag, coat of arms, hymn, currency, and passports have been imposed upon Bosnia and Herzegovina. People as individuals have accepted this, since they must travel, shop, and live; but they have not accepted this as the three nations. These symbols, therefore, do not represent collective values, but rather technical solutions imposed by the international community.

Globalization and national identity

One of the basic values of small nations is their desire for their own state, national independence, freedom, and sovereignty. In Europe a series of small nations, including Croatia, has achieved this desire during the past ten years. The paradox is that the international community considers the majority of these movements nationalistic or right wing, and not primarily democratic, liberation movements. These are young states, and states in transition are still in the process of constructing state institutions. Just because they are confronted with problems which developed countries have already resolved does not mean that the motives, actions, and goals in these countries are undemocratic or that they are historical anachronisms. It is therefore paradoxical that America and the international community have often assisted former Communists and their parties to reassume power, all in the name of democracy.

The refusal to acknowledge, validate, or accept collective human rights – especially those which are critical to national interests and the goals of some nations – leads to unreal expectations about actions and operations that have been undertaken.

The military intervention in Kosovo in 1999 is one example. “The fact that Secretary of State Madeleine Albright advised President Clinton that Mr. Milosevic would fold after a few days of bombing was a testament to how little she understood Serbian intransigence”⁷. After the removal of Milosevic and the election of Kostunica as President of Yugoslavia, the international community is again just as prepared to make false evaluations and hasty conclusions. Another example is Special Envoy to the UN Secretary General Carl Bildt’s recent “non-paper”⁸, which promotes stability in the “Balkans”, but by first placing these countries in quarantine, then integrating them by the formula 5 plus 1 plus 1, and only allowing them the right to satisfy the minimum of national interests.

Carl Bildt does not see these countries as equal partners, or as partners in European integration; they are simply countries with “low-level sovereignty”, in the “waiting room” for integration with the democratic world. Bildt’s proposal does not respect the views, interests, and values of countries in the region; it simply imposes resolutions. This entire conflict broke out because individual nations revolted against the hegemonistic dictates of the stronger powers.

A recent statement by George Bush, Jr., who said that American foreign policy should stop being so arrogant and stop imposing its political and cultural values on other countries is therefore reassuring. I quote: “I just don’t think it’s the role of the

United States to walk into a country and say, we do it this way, so should you..I think the United States must be humble and must be proud and confident of our values, but humble in how we treat nations that are figuring out how to chart their own course⁹."

Not all problems come from one direction. We know that problems appear in a different light if measured against other criteria or seen through other mirrors. Croatia is a small country in Southeastern Europe. For various historical and political reasons, it is very sensitive about its independence, freedom, and sovereignty, and will therefore expend all its energy in preserving its national identity and prosperity. Croatia sees its future in European and North-Atlantic integration and organizations. Croatia is not interested in participating in this integration on the basis of Balkan associations. Croatia wishes to have good relations with its neighbors, but wants to be an equal partner and member of the international community.

The process of globalization has enabled the national independence of small nations emerging from multi-national communities. The democratization of Europe would not have been possible without ensuring the rights of all European nations to self-determination.

Small nations who now have their own states have become subjects on the international scene and have a chance to achieve freedom, self-sufficiency, and development in cooperation with other nations of the world. The process of integration of the former Communist countries and new sovereign states in European and North-Atlantic organizations is unavoidable. The process of democratization and modernization of transition countries will be painful, for these countries must pay a high price if they wish to attain the high standards which exist in Europe. But this process can also be wrought with misunderstandings and unnecessary conflicts if the international community does not "democratize" at the same time; that is, if it does not envision integration as a two-part process in which, on the one hand, new states will fulfill the high standards of the international community, but, on the other, their national identities, security and prosperity are guaranteed.

NOTES

- 1 Supreme Allied Commander Europe General Wesley Clark: "Lessons of Kosovo", the American Enterprise Institute, August 31, 1999.
- 2 M. Tuđman: "The First Five Years of the Croatian Intelligence Service: 1993-1998", *National Security and the Future* 2(1)2000, pp. 47-74.
- 3 "After a century of war that saw the demise of ancient empires and the victory of democracy and market economies over Nazi and Communist totalitarianisms."

- (Robert Gates "Security Issues in the 21st Century: An Intelligence Perspective", *National Security and the Future* 2(1) 2000, pp. 9-11). These evaluations only confirm the changes, they do not provide insight into why they occurred.
- 4 F. Tudman: "The Process of Democratic Transition in the South-Eastern Europe", *11th International Conference on Policy and Strategy, Institute for Foreign Relations "Franz Josef Strauss – Symposium"*, Munich, November 18-20, 1990.
 - 5 Executive order 13107, "*Implementation of Human Rights Treaties*," December 10, 1998.
 - 6 National refers to a nation or a country in its entirety, "pertaining to a nation or country, esp. as a whole; affecting or shared by the whole nation".) *New SOED*. Nation can even mean land or kingdom, as in United Nations.
 - 7 David Owen, *The Wall Street Journal*, September 26, 2000.
 - 8 Carl Bildt: "*To Prepare for Peace – Towards Self-Sustaining Stability in the Balkans*", September, 2000.
 - 9 Presidential Debate at Wake Forest University, October 11, 2000.

