

MONTENEGRO AND STABILITY IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

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I wish, first of all, to thank the U.S.-Montenegrin Policy Forum for organizing the discussion on the future of Montenegro. Montenegro, being peaceful and without any real danger of war, does not provoke special interest, attention, headlines, or breaking news. It does not motivate for support either. Hence, every effort and contribution in promoting successful protection of peace and multiethnic society, open towards regional cooperation, all of which Montenegro still manages to achieve, is worth admiration and praise.

Problems of regional peace and stability

The Balkans, or the South East Europe, where I come from, with crisis and wars, has given very strong and durable imprint to the Europe in the last decade of the 20th century. And, by all means, it continues to do so at the outset of the new century. Although the power that has brought and conducted the war has been ousted, the evil genie released, still cannot be brought back into the bottle. The negative consequences will last for a long time. NATO will extend, and possibly expand, its presence in the region to maintain whatever peace and security. The end is not yet at sight for the foundations of a just and stable peace are not yet created.

To illustrate this, I can mention some of the unresolved issues:

- **Kosovo** - there is no vision for its future: its status, its relations with Serbia, Albania, and the region;
- **Serbia** - there is a strong presence of old political ideas, ambitions and structures, uncertainty regarding its regions: Southern Serbia, Vojvodina, Sandzak, and its future role in the region;
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina** - the Dayton Peace Agreement that ended the war, is still the basis, not a departure towards a strong and stable state - much depends on the political attitudes of Zagreb or Beograd;
- **Macedonia** with possible difficulties until peace and stability is secured;
- **Future of Montenegro** and its relations with Serbia;
- **Albania** and its internal and regional development, stability and ambitions.

I believe that prerequisites for a durable peace and stability in our region are the following:

1. Complete removal of the policy that represents the root cause of war and destruction in the region, i.e. the policy of regional power aspiration and hegemony in all of its forms.
2. Strengthening and predominance of genuine democratic and reformist orientations, ideas, values and institutions.
3. Support of the processes that lead to internal stability of every specific country, without any kind of pressure or interference from neighboring countries or from foreign powers.
4. Support to the protection of multi-ethnic character of the societies in countries with complex ethnic or religious composition. This assumes full protection of minorities in accordance with the best European standards and practice.
5. Promotion of regional cooperation and relaxation of restrictions in order to enable free movement of citizens, goods, services, investment, etc.

6. Efficient regional program to fight all kinds of crime, illegal trafficking and to promote the rule of law and of good governance.
7. Let the process of dissolution of former Yugoslavia be peacefully completed and accepted, and start building, on that bases, new partnership of sovereign states, first of all between Montenegro and Serbia.

Significance of the transfer of Milosevic to The Hague

Because of the often-negative echo and image of Montenegro, created due to the saga of Milosevic's transfer to The Hague, it is necessary to give some clarifications and further warnings:

- The opposition to the Draft law, or to the decision of Serbian Government to hand Milosevic over to The Hague, has nothing to do with the official and democratic Montenegro. Our position, all these years, remained that all who are responsible, and Milosevic is the foremost one, should be extradited to The Hague. That is our political, moral and legal commitment. No legislation was needed for his transfer. Those opposing extradition are exactly the same political structures that Milosevic brought to Beograd to represent Montenegro, and that he used to destabilize Montenegro, instead of democratically-elected authorities. Unfortunately, it is the new Serbian leadership that is maintaining FRY (Milosevic's creature) with the support of all those pro-Milosevic cronies in Montenegro. And again, unfortunately, some western powers have been, or still are, with them on that course.
- Now that Milosevic is in The Hague, I consider it important to underline the following:
 - a. Milosevic, the most important executor of the policy of aggressive national chauvinism, of hegemony and of war, is in The Hague. Nevertheless, the founding fathers, the architects and the driving forces of that policy - they are not at large; they are very much in power structures of Serbia, even amongst the main advisers of FRY leadership.
 - b. Milosevic in The Hague should not be used as an excuse for Serbia. Serbia should start facing real issues, root causes and forces that brought the disaster, and begin with trying thousands of those that committed killings and crimes all over former Yugoslavia. Reconciliation and forgiveness among the people and three states of former Yugoslavia, as well as awakening and a kind of catharsis, will not come without such steps and development.
 - c. Equally important, The Hague process of Milosevic and his associates should pinpoint and enlighten the mistakes and absurd policies of some mighty international factors. How was it possible that Milosevic, with his policy and hundreds of thousands killed in Croatia and Bosnia, was not indicted up until Kosovo exodus, but was even the main partner of international community? So, there is no escape. There is responsibility of some international factors that kept him for so long in such a position, as well as for not extending efficient, timely assistance to the democratic forces in the region.

Montenegro

Oasis of peace and ethnic harmony Agent of stability

I wish to remind that Montenegro, although the very first victim of the Serbian policy to become a regional power, has managed throughout these years to preserve peace and stability, as well as good multi-ethnic relations, and even harmony. This was done in the absence of security guarantees by any power in the region, Europe or world at any time. There was, however, significant political, humanitarian support and, lately, budgetary assistance, especially from the United States. Montenegro, during the whole period of turmoil, was the safe haven for tens of thousands of refugees from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Kosovo. After 1997, it was a reliable support base and a partner to the opposition structures from Serbia in a joint confrontation to the Milosevic policy, as well as a good partner to the EU and the United States with the similar aim. Today, Montenegro is the first and the only country in the region offering the

vision, the concept and an example of possible future relations, cooperation or, even, of integration processes in the region.

During the past years, Montenegro was at the crossroads: to remain in the embrace of Serbia that, strangely enough, managed to inherit the name of Yugoslavia, or to go the same way of all other republics of former Yugoslavia, to be an equal and autonomous international legal entity. That dilemma is now practically resolved. The April elections, for the first time in 80 years of experience with different forms of Yugoslavia, have demonstrated that the majority of the citizens of Montenegro do not wish this framework anymore. It is primarily because the former Yugoslavia of the six republics has ceased to exist, and the existing one is seen to be only Serbia. The Parliament of Montenegro has declared the same in an unequivocal way on the 8 of July 2000, by rejecting and assessing illegitimate the unilateral constitutional changes that have cancelled provisions guaranteeing equal status for Montenegro in the federation of the two republics. The experiment with the 1992 Federation of Serbia and Montenegro, from the very outset, was a total failure of the idea and the efforts to create a common, equal and viable state.

Recently, Serbia has confirmed the same. It has rejected the federal Constitution and the laws, deciding that the Constitution and interests of Serbia must be respected, when rightfully invoked it as the only valid legal base to transfer Milosevic to The Hague. Few days ago, Serbian Prime Minister clearly confirmed that the federal government is another government of Serbia, and that what is called FRY is practically Serbia, as well as that FRY, as a federation of Serbia and Montenegro, in reality does not exist. That is all true, FRY is another name for Serbia, and nobody has the right to ignore this fact. Montenegro is not a part of FRY anymore. The famous stand, the declaration "democratic Montenegro in a democratic FRY", does not have any meaning or sense, because that is absolutely impossible. It is high time to abandon and forget such an illusion. In Montenegro, we consider and experience it only as a recommendation, as a preference, or favor for us to be a part of the Greater Serbia. We have no options and plans of that kind, whatsoever.

New Government of Montenegro and new priorities

Recently, the Parliament of Montenegro has elected a new government and approved the Prime Minister's program. For this occasion, I would like to mention only three important priorities of this Program:

- 1) To speed up the reforms of the public administration, judicial system, and the fiscal and tax policy, and that is what we will be implementing in close cooperation with the EU and the United States' experts. An issue related to this is the privatization program, including the public infrastructure companies, banks and insurance companies.
- 2) To intensify, preferably with the EU, the United States and regional countries and structures, the schemes and actions against the organized crime, trafficking of human beings, as well as establish anti-corruption projects.
- 3) To start the dialogue in Montenegro and with Serbia on our future developments and relations. In this respect I wish to point out the following:
 - a) There is no hurry as far as the Referendum is concerned. We need more time to consolidate peace and stability, and to try to achieve as wide support as possible for what is the best for Montenegro' s future. Also, we have to further win the support for democratic procedure and outcome, for we wish to achieve it in a European, not Balkan, way, i.e. by accepting and promoting

democratic rules of dialogue and of decision, without blackmails, threats or violence. As far as the protection of minorities is concerned, we will apply the highest European standards.

b) We have proposed to the Government of Serbia talks on future relations. The present framework should be abandoned altogether and for good. We can develop our future as two independent and equal states only, as all others have done in the region.

If this is acceptable, we remain ready, provided that this corresponds to the desire and interests of Serbia, to start with associating a part of our sovereignty to a new type of union, for a better future of our citizens, for our common prosperity, as well as for new confidence and cooperation in the region.

For the time being, Serbia does not show interest for the association of equal states. Most would prefer the existing framework, which is greater Serbia, reduced, however. Nonetheless, that is not an option for us. Our state, our equal position with all other states of former Yugoslavia, is non-negotiable. I sincerely believe that, at the end of the day, from this confusion and mix of old and new aspirations and values, a new, genuinely democratic Serbia will emerge and prevail, a Serbia that will stand ready to enter into new relations with Montenegro, as well as with all other countries in the region.