

The Balkans: Far from the Objectives of the International Community

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The Western Balkans, using current terminology, or if one prefers to avoid using a euphemism, the former Yugoslavia. Ten years after Dayton and the Serbia and Kosovo operations, the objectives of the international community do not appear to have been achieved, at least not fully. Let us remind ourselves what they were: the ceasing of hostilities, military stabilisation, the restoration of civil institutions, the democratic process and the handing over of those responsible to the Hague Tribunal.

The *Sonderweg* of Slovenia seems to confirm what it was at the start of the wave of conflicts in the 90s: little combat, fewer deaths, limited population movements and integration into international institutions (starting with the EU and followed by NATO). It is nothing like the other old republics and autonomous territories of Yugoslavia. It is the exception. The universal laying of blame on the Serbs, the permanent suspicion of the Croats and the still unresolved problem of the role of the Bosnian Muslims mean, as a whole, that a high percentage of the affected populations can only wish for emigration as an outlet for frustrations built up after the no less intense hatred. The restoration of infrastructures, fundamental for the normalisation of economic life and for population mobility, continues paralysed in the international courts, which award funding and tech-

nical resources out of consideration for stability and security. All of this is linked to institutional stability, that is, to the degree of effective democratisation of the local institutions, as well as the handing over of those responsible for ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity during the 90s.

The pessimism of the people is even greater in the areas in which the conflicts developed with greater violence and in those where stability in all its forms is far from being *normal*. This is the case in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Srpska Republic, in Kosovo or Serbia, where unemployment, the black economy (when not linked to the mafia) and the absence of prospects makes the latency of the conflict explosive. Only the international presence of armed and security forces guarantees a certain restoration of normality, which can never be compared to pre-war times, or less still to what could be expected of territories which are Central European by history, vocation and contiguity.

Croatia, which was approaching to a greater extent, recognition for its democratic advances, with the liquidation of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) via the urns in successive elections, has seen how the doors have closed to the opening of negotiations for its entry into the European Union in March 2005. This was certainly on the basis of the strict consideration of one of the conditions, that of collaboration with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), whilst other extremely important conditions appeared to satisfy the most demanding: from economic orthodoxy and public financing, to meticulousness

in the observance of the democratic rules for the institutionalisation of political life, or the no less important subordination of the armed forces to civil power. The recovery of economic life, with sectors as important as tourism, pointed to a path of normalization which was even envied by their nearest neighbours.

The disappointment of the Croats, somewhat justified in the March intransigence, will not just have internal consequences but will also affect their closest neighbour, in particular the Croat area of influence within the Croat-Muslim Federation in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Perhaps, – and I digress –, the formula is not the application of the demands *ad littera*, but instead the search for compromise, for the complicity of local democratic institutions in solving legal and criminal problems derived from the conflicts of the 1990s. Or, to put it in other words, that it be those affected themselves who pursue, judge and sentence criminals and delinquents. These are not only war criminals against humanity and in favour of genocide, but also those who made their fortune in the wars and during the long post-war period which has still not been concluded.

Bosnia-Herzegovina, or Mostar and Sarajevo are examples. Incredibly high unemployment, a black economy, some recovery of symbols and societies which have turned their backs on each other, that is, Bosnian and Croat Muslims and the Serb minority reduced to negligible levels. Mostar is a divided city, separated into two communities. The *Stari Most*, symbol of the destruction and at the same time symbol of the city, has been reconstructed and was unveiled on 23rd July

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2004. All the paraphernalia, treasured insofar as it committed the international community, could not hide the emptiness of the streets to the Croatian west or the scarcity of the recovery of economic activity or, even, the reconstruction of homes within the 1995 military division lines. A multiethnic community is nowhere to be seen.

Sarajevo in 2005 represents a city which is increasingly Muslim. This process is illustrated by the exponential growth in mosques, which do not have transparent financing as in other cities with a Muslim majority.

And then there are the institutions, certainly elected through correct procedures and under international guardianship, with the presence of the armed and security forces and imposing a coexistence which significant strata of the population reject when not opposing them head on. Economic activity is protected by the presence of international aid, waning insofar as the scenes of violence become distant or, due to the media influence, shift to catastrophes and fresh violence in other scenarios. In other words, activity is subdued, and takes place in an environment in which submerged economy is the norm.

It is definitely not the breeding ground required to regain normality after the conflicts and the long post-war period and

consequences. The process of the return of refugees and the displaced is therefore nearly impossible and, according to the current data, has registered ridiculous numbers with respect to the sheer size of the displaced population. Significant returns of people to the areas in which some of the minorities are approaching the majority are not even seen, which could be interpreted as a certain distrust in the future even when sheltered by their own community.

The marginalisation of Serbia and the permanent label of aggressors placed upon the Serbs does not help, of course, to temper the mood. On the contrary, the Kosovo intervention is understood as an international aggression and an additional sentence on its people. The secession of Kosovo seems to be a logical conclusion after the international operations and protectorate which were subsequently established. And this secession is interpreted as an amputation without any defence for the feelings and interests of the Serbs.

The prominence of the EU, through the transfer of NATO functions and missions and the international community, means it faces certain responsibilities which firstly, during the military conflict, it shied away from or did not know how to face and which it increasingly shared during the stabilisation phase.

The reformulation of the objectives is now more necessary than ever insofar as the so-called western Balkans are Europe's responsibility and the so-called eastern Balkans are immediate candidates to join their institutions. All this is in the presence of the significant and dignified conduct of Turkey. It is a candidate to join the institutions of the European Union, whose presence is not so distant in the scenarios of the tragedies of the end of the twentieth century. The objectives are economic integration, effective cooperation for the reconstruction of infrastructures and the productive fabric, the reduction of the informality of transactions and the fight against mafias, population mobility and the complicity of the local institutions with these objectives and with the pursuit and sentencing of criminals and their networks, with the addition of the effective establishment of the armed and security forces in our common European systems of security and defence.

Clearly what is required is to put to the test new European proposals for cooperation, security and international relations, so they can truly be European. Such is the wish of the people, all of them victims and this is the moral duty of those with political responsibility and of the populations.