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REECAS NW Conference  
“Shadow Democracy in the Balkans”  
30 April 2015

Shadow Democracy- N.- “Having the general outline and shape of a democratic government but lacking any substance of actual democratic institutions.”- See Kabuki Theater, and several post Yugoslav governments

The Breakup of Yugoslavia is one of the least coordinated, drawn out, and chaotic processes Europe has gone through in the last 50 years. Many of the aftershocks of the breakup can still be seen today with many “democratic governments” failing to maintain even basic principles of human rights within their countries. Within this article I will outline the situations that created this push for faux democracy, the current state of affairs in many post Yugoslav governments, and offer my own recommendations for creating a more democratic system.

The driving force behind this kabuki theater is simple; the West wants democratic governments. Throughout its history Yugoslavia famously played the West against the East. Famously dubbed the “Chink in the Iron Curtain<sup>1</sup>” Yugoslavia embraced socialist principles, but remained open to trade with all parties. Even with the death of Tito in 1980 the strength of these economic and political ties was such that it supported the government for nearly 10 years as Yugoslavs struggled and failed to find a replacement for their famous Marshal. With the Fall of the Iron Curtain it became incredibly apparent to many Yugoslav elites that these countries must embrace the ideals and norms of NATO and EU in order to remain economically and politically viable. So complete is this consensus, that currently all of the Heads of Government in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Macedonia

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<sup>1</sup>. Echikson, William. "Penetrating the Iron Curtain." *Christian Science Monitor* 19 Sept. 1986. [Http://www.csmonitor.com](http://www.csmonitor.com). Web. 24 Apr. 2016

stated that their major political goal is rapid accession to the European Union<sup>2</sup>. However, even with this consensus among the ruling elite actual change to these societies has been slow and challenging.

During the reign of Slobodan Milošević Serbian gangsterism as a form of government became well known throughout the world, with groups such as Arkans Tigers becoming infamous. However, many lower key criminals have not only continued to operate in these independent nations, they have thrived. In many cases they have taken such control of the government apparatuses that it is difficult to tell where the criminal operations begin and government involvement ends. A shining example of this is the current regime in Montenegro.

A small country of about 600,000 people Montenegro has had a rough and tumble history. But for the current generation there is one man who has defined their recent history, Milo Đukanović. Đukanović has been in power, in some form or another for over 25 years, alternating between Prime Minister and President every 8 or so years, with small forays as a private citizen and Minister of Defense<sup>3</sup>. His family has also grown incredibly wealthy over the last quarter century, with his brother owning the largest bank in Montenegro (with the government as its largest customer) and his other relatives taking key positions within the defense and foreign relations ministries<sup>4</sup>. He has been charged with personally orchestrating large smuggling and racketeering operations worth billions of euros by both the Italian and Slovenian governments<sup>5</sup>. He has also crushed active protests over his regime, such as the 2015 anti-government protests that were dispersed with tear gas and armed personnel<sup>6</sup>. However, even now international press understands that Đukanović and his cronies are more or less a permanent

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<sup>2</sup>."EU Enlargement: The next Seven." *BBC News*. Web. 24 Apr. 2016.

<sup>3</sup>.Pejic, Nenad. "The Smartest Man In The Balkans." *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*. Radio Free Europe, 17 Oct. 2008. Web. 24 Apr. 2016.

<sup>4</sup>.Pula, Besnic. "The Budding Autocrats of the Balkans." *Foreign Policy The Budding Autocrats of the Balkans Comments*. Foreign Policy, 15 Apr. 2016. Web. 24 Apr. 2016.

<sup>5</sup>.Traynor, Ian. "Montenegrin PM Accused of Link with Tobacco Racket." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 10 July 2003. Web. 24 Apr. 2016.

<sup>6</sup>."Thousands Demand Montenegro PM Resign as Clashes Rage." - *Al Jazeera English*. Al Jazeera, 25 Oct. 2015. Web. 24 Apr. 2016.

fixture in the government for the near future and must be accepted for any type of diplomatic or economic relations with the country.

Similarly, Kosovo has faced massive issues with its own former Prime Minister, now President Hashim Thaçi; for the last 25 years he has been linked with various criminal enterprises, from his time with the Kosovo Liberation Army to his current administration<sup>7</sup>. This culminated with a 2010 report by the Council of Europe that accused him of direct involvement in smuggling organs taken from Serbian prisoners<sup>8</sup>. From this scandal not only did Prime Minister Thaçi go on to serve an additional 4 more years as prime minister, but he was easily elected President of Kosovo. But far more telling are recent events in Kosovo's Parliament, where it has now become common for members of parliament to regularly throw tear gas during parliamentary sessions. This is done by members of the opposition in order to disrupt the proceedings over topics ranging from Serbian autonomy to taxation issues<sup>9</sup>. These instances demonstrate government and media institutions that are unable to create bare levels of accountability for members of the government.

Recent events have also demonstrated the weak democratic institutions in many of the other former Yugoslav states. Currently the Republic of Macedonia is facing a major scandal after the leading party in the country, VMRO-DPMNE, was caught wiretapping the offices of the leading opposition party, SDSM. This has forced, Nikola Gruevski, the Prime Minister for the last decade, to resign. Matters were only complicated when President Ivanov pardoned all 75 members of his party for any alleged wrongdoing, leading to huge anti-government protests and many people questioning the future of the country. Additionally, Bosnia was rocked in 2014 with its own "Bosnian Spring," where Bosnia's held a series of demonstrations about limited economic growth and political stagnation. This

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<sup>7</sup>.Sepper, Jerry. "KLA Finances Fight with Heroine Sales." *Washington Times* [Washington DC] 3 May 1993: A1. Web. 24 Apr. 2016.

<sup>8</sup>.Lewis, Paul. "Kosovo PM Is Head of Human Organ and Arms Ring, Council of Europe Reports." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 14 Dec. 2010. Web. 24 Apr. 2016.

<sup>9</sup>."Kosovo Parliament Buys Scanners to Stop MPs Bringing Teargas to Work." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 10 Mar. 2016. Web. 24 Apr. 2016.

culminated when members of the public burned and ransacked the Parliament and Presidential Manor over several days and members of the military were called in to disperse them. Lastly Serbia, with all three of its major party leaders holding cabinet-level offices under Slobodan Milošević<sup>10</sup>, has been increasing pressure on the press by the government to not only support government policies, but exclusively support the government's positions on NATO and European integration<sup>11</sup>. Currently, out of the seven former Yugoslav countries, 5 of them have had major breaches of democratic principles by their leadership and/or major protests against the current state of affairs.

What the general trend of these political events demonstrates is that while the form of democracy is there, the function is not. And while many of the political elites within these countries are vocalizing support for the EU and its ideals, many of the deeply held cultural beliefs and practices of the people are resistant to the changes that need to be made. Some of the countries have drafted laws on environmental enforcement, LGBTQ rights, and political reforms, but are facing major difficulties in enforcement. I believe that several key steps can be taken within the region to address these issues and strengthen legitimate governments within these post-Yugoslav states.

A regional Truth and Reconciliation Commission should be established, encompassing Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Serbia, Macedonia, and Montenegro. Similar to the commissions set up after the Rwandan Genocide and Apartheid in South Africa all participants will be granted immunity and allowed tell their story. While many would claim that this goes against the basic tenets of justice, I would argue that the unifying effect that these commissions have demonstrated is critical to finally allowing these countries to move on from the ghosts of the Yugoslav wars<sup>12</sup>. In many instances national media and politicians in all of these countries sidestep these issues and rarely if ever work towards

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<sup>10</sup>.Pula, Besnic. "The Budding Autocrats of the Balkans." *Foreign Policy The Budding Autocrats of the Balkans Comments*. Foreign Policy, 15 Apr. 2016. Web. 24 Apr. 2016.

<sup>11</sup>."Serbia, Annual Report 2015." *Freedom House* /. Freedom House. Web. 24 Apr. 2016.

<sup>12</sup>.Vora, Jay A., and Erika Vora. "The Effectiveness of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Perceptions of Xhosa, Afrikaner, and English South Africans." *Journal of Black Studies J Black Stud* 34.3 (2004): 301-22. Web. 24 Apr. 2016.

internal or international reconciliation<sup>13</sup>. Only by addressing these issues head on, and forcing the people of these nations to understand the legacies of their past can we enable these people to move beyond ancient hatreds and ethnic conflicts. While many would argue that the ongoing Hague tribunal is working in a similar fashion to address this, I believe that this places the blame of the conflict on individual leaders, rather than the society that lead to these actions. By enabling these numerous societies to face, understand, and move on from their past, it will enable larger cooperation within these countries rather than enabling old wrongs and suspicions.

Secondly, the European Union should work to liberalize trade relations between the EU and the Western Balkans. Since the Fall of the Iron Curtain these nations have faced limited economic opportunities for an increasing number of disenfranchised youth. With some countries, such as Macedonia and Bosnia reporting up to 45% unemployment within their countries<sup>14</sup>. The EU should enable private companies to take advantage of the cheap labor available in these counties and proximity to large markets. Once more economic opportunity is available in the country, the trend across most of eastern Europe is for people to turn to legitimate business<sup>15</sup>. As can be seen across the former Eastern Bloc, when the opportunity occurs for citizens to pursue legitimate employment the ability of criminal organizations to recruit and remain effective is diminished. By Europe enabling the formation of business within these areas, they can enable to rule of law within these countries and stem the migration of disenfranchised Slavs into their own countries.

Lastly, these post-Yugoslav states are facing the largest challenge to their own institutions since the wars and conflicts of the 2000's with the massive migration of Syrians, Afghans, and other conflict refugees flowing into Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo and Bosnia in an attempt to migrate to Western Europe. With thousands of refugees flowing into Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo and Bosnia, in an attempt

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<sup>13</sup>. "Serbia, Annual Report 2015." *Freedom House* /. Freedom House. Web. 24 Apr. 2016.

<sup>14</sup>. "The World Factbook: Bosnia and Herzegovina." *Central Intelligence Agency*. Central Intelligence Agency, 2015. Web. 24 Apr. 2016.

<sup>15</sup>. "Higher Youth Wages Mean Lower Crime Rates." *Higher Youth Wages Mean Lower Crime Rates*. National Bureau of Economic Research. Web. 24 Apr. 2016.

to migrate to Western Europe. At this time the West has placed numerous restrictions on these governments, but done little to assist them with this international crisis. At this time the EU should be focused on providing both administrative and military support to these nations to allow for them to face and handle this ongoing crisis in a humanitarian manner. This would also allow for these countries to work to strengthen their own institutions and test their ability to manage internal affairs in the face of international crisis.

The Western Balkans more than any other region in Europe is facing a dilemma of changing its society to meet and be accepted by the regional powers of their continent. While the elites of these countries have worked hard to create the institutions necessary to change the society, they lack the political will and power to change these societies and extinguish long simmering ethnic tensions between numerous peoples. It is up to the European Union to work to enable the destruction of these shadow democracies or face the security threat of having a large population of economically disenfranchised, politically corrupt, and culturally isolated population on their very doorstep.

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