<https://www.dw.com/bs/kontinuitet-osporavanja-bih/a-51283049>

***Bosnia-Herzegovina continually denied***

Serbia’s and Croatia’s attitudes towards B-H have been destructive in the former Yugoslavia the same as during the 1990s wars. Disagreements and inconsequence within the EU are actually lending a helping hand to these two countries, participants in the round table agreed on.

*USA Milosevic Tudjman und Izetbegovic in Dayton (Getty Images/AFP/J. Ruthroff)*

All B-H neighbors are continually acting contrary to its interests, said the participants. Speaking about Serbia’s and Croatia’s attitudes towards Bosnia in the context of ongoing geopolitical turmoil, Nerzuk Curak, professor at the Faculty of Political Sciences, emphasizes that Russian influence, though destabilizing, has been “overestimated;” should the EU betray its principles that would be a much bigger problems to B-H, he adds. “If a ban on migrants in search for a better life becomes the EU’s highest value, such a Europe is of no avail to us. If its values are closed borders, denied diversities, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, that’s the EU we need not, as it stands against multiethnic countries. “Such an EU would be inherently against B-H, while allied to nationalistic policies of Belgrade and Zagreb,” said the professor.

Referring to Islamophobia, strengthening of right-wing policies and political “center’s” flattery to rightist structures, professor Curak also warns about the consequences of French President Macron’s “dangerous” interview with British “Economist.” “Macron is speaking about a geopolitical transformation of the world, while actually advocating a new Europe under French influence. The said interview shows that even Macron is under the influence of Islamophobia, hence his statement about Bosnia as a ‘time bomb’ is nothing one would not expect of him. Statements as such create the atmosphere that only encourages Belgrade’s and Zagreb’s destructive policies for Bosnia. Unfortunately, we do not have an authentic B-H policy capable to confront all of this,” notes Curak.

*Runder Tisch in Sarajevo: Einfluss Serbiens und Kroatiens auf politische Lage in Bosnien Herzegowina (DW/S. Huseinovic)*

***Diplomacy of the Republic of Croatia in the service of B-H’s HDZ***

Participants in the round table warned that Serbia’s policy still considers B-H “a part of its geopolitical space” and that nothing indicates a slightest change in Serbia’s intelligence structure – a “cancer” of the Western Balkans. They noted that Croatia – that should be B-H’s ally – was also insisting on reorganizations that would imply three ethno-territorial units established in the country.

 “This is mirrored in /Premier/ Andrej Plenkovic’s statement about putting Croatia’s diplomatic service in the aid of B-H’s HDZ. Regretfully, Zagreb’s foreign policy boils down to the domestic policy of B-H’s HDZ,” says professor Curak.

Serbia and, to some smaller degree Croatia, but each one in its own way and with the assistance from their “strategic partners” have influenced political developments in the post-war B-H by playing exactly on European dilemmas and misunderstandings President Macron is now provoking in his public addresses, takes Academician Slavo Kukic. “But there were periods that hinted at different attitude towards B-H,” he explains.

“The early 2000s hinted at changes. HDZ had lost power in the Croatian Parliament. Ivica Racan and Stjepan Mesic with different attitude towards B-H stepped onto the political scene. Mesic used to say that Croats in B-H should be seeking answers to their problems in Sarajevo rather than in Zagreb,” said Kukic.

***Mesic’s and Tadic’s positive signs did not influence actual centers of power***

In the early 2000s positive signals started coming to B-H from Serbia as well. “Following on the fall of the Milosevic regime, and then of the cabinet of Vojislav Kostunica who had never stopped dreaming about ‘the Greater Serbia,’ Serbia President Boris Tadic also began sending positive signs to B-H. He was advocating cooperation and reconciliation between the countries emerging from disintegrated Yugoslavia, he apologized to the victims of the war and paid homage to the killed in Srebrenica. However, projects of special ties between Serbia and Republika Srpska were launched while he was still in office; true, the Dayton Accords did provide such special ties, but today with Aleksandar Vucic in power these ties are being misused to such an extent that Serbia develops relations with Republika Srpska as if the state of B-H is non-existent,” says Kukic.

“Aleksandar Vucic has never distanced himself from Milorad Dodik’s statements about RS-Serbia unification as a permanent strategic goal. His only response were tropes such as ‘Serbia respects the territorial integrity of B-H.’” Kukuc warns that radical changes in attitude towards Bosnia are coming from its neighbor in the West.

“Contrary to expectations, rightist ideology has been on the rise in Croatia after its admission to the EU. So, Croatia’s policy is once again determined by its attitude towards Sarajevo. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic champions this policy while presidential candidate Ante Djapic promises establishment of a Croatian republic in B-H. They are also insisting on amendment of the Election Law in B-H, the amendment providing clauses contrary to all European standards,” warns Kukic.

*Runder Tisch in Sarajevo: Einfluss Serbiens und Kroatiens auf politische Lage in Bosnien Herzegowina (DW/S. Huseinovic*)

Ivo Komsic called Croatia’s policy for Bosnia ‘double-faced.’ Zagreb leaders are now distancing themselves from Tudjman-Milosevic agreement in Karadjordjevo, he noted.

***Radicalization of B-H political scene***

What can come out of such neighbors’ attitudes towards B-H? According to Kucic, Belgrade’s and Zagreb’s attitudes fuel political radicalization in B-H so that calls for a change in domestic political arrangements coming from Bosniak representatives of the Party of Democratic Action /SDA/could be expected. “SDA could advocate arrangements that would lead towards political supremacy of one ethnic group. This is why I would like to see Belgrade’s and Zagreb’s leaders following Willy Brandt’s example and apologizing to citizens of B-H for all the evil their territorially aggressive policies had generated. Mesic’s and Tadic’s gestures at the beginning of this century fell on deaf ears in both countries. Territorial ambitions have survived. Even today international ‘tutors’ are supporting Serbia and Croatia in their destructive policies of B-H,” he warned.

Former members of B-H Presidency Mirko Pejanovic and Ivo Komsic exemplified destructive activities against B-H in the 1990s. Pejanovic reminded of peace negotiations and secret meetings with Slobodan Milosevic who had stated that everything had been settled and the world “wants to see B-H as a unique country.” However, he said, this realization of his costed four bloody years and at least one hundred deaths.

Komsic called Croatia’s policy for B-H “double-faced,” stressing that today’s Zagreb distanced itself from the agreement Tudjman and Milosevic had reached in Karadjordjevo. He also referred to Mate Boban’s offer to him on the eve of the war – Boban had passed across a message from the “president” asking Komsic to assist the establishment of the Croatian state that would “encompass parts of B-H.” “When I asked Boban what would happen to Muslims who were in the majority in the said parts, he replied ‘They will be exterminated.’” „

***Serbian-Croatian attitudes towards B-H at the time of Yugoslavia***

In the Yugoslav era too Serbia and Croatia have influenced political developments in B-H. When it comes to Zagreb, says historian Husnija Kamberovic, that was notably evident during the so-called Croatian spring, while Belgrade intensified its activities in the 1980s when Milosevic was on the rise. Former high official of B-H and Yugoslavia Raif Dizdarevic also tackled the issue, emphasizing that B-H leadership had been often in the position of having to defend the republic’s status of an equal federal unit. He reminded of the Agrokomerc affair the security service had plotted, which had been misused for influencing Bosnian political leadership.

<https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/vijesti/bih/foto-i-video-curak-i-nikolic-i-vucic-su-iz-radionice-cetnickog-vojvode-seselja-507401>

 *(FOTO i VIDEO) Ćurak: Both Nikolić and Vučić were produced in Chetnik Duke Seselj’s workshop*

Academician Kukic recalled the period 2000-2019 to illustrate changes in Bosnia’s neighbors’ attitudes that depended on persons and parties in power. i.

 “True, there were periods of different attitudes, especially from 2000 till 2013 when Stjepan Mesic was the President of Croatia. He said that Croats, together with other compatriots, should build their future in Sarajevo. That was the time when Serbian President Boris Tadic was passing across similar messages, though not so explicitly. However, ever since Croatia’s admission to EU and electoral victory of Tomislav Nikolic and Aleksandar Vucic in Serbia, we have been witnessing repeats of the story from the 1990s – and, as the time goes by those repeats have been more and more intensive.”

“The Serbian Progressive Party’s occupation of the Serbian political scene, political processes shaped by Nikolic’s scenario and Vucic’s in his capacity as first vice-premier and then the premier, put the end to the times without ambitions for B-H. Anyway, track records of those two persons could not have promised any other scenario, they’ve only changed their styles but the fact remains that both of them are products of Chetnik Duke Seselj’s workshop,” says Curak, adding, “Aleksandar Vucic’s behavior is extremely hypocritical. On the one hand, he has been putting across tolerant messages that Serbia acknowledges territorial integrity of B-H and would not interfere into other country’s domestic affairs, while, on the other, he himself has been constantly meddling.”

Participants in the round table also mentioned Milorad Dodik’s political rhetoric based on non-recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and world centers of power that are prone to accept this stance. Milorad Dodik, they stressed out, wouldn’t use such rhetoric without a green light from Belgrade.

The fact that officials from major European countries are actually encouraging Serbia’s and Croatia’s rhetoric additionally burdens B-H, concluded participants. For instance, French President Emmanuel Macron called B-H a time bomb – his statement indirectly encourages Belgrade and Zagreb.

Critical mass has not been created yet. Therefore, one can hardly expect some major changes in foreseeable future. Only more intensive interference of US, NATO and EU into “the story” may bring about some fresh advances, said the participants.

But the question is whether the above-mentioned are ready for such activity. Judging by the US administration moves, they are, but judging by the French President’s statements, they barely seem to be.

By INDIRA HAMZIĆ

<http://historiografija.ba/Hrvati-u-Bosni-i-Hercegovini-trebaju-dobiti-svoj-teritorij.php>

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