

WikiLeaks documents expose disaster created by the US and EU in Bosnia

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17 October 2011

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has been without a state government for over a year—ever since the general election on October 3, 2010—and has little prospect of forming one soon. The political deadlock is described as the worst crisis since the wars of the 1990s after the breakup of the former Yugoslavia. WikiLeaks cables on Bosnia are a devastating exposure of the systemic failure of the entire official political framework, exposing the political bankruptcy of the state's international backers, US and European imperialism.

The country is still divided into two semi-independent entities created by the 1995 Dayton agreement that ended the four-year war provoked by the imperialist powers amid the restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe. The two regions are the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), inhabited mainly by Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats, and the Serb-dominated Republika Srpska (RS).

The FBiH is itself divided into those, mostly Bosnian Muslims, who seek a more centralized state and the abolition of the current divisions, and Croat forces, who demand more autonomy and the eventual creation of a third, ethnically-based entity for Bosnian Croats. The Croat nationalists in turn receive some support from RS Serbian politicians, who are looking to consolidate their powers and occasionally call for the secession of RS.

In this complex political situation, all three sides can veto state-level decisions, or at least challenge their legitimacy and implementation. Each entity has its own government controlling taxation, education, and even foreign policy. A single Bosnian army and unified Ministry of Defense was created in 2006, but is just as divided as all other state-level institutions.

A secret cable from the US embassy in Sarajevo published by WikiLeaks illustrates this fact. The cable, titled “Bosnia: Armed Forces Face Down Grave Crisis,” dates from February 10, 2010.

Faced with protests from 2,700 soon to be dismissed soldiers, “there was a credible threat that Bosnian-Serb soldiers would withdraw from the Armed Forces,” the cable notes. It calls the event “a mutiny.” It concludes: “the breakdown of command along ethnic lines, recourse to political parties and religious leaders, and failure of the collective Presidency to take action as Commander-in-Chief all illustrated the fragility of Bosnia's oft-touted defense reform.”

Another February 2010 Sarajevo embassy cable, “[Croat leader] Covic and [RS prime minister] Dodik – Strange Bedfellows,” discusses “an emerging relationship between prominent BiH Croat and Serb leaders,” who “have met several times in recent months to discuss, inter alia, their ideas on a territorial reorganization within BiH.”

Due to such crises, there are calls to overhaul the Dayton Agreement, part of which functions as the country's constitution. Thus European Parliament coordinator for BiH Doris Pack said Monday that changes were needed, as it was “hard to run a country on the basis of the complicated document.”

There is no simple solution to the intractable ethnic tensions created by the dismantling of Yugoslavia, however. Enver Kazaz, a professor at Sarajevo University, told *Balkan Insight*: “Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country in which the constitutional crisis is the principal, fundamental and fateful political issue.”

Kazaz said that the government vacuum could have catastrophic consequences—including “the collapse of the credit rating of the country, its deepening economic crisis, rising unemployment and sending out the image to the international community that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a politically unstable country that results in a decline in foreign investment.” Thus European Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Fule may withhold a €96 million special assistance package created for Bosnia.

In a May 6 policy briefing entitled “Bosnia: State Institutions Under Attack,” the International Crisis Group declared that “Bosnia faces its worst crisis since the war,” adding that violence is “a near prospect if this [gridlock] continues.”

These concerns were already voiced in the confidential April 2009 US cable, “What to do about a problem called Bosnia.” It declares: “Unfortunately, Bosnia has been heading in the wrong direction for almost three years now. There has been a sharp and dangerous rise in nationalist rhetoric, reforms have stalled (in some cases there has been backsliding), and Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats have laid out sharply different visions of Bosnia's future as a state. The options for addressing the Bosnia problem are limited. There are risks associated with any course of action designed to resolve it.”

Constitutional reform, the cable continues, “if unsuccessful...could further inflame the political situation here, perhaps irretrievably. To be stark: a process that failed could bring such pressure as to splinter the state.”

The way imperialist foreign policy has spawned a corrupt, super-rich local elite is exposed in an embassy cable of February 2010. It describes the entry into politics of “the powerful, reportedly corrupt, and sometimes vindictive media mogul Fahrudin Radoncic, [who] has the support of the leader of the Islamic community... [and] ownership and direct control of the most widely-read daily newspaper in Bosnia [which] will ensure that his campaign message is well propagated.”

The cable tells how Radoncic, said to be the richest man in Bosnia, had risen “from relative poverty and obscurity after the 1992-95 BiH war to become the founder and owner of Bosnia's leading publishing company.” This company has become a “powerful tool against Radoncic's opponents, particularly the police authorities investigating his role in corruption scandals.”

Radoncic's “corrupt business practices: are then described, including his bribing of the Federation Development Bank director Ramiz Dzaferovic for a loan of about 11 million euros to build his business high-rise office block—money that had been allotted for agricultural development. Having been accused of links to an international drug dealer, Radoncic then launched “a full-scale attack in the pages of *Avaz* [his paper] against the police officials working on that case.”

In the cable, senior diplomat US ambassador Charles English concludes, “Radoncic is almost certainly seeking political status in order to secure protection from the investigation of his illegal business deals by wielding

government influence over the judiciary.”

The cable notes Radoncic's close relations with Islamic religious leaders including Reis-ul-ulema Mustafa Ceric, explaining: “Although Radoncic is not at all devout, he and Reis Ceric have enjoyed a close relationship for over a year, most likely tied to Radoncic's gift of one million KM (approximately 714,000 USD) for the construction of Reis's headquarters and residence in Sarajevo. Additionally, Reis Ceric is the only public figure whom *Avaz* has never criticised.”

The US nevertheless views Radoncic as someone it can do business with. The cable concludes: “At the same time—however distasteful it may be to us or others—if Radoncic... gains enough authority through the October 2010 elections to join a ruling coalition at the state or Federation level... [he] could perhaps contribute to a more peaceful political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina over the near term.”

Indeed, Radoncic's influence secured him 30 percent of the votes for the FBiH state presidency, coming close second to Bakir Izetbegovic, son of the late Bosnian president Alija. His “Union for a Better Future of BiH” won four seats out of 42 in the state parliament, coming third.

The people of BiH face appalling economic and social conditions. Radio Free Europe reported on October 10 that nearly half the working-age population is unemployed, and that Bosnians now spend as much as Americans—over \$90 per capita monthly—on antipsychotic and antidepressant drugs. In Bosnia, this represents more than one-third of the average income.

In the Balkans, a cauldron of diverse national and religious groups, divisions based on ethnicity have had terrible consequences time and time again, and Bosnia is a prime example. It is imperative for the working class to rise above these divisions promoted by imperialism, and consciously turn towards an internationalist and socialist alternative based on establishing the United Socialist States of the Balkans.



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