

FRESH TREMORS IN THE BALKANS

G. Poukamisas¹

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The survival of two diplomatic achievements of the West in the space of former Yugoslavia is imperilled:

- in the North, the Serb component of Bosnia Herzgovina, Republika Srpska, is ready to exit this arabesque of Dayton.
- in the South, another painstaking feat of atlantic diplomacy, Republic of Northern Macedonia, is anew threatened with disarray and implosion. Defeat of PM Zaev in the local elections is a blow for Brussels. In any case nobody is perfect, nobody is eternal. Yet, EU is not to be blamed. The Union, with all its generosity and lack of strategic culture, cannot accommodate at once all those aspiring to enter the fold.

Strong destabilizing winds are blowing to remind all of us that in first place destabilization started in June 1991 with the secession of Slovenia from Belgrade and the ensuing wars of Yugoslav succession. With broken pieces in hand, the West with the Holbrookes, Ahtisaaris, Rohans, had meticulously laboured to re-establish order in the chaos of which it was not foreigner.

Domino movements might restart and then all hell will break loose:

- in Skopje, all four neighbours, not to mention Kosovo, are concerned stakeholders. North Macedonia might increasingly look like the Macedonian vilayets of the Ottoman empire just before the outbreak of the Balkan wars (October 1912).
- in Kosovo, passions might be re-ignited.
- in BH, who is really able to tame Milorad Dodik in his quest for a separate Bosnian Serb statehood?

The Agenda of Thessaloniki (2003) which initiated the long and strenuous process of approximation and ultimately admission of the Balkan countries into the EU was an opening, not having blossomed into fruition. The EU has not been able to deliver, nor to heal the wounds onto the body of the Serbian nation. Now is late and Greece is called upon to play its role, supporting not persons, but institutions, and regional stability, avoiding counterproductive moves there where she has been prudent and circumspect for the last fifteen years. In our judgment, Belgrade and Sofia deserve attention and priority. Hellenic diplomacy, engaging Prime Minister Mitsotakis himself, should enter the fray. With dexterity. Consultations with Romania, “the northern balancer”, might be useful.

Stravon of Amaseia, paying tribute to late Ambassador George Ciamba, outstanding Romanian diplomat.

¹ Dr Poukamisas served as Ambassador of Greece to Ukraine between Autumn 2016 and Autumn 2019.