

Leninism in the Balkans

Пише: Gordon N. Bardos
четвртак, 07 април 2011 06:48

(The National Interest, 6. 4. 2011)



The dirty little secret of international engagement in southeastern Europe for the past two decades is that much of it has been guided neither by liberal internationalism, nor Wilsonian idealism, nor the principles of Jeffersonian democracy, but by a much more malign philosophy—Leninist voluntarism. And as the region faces its most severe crisis in more than a decade, the consequences of using Leninist methods to transform the Balkans are becoming painfully apparent.

Vladimir Lenin's major contribution to Marxism was essentially a repudiation of it: in contrast to Marx's central belief that history evolves as material forces and the means of production are transformed, Lenin argued that a small, determined group can change and accelerate the course of history. Leninists took it for granted that their elite vanguard was entitled to disregard "bourgeois" notions of democracy and justice for the sake of some greater good that they themselves had decided upon. For Lenin and his comrades, the ends justified the means.

We know of course how that story ended, and the problems, abuses, and crimes that Lenin and his followers ultimately caused throughout much of the world. Sadly, however, much of our approach to the Balkans is often guided by the same mindset.

Consider Bosnia, for instance. Since 1997, the high representative in the country, an internationally appointed bureaucrat with no democratic legitimacy granted to him by the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina, has had the right to dismiss freely elected officials from office, overturn decisions made by legitimately elected legislative institutions, impose laws and regulations by fiat, and confiscate both public and private property at his discretion. (Lenin was quite fond of confiscating personal property and assets as well.) Transparency International has gone so far as to say that that the high representative engages in actions which would be considered theft in any Western democracy.

And it doesn't stop there. In one notable instance, a former high representative dismissed some sixty public officials from office and banned them from future engagement in public life, a decision based essentially on hearsay evidence and random accusations made in cafes. They were neither allowed to appeal their dismissals nor to present evidence in their defense. Even Yagoda (Stalin's favorite prosecutor during the Moscow show trials) allowed his accused at least the pretense of a trial. Such judicial tactics are clearly not those of people who sincerely believe in Western conceptions of justice and rule of law, but Leninists by definition are always in a hurry so they have no time to honor the judicial formalities of the decadent West. Such tactics were again used by the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq, with even more devastating and tragic consequences.

The epitome of Balkan Leninism is perhaps on display at this very moment. Some two weeks ago, the Bosnian Muslim Social Democratic Party (SDP) engineered what amounts to a coup in one of Bosnia's two entities, the Federation of B&H, by forming a government without the support of two parties that received approximately 90 percent of the Croat vote, a clear disenfranchisement of the Croat population in Bosnia, and a blatant violation of the fundamental Bosnian principle of the equality of the country's ethnic groups. The SDP's move has been silently supported by international officials in the country. What's more, when Bosnia's Central Electoral Commission ruled that the SDP's actions violated Bosnian electoral laws, the high representative then suspended the ruling. Somewhat remarkably in twenty-first century Europe, an individual whose position is essentially that of an internationally appointed colonial administrator has decided that neither the electoral will of Bosnia's citizens, nor Bosnia's own political traditions and culture, nor the decisions of Bosnia's own legitimate constitutional bodies really matter. The only thing that apparently matters is some secret plan for imposing "progress" on Bosnia that does not require democratic dialogue and constitutional legitimacy, but only sufficient dictatorial force.

An active propaganda campaign was also one of the hallmarks of Lenin's approach to politics, and here the Balkan Leninists have not been slouches either. In a bizarre misappropriation of blame for the problems in Bosnia, individuals who led the war in the 1990s, who advocate using Leninist political tactics to solve interethnic problems and who fight to achieve the ethnic dominance of their group over others have somehow become the international darlings. Meanwhile, individuals who were against the war, who stood up against the war criminals when it was most dangerous to do so, and whose political efforts are based on simply protecting the equality of their communal group vis-à-vis the others have become the bad guys. Orwell certainly would have appreciated the twisted doublespeak of many international officials on this score.

Leninism in the Balkans

Пише: Gordon N. Bardos
четвртак, 07 април 2011 06:48

In Kosovo, the Balkan Leninists have been hard at work as well. Over the past decade, as expertly described in a new article by Pulitzer prize winning journalist Matt McAllester [\[1\]](#), rather than promoting human rights or the rule of law, international officials (primarily American) have actively worked to block and prevent investigations of people accused of essentially being pimps, drug dealers, human organ thieves, political assassins, and of persecuting ethnic minorities. Why such people were ever considered American allies or how they were supposed to promote democratic development in Kosovo or regional security in the Balkans is hard to imagine, but then again, Lenin's Cheka drew most of its recruits from the worst elements in society as well. And the results of such policies are plain to see. Twelve years after NATO took control of Kosovo and three years after Kosovo's self-declared independence (a period during which Kosovo received twenty-five times more international aid per capita than Afghanistan), Kosovo's unemployment rate is near 50 percent, it has a frozen conflict in the north, a nonexistent judicial system, a former prime minister indicted for war crimes, decreasing levels of foreign direct investment, two-thirds of the international community refuses to recognize it, and chronic political instability, as seen in the widespread fraud accompanying Kosovo's December parliamentary elections and the unconstitutional election of Kosovo's president in February. Meanwhile, talk of a "Greater Albania" is discussed more and more openly (even by Kosovo's recently removed president), a development that will only further Macedonia's slow disintegration and destabilize most of the southern Balkans.

Unfortunately for southeastern Europe, for most of the past two decades far too many international officials have been guided by Lenin's belief that the ends justify the means. As [Madeleine Albright](#) (of "Madeleine's War" fame) once said on 60 Minutes, she believed removing Saddam Hussein from power was worth the deaths of five hundred thousand Iraqi children. One shudders to think what many of the internationals now working in the Balkans might have done had fate placed them in Lenin's Politburo in the 1920s rather than in the fortunately more benign and constricting environment of twenty-first century Europe. And it is very hard to imagine that using such Leninist methods will ultimately produce the stable, tolerant democracies we claim as our goal.

[\[1\]](#) See "Kosovo's Mafia: How the US and Allies Ignore Allegations of Organized Crime at the Highest Levels of a New Democracy," available at: <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/europe/110321/kosovo-hashim-thaci-organized-crime>