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This week's elections again confirmed that Bosnia is a "pretend country"—a wholly artificial creation of meddling Western nation builders. [Most media accounts in the United States highlighted the victory](#) of the supposed moderate candidate, Bakir Izetbegovic, for the Muslim seat on the country's collective presidency. But that focus was misleading for two reasons.

First, it is easy to overstate Izetbegovic's alleged moderation. He does seem less extreme than some other Muslim political figures in the Muslim-Croat subnational entity that makes up one half of Bosnia's convoluted political structure. However, he is the son of Aliya Izetbegovic, the country's first president after the secession from Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. The elder Izetbegovic was a Muslim hardliner who bore more than a little share of the blame for the subsequent civil war in Bosnia. It remains unclear just how much different the son is from the father.

Second, election results in the Serbian subnational entity, the Republika Srpska, and for the Serb seat on the collective presidency [emphasized that ethnic nationalists remain in control](#). The re-election of Milorad Dodik as president of the Republika Srpska is especially significant, since Dodik [has stated repeatedly](#) that the Serb entity ought to be able to secede from Bosnia and form an independent state. So, even if Muslims and Croats might be in the mood for compromise, there is little indication that the Serbs share that attitude.

The bottom line is that Bosnia seems no closer politically to being a viable country now than it was fifteen years ago when the U.S.-brokered (and largely U.S.-imposed) Dayton accords ended the bloody civil war. If allowed to do so, the overwhelming majority of Serbs would vote to secede. Most Croats also would likely prefer to end their status as Bosnia's smallest and least influential ethnic bloc and choose to merge their territory with neighboring Croatia. In other words, Bosnia is a country in which a majority of the population does not want the country to exist. That is a good operational definition of an unviable state.

Washington's Bosnia Fiasco

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The country's economic prospects are no more encouraging. [Bosnia's unemployment rate is an astonishing 43 percent](#), and much of the economy consists of inputs from the international community—both in the form of direct foreign aid and the money that the swarms of international bureaucrats in the country spend while performing their duties. Absent those expenditures, Bosnia's economy would be in even worse shape.

[In an interview with the *Wall Street Journal*](#), Milorad Dodik described the creation of Bosnia as “a mistake.” He's right. It was certainly a mistake for the United States and its NATO allies to insist that three mutually antagonistic ethnic groups stay together in a state that only one faction, the Muslims, regarded as legitimate—and did so only because, as the largest group, they believed they would control the government. The Western powers would have been wiser to have facilitated a partition of Bosnia when the civil war first broke out.

That mistake needs to be repaired, or Bosnia will be a perpetual international political and economic ward. Worse, it could be a political time bomb that might detonate at some point and cause another crisis in the Balkans. Western policy makers simply ignore reality when they stubbornly insist that Bosnia continue to exist in its current incarnation. Washington should explicitly withdraw its objection to a partition of the country. If voters in the Republika Srpska choose to establish an independent state, the U.S. and the other NATO members ought to respect that decision. Keeping a vegetative Bosnia on international life support does not serve any legitimate American interest.