



Where does the EU and USA Taxpayers' Money go? International Institute for Middle-East and Balkan Studies analysis

During the past ten years Bosnia and Herzegovina underwent the process of deep reforms and structural adjustments dictated by the Euroatlantic integrations for which BiH opted after signing the Dayton/Paris Peace Accords. Numerous reforms have significantly changed the Bosnian society in only one decade, though at certain points of time they were slowed down and opposed by the national/nationalistic parties. Although the nationalists most often rejected the reform efforts of the state of BiH, they nevertheless participated in those processes with various forms of pressurising which changed general political relations in the state.

However, the Office of the High Representative is the only institution operating in BiH which has failed to carry out any serious reforms within itself in order to show that it approves the spirit of changes which have swept through the Bosnian society and that it is willing to participate actively in those changes by reforming and adapting itself.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was - unlike the other neighbouring states - deprived of the opportunity for democratic development in the early 1990s due to the national/nationalistic parties, has expected OHR to accelerate the democratic processes by constantly adapting the methods of its activities within OHR to the social processes. Regrettably, OHR is the most bureaucratised institution today with an extremely low level of democracy in which the High Representative with his actions promotes the concept of totalitarian regime and treats BiH in certain moments as a kind of a colony rather than a sovereign state which is actually member of UN and strives for membership in EU and NATO.

The IFIMES International Institute believes that with those actions OHR has compromised the reputation and credibility of the international community in BiH and the region. This has been confirmed by constant resistance to the OHR's activities which in turn reduces the international credibility of BiH which has already become one of the less interesting states due to other crises in the region such as Kosovo, Macedonia etc.

The High Representative for BiH is not capable of implementing the international authority under the very complicated conditions in BiH. Lord Paddy Ashdown who has carried out this function for the past 33 months has very often applied the methods resembling totalitarian and dictatorial regimes

The IFIMES International Institute believes that the actions taken by the present High Representative for BiH Lord Ashdown reflect his political background and the country from which he comes. The overaccentuated military career which he pursued most of his life and the fact that he was born and grew up in India, the largest former British colony, mark significantly his present behaviour in BiH.

All the former High Representatives for BiH (Bild, Westendorp, Petrisch) as well as the present High Representative Lord Ashdown failed to deal with the fundamental problems of BiH, i.e. political organising on national basis. Moreover, in contrast to his predecessors, Lord Ashdown even accepted the nationalists (SDA - Party of Democratic Action, SDS - Serbian Democratic Party, HDZ - Croatian Democratic Union) as partners in carrying out the reforms of the Bosnian society in 2002. Due to Ashdown's approach to reforms Bosnia and Herzegovina is facing a deep crisis in implementing the powers which is most pronounced in the Republic of Srpska (RS) and in the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

During Ashdown's term of office the feeling of deep national division has become very strong. This raises the very serious question whether BiH can be preserved as the union of three nations. The present High Representative Lord Ashdown has frequently taken over the role of domestic institutions in carrying out national tasks, especially in foreign policy. Thus, he has often assumed the role of the Presidency of BiH and of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. This suggests that Lord Ashdown carries the frustrations of not becoming a politician in his country of origin, Great Britain.

The IFIMES International Institute is of the opinion that the international community, acting through High Representative and the Council for the Implementation of Peace in BiH, must take a far more serious approach (in form and content) to the issues of limiting and weakening the influence of nationalistic parties in the Bosnian society, for they are one of the key generators of various forms of conflicts which have not stopped even ten years after signing the Dayton Peace Agreement in this economically almost the poorest European state.

The statement that the current crisis in the BiH Council of Ministers could be overcome by engaging the SDS, SDA and HDZ staff along with the announcement that the vacant position of minister of foreign affairs could be filled in by the conditionally new/former SDS staff such as Mladen Bosic, former BiH ambassador to Slovenia, who - as president of SDS in Brcko - opposed the arbitration process for Brcko in 1997 by organising with a group of his followers the most brutal demonstrations in the post-Dayton Bosnia (the international community has been developing the Brcko District as the most successful multiethnic project in BiH), undoubtedly impair the democratic development of BiH.

This rises the question whether people like Mladen Bosic can carry out the function of minister of foreign affairs or any other important function in BiH if they took part in and supported the anti-Dayton activities during the most sensitive period thus destroying the international peace plan for BiH?

Bearing in mind the insufficient democratic development of BiH, the imminent economic breakdown and the blossoming of corruption and organised crime in BiH, the IFIMES International Institute raises the question of what was the basic aim of enormous funds provided mainly by the EU and USA taxpayers for the functioning of OHR and the High Representative and where were those funds spent. Due to the non-transparency of activities carried out by OHR and the High Representative, the international community has namely never been informed of the costs of the OHR mission to BiH incurred so far.

The IFIMES International Institute is of the opinion that OHR has significantly reduced its authority in the eyes of the public of BiH, especially during Lord Paddy Ashdown's term of office. It would therefore be reasonable for the Council for the Implementation of Peace in BiH to consider his replacement. The new High Representative should assume this position as soon as possible in order to start the process of reforming OHR and its role in BiH. This would also provide a positive stimulus for BiH to return to the path towards true democratisation and reform and help BiH to achieve a sustainable multiethnic society in which there would be no room for current Ashdown's partners and reformers who stem from the SDS, SDA and HDZ nationalistic parties.