

“SCHINDLER LIST” FOR SOUTHEAST EUROPE

Pakistanisation as the Final Solution for the Balkans?

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A few days ago *Observer* published a column under the title *Putin-Proofing the Balkans: A How-To Guide*, written by **John Schindler**. In this article the author advocates some new geopolitical redesigns of the Balkans which are actually far from being a novelty. As a matter of fact, these ideas represent a pale copy of the ideas recently published by *Foreign Affairs* in the article under the title *Dysfunction in the Balkans*, written by **Timothy Less**, a former British diplomat who served as the head of the British diplomatic office in Banja Luka, the capital of the Serb entity in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as the political secretary of the British Embassy in Macedonia. Less advocates a total redesign of the existing state boundaries in the Balkans: the imagined Greater Serbia should embrace the existing Serb entity in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also the entire internationally recognized Republic of Montenegro; the Greater Croatia should embrace a future Croatian entity in Bosnia-Herzegovina; the Greater Albania should embrace both Kosovo and the western part of Macedonia. All these territorial redesigns, says Less and Schindler agrees, would eventually bring about a lasting peace and stability in the region.

Of course, it is easy to claim that both Schindler and Less are now only freelancers whose articles have nothing to do with their former employers' policies. However, the problem is that certain circles within the foreign policy establishment in both Great Britain and the United States, in their numerous initiatives from 1990s onwards, have repeatedly advocated the very same ideas that can be found in these two articles, such as the creation of the imagined monoethnic greater states – Greater Serbia, Greater Croatia and Greater Albania – as an alleged path towards lasting stability in the Balkans, with Bosnia's and Macedonia's disappearance as a collateral damage. Of

course, these ideas have always been spread below the surface of official policy, but they have never been abandoned, as the 'coincidence' of almost simultaneous appearance of Schindler's and Less's articles in the renowned mainstream magazines demonstrates.

Ostensibly, the ideas advocated by Schindler and Less are rooted in the plausible presupposition that, as long as the existing nationalist greater-state projects remain unaccomplished, the nationalist resentment will always generate ever-increasing instability. However, the history has clearly demonstrated, both in the Balkans and other parts of the world, that such a presupposition is nothing but a simple fallacy. For, the very concept of completed ethnonational states is a concept that has always led towards perpetual instability wherever applied, because such ethnonational territories cannot be created without projection of extreme coercion and violence over particular 'inappropriate' populations, including the techniques which have become known as ethnic cleansing and genocide. The logic of 'solving national issues' through creation of ethnically cleansed greater states has always led towards permanent instability, never towards long-term stability. Let us only remember the consequences of the German ruling oligarchy's attempt to create such a state in the World War II. And let us only try to imagine what the world would be like if their geopolitical project was recognized and accepted in the name of 'stability', as now Schindler and Less propose in the case of some other geopolitical projects based on ethnic cleansing and genocide.

What is particularly interesting when it comes to 'solving national issues' in the Balkans is the flexibility (i.e. arbitrariness) of the proposed and realized 'solutions'. First, the winners in the World War I, among whom the British and American officials occupied the most prominent positions, advocated the creation of the common national state of the Southern Slavs at the Peace Conference in Versailles. Then, more than seventy years later, Lord Carrington, the longest serving member of the British foreign policy establishment, chaired another international conference in The Hague where he oversaw the partition of that very state in the name of 'solving national issues' between ethnonational states which constituted it. Together with the Portuguese diplomat, Jose Cutileiro, Lord Carrington then also introduced the first, pre-war plan for ethnic partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina (the Carrington-Cutileiro Plan), again in the name of 'solving national issues' between the ethnic groups living in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which was eventually sealed, with some minor changes, at the international conference in Dayton. And now, here is yet another plan for fragmentation of the Balkan states, again in order to 'solve national issues'. What is needed in addition is yet another international conference to implement and verify such a plan, and thus turn the Balkans upside-down one more time. Therefore it comes as no surprise that such a conference on the Western Balkans has already been scheduled for 2018 in London.

Yet, how the proposed dismemberment of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, as well as the absorption of Montenegro into Greater Serbia, can be made politically

acceptable to the population of the Balkans and the entire international community?

What is required to accomplish such a task is a scenario that would make an alternative to dismemberment and absorption of sovereign states even less acceptable. It is not difficult to imagine that only a war, or a threat of war, would be such an alternative. However, its feasibility is limited by the fact that no state in the Balkans has the capacities and resources – military, financial, or demographic – to wage a full-scale war, and their leaders are too aware of this to even try to actually launch it. In such a context, the available option is to create an atmosphere that would simulate an immediate threat of war, by constantly raising nationalist tensions between, and within, the states in the region. Of course, such tensions do exist since 1990, but it would be necessary to accumulate them in a long-term campaign so as to create an illusion of imminence of regional war.

Significantly, following the appearance of Less's article, and simultaneously with Schindler's one, the tensions within Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia have begun to rise. This growth of tensions can hardly be disregarded as accidental, given the fact that the Balkan leaders can easily be played one against another whenever they receive signals, no matter whether fake or true, that a new geopolitical reshuffle of the region is being reconsidered by major global players. Since they are already well-accustomed to raising inter-state and intra-state tensions as a means of their own political survival, it is very likely that they will be able to accumulate such tensions to such a level as to gradually generate a mirage of imminent regional war. Also, a part of the same campaign is the systematic spread of rumours, already performed all over Europe, which a war in the Balkans is inevitable and will certainly take place during 2017.

In the simulated atmosphere of inevitable war, a radical geopolitical reconfiguration of the entire Balkans, including dismemberment of the existing states proclaimed as dysfunctional and their eventual absorption into the imagined greater states, may well become politically acceptable. All that is needed is to juxtapose this 'peaceful' option and the fabricated projection of imminent war as the only available alternatives, and offer to implement the former at a particular international conference, such as the one scheduled for 2018 in London. What is required for implementation of the proposed geopolitical rearrangement of the Balkans is to spread the perception that the permanent rise of political conflicts in the region inevitably leads to a renewed armed conflict. In that context, all the proposed fallacies about usefulness of geopolitical redesigns in the Balkans may easily acquire a degree of legitimacy, so as to be finally implemented and verified at the 2018 London conference on the Western Balkans.

Of course, if that happens, it can only lead to further resentment and lasting instability in the region and Eastern Europe, and that can only lead to growing instability in the entire Europe. One can only wonder, is that a desired ultimate outcome for those who promote greater state projects in the Balkans as an alleged path towards its stability?

