
Independence Of Kosovo And The Nagorno-Karabakh Issue

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I believe that it would not be wrong to define International Relations, in a limited sense, as a discipline that tries to depict the formation of new systems and the elimination of the old ones systematically. Moreover, it draws a framework for the art of diplomacy in an interdependent fashion and regional conflicts represent one of the most interesting parts of this area in this context. Since, this topic is an interdisciplinary issue and each conflict requires a sui generis approach.

Formation and dissolution of unions cause instability in terms of politics, economics and security. In this context, the last decade of 20th century was really dramatic when we recall the collapse Iron Curtain, with the fall of Berlin Wall and revolutions in 1989 which was followed by inevitable dissolution in the Eastern Bloc.

After the elimination of old system, state controlled economies were forced to transform into market economy which was totally an unknown issue for those countries. Issues such as democracy, human rights also have been started to be brought up ever so often.

In such an environment with the disappearance of powerful-authoritarian state image, which had surpassed ethnic and nationalist movements, serious problems have started to take place in the Former Yugoslavia and Former Soviet geography.

In Balkans Serbian nationalism headed by Milosevic caused massacres firstly in Bosnia and then in Kosovo and initiated a process in which micro-nationalism deepened.

Clashes between Serbians and Albanians of Kosovo required military intervention of NATO in 1999 and international community has taken control in Kosovo, which was once a part of Yugoslavia. Until the declaration of independence of Kosovo in 2008 a new period in which formation of new states and change of political structure would be witnessed has started. Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia have been already established until 1999 and in 2006 Montenegro disaffiliated from the federal structure of Serbia-Montenegro. When Kosovo declared its independence on 17 February 2008, a new state got participated to this league of newly emerged countries.

In fact, Kosovo had been independent for 8 years in de facto sense, but the official declaration of this reality has brought many problems.

The essence of the problem was international recognition of a country based on the right of self determination without the approval of the state, to which it is constitutionally dependent. This recognition takes place, in spite of the presence of the statement in the UN resolution 1244: "Kosovo is a part of Federal Yugoslavia". Basically, Federal Yugoslavia formed by Serbia and Montenegro and Kosovo has lost its autonomy after the changes in 1989 done by the government of Milosevic unilaterally. As a result of these changes Albanians of Kosovo was pushed out of the institutional structure.

As expected the independence of Kosovo leads to a great unease in the states that suffer from separatist movements and these movement's desire to use the example of Kosovo in favor of their cases gain basis which can be observed easily.

In this framework, Turkey is located in a region that three main areas of instability attract attention. These can be indicated as Cyprus issue, separatist movements in Georgia and Nagorno-Karabakh issue between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Nagorno-Karabakh, which Turkey also follows closely, is one of the main reasons of instability in Caucasus. Roots of the problem go backwards, but it can be said that this problem aroused as a result of the glasnost and perestroika policies of Gorbachov in 1980s and Armenian nationalism has gained ground that triggered an on going conflict for more than fifteen years. Dissolution of the USSR further promoted the seriousness of problem, due to vacuum of power in the region. After the independence of Armenia and Azerbaijan tension between these two increased step by step and finally it resulted with a war which had continued up to the ceasefire in 1994 and caused misery and losses for both of the parties.

All these events in the period of war are subjects of another article. Here what is wanted to be discussed is whether the independence of Kosovo constitutes a precedent for Nagorno-Karabakh or not. In this sense, declarations of the foreign minister of the separatist region show the expectations of Armenians. The so called Minister of Foreign Affairs Gregory Petrosyan stated that the example of Kosovo cut in favor of them and shows that even without the approval of the main state recognition of a region is possible.

Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh attempted to be independent several times in the past, but these attempts were not taken seriously by the international community. However, it should be underlined here that Kosovo and Nagorno-Karabakh have highly distinct characteristics. Below, I will try to indicate the reasons in comparative sense.

About the relations of Kosovo and Serbia it can be seen that Serbians had clearly negative attitude against Albanians of Kosovo and they are responsible of the death of thousands of Albanians until the intervention of NATO forces. Prevention of this massacre was by international community. Another important factor is the presence of Serbian majority in northern Kosovo; even after all these events and the declaration of independence.

On the other hand, when we analyze Armenians Karabagh policies, it is so obvious that Azerbaijanis represent the aggrieved side. During the war Armenians killed thousands of Azerbaijanis and occupied almost 20% of Azerbaijan's territory. After the war nearly 1 million people lost their homes -these people have become internally displaced people (IDP) or known as kackinlar in Azeri- and had to live in wagons in really bad conditions. They cannot use their territory, homes or other belongings which is entitled to them by law due to Armenian occupation. There are no such applications in Kosovo. Additionally unlike Kosovo, in Nagorno-Karabakh occupied territories are under the control of Armenian soldiers not the international community. This situation has been condemned many times by international community. Unlike Kosovo, crimes against humanity were committed against Azerbaijanis not on the party which declared independence in Nagorno-Karabakh. (It is not necessary here to discuss details of Hodjali Massacre of Armenians during the war.) In 1989 legal status of Kosovo was changed by the majority, but there is no such attempt by Azerbaijanis in Nagorno-Karabakh. Even Azerbaijan puts expanded autonomy for Nagorno-Karabakh on the negotiation table. Finally the resolutions of UN and other international institutions are in favor of Azerbaijan.

In this context, declarations of international society suggesting that Kosovo is not a precedent for Nagorno-Karabakh show that the theses of Armenians are baseless. In the forthcoming period, the support of international society in

prevention of a wrong process to begin in the Nagorno-Karabakh issue has a vital importance.