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**PERSPECTIVES OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT
OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA¹**

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Summary

This text is a review of Mirko Pejanović's book, The Political Development of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Post-Dayton Period (Sarajevo: Šahinpašić, 2007), which deals with perspectives of political development of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The book by Professor Mirko Pejanović, *Political Development of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Post-Dayton Period* is a result of analysis conducted over a period of years into the dysfunctionality of the Dayton political arrangement based on ethnic principles. On the other hand, it also represents a continued public engagement of an intellectual, concerned about a practically hopeless situation, which his political community has been facing for two decades. Pejanović's text is not solely focused on an analytical approach to this problem matter. It not only critically evaluates the mere foundations of the so-called Dayton Bosnia, but also offers concrete, scientifically-based steps which need to be taken in the process of reconstruction of the country and its association to the European Union; this especially in Chapter 6 entitled *Ideas for Change of the Political System in Bosnia and Herzegovina*.

In my opinion, the main view dominating the book could be summarized as follows: the political development of Bosnia and Herzegovina

¹ Mirko Pejanović, *The Political Development of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Post-Dayton Period*, Sarajevo, Šahinpašić, 2007

“presupposes a change of the concept of political representation. The dominantly ethnic concept should be replaced with a political concept of representing the interests of the citizens. “Then”, Pejanović concludes, “the formula ‘one party – one people – one leader’ will no longer stand. Such a change would prevent disagreements between parties to be transferred to peoples as the *ehtnos*”. After that, a decades-long system “of systematic creation of fear of the other nation” (50) as a mechanism of power, which keeps ethnic elites in power, would be disabled. In other words, as long as political representation of the citizens’ interests is *ethnically based*, it will be possible to interpret criminal charges against a corrupt politician only as a flagrant act against vital national interests, rather than a shameless criminal act. With or without Dayton, Bosnia and Herzegovina is, according to Pejanović, “a hostage of failed political pluralism based on *ethnodemocracy*.” That is why the chapter “Ethnic or Political Pluralism?” rightly asks if there is any way of making a connection between ‘ethnic pluralism’ and democracy.

“This democracy”, Pejanović concludes “appears in the form of parallelisms in government, ethnic homogenization of territories and mono-ethnic structure of public administration at the municipal, cantonal and entity level” (63). It is a dead end which, instead of bringing democracy in all segments of the society, makes it ethnic, multiplied by three in our case. In that way, a false image of social pluralism is created, when in fact it is a case of party centralism and political conformism, this time based on an ethnic rather than on a communist ideology, one that determines the loyalty of its citizens based on blood, not politics, on the basis of the accidental fact of birth. Political pluralism, Pejanović notes, has been replaced by ethnic pluralism. What kind of political community can be founded on a non-political predestination? There is no such community, which is exactly what we have at the moment - a kind of a non-state in which democratic elections are a mere census which records only one category – ethnic and religious affiliation. Opposite of that, Pejanović warns, “political interests need to be derived from the will of the citizens and their economic and social interests, not from membership to a national collectivity”. “That is why”, Pejanović continues, “ethnic parties are, by nature, lead towards ethnic divisions and territorialization of power. They cannot ensure integration of the society of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the return of refugees.” (102) This idea is extremely important today,

when concepts of reconstruction of political community on the principles of territorial consocialism and ethno-territorial federalism are being introduced to the public discourse.

After seventeen years of life in nationalistic frames, we need to draw a bitter conclusion together with Pejanović: **ETHNIC AFFILIATION CANNOT BE THE POLITICAL OPTION REPRESENTING THE INTERESTS OF CITIZENS.** The case with Bosnia and Herzegovina is, as Pejanović notices, that “political affiliation comes together with national. Identity of a citizen has been reduced exclusively to the national identity. The citizen is not at the foundations of every political representation, but rather a nation and national identity; that is, collectivism. One-party model of representation the working class’ interest was replaced in 1990 by the representation of collective interests of a nation, and the nation is, as an abstract entity, what they – national elites – say it is. “In such models”, Pejanović precisely determines, “instrumentalization of power achieved through elections occurs in the way that interests of the political elite become interests of a nation”(116). Political development which rests on polarization of the non-political, and which is based on the ethnic parties’ activities, takes place in terms of “ethnic homogenization, ethnic territorialization and creation of parallel state institutions, which all together create an irrational and successful state of Bosnia and Herzegovina” (106). Furthermore, the key mechanism of rule of ethnonationalism is “fear and mistrust towards other nations initiated by the political elites of the three ethnic parties, which has brought about the fragmentation of civic structure of the electoral body of Bosnia and Herzegovina to three electoral bodies and three separate public opinions” (115). Pejanović knows well and most of the negotiators on constitutional changes in Sarajevo today do not want to know, that that is the reason why “annexing the Dayton Agreement should eliminate the dominant ethnic structuring of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina and establish a structure on the basis of civil society” (169). Of course, such a political analysis would be limited in its scope had it not been placed into a specific historical context which focuses on continuity of statehood of Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially the contemporary one, dating from 1943. That is also where Pejanović proves himself to be a profound analyst. From political and philosophical point of view, he holds that Bosnia and Herzegovina is determined in two ways. He says: “Bosnia and Herzegovina is, at the level of civilization

achievements, (...) determined in two ways. At the same time, it is a country of free citizens and a country of equal peoples” (248). As a political analyst, he sees evidence for such an understanding in interpretation of the highest political acts which had articulated the political identity of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the first and second session of ZAVNOBIH (Regional Anti-Fascist Council of People’s Liberation of Bosnia and Herzegovina) until the Dayton Agreement. Pejanović finds evidence to the claim that Bosnia and Herzegovina is the country of its citizens but also the country of equal peoples in each of these most important political documents – the basis of political subjectivity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Magna carta, or even better, *Magna cartae*, of such an understanding of Bosnia and Herzegovina has the real basis in two documents of historical importance – The ZAVNOBIH First Session Resolution, which promotes “political equality of the peoples” (249) and in The ZAVNOBIH Second Session Declaration on Rights of Citizens. It is exactly on the basis of this two-way determination of political community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, keeping in mind the half a century long political experience, and for the purpose of finding out where we are heading, that several issues should be emphasized.

With the exception of a period of rigid totalitarianism which had followed immediately after the war, political self-recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina, up to this day, has focused on the principles of ethnic equality, not on the principles of political equality of citizens. Stated in terms of contemporary political philosophy, it may be concluded that the principles upon which the political community of Bosnia and Herzegovina rested have always been based on the principles of ethnic equality, equality of collectivism, rather than on the principles of ethical equality, equality of individual citizens. Although all constitutional determinations of Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1946 until 1995 had referred to this duality of citizens and peoples in authoritative social practices of socialism and ethnonationalism, political equality of citizens was nothing more than mere words. Marginalization of the civic category and focus on the concept of political equality of ethnic communities – starting with the famous ethnic key which had been inaugurated by the authorities of socialist Bosnia, made certain discriminatory practices against the citizens understandable by themselves. Moreover, they limited the very possibility of political activity and articulation solely to the ethnic affiliation.

In a country which had already been under a repressive one-party ethnic system, that narrow scope of political activities of citizens in Bosnia was additionally narrowed by an ethnic filter constructed to ensure political equality of not citizens – individuals, but of a group, that is, people, actually ethnic groups.

Socialist determinations of Bosnia and Herzegovina as the community of equal peoples had created, unintentionally, preconditions for politization of ethnic groups. Political suitability, even initiation of ethnical diversity, which is now a way of political activity, made possible to, with the fall of socialist self-government system, understand political organization almost exclusively as ethno-political. Pejanović is certainly right when he politically determines Bosnia and Herzegovina in two ways; however, the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina has shown in the last fifty years what happens when those two determinations are not treated the same way and when one of them is taken to be the ruling principle – equality of collectivism, while the other is marginalized – equality of individual citizens.

Complete political irrelevance of the civic in political praxis of the socialist Bosnia made the transfer from socialism to nationalism quite normal. Both the systems are totalitarian for neither of them gave any importance to the free citizen, but always to a collective.

Loss of a strong authoritative political frame, such had been the Yugoslav and socialist in the late 1980s, resulted, in 1990, in the need of political determination of ethnic diversity, this time in an atmosphere of fear and suspense. Peoples had to be firm and independent in their diversity, in short, they needed to become individual political subjects in order to stay equal. For achievement of full political subjectivity only a small step remained – territorial definition. The favored conceptions of the people's equality, political practicing of the differences, resulted in a logical series of events later – tragic for us all – it resulted in a war establishment of territorial wholes, ethnic entities.

When understood authentically, conclusions of the First and Second Session of ZAVNOBIH, in which Pejanović sees double self-explanation of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a country of equal citizens and equal peoples, after fifty years of practice, have turned into: a conception of political equality of the peoples or a conception of ethnic equality which had been subordinated in relation to the conception of equality of citizens and,

as such, could not have guaranteed political equality of citizens, that is, ethnic equality of every citizen of Bosnia and Herzegovina in his or her dignity and freedom. That is why Bosnia and Herzegovina, in its socialist and ethnonationalistic form, was a non-free society in which political power was always given to a collective, that is, political elites which lead the collective over the citizen – individual.

There lies the cause of our dysfunctions, both past and present, and Pejanović detects them well. The call for double determination Pejanović insists upon in the light of constitutional reforms and the upcoming association processes to the family of free European peoples means, for us, to again return to the state continuity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is determined in two ways, but this time, without favoring one over the other. In that sense, Pejanović proposes, one should **RATIONALLY** determine what truly is vital national interest of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and protect it constitutionally and limit it, in that way; while, at the same time, the vast political field should be cleared off of ethnic basis of political organization, and liberated for the free citizen and the political organization which would protect his interests. Those who resist the citizen movement and the legal state will, in the process, have no valid arguments for any objections, for how can they draw conclusions about something Bosnia has never seen – true freedom?