

Extreme nationalism is still a major threat

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Extreme nationalism is still a major threat

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ANALYSES

Extreme nationalist tendencies in the Balkan nations have led to major conflicts after nationalism turned into policies of expansionism. This process began when the Balkan nations left Ottoman rule and even caused the outbreak of the First World War.



By Hrux Yahya

ISTANBUL: TBT News Desk—Everyone has a perfectly natural right to love and take pride in the customs, language, culture and homeland of the nation to which he belongs. However, if that description, known as 'nationalism' goes beyond the bounds of patriotism and turns into ideas of 'grandeur and superiority,' this can have very adverse consequences. One of the places where such excesses have assumed the most violent form in recent history is the Balkans.

Extreme nationalist tendencies in the Balkan nations have led to major conflicts after nationalism turned into policies of expansionism. This process began when the Balkan nations left Ottoman rule and even caused the outbreak of the First World War.

Extreme nationalist movements in the Balkans went into hibernation because of the rivalry between the Eastern and Western blocs during the Cold War, but woke up again even stronger with the collapse of communism. But why did nationalism flare up again at the end of the 20th Century?

First, the Balkan nations previously deprived of basic social and human rights (particularly those in the former Yugoslavia) became aware of their own identities and began yearning to become stronger nations.

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First, the Balkan nations previously deprived of basic social and human rights (particularly those in the former Yugoslavia) became aware of their own identities and

began yearning to become stronger nations.

Second, religious groups freed from socialist oppression equated their own identities with nations. Groups with extreme nationalist and Orthodox religious views came together around common interests and acted together against other sects and nations in order to attain those ends.

Third, several ethnic groups widely dispersed across the Balkans began seeking self-determination because they had remained outside the borders of their mother countries.

Fourth, the economic changes in the Balkan countries associated with the collapse of communism led to the emergence of 'discontent with the rapid rise in unemployment and poverty.' These large numbers of people preferred to hold other ethnic groups and members of other sects and religions with whom they had formerly lived in peace responsible for their own situations. Extreme nationalist Albanians thought the solution to their problems lay in freedom from the Serbs, while extreme nationalist Serbs thought the same of Croats and Bosnians and extreme nationalist Macedonians thought the same of the Albanians.

Fifth, various social institutions that played important roles in the social order fell apart, but no new ones could be formed to replace them. People whose incomes were guaranteed by the state began suffering severe economic difficulties when that state support was withdrawn. These people regarded their own nations as guarantors of their well-being instead of the former socialist state; the Serbs in Bosnia imagined that all their troubles would come to an end once they became part of a powerful Serbia.

Sixth, the materialist education provided under communism made it easy for extreme nationalism to be adopted as a philosophy of 'strength through conflict,' instead of peace and compromise.

Finally, following the collapse of the Soviet bloc, a climate of uncertainty was born in national and international policies in the Balkans. States were unable to fully determine their foreign policies and to which camp they belonged. Extreme nationalists were the first to profit from this ideological vacuum, implementing their expansionist aims as 'policies of state'. Security deficits in the international arena prevented prompt intervention against extreme nationalist policies of expansion.

For these seven important reasons, extreme nationalism became the major threat to peace and order in the Balkans. Of course, interest and even intervention in the region by the USA, Germany and especially Russia led to these causes having a more powerful and violent impact.

Non-regional countries must cease manipulating the Balkans in the light of their own interests. Countries such as the USA, Germany and Russia must do business with the Balkan countries and increase collaboration; they must not, however, encourage expansionist policies in those countries they enjoy friendly ties with, and must rather prevent them. If that is done, it will be easier to build a lasting peace in the Balkans.

Serbia can remain a friend of Russia and maintain its close relations with it. It can also develop close relations with Europe by signing a Partnership and Free Trade Agreement with the EU. While guaranteeing that it will not damage relations and agreements with the Commonwealth of Independent States, Belgrade can also sign up to the legal, social and political criteria demanded by the EU without distancing itself from Moscow.

Extreme nationalist movements grow strong and attract support during times of crisis. Policies against poverty and corruption must therefore be developed in the region, and governments' policies on these subjects must be supported by international organizations.

An education program must be developed as a solution to the climate of hostility caused by extreme nationalism: Governments in the Balkan countries can support such activity. They can stand against extreme nationalism through various joint educational and cultural initiatives and minimize ignorance. With a multi-faceted cultural mobilization, the abandonment of hostile language against members of other religions and ethnic groups (and races) and the use of the language of love and peace, it can be shown that it is possible to live without fanaticism.

When compassion, peace and well-being prevail in the Balkans, extreme nationalism will cease being a threat to all the nations in the region. In order to ensure that, of course, there first needs to be an alliance between people that seeks love and compromise and that does not encourage conflict so that peace can be brought to the peoples of the region.

Adnan Oktar's piece on The Bosnia Times & Indian Muslim Observer:

<http://www.thebosniatimes.com/en/extreme-nationalism-still-major-threat/>

<http://indianmuslimobserver.com/2014/10/07/balkan-extreme-nationalism-is-still-a-major-threat/>

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