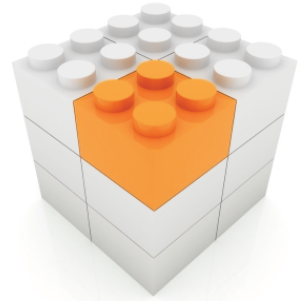


DE CONSTRUCTION THREE



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Goodbye or Good Day to Foreign Investment?

Judging by the title of the article, Bosnia's future depends on an Irish vote. In the next few paragraphs I will analyse, based on this media example, a view which the world holds of our beloved homeland.

Initially, the title of a particular text, book, or newspaper article is the first thing that a reader or internet surfer sees. This article's title emphasizes how much Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) relies upon external help, or more precisely, the help of the European Union.

What the author does not realize is that BiH does not need charity, it needs an investor - someone who would not see the millions that BiH needs as wasted money, but rather as millions needed in an economically underdeveloped region. Besides this issue, there is an interesting parallel between the Republic of Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina - Ireland is a country that flourished as a result of external investment during the 1980s and 1990s. As a result, it ranked in sixth place on a world map of GDP at the end of the year 2007 (today it stands at 16th place largely due to the recent worldwide economic crisis¹). Despite this decline, Ireland has the most liberal economy in the EU and has the 5th best economy in the world. It is a success that no one would have expected 30 years ago.

Continuing with the text, many people only read the first paragraph of an article, usually because it consists of a brief introduction to the full text, as well as an occasional précis. In the first paragraph of this article, it is difficult for any reader to remain indifferent when he or she is bombarded with depressing and daunting vocabulary. The economy is not only linked to politics and the general situation in a country, but it is intertwined with it. In a healthy body there is a healthy mind (*mens sans in corpore sano*); therefore, in a healthy political system there is a healthy economy. One cannot exist without the other... so if a foreign investor cannot trust the political system of a state, how can he or she believe that their investment will pay off? As a result, a reader of this article cannot avoid feeling anything but

¹ <http://www.heritage.org/index/Country/Ireland>, a product of the Heritage Foundation and the Wall Street Journal, 2010

depressed upon reading the first two sentences in which gloomy words become dramatically charged with the use of depressive epithets such as: "bloodiest recent war" and sentences such as "**Bosnia and Herzegovina [...] an alternately wild, entrancing and deeply divided place**". One cannot help but wonder after reading this whether or not we will ever experience a period of stability.

Moreover, one would think that enough has already been said in the first sentence, and that the following statement is superfluous: "**[BiH is] divided into two barely functioning administrative entities**". Bye-bye, Mr. Foreign Investor...

The public who continue to read this article beyond these first few sentences certainly would not include a Wall Street businessman. Indeed, if such a man ever continued to scan his eyes across these sentences that speak about our wonderful homeland, he would probably regard us as savages who refuse to prosper, who do not want to continue on the path towards reconciliation, and who do not want foreign investments. They believe we do not want to move from irrelevant ethnic, religious and other differences, like residents of the most advanced economic countries in the world today did some 60 years ago, not to mention what would happen if we had other racial groups in our region. However, perhaps that would be a good solution? A few of us who are proud of the diversity of our country realize that further mixing with Buddhists, Catalans, Italians, South-Africans, Japanese, Czechs, (to name but a few) would breed awareness in the BiH population that being different is a good thing, to live with differences even better - and that tolerance towards "difference" is also love for the different and love for our own. New Yorkers, Londoners, Berliners, Swiss, Irishmen, Brazilians, Japanese, (and I dare say, Yugoslavs) know that man is capable of living near a homosexual who is of Mexican origin, whose mother is from Puerto Rico, and near to the personal trainer of an NBA basketball player, who lives next door to single mother, who is a lawyer and has two sons from two marriages. Differences can only be positive in today's world. How could someone, raised in such an environment, ever be capable of finding even the smallest justification for a continuing a rigid campaign to create an ethnically pure nation?

Nationalism is the idea for which Bosnian society is represented throughout the world - it is woven into the consciousness of the Balkan people, it is the well known cause and consequence of war in this region, and it unfortunately carries across generations. Unconsciously, we preclude ourselves from ever entering into a liberal society which sees us as a carbon copy of Hitler's Reich. We are the only region still struggling with issues and attitudes from the 1930s and 1940s.

The isolation imposed by the EU is what we, the youth, are most afraid. A Schengen visa is seen nowadays as being more valuable than gold, and going to Paris, Vienna, Berlin or Barcelona, changes a person and provokes enlightenment in an open mind. Therefore, if we, as citizens of BiH, are isolated from the EU by a visa regime, how can

we ever know anything about a liberal mentality, and whether it is really possible to live together in a diverse society?

However, this is no place for further psychological analysis. Continuing with the article, one can of course, find a kernel of truth in every media article, but the way in which facts are interpreted, represented, advertised, and displayed, says a lot about the opinions that foreign journalists hold of our country. "Analysts say they fear nationalist tensions are so strong, and European officials unable to deliver progress despite the hundreds of millions of dollars that have been poured in there, that violence could surge anew". For those who still remember events in the Western Balkans in the early 1990s, this sentence is worse than a death penalty. War. Have we learned nothing from the mistakes that we have made in the past?

Nevertheless, we should be thankful for the efforts of Valentin Inzko and Paddy Ashdown who have tried to remedy the problems of this region. The following quote:

"We are now in a dangerous dynamic and if we fail to operate in a cohesive fashion we could end up with the de facto disintegration of BiH" leaves us with two possible conclusions:

1. That they understand that BiH was neglected post-1995 and that there is now a need to introduce an element of fear and scaremongering so that people understand that the job in BiH is not complete with only the Dayton Agreement.
2. It is a statement in which they wanted to say that they have lost all hope for a unified Bosnia and Herzegovina if the EU does not realize that we need to reorganize the system of external monitoring for BiH.

Thus, a positive outcome in the Irish vote might lead to the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty. This treaty could alter the way in which foreign policy is executed by the European Union, the system with the highest contribution of foreign investments would therefore, more functional, and thus the progress of BiH's economy would be accelerated.

Further on, the text talks about the problems that the EU and Brussels have had with maintaining their supremacy over BiH. '**The politicians believe that the EU wants them really bad**' (to accede to the Union). This attitude further discredits the belief that there is a part of the BiH population that wants to progress and believes that it is impossible to achieve accession without help from outside. This statement is indeed manipulated - firstly, it is expected that BiH will become part of the EU. Bosnia and Herzegovina is in Europe - and what is the European Union, without this part of Europe? Integration would be complementary for both sides - BiH would

demonstrate its economic progress and prosperity in every sense, whilst the EU, as a major supporter of the protagonist in this story, would be able to glorify the success of its foreign policy system in detaching the Balkans from the mentality of the 1990s. I can already hear the ticking of the hour, as a sign of celebration at the Palace because of the success of EU in integrating BiH. The sooner this act occurs, the greater the effectiveness of the partnership between BiH and the EU will be clear. Politicians will always utter statements like those mentioned above (and journalists will always pull everything out of context), but even they understand that without a lot of changes, the EU will not accept BiH under its umbrella.

Therefore, the Lisbon Treaty certainly could help the first investor in BiH – the EU itself – to more successful, and when someone breaks the ice, it becomes easier for others to move through the already well established path.

Do I even need to mention that a different mental approach and positive attitude towards Bosnia and Herzegovina would be reciprocated in the trust of BiH citizens in foreign bodies? The placebo effect is interesting - if you treat me as a patient, I will feel even sicker. I do not want, in any case, to say that we need the attitude that “everything is rosy” (ignoring the problem and acting as though it is not there will certainly not solve the problem), but for goodness sake, I want to be told that it is possible that I will, in the near future, stand on my own two feet. Young people want to hear that. Elderly people may not be here in 30 years, but we will. We are looking at you and your national attitudes that you impose on us as a death sentence. We do not want them. Keep them for yourself. We want to bury them and raise a monument as we did after the war. We want that monument to remind us and stand there as a warning of what awaits us if we stray again to the sick mentality of our fathers. We see the future, and you're still stuck in the past. Let us breathe. We really want to breathe.

So to conclude, I have to change my statement from the third paragraph - in a healthy economic environment there are healthy politics. Perhaps that thought makes us reverse our priorities. Thanks to Tito, Yugoslavs became an example to the world only 15 years after the Second World War, and people with a Yugoslav passport were welcome everywhere. Good old times, as my Auntie Biba would say. “In Trieste for jeans!” echoes in my head. Now I cannot wait to see what we shall create. Butterflies in my stomach are telling me that we can do better than glorious Tito did... if nothing, let his slogan be used for the one and only true daughter of multinational Yugoslavia : brotherhood – unity ! 🍌