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WEAK STATES - A VIEW FROM WITHIN

What are Weak States?

Although the phenomenon of weak states has not been uncommon in the arena of international politics, there has been relatively little research on weak states. There has been an increasing concern for the weak states during the first decade of the aftermath of the Cold War. This concern came about mainly due to the negative impact that a number of weak or failed states had or could have not only on their national security but also on international security issues.
The impact of negative spill-over effects of weak states on the international arena has been increasing, primarily due to the end of the Cold War. Previously, the deep separation into two opposing blocs and into a third unallied one limited the impact that weak states could have on the international arena. Another factor that has deepened the negative impact of weak states on national and international security issues is the changing nature of conflict in today's world. Most of the conflicts or wars during the last decade have been intra- rather than inter-state ones. Such were the wars that took place in the Balkans, wars that took place within the Yugoslav Federation. Thus, the wars in Slovenia, Croatia and later on in Bosnia were wars within the Yugoslav Federation until when the international community decided to recognize these countries as independent states. The latest conflict in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was an internal one, as it was the case also with the '97 disturbances in Albania. The Kosovo War is another example of intra-state conflict. It was a war that took place within the rump Yugoslav Federation composed of Serbia and Montenegro, despite the fact that the parties in the conflict

represented different nations and ethnicities. Moreover, the conflict in Kosovo is one of the best examples to demonstrate the fact that intra-state conflicts constitute a real threat to the international security and order and not only to that of the local actors involved.

It is fair to say that international peace, however, does not seem to be jeopardized by war or conflicts between states. The issue now is how to secure peace within states.

According to Kalevi Holsti (1996), "the assumption that the problem of war (conflict) is primarily a problem of relations between states has to be seriously questioned ... The security between states in the third world, among some of the former republics of the Soviet Union, and elsewhere has become increasingly dependent upon security within those states. The classical formulae were: International peace and security provide an environment in which domestic politics can unfold untroubled by external disturbances. The equation is now becoming reversed. The problem of contemporary and future politics, it turns out, is essentially a problem of domestic politics".[1]

A functional global response to the serious threat that terrorism poses to global security requires that special attention be paid to weak or failed states. To a great extent, the roots of international terrorism lie in aching societies of weak states.

But, what are weak or failed states? Weak or failed states are "incapable of sustaining themselves as members of the international community".[2]

The civil wars, violence between communities, ethnic conflicts, collapse of governments, poverty and on top of it organized crime

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[1] **Kalevi Holsti**, The State, War, and the State of War (1996), p. 15.

[2] c.f.: **Barry Buzan**, People, States and Fear, 2nd ed. ( ); **Lawrence Freedman**, Weak States and the West, 32 Society (1994), Number 1, p. 17; **Gerad B. Helman, Steven R. Ratner**, Collapsing into Anarchy, Current (1993), Number 353, p. 33; **Albert Rakipi**, Weak States - new dynamics of security, Romanian Journal of International Studies (1999).

turned a number of the new states, that were declared or are being declared independent, into ungovernable land. Although there is no clear definition of each of these two categories there is a very evident commonality. This commonality relates to the weakness of the institutions. In fact, the major difference between weak and failed states is the degree of weakness of the institutions. When state institutions are weak but still functional to a certain extent, the state classifies as weak. If the institutional weakness is such that it incapacitates their functionality the state is considered to be failed.

What is important here is the concept of weaknesses of these states. According to Barry Buzan "States ... vary in terms of their degree of socio-political cohesion which is the very essence of what qualifies them to stand as members of the category of states ... When the idea and institutions of a state are both weak, then that state is in a very real sense less of a state than one in which the idea and institutions are strong.[3]

In order to clarify the concept of weak states, Barry Buzan emphasizes the fundamental differences between weak and strong states and between big and small powers. Weak or strong states refer to the degree of socio-political cohesion, while big and small powers refer to the military and economic power in comparison to other states. According to Barry Buzan, being a strong state in terms of institutional functioning does not depend on military or economic power. Weak powers such as Austria, Holland, Norway, Singapore or Switzerland are simultaneously strong states, while such relative big powers as Argentina, Brazil, Nigeria, Pakistan, even big powers like China or Russia used to be and in some cases continue to be weak.[4]

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[3] *ibidem.*
[4] *ibidem.*

Nonetheless, there is a connection between being a big or relatively big power and a strong state. For instance, while Slovenia already has or is on the way of consolidating a strong state, it can never gain the status of power, even in the regional context. Or although Switzerland has a state that operates perfectly, it does not aspire to become a European power, much less a world power.

The Search for Legitimacy

Lack of legitimacy is the primary source of state weakness in a number of Southeastern European states in general and in the Balkans in particular. Here it is important to note that legitimacy does not pertain to the respective governments within the state, but has to do with the relationship between the state and the citizens in its most general meaning. Thus, legitimacy pertains to the experience that the people have to get organized in a modern state and to the extent that the state is accepted by its citizens as necessary in order to fulfil their need to be politically and socially organized. In this respect the Balkan states do not enjoy a high degree of legitimacy. At the very least, the extent to which the state is accepted and respected by the societies of Bosnia, Bulgaria, Serbia and Albania is much less as compared to that of the Western European ones.

There is an ongoing debate among scholars as to why the state developed in Europe as this particular form of social organization.[5] The modern state emerged in Europe "along with the coming of industry and of complicated commercial arrangements… the modern industry and commerce needed something like the state."[6]

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[5] cf: **Charles Tilly** (ed.), The Formation of Nation States in Western Europe (1975).
[6] cf: **Phillips Shvely**, Power and Choice, 4th ed. (1987), p.110.

If the Balkan states and a number of Southeastern European and other states in the region are weak, one should first look at the origins of these states and how they were created in order to understand why they are weak. It is important to ask the following: what necessities brought about the creation of these states? They emerged relatively later then their Western European counterparts. The national movements that anticipated and set the grounds for the creation of these independent states were, with few exceptions, motivated by nationalism or resulted from the opposition to imperial or colonial systems. In any case these movements were not set in motion by the immediate necessities of modern industries and commerce. The movement that led to the creation of the state in Western Europe was a massive one, and although it was led by the emerging elite of the time it had a substantial popular backing. In the Balkans, on the other hand, the concept of the state was conceived and encouraged by an elite that identified the state with power.

The idea and the need for a state in Western Europe is more deeply felt as compared to that in societies of Albania, Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina or even in Romania and Bulgaria. "States in industrial societies after more than 500 years of development, have become "strong" in the sense that for the first time in history, they enjoy popular legitimacy."[7]

In the Balkans, and generally in Southeastern Europe as well as in all the third world countries, a state tradition was lacking and therefore could not be the source of the legitimacy for the state, i.e., the long experience of the coexistence of the state and the citizens which in time translates the former - in the eyes of the public - into a necessity.

The reason why there is low acceptance of the state in countries such as Albania, Macedonia, Bosnia, Serbia, Bulgaria and so on

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[7] **Kalevi Holsti**, The State, Fear and the State of War (1996).

should be sought in the authoritarian regimes or the communist dictatorships that came to power in these countries at the end of the Second World War. During the period of dictatorship the state was used against certain segments of the population. For nearly half a century the citizens of Albania and those of the other countries in the communist bloc, at the very least did not conceive of the state as a necessity and at the very best, more than half of these societies thought of the state as an instrument of repression that ensured the survival of the communist regime. The societies in the communist countries were deeply divided into those who supported and those who opposed the communist system. For a relatively long period of time in the human conscience of the Balkan countries and other countries in the communist bloc, the authoritarian regimes, and in the worst scenario extreme dictatorships, were identified with the state. Therefore, for the citizens of these countries the state never enjoyed legitimacy and was even perceived to be an evil for at least half of the society. For certain segments of society, on the other hand, as was the case not only for Albania, the state was a source of income and an instrument that was used to subjugate the rest of society. However, the phenomena of a clientele state, such as nepotism and localism that are still very present ten years after the fall of communism do not originate from the totalitarian states in the Balkans. These are not solely Balkan phenomena. It is probably fair to argue that the deep backwardness, economic underdevelopment and the isolation of these states from each other nourished and still nourish, a hundred years later, perceptions of the state as the primary source of personal gains.

The weakness of the state in most of the Balkan countries cannot be explained by the heritage of the communist period. The economic and political stagnation, the slow paste of the reforms or even the scarcity of ideas on how to reform and modernize society has its roots in the period before that of the communist regimes. Even before the Second World War these countries were closed agrarian economies with a very limited industrial sector.

In the meantime Western Europe had begun, for at least two hundred years, to practice liberal ideas in both the social and the economic realm. These ideas would find fertile ground and develop in the Balkans much later. In most of the countries in Southeastern Europe the liberal ideas and practices would develop simultaneously with the democratic ones. Usually, Liberalism and Democracy tend to go hand in hand. However, "it is possible for a country to be liberal without being particularly democratic, as was eighteenth-century Britain."[8]

Greece is perhaps another example where economic development and the development of liberal practices in general increased and strengthened the legitimacy of the state, despite the fact that democratic processes in Greece were interrupted by episodes of autocratic rule. Spain could be another example of the coexistence of autocratic rule on the one hand and liberal economic practices on the other.

Some instances of liberal practices in the region began to develop in the twentieth century, but they were rare and far between the whirlpools of conflict and violence. In the case of Albania such were few years under the rule of King Zog I. during which the state enjoyed some sort of legitimacy. Yugoslavia under Tito is another example in the Balkans where in the absence of democratic procedures the government experimented with liberal economic policies that were not completely unsuccessful.

After WWII most of the countries in the region, and particularly Albania, would become the grounds of some of the wildest experiments of the communist regimes that were trying to develop the Marxist concept of the state. According to this concept, the state is simply an instrument of power.

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[8] **Francis Fukuyama**, The End of History and the Last Man (1992).

The Legitimacy of a State's Institutions

At the essence of the existence of the state ever since its inception and under all kinds of regimes is the need to gain legitimacy or the trust and approval of society. Legitimacy vests the government and its structures with the authority to act.

Thus, another source of state weakness or failure in the Balkans or elsewhere has to do with the legitimacy of governance. Countries such as Albania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania and many former communist countries began liberal economic policies and at the same time democratic procedures in order to determine who would govern the country. So, two processes had to take place simultaneously: the economic development and the transformation of the economy, completely centralized in the case of Albania and partially liberalized in the case of Yugoslavia. Also, for the first time in the history of many former communist countries, the legitimacy of the state would be determined through the open competition for power among different political groupings and through the participation of a public that had the right to elect and to be elected.

Would this imply, though, that the governments that were in place in Albania and Yugoslavia as well as in other countries of the former communist bloc before the dawn of democracy lacked any kind of legitimacy? Any government in any regime needs some kind of legitimacy in order to stay in power and to take action on behalf of society. As Socrates explains in Plato's Republic, even among a band of robbers there must be some principle of justice that permits them to divide their spoils.[9]

The communist government that came to power in Albania in 1944 did enjoy certain popular support. It was a legitimate government in the eyes of the public since it came out of the movement that put up the major resistance against the fascist invaders. At the time the

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[9] *ibidem.*

legitimacy and power of this government could have been hardly successfully contested by another political movement. This was true for most of the communist governments that came to power in other countries in the Balkans and Eastern Europe. They did enjoy some legitimacy as organizers of the anti-nazi-fascist resistance. The other political groupings in these countries appeared compromised in the public eye due to their alleged collaboration with the nazi-fascist invaders.

Thus, for a relatively long period of time the communist governments continued to enjoy popular support and a considerable amount of legitimacy. This was also due to the achievements of these governments in the first decades after WWII. In the case of Albania, for example, the communist government strengthened its legitimacy by conducting land reforms at a massive scale. In a country where conditions of extreme poverty prevailed at the time, any steps towards the betterment of the life of the peasants in an overwhelmingly rural society gave a real boost to the legitimacy of Hoxha's communist government. The reforms, especially those in the agricultural sector, brought relative improvements in the living conditions of the populace, at least within the first two decades immediately after WWII.

In a similar fashion, the popularity and legitimacy of the Soviet government increased due to the rapid economic development of the Soviet Union after WWII.

Hitler's Germany in the Thirties is another good example of how a government attains legitimacy through successful economic reforms and development. "What solidified Hitler's hold on Germany and gave him a degree of legitimacy by the end of the 1930s was the results of his early policies. He reduced unemployment … he built the autobahn system of superhighways; he even pioneered the Volkswagen 'Käfer' automobile."[10]

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[10] cf: **Phillips Shvely**, *supra* fn 6.

Tito's Yugoslavia is another good example that shows how a government can enjoy legitimacy through economic achievements. While in a number of communist bloc countries the economies were entering periods of recession and deep economic crises, the citizens of Tito's Yugoslavia enjoyed living standards that did not set them very far apart from other citizens in the developed Western European countries.

What the examples above have in common is not simply the fact that they demonstrate that economic achievements bring about legitimacy for the government. Another commonality the previous examples share is the fact that all the above mentioned countries were fascist or communist dictatorships at the time. Thus, at this point one could ask: Was it due only to their economic successes that these governments and their legitimacy were not contested for a certain period of time? To answer this question it is important to emphasize that in these dictatorships, both of the left and of the right, alternative views and processes were either routed from the very beginning or simply forbidden by law. Both in the case of a left-wing dictatorship and in that of a right-wing one the so-called civil society was smothered or subjugated. There was no free speech and the media was completely in the hands of the government.

The communist Albanian Government as well as many others of the former communist bloc managed to stay in power for many consequent decades despite the fact that the economic development came to a halt. In fact, the economic situation worsened, the country remained undeveloped, unemployment was large and poverty was soaring.

Therefore, when the Eastern and Southeastern European countries broke away from the communist system, they could not claim legitimacy simply on the prospects of future economic growth, but also on the premises of open democratic procedures and free competition of different political groupings through the participation of the citizens and the public opinion at large.

18

Almost all of the post-communist governments that replaced the communist ones in this part of Europe enjoyed an almost popular legitimacy. The coming to power of these governments marked the end of the one-party rule that had exhausted the population, ruined the economy and had disappointed the hopes of many. The governments that came to power in the early nineties were identified with the change from a totalitarian to a democratic system and they opened a new epoch for the people of the countries that had suffered under communism. The Albanian government of the Democratic Party, the first Albanian opposition that precipitated the fall of communism in Albania in 1992 was most probably as popular as the Albanian communist government of 1945, probably enjoying substantial legitimacy in the populace at large.

The experience of Albania after 1992 and in fact the experience of every former communist country shows that in an open society where various alternatives compete freely it is of primary importance to first secure the legitimacy of the institutions through democratic elections, and only afterwards seek legitimacy through economic successes. Thus, if at present time a number of Balkan countries classify as weak states the reasons should be sought in the distortions of those democratic procedures that legitimise the institutions of governance.

In Rump Yugoslavia, Serbia has just started to draw from this source of legitimacy for her government and institutions. During the last parliamentary elections in Bosnia–Herzegovina and even in Croatia the standards needed for these elections to be considered free and fair were not met. Macedonia is another good example where distortions in the electoral processes added to the internal problems of the country that resulted into a security crisis not only for Macedonia but also for the entire region. The prevalent political conflict and unsustainable stability in Albania ever since 1996 can be attributed to the movement away from democratic procedures

and standards. Ever since 1996 there have been serious violations during the electoral processes and the results of the elections have been contested by the two major political spectrums. A precondition for self-sustainable stability in these countries is the consolidation of democratic procedures to regulate the transfer of power from one political party to another. In most Balkan countries power has not yet been transferred through free and fair elections.

But how does the absence of legitimacy emerge in the weak states of the region? Multiethnic states count for the bigger part of weak states. In such cases societies can not become communities because of their division over ethnic basis (Macedonia). But the phenomenon is endemic even to nation states (Albania). In this situation the institutions do not function or function with serious deformations. There is a striking level of politically motivated violence, questionable and even unconstitutional use of the police and secret services.

In both categories, multinational and national, the absence of institutional legitimacy is the main reason for generating instability and even anarchy. The legitimacy of institutions is connected to democracy. Following the end of the Cold War, democracy is considered "as the conditio sine qua non for validating governance".

Albania, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, even Serbia can be classified as weak states. This is due to either the absence or violation of the legitimacy of the institutions. Of course, the degree of weakness varies from country to country. State control over the media is easily perceptible in each of the countries. Physical violence, loss of jobs on political motivations or on ethnical basis, political arrests etc.

A common feature of all weak states is the identification of the state with the government. Security of government is mischievously interpreted as security of the state. So, if the government is endangered, the state and the nation are endangered. However, although the identification of the state with the

20

government is present in almost every weak state, it manifests itself in a variety of forms. For instance, in Albania, if the government collapses, the state collapses too; when a new government takes office, the new state starts to build.

Whereas in FYROM, the legitimacy of the institutions is questioned by the ethnic Albanians who account for no less than 40% of the country's population according to Albanian sources and no more than 22% according to official sources. The weak states combine "structural weaknesses with a regime, which is inherently divisive in representing only one part of the community"[11]. This is the case with Macedonia where the state has been established as the Macedonians' national state to represent their collective rights. The Macedonian experience but also the experience of other multiethnic states poses the critical question: is the institution of free and fair elections sufficient in order for the institutions of the state to be legitimate and the state to be strong? The parties of one ethnicity may win the majority in free and fair elections. Therefore, they will not find it necessary to involve political parties from other ethnic groups in government. Here the state is involved, not the government. By wining the majority in free elections, a certain ethnic group sets up its own state and deprives groups from other ethnicities from the right to state institutions. The Macedonians try to cover up the national state they are building ever since their UN-membership under the presence of a few Albanian ministers in the cabinet. In the meantime, the Albanian presence in the army, police, education, secret service, foreign service, etc is almost inhibited.

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[11] **Steven R. Ratner**, *supra* fn 2.

21

Legitimacy through the Actions of the International Community

The international community is another source of legitimacy for the weak states. This legitimacy does not simply derive from recognition. Weak and even failed states have been recognized internationally and are members of the United Nations. However, there are other states that function quite efficiently, and stronger states that have not been recognized internationally. These states exist *de facto,* but they have not been recognized *de jure.* Such are Northern Cyprus and Taiwan.

If weak states are incapable to ensure their own normal survival, one would expect the international community to intervene. The engagement of the international community in order to support the weak states is necessary, as the weak states are not capable of maintaining themselves as members of the international community. This is not to say that the international community has always shown the same willingness and inclination to come to the aid of the weak states. In those instances when the presence of crisis-driven weak states has endangered or could potentially endanger the interests of the powers and institutions that constitute the so-called international community, the attention and the assistance given have been greater, swifter and more effective. This engagement of the international community has appeared quite early if we remember the forms of protectorate that the League of Nations and later on the United Nations proposed in order to come to the help of some new and weak states at the time.

How does the international community serve as a source of legitimacy for the governments of the weak states?

First of all, through economic aid, through programs for economic aid and reforms financed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund or other regional financial institutions. Most of the former communist countries, including the Balkans, had immediate

financial and economic needs when they began the reforms after the fall of the communist regime. Thus, the legitimacy that can be drawn is twofold. On the one hand, through the support received by these international institutions, and, on the other hand, through the higher chances of economic success that such a support brings about, which in turn means more legitimacy.

Thus, at least initially a lot of economic aid and later on many economic programs of the European Union, or from EU members, in countries like Albania, but also Romania and Bulgaria helped the first non-communist governments to reduce the social costs of the reforms that were necessary in order to move from a centrally planned to a market economy. At the same time a series of economic agreements or simply economic programs of the International Monetary Fund, European Union and so on, were viewed and propagated by the post-communist governments as achievements in the field of democratic transformation. Almost all the first post-communist governments viewed NATO and EU membership, or any steps towards such memberships as an indicator of their democratic rule, or as a passing grade for their legitimacy. Albania was the first country that signed the partnership for peace agreement and applied for NATO membership. This happened due to the determination of the political elite that put up a resistance against the communist regime to tie up the future of the country with the West and its institutions. It is fair to say, though, that the relations of the first post-communist Albanian government with NATO, EU or other Western countries were viewed as a source of legitimacy for the Albanian government by the international community itself. The same scenario took place with little variations in Romania and Bulgaria, the only major difference being that in Albania ever since the establishment of a multi-party system there was no major political force that would oppose, at least publicly, the western orientation of the country. When the Socialist Party (the former

Communist Party responsible for the total isolation of Albania and the fifty-year enmity towards the West) came to power in 1997, it maintained the orientation towards NATO, EU, USA and other Western institutions in its foreign policy.

Secondly, but not second, the international community serves as a source of legitimacy for the weak states through the special role that institutions such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has taken upon itself. The legitimacy of the post-90 governments can not longer come from the barrel of the gun, since free and fair elections are not only perceived essential for legitimacy but also as an international norm. However, free and fair elections that have been accepted by all the actors still remain a challenge for a number of Balkan countries that still have to hold such elections in order to complete the peaceful transferring of power from one political party to another. OSCE and other institutions, such as ODIHR have not only observed but also conducted arbitration regarding various electoral processes in these countries. Although OSCE Missions have the status of the observer in electoral processes and write reports containing suggestions, it is fair to say that their conclusions are widely accepted as the final say regarding the validity of the elections. While in Kosovo, OSCE organized the elections, the conclusions of similar OSCE missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia, Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania as well as a number of former Soviet Union Republics were used as the criterion upon which the validity of the election process and the international standards were evaluated. This role of the international community seems to be not only necessary but also desirable especially for those weak states that manifest a conflictual political culture. However, in a number of cases double standards have been used by the international community in evaluating and legitimising election results.

"There has been a tendency especially in the Balkans to make a compromise with the international standards with regard to free

24

and fair elections, i.e. escaping from these standards, which starts with the elections of September 1996 in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was followed by the elections of April 1997 in Eastern Slavonia, Croatia, and it reached its peak with the Parliamentarian elections in June 1997 in Albania."[13]

In the case of Macedonia, for example, the international community shunned away from major problems in the Macedonian–Albanian relationship within the newly created state of Macedonia. The internal Macedonian problems pertaining to the consolidation of the common institutions were either postponed or ignored by the international community. The attempt to preserve regional stability at the expense of domestic problems was the prevailing theme of the international community in the Balkans, Macedonia and Kosovo for a long time.

The outburst of armed violence in the spring of this year (2001) tore that deceiving veil of a multiethnic state, unveiling thus the undemocratic methods and procedures this state was functioning upon. The control of the state, the decision-making process and even the executive branch were in the hands of the Macedonian ethnicity; the army, the police force, as well as other security bodies were almost entirely composed of Macedonians.[14] The very decision to crush the armed uprising through the use of violence implies that the Albanian population, although it did have some representatives in government, was not consulted and left out of the decision-making process. The Media and the political elite also reflected the deep division between the two major ethnicities.

However, Macedonia had been viewed by the international community as a success story of ethnic co-existence.[15] When the

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[13] See Albania's parliamentary election of 1997 prepared by the staff of the Organisation on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

[14] cf: **Albert Rakipi**, Albanian in the Balkans, AIIS (2001), Albanian edition.

[15] **International Crisis Group**, Macedonia's Ethnic Albanians: Bridging the Gulf (2000).

Balkans became engulfed in a series of wars, preserving the territorial integrity of Macedonia was thought to be a decisive need. Through all its actions and initiatives the international community gave its unreserved support to the Macedonian government, making it immune to criticism. In this way the international community ignored or postponed those matters that were eating away the internal stability of the country. Legitimate concerns about the security of Macedonia quite often have been used as justifications in order to postpone difficult decisions about problematic internal matters.[16] The international community is thus at least partially responsible for creating a false or at least unreal image of harmonious ethnic co-existence in Macedonia. Thus, one of the issues that have been continuously contested by both Albanians and Macedonians is the percentage of the Albanian population in Macedonia. According to official sources, Albanians do not constitute more than 22% of the entire population of the country, whereas the Albanians claim 40% of the population if not more. The real number of the Albanians is certainly greater than that given by the official census.[17] However, the second census that was monitored by the international community under the auspices of the OSCE (1994) gave a number that is almost identical to that of the government statistics, 22.09%.

Another instance in which the international community turned a blind eye, was the reduction of the number of Albanian deputies in the Macedonian parliament, by reorganizing the electoral districts so as to favour the Macedonian electorate. Those electoral districts assigned to an Albanian electorate had on average 1.5 times more voters than those with a Macedonian electorate.

The parliamentary elections of 1996 in Albania were characterized by serious shortcomings. The opposition withdrew, undermining the electoral process. The international community through OSCE

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[16] *ibidem.*
[17] *ibidem.*

26

reports did not accept the distorted victory of the Democratic Party undermining thus the legitimacy of the government and its institutions.

In the 1997 early parliamentary elections the international community backed a compromise that denied access to half of the country to one of the two major competing political parties. The international community recognized the results of the elections as acceptable given the circumstances of the 1997 crisis in Albania. This meant a movement away from those democratic standards that had been considered sacred and a legitimacy test up to then. Perhaps, given the circumstances, this was the lesser evil, however, basing a four-year term for the winning party on the results of such elections did not contribute to the stability of the country. The government that came to power was viewed as illegitimate by the opposition and its electorate. At the same time those who came to power through the armed rebellion felt obliged to include in important sectors of the administration, such as the security and the finances, individuals that were identified with the armed wing of the Socialist Party, for which there were allegations of connections with the organized crime and smuggling activities. This in turn undermined the legitimacy of the government and its institutions, delaying thus further the rule of law.

The last parliamentary elections in Albania were also characterized by serious violations, and neither the country, nor the institutions that came out of these elections were recognized as legitimate by the opposition. The international community which deeply influences the domestic policies of Albania, while recognizing the serious violations that occurred during the elections, seems to have been led by considerations other than democratic procedures, such as regional stability, when concluding that the elections were acceptable.[18] The parliamentary elections in Albania took place

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[18]   See Albanian Parliamentary election the report of OSCE.

while Macedonia was going through its worst internal crisis ever since it came into existence.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that weak states are not a new phenomenon in the international arena it is important to note their increasing importance in world politics due to irreversible Globalisation trends. In today's world the negative impact that a weak state has on national security and stability can quickly affect regional and international security and stability parameters. It is for this reason that deeper research and a deeper understanding of the weak state phenomena is needed. As the examples from the Southeastern European countries show, at the root of the weak state phenomena are the legitimacy crises, weak institutions and old trends and mentalities. The concept of legitimacy is very important here. It has to be understood both in the framework of the state and that of governance. In the state context it pertains to the shred traditions and experiences that the citizens have had in building and living under a common state. Legitimacy of governance, on the other hand, while it is related to the legitimacy of the state is also closely connected with efficiency and democratic procedures that are open and fair.

Here the international community has an important role to play, not only because the international community serves as a source of legitimacy, but also because it upholds democratic standards and procedures. In many weak states the international community has gained a status that allows it to arbitrate among different political groups. For this reason it is important that democratic principles and norms are applied uniformly across different countries and scenarios and be sacrificed due to short-term security and stability

28

concerns. Only in this way can sustainable, prosperous and democratic stability be achieved, and the weak states strengthened.

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