

Work shop report: “From Yugoslavia to Europe”

Passau University 27-29 March 2015

On 27 March 2015, the members of the work shop “From Yugoslavia to Europe” met at the Passau University to further produce research work and progress for the aim of the project. The participants came to Passau from various parts of the Balkans and from Canterbury, United Kingdom. Throughout the weekend, the experts in their field gave presentations in which they presented their research paper in front of the other participants, which was then followed by lively and productive discussions on the topic of state and identity building.

The group met up on Saturday, 27 March and Sunday, 28 March, between 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. and took part in lively discussions.

On Saturday Dr. Soeren Keil, senior lecturer for International Relations at Canterbury Christ Church University, presented the cases of Montenegro and Macedonia which were respectively produced by Dr. Jelena Dzankic, a citizen of Montenegro who currently works as Jean Monnet Fellow at the European University Institute in Florence, and by Dr. Cvete Koneska, who is originally from Macedonia and now works and lives in London, who were not able to attend the work shop. Following on the same day were Dr. Gezim Krasniqi, an Albanian national who is the Alexander Nash Fellow at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London and presented the case of Kosovo. Mr. Adnan Huskić, who teaches Politics and International Relations at the University of Technology in Sarajevo presented the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Mr. Mladen Mladenov, a PhD student from Passau University who lived and worked in former Yugoslavia for a while, presented the case of Serbia.

On Sunday, Dr. Ana Bojinovic-Fenko, who works as an Assistant Professor at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, together with Prof. Dr. Zlatko Šabic, who is the Professor for International Relations at the University of Ljubljana, presented the case of Slovenia. Following them the case of Croatia was presented by Dr. Senada Selo Sabić, who works at the Institute for International Relations in Zagreb, Croatia.

During the break times the participants had lunch and dinner in various Passau evening locations and were able to get to know Bavarian culinary specialties.

Background – objectives of the overall project

This research project on Comparative Foreign Policy in the Western Balkans fills in a gap largely left unnoticed by contemporary political science. Scholars from the former Yugoslav states write and discuss about the formation of an independent foreign policy in their respective states, the approach of each state towards EU Enlargement and state attempts of reconciliation after the disruptive Balkan wars of the 1990s. Further aspects discussed are the creation of a security community in the Balkans and the state/nation problem of the newly formed countries. The research group is currently presenting its draft papers on international research conferences like UACES and ECPR. In addition, there are common publication projects i.e. edited volumes and special issues in

journals.¹ The results of this workshop are meant to be published in the Croatian International Relations Review² - an online based academic journal.

Workshop aims

While the more recent trend towards a focus on the post-Yugoslav states as independent political systems is most welcome, many areas remain under-researched. This has a significant impact not only on our academic understanding of the political development of these countries since they became independent and their current constitutional challenges in light of EU integration, but also for the EU, which has been struggling in its engagement with the region in recent years, often being unable to address serious political conflicts. Hence, further studies are needed to understand how the political systems work, how political actors reach their decision, which role nationalism plays as an ideological framework for political motivation and what the future role of the EU and other international actors in the region will be. One way to address some of these questions is by studying the foreign policy of the post-Yugoslav states and its link to the political system and its main features.

The interesting thing about the study of the foreign policy of the post-Yugoslav foreign policy is not only the lack of academic literature on this topic and the potential for new research insights, but also the link between foreign policy and other state- and nation-building processes in the region. In other words, the study of foreign policy as one policy field within the wider political decision-making processes of the post-Yugoslav states tells us something about (1) policy formulation and decision-making; (2) the role of internal and external actors in the policy process; (3) the role of historical narratives in the process of policy-making and implementation; (4) the capacity of a state to formulate and implement a specific foreign policy; (5) the relationship between different internal and external actors, and (5) to what extent foreign policy reflects wider policy issues. In short, foreign policy often reflects wider issues of state-building and nation-formation, particularly (but not only) in the young states in Southeastern Europe. Hence, the study of foreign policy as a tool of state-building promises to shed light into fundamental questions of state capacity, decision-making, state-identification, internal and external policy priorities and the role of historical narratives.

The discussion

Based on a discussion paper³ by Sören Keil, Bernhard Stahl briefly introduced the topic. Traditionally speaking, state-building has never been part of the literature on foreign policy since the latter was concerned with functioning states. Only when states failed to consolidate or formerly functioning states collapsed (“failing states”) the relationship has become a rewarding one. Yet the

¹ For the Website see <http://www.phil.uni-passau.de/die-fakultaet/lehrstuehle-professuren/politikwissenschaft/internationalepolitik/forschung/projekte/from-yugoslavia-to-europe.html>, and the website of the project (under construction).

² See <http://cirr.irmo.hr/>

³ See Soeren Keil: Foreign Policy as a tool of state building in post-Yugoslav states (<http://www.e-ir.info/2014/10/10/foreign-policy-as-a-tool-of-state-building-in-the-post-yugoslav-states/>).

example of the post-Yugoslav states has demonstrated that the relationship has more to offer. When studying the use of foreign policy as a tool of state-building, it is important to keep in mind that the post-Yugoslav states are young countries that have only become independent in the early 1990s. In all countries, forms of internal legitimacy (state-building) and external legitimacy (through engagement with other states, i.e. foreign policy) overlapped and continue to do so. In 1990, new elites came to power in those countries that were anti-Communist and pro-independence. Only in Serbia and Montenegro, there were elites which supported the continued existence of the Yugoslav state, albeit under the dominance of Serbia and Slobodan Milošević. From the beginning of the Yugoslav dissolution, foreign policy and state-building were strongly interconnected. In fact, the first act to become independent was to ask other states for independence, i.e. to become an equal player within international politics. The overall question of secession/state-dissolution was decided by international actors (in this case the Badinter Commission), who outlined principles that these states had to comply with to be recognised. The violent conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia resulted in a strong link between state-building, violent conflict and international engagement to solve the crisis. Even when the violence ended in both countries in 1995 international actors remained important, in Bosnia NATO and the Office of the High Representative (OHR) became key protectors of peace in the immediate post-war era, while in Croatia the UN ensured the peaceful reintegration of Eastern Slavonia into the Croatian state. After having commented on the implications of the theoretical and historical implications (by Zlatko Šabić in particular) the country-specific presentations revealed further insights.

As Adnan Huskić pointed out, the war in **Bosnia** occurred because a part of the population did not want to recognise the legitimacy of these states. Hence state-building, including the establishment of functional administrative structures, the implementation of constitutional law in all parts of the country and the building of police and military structures are all part of the wider strategy to secure internal legitimacy. Not only do the entities have the right to engage in their own limited foreign policy with neighbouring states (“para-diplomacy”), but the inability of Bosnian elites to formulate a coherent foreign policy strategy reflects the inability of the Bosnian state to function properly within the framework of the Dayton system. State-building has come to a halt while the foreign policy of the contested state ran into paralysis. However, as Senada Šabić made it clear in her presentation, internal legitimacy should not be confused with democracy. It is well established that neither **Croatia** after 1991 nor rump-Yugoslavia (after 1992) should be considered democracies. Elections were used to confirm the ruling elites in power, rather than representing the will of the people. This of course had consequences for their foreign policy, i.e. their ambition to be recognised as legitimate actors by other states within the international sphere. Their lack of democratic governance meant that these states struggled to engage in constructive relations not only with their near neighbourhood but also with other states in Europe. Croatia is a particularly interesting example here, in the early 1990s the Tuđman government used the discourse on Croatia as a European country to legitimise its secession from Yugoslavia and its “return to Europe,” however once the EU and other actors began to criticise Tuđman for his authoritarian leadership, Europe became the enemy, the entity that left Croatia alone during the war.

The question of legitimacy remains important in other areas as well. Clearly, in the **Kosovo** case it can be observed how state-building took place without external recognition (200-2008). Since then, internal and external legitimacy are strongly connected, and Kosovo's foreign policy is focused nearly exclusively on increasing the number of countries that recognise the independence of the Republic of Kosovo. Kosovo's integration into the EU – as Gezim Krasniqi underlined - is very much part of this wider strategy, connecting internal legitimacy (i.e. the right of the Kosovan state to exist) to external legitimacy as a country that is part of the EU's enlargement policy. Questions of legitimacy have also become more and more important in the case of **Macedonia** (Sören Keil presented Cvete Koneska's paper). In recent years the Macedonian government has engaged in a strong nation-building exercise, which is not only reflected in the architectural re-design of the capital Skopje (as part of the project Skopje 2014), but also in renewed discourses on Macedonian history, identity and nationhood. This has had a very negative impact on Macedonian foreign policy, since these discourses are highly contested in Greece and Bulgaria. Both countries have recently vetoed the start of EU membership negotiations with Macedonia and Greece also vetoed Macedonia's entry into NATO in 2009.

Other examples to demonstrate the link between foreign policy and state-building include **Slovenia's** foreign policy after independence, which focused on a "return to Europe" and a re-branding of the country as a Central European (rather than Balkan) country. Following Ana Bojinovic-Fenko's statements, Slovenia's integration into the EU and NATO was also used to legitimise the existence of the Slovenian state and its secession from the Yugoslav federation. More importantly, since Slovenia has joined the EU in 2004, there is a clear lack of foreign policy priorities. The main aim, integrating the country into Europe and thereby completing its manifestation as an independent country, have been achieved and since then several governments have been unable (and unwilling) to agree on a new foreign policy strategy (even as part of a wider European foreign policy).

The process of state-building in **Serbia** has long been closely related to foreign policy. Following Mladen Mladenov's line of argument, this link can be tracked back at least to Ilija Garašanin's vision to build a South-Slav state encompassing all lands with Serb population. After the end of the Cold War, Serbian foreign policy had a double task, which included organizing the transition in relation to the other former Yugoslav states and determining the future foreign policy orientation of the own country. A major obstacle for state-building and state consolidation in Serbia has been the fact that the country has had to adapt several times to different settings: first after the wars in the first half of the 1990s, second after the Kosovo war, third after the transformation of the FRY into the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, fourth after the independence of Montenegro and finally after Kosovo's declaration of independence and the recognition of the latter's legality by the ICJ.

Jelena Djankic's view on **Montenegro's** foreign policy (presented by Sören Keil) started from the assumption that foreign policy has not only been the key tool for achieving the country's independence in 2006, but also a mechanism for consolidating the state in the post-independence period. By symbolising elements of state-building, it can be concluded that foreign policy mirrors the 'state-of-the-state' thus containing the essence of the state-nation constellation.

Finally, Zlatko Šabić in his role as discussant of the papers drew some conclusions for the envisaged publication project. Sören Keil as well as Bernhard Stahl concluded the workshop by clarifying future deadlines and internal review processes for the papers on state-building and foreign policy.

Participants

Prof. Dr. Bernhard Stahl, who is the Professor for International Politics at the University of Passau and has vast experience in Balkan foreign affairs issues.

Dr. Soeren Keil, a senior lecturer for International Relations at Canterbury Christ Church University

Dr. Jelena Dzankic, a citizen of Montenegro who currently works as a Jean Monnet Fellow at the European University Institute in Florence

Dr. Cvete Koneska, who is originally from Macedonia and now works and lives in London (delivered a paper but was not present in Passau)

Dr. Gezim Krasniqi, an Albanian national who is the Alexander Nash Fellow at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London

Mr. Adnan Huskić, who teaches Politics and International Relations at the University of Technology in Sarajevo

Mr. Mladen Mladenov, a Bulgarian national who lived and worked in former Yugoslavia for a while

Dr. Ana Bojinovic-Fenko, who works as an Assistant Professor at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Prof. Dr. Zlatko Šabic, who is the Professor for International Relations at the University of Ljubljana

Dr. Senada Selo Sabić, who works at the Institute for International Relations in Zagreb, Croatia.