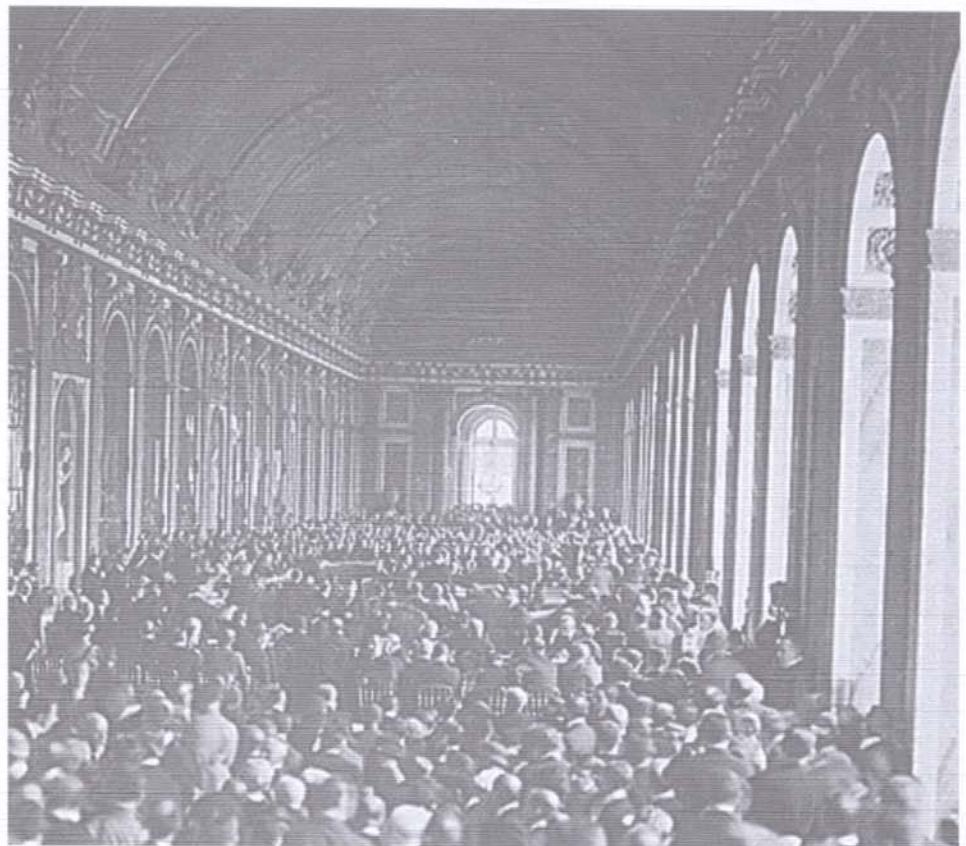


SELF-DETERMINATION

FROM VERSAILLES TO DAYTON ITS HISTORICAL LEGACY

edited by Henry Huttenbach and Francesco Privitera



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Longo Editore Ravenna

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FOREWORD

Self-determination has deeply influenced international relations and the process of state building, particularly in Europe during the current century. Since the time of Wilson and Lenin, this political doctrine was used and/or abused by policy makers, leaders and political parties to re-define the geopolitical map of Europe as well as to establish a better security for their people.

The Russian revolution and the previous Lenin declaration in 1916 in favor of self-determination opened a new situation in terms of political struggle and international relations: secession became an instrument to be used with the aim of weakening internal and external enemies. Since the beginning of World War I, however, each European multinational empire sought to attract the minorities in a rival empire in order to hasten each others collapse. Nevertheless, once Lenin appeared able to establish Bolshevik power in Russia, encouraging self-determination as an instrument to defeat imperialist powers and, thereby, strengthening the world socialist revolution, president Wilson reacted. As is well known, Wilson took the decision to limit the influence of emerging communism by supporting self-determination in Central Europe, where the Polish question and the deep crisis of the Austro-Hungarian Empire could create an area of opportunity for Lenin's projects. Thus, an emerging dictatorship and a democratic country confronted one another for the first time; the claim of self-determination radically influenced their bilateral relations as well as the evolution of European international relations from that time on.

A comparison of these two approaches to self-determination and to the right of secession seems unavoidable. Wilson's and Lenin's points of view were different theoretically and politically, because of the differences of their own idea of state and society, of their divergent cultural legacies and of the context in

which they acted. On the other hand, the two quite different attitudes to self-determination in democratic or dictatorial perspectives influenced the further evolution of similar processes throughout the European continent. It is also true that self-determination ought not lead to ethnic cleansing. Yet in 1923 the Lausanne Treaty between Greece and Turkey promoted the exchange of populations as an instrument to guarantee security.

Consequently, once the Versailles Peace Treaties were put in practice, an uncertain and restless continent looked at national questions, at minorities' issues and state borders in a completely different way than in the past. The evolution of the idea of nation and the attractiveness of nationalism as a political movement surely paid a crucial role in this direction. Particularly the status of minorities became a crucial issue: their discrimination in democratic countries was considered by minorities as a confirmation of the democratic limits of the society in which they lived or were forced to live, while similar attitudes in states under dictatorships created the condition for a "double" kind of discrimination of minorities, both as citizens of the country and members of "rejected" groups.

In addition, in East-Central Europe (but generally over the whole continent) a new legitimization of political powers took root, replacing that of the old dynastic states. The transformation was in many respects unexpected and very rapid. The world was radically changing: mass societies came into being, influencing the institutions and the actions of policy-makers. This process involved a new system of decision-making illiterate peoples and/or strata whose political consciousness was rather primitive. This situation had dire consequences in the large, ethnically mixed area east of an imagined line from the Elbe river to Trieste.

In the end, the process which allowed the establishment of the Soviet Union was deeply influenced by the national question and the claim of secession, not only for Poland and Finland or the Baltic States, but also for Ukraine and the Caucasus region. In such a case a new kind of dictatorship (namely the dictatorship of the proletariat) had to face both the internal "white" reaction and the national claims of the different peoples of the former Russian Empire. Lenin's declaration for self-determination quickly came into conflict with the goal of the world revolution and, then, with the establishing of an isolated socialist country.

More or less in the same period, the national animosity and the confrontation amongst the newly established states in East Central Europe was in short order absorbed, exalted and reversed by the new Nazi dictatorship in Germany. Its sudden strengthening was pursued, by the national point of view, not only with a German racist approach to nationalism but also with a double policy of exclusion and inclusion towards neighbors and other peoples. Hitler used the lever of self-determination to organize his attack on the Versailles order and to destroy it particularly with respect East Central Europe and, then, in his campaign against the Soviet Union.

Two dictatorships manipulated various claims of secession as well as the poli-

cies aimed at including or rejecting peoples. These were used by both regimes to guarantee security and establishing an arbitrary list of groups considered loyal or disloyal. Stereotypes and religion also were instruments to strengthen the campaign for consensus among the majority group. Even when one of these two dictatorships collapsed at the end of the World War II, the Soviet winner maintained a similar approach both in its internal affairs (against the so called "traitor-people" or the Jews) and in its international affairs, particularly in the area where its influence was becoming stronger. The establishment of the soviet satellite system interacted with the national question in many respects, as much an issue related to the relations between socialist countries as it was an issue related to the Soviet minorities or other Soviet peoples, or even as an issue related to minority groups living in the other people democracies. In this context, the project of the "Balkan federation" aimed at by the Yugoslav Communists is a good example of the changing approach to the national question of the Soviet Union from the establishment of the Comintern to the Cominform. Throughout the twentieth century, by means of the Comintern, Moscow tried to pit the members of different nationalities inside the Yugoslav communist party against each other, to redirect the project of the Yugoslav Communist Federation towards a Balkan one, consisting of small soviet states. In contrast, Tito's program aimed at a strong Yugoslav federation which, in turn, would lead to a Balkan federation with Albania and Bulgaria.

The split between Tito and Stalin, which occurred in 1948, made clear these interrelationships: the "Yugoslav secession" from the camp had both an ideological and national origin. The consequences were felt by all the other countries of the soviet camp, as well as by their minorities. As a result Yugoslavia had to transform its federalism (as confirmed by the constitutional efforts of 1968-1974). Nonetheless, the Yugoslav communist dictatorship suffered from different and reiterated national claims that prepared the way to a bloody collapse of the country once communism was defeated. In this period, particularly when *détente* took effect between the Cold War blocs, a mutual process of appeasement allowed the formation of the CSCE. The Helsinki agreement included in its final declaration the protection of minorities, self-determination and secession amongst the categories of human rights. In such a way, they were confirmed as a high priority topic in the relations between communist dictatorship and the democracies.

The Yugoslav war of secession which started in 1991 compelled the whole European framework to face for the first time since World War II the question of secession at a critical juncture: ethnicity and ethnic cleansing became fundamental criteria in a process of establishing new nation-states, influencing the future of the notion of democracy as a government of "demos" or "ethnos". Elsewhere, the collapse of the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia followed rapidly, giving rise to the same issues.

Most recently, in a historical period when european dictatorships have virtu-

ally disappeared, the Dayton agreement (and previously the way how the former Yugoslav republics were recognised by the European Union), as well as the Kosovo crisis, have strengthened the relevant role of self-determination and secession, even offering new patterns for what we can call a “new political morality for the 21st Century”.

The Kosovo crisis again put on the front burner the two contradictory principles of international borders and the concept of self-determination. The international community (United States, European Union, Russia etc.) has taken for the time being the position that the Kosovo problem must be solved with some formulas of autonomy that would not lead to changes of the external borders of Yugoslavia. However, the Albanians have repeatedly rejected this position, appealing to the principle of self-determination, which they claim had been applied to others when the former Yugoslavia broke up. Again, as it had been in 1991 and 1992 (the Bosnian crisis), the genuine confusion in the international community and the inconsistency of past practice in the application of the principle of self-determination exacerbated the situation in Kosovo, mounting tensions which soon erupted into full-scale violence. Consequently, a re-consideration in the light of the current evolution of events – particularly after the violent collapse of Yugoslavia and the difficulties shown by the international community to manage its consequences – is unavoidable.

The aim of this book is to analyse the concept and the policies of self-determination in the Russian, German and Balkan areas during the 20th century, not only in a historical perspective but also taking into account the possible consequences on the internal and international relations in the near future. The question of secession has to be re-considered – by historians, political scientists, and experts on international law and international relations – in the light of interdisciplinary and comparative methodologies: (a) chronologically, namely the historical evolution of the concept and of the policies related to it during the 20th century; (b) geographically, namely, by comparing the policies and interpretations of the concept by the Soviet Union, Germany and Yugoslavia; (c) politically, namely, a comparison between diverse political organisations, such as the dictatorships and their relations with democratic countries (United States and the Western camp) towards self-determination and secession.

In previous analyses of the topics of self-determination and secession, they have more recently been analysed as political/sociological concepts (as in the case of Buchanan or Petrosino) or as a policy promoted by powerful policy-makers (Wilson, Hitler, Lenin, Tito...) or by single scholars (Link, Motyl, Gibianskii). In other works published in the last 20 years, the main interest was focused on nationalism rather than secession per se (Ernest Gellner, Anthony Smith, John Breuilly and others.)

In fact, there are no collective discussions or considerations on the topic in a perspective both historical and comparative. Moreover, the relations between

dictatorships and self-determination, as well as amongst dictatorships-democracies and self-determination, were rarely explored. In addition, several studies on self-determination under communism were developed when communism was in power. For this reason, the Association for the Studies of Nationalities and the Europe and the Balkan International Network (an academic network of scholars, whose activities are developed through the Centro per l'Europa Centro-Orientale e Balcanica, located in Bologna, Italy) have decided to promote this book based on an international conference on these issues, organised by both institutions and held in Forlì, Italy, in 1997. The conference and the book were intended to contribute to the debate on self-determination as the starting point for a new approach to the topic in order to find for the next century a realistic political morality as an alternative to the historical legacy of the twentieth century and the tragedies of the peoples of Eastern Europe if not of all Europe.

EUROPE AND THE BALKANS INTERNATIONAL NETWORK

COSTITUITO ALLA FINE DEL 1993 CON IL SOSTEGNO FINANZIARIO DELL'UNIONE EUROPEA (PROGRAMMA HUMAN CAPITAL AND MOBILITY), IL NETWORK INTERNAZIONALE "EUROPE AND THE BALKANS" SI AVVALE DELLA COOPERAZIONE DI ALCUNI FRA I PIÙ NOTI STUDIOSI DELL'EUROPA E DEGLI STATI UNITI. IL NETWORK NASCE COME INIZIATIVA UNIVERSITARIA E CON L'AMBIZIONE DI SVILUPPARE CONVERGENZA STRETTA FRA RICERCA SCIENTIFICA ED ESIGENZE DI INFORMAZIONE QUOTIDIANA NELLA NOSTRA SOCIETÀ.

THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK "EUROPE AND THE BALKANS" WAS ESTABLISHED AT THE END OF 1993 WITH THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (HUMAN CAPITAL AND MOBILITY PROGRAMME) AND RELIES ON THE COLLABORATION OF SOME OF THE BEST-KNOWN EUROPEAN AND NORTH AMERICAN SCHOLARS. THE INITIATIVE WAS CONCEIVED AS A UNIVERSITY PROJECT, AIMING TO MAKE ACADEMIC RESEARCH MORE RELEVANT TO THE WIDESPREAD NEED FOR INFORMATION.



Università di Bologna

Self-determination has deeply influenced international relations and the process of state building, particularly in Europe during the current century. Since the time of Wilson and Lenin, this political doctrine was used and/or abused by policy makers, leaders and political parties to re-define the geopolitical map of Europe as well as to establish a better security for their people. In the last years, the Dayton agreement and the Kosovo problem (and previously the way how the former Yugoslav republics were recognised by the European Union) have strengthened the relevant role of self determination and secession, even offering new patterns for what we can call a "new political morality for the 21st Century".

The aim of this work is to analyse the concept and the policies of self determination in the Russian, German and Balkan areas during the twentieth century not only in a historical perspective but also taking into account the possible consequences on internal and international relations in the near future.

There are no collective discussions or considerations of the topic both historical and comparative. Moreover, the relations between dictatorships and self-determination, as well as amongst dictatorships-democracies and self-determination, have been rarely explored. There have been several studies on self-determination under communism but these were written when communism was still in power.

This both is the effort of those who wrote this collection of essays intending to contribute to the debate on self-determination as the starting point for a new approach on the topic, in order to find for the next century an alternative political morality to the historical legacy of the twentieth century and the tragedies of the peoples of Eastern Europe.

Cover illustration: *The Interior of The Palaces des Glaces during the signing of Peace Terms. Versailles, France, June 1919* (Photo Credit: National Archives)

L002211

L. 30.000
€ 15,45

ISBN 88-8063-227-2



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