

Balkan War Shows Ethnicity Still Matters

Important or not? We can't have it both ways

by Samuel Francis

Any After two and a half months of the most recent war to make Europe safe for global democracy, you'd think that U.S. senators would start to get it, but evidently some don't. One who doesn't get it — the real purpose of the Clinton-NATO war in the Balkans, that is — is Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison of Texas, who unveiled her ideas about how to end the war and avoid future ones in *USA Today* last week. In fact, her ideas make a good deal of sense, but it's clear she still doesn't get it.

Hutchison thinks the way to end the war is to “nudge our European allies to help us create conditions that reflect the self-determination of the people of the region” — the Balkans. What that means is new states based on ethnicity.

The senator is pretty explicit about ethnic states, writing that “self-determination could mean redrawing borders, perhaps leading to majority Albanian, Serbian,

Croatian and secular Muslim states. Organizing a democracy around ethnic or religious groupings has many precedents in Europe and Asia, yet that opportunity is being denied the people of the Balkans.

Well, now, a tip of the bonnet to Hutchison, who has discovered what just about everyone used to know but now has forgotten — that ethnicity matters and that it matters so much you can base entire nations on it and draw their borders around it. What she is proposing is precisely the way to achieve peace in the Balkans and just about everywhere else where ethnicity remains important.

But, like the kid who said the emperor wore no clothes, Hutchison managed to miss the point of the war. That point was most clearly stated by Gen. Wesley Clark, who remarked around the time the war began that “there is no place in modern Europe for ethnically pure states. That's a 19th century idea, and we are trying to transition into the 21st century, and we are going to do it with multiethnic states.”

Clark's remark was probably the clearest expression of the war's real purpose, but it is by no means the only one. President Clinton, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and several other panjandrums have uttered similar pronouncements.

Columnist Richard Cohen, always a reliable source for liberal inanities, writes: “The original justification for this war was a good one. It was to say, in no uncertain terms, that genocide or ethnic cleansing is impermissible.”

Leaving aside the obvious reply that genocide and ethnic cleansing happen and have happened through history and that no one has ever gone to war to stop them for that reason alone, what Hutchison is proposing, while not exactly the same thing as forcing one ethnic group out of territory claimed by another, is somewhat similar.

Both concepts presuppose the legitimacy and importance of ethnic identity, and it is in this presupposition that they both are totally at odds with the stated purposes of the war and of the new global order that wages it.

In that order, particular identities — race, religion, ethnicity, nationality, cultural tradition, class, gender and any other category that distinguishes one “person” from another — will be forbidden. There are enough statements on record from the architects and prophets of this new order to know that national sovereignty itself will have vanished. And the order will not just be somewhere else, it will be everywhere, including in what used to be the United States.

Samuel Francis, Ph.D., is a syndicated columnist. This article, © 1999, is reprinted with permission from Creators Syndicate.

That is essentially what Clinton meant when he told a group of journalists in 1997 that in the 21st century America will “prove that we literally can live without in effect having a dominant European culture. We want to become a multiracial, multiethnic society. We’re not going to disintegrate in the face of it.”

Of course, it’s by no means clear we won’t disintegrate, just as the Balkans and other “multiracial, multiethnic societies” have dis-

integrated. It is rather more likely the United States will go the same way at some point in the future than that we will all just get along in the fictitious Clintonian utopia.

The way to avoid that future is to do precisely what Senator Hutchison proposes — redraw the borders of existing nations so those “population groups,” as races and ethnic groups are demurely called these days, that feel a common cultural and political identity can establish their own states and

govern themselves.

But it’s not going to happen, mainly because the ruling class of the merging global order has conceived the idiotic notion that ethnicity no longer matters and is illegitimate anyway. Until it abandons that fantasy, the genocides and ethnic cleansings that are supposed to be “impermissible” will be as much a part of the next century as they were of this one. •