

Article by Paddy Ashdown, High Representative for BiH: “10 years after Dayton II: Lessons for fixing failed states”

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How do you prevent failed states from becoming launch pads for terrorism? How do you turn them into functioning democracies? How do you intervene effectively to serve the citizens of those states and the citizens of the global community? A decade of peace implementation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, following the U.S.-brokered agreement signed at Dayton, Ohio, in November 1995, offers tentative answers to these questions.

The poverty, lawlessness and political confrontation that were the immediate legacy of Bosnia's three-and-a-half-year war could have turned the country into a black hole, a staging post for transnational crime and terrorism, consigning its citizens to the status of pariahs.

Yet today Bosnia is a stable democracy with a growing economy about to begin negotiating accession to the European Union and ready to participate in NATO's Partnership for Peace. It has passed through the gates that lead to Euro-Atlantic integration, moving from the era of Dayton to the era of Brussels.

What worked? Military force, judiciously applied. A NATO-led force of 60,000 peacekeepers was deployed in the winter of 1995 to support the political settlement. Troops on their own can't do the job, but political reconstruction can work only

if supported by credible military capability.

Over the last 10 years, force hasn't been needed, but it has always been an option. The NATO deployment has now been replaced by a much smaller EU force, but one that is visibly capable of keeping the peace.

This deployment has been accompanied by a progressive downsizing of Bosnia's armed forces, now numbering 12,000, which are being reconfigured and modernized in order to begin taking part in NATO exercises. Since June this year a Bosnian demining unit has been deployed with coalition forces in Iraq.

Dayton established a complex government structure designed to guarantee representation for each of Bosnia's three constituent peoples – Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats. Immediately after the war, party leaders misused this structure for their own ends. Nation-building was put on hold; the economy, kept on life support by international aid, languished.

So, two years after Dayton, the international community empowered the high representative to dismiss officials and to impose laws if this was deemed necessary to advance the peace process. This proactive approach has worked. It has allowed international and local officials to sidestep obstructionism and establish the institutions necessary for a viable modern democracy.

In October, political agreement was reached on establishing, within the next five years, a state-level, European-standard police system that is democratically controlled and efficiently run.

We have completed the rehabilitation of the judiciary so that the courts are now in a position to tackle the endemic lawlessness that had threatened to overwhelm the state. In addition, the intelligence services have been reconstituted and brought under democratic control. Just two weeks ago, Bosnia's security institutions successfully mounted an

operation against potential suicide bombers transiting through the country.

Economic reforms undertaken preparatory to the launch of EU accession talks have produced major improvements in the business environment: The prospect of full integration in Europe has served as a powerful and popular incentive. Growth in gross domestic product this year is projected at 5.6 percent, the fastest in the Balkans. Inflation stands at 0.5 percent, the lowest in the Balkans. Foreign direct investment, industrial production and exports are all up.

The two most-wanted war crimes indictees, Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, remain at large. Their arrest is a necessary act of closure for the people of Bosnia, and I trust that it will not be deferred much longer. However, I am encouraged by the fact that 12 indictees have been transferred to The Hague this year through the cooperation of the authorities in Bosnia and in neighboring capitals, compared with none in the preceding nine years.

As the international community's high representative here, I have had my share of unsolicited advice – often tendered from afar and with little knowledge of conditions on the ground. I am not about to prescribe glib solutions for Iraq or Afghanistan or other failed states. But Bosnia has worked.

This is a country that could have failed its own people and could have become an international economic and security liability. Instead it is a stable and increasingly viable democracy. Its lessons should not be ignored.