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THE EFFECT OF STATE SUCCESSION ON THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE UNITED NATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF YUGOSLAVIA

T.S.N. Sastry

Introduction
The former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia consisted of six republics namely, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia. The crisis in Yugoslavia erupted around September 1990, when some of its member republics expressed their desire to opt out of the federation. All the steps taken by the Federal Government of Yugoslavia, the European community, the conference on Security and Cooperation (CSCE) to resolve the crisis and to preserve the stability of Yugoslavia became in vain. Finally, four out of the six republics seceded from the federation leaving Serbia and Montenegro and declared their independence between the years of 1991-92. All the four republics were recognised by the European community, USA and by a number of nations during 1992-93. The United Nations also admitted them as new members of the organization.

The remaining two republics, Serbia and Montenegro, joining together formed a joint State and declared it as the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Accordingly, Serbia and Montenegro claim that the break-up of former Yugoslavia constituted only as partial succession, and the new State is the successor of predecessor of Yugoslavia, and thereby entitled to succeed to all the rights and obligations of Yugoslavia including the membership in the United Nations. The United Nations refused to accept the stand taken by the new State of Yugoslavia stating that "the claim by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) to continue automatically the membership of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the United Nations has not been generally accepted", and asked the new State to apply for the membership like a new State.

1. Lecturer, School of International Studies, Pondicherry University, Pondicherry - 605 014
6. Diplomatic Note No.81/92 to the US Dept. of State from the Embassy of the SFRY (FRY) cited in Paul R. Williams, op.cit., at p. 781, n.28.

The State of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia refuses to apply for the membership and insists that it is entitled to succeed to the membership of the former Yugoslavia in accordance with the past practice of United Nations and principles of International law of state succession. However, the Security Council adopted a Resolution which effectively eliminated the claim of FR Yugoslavia as a successor of the former SFR Yugoslavia. The decision of the United Nations not to follow its earlier practice in recognizing the claim of the new State of Yugoslavia, as a successor of the former SFR Yugoslavia, clearly exposes the problems in built in this area even today. Further, the decision of the UN once again became a battlefield for the scholars of the legal community and divergent views are aired on the subject.

In view of the acrimonious situation prevailing in respect of succession of membership to the international organizations upon the break of a State, this article aims to examine the problem under study taking into consideration of the principles of International law of State Succession and the past practice of the United Nations in brief, and tries to identify to what extent the decision of the UN is coherent. This article further tries to identify the dangers involved in the area and comes out with specific suggestions to overcome the problems in future.

International Law of Succession Pertaining to International Organisations and The Practice of the UN.

1. Succession pertaining to international organisations.

States are exposed to change. In whatever manner a change takes place in the internal form of a 'State', it will not affect the catus of the 'Community of nations', so long as the State retains its international identity. However, certain changes in the personality of a State do affect the identity and continuity of states as international persons. Although transfer of sovereignty from one State to another do not take

7. Security Council Resolution 777, States in Part: "Recalling the State formerly known as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was ceased to exist, and realizing that the claim by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) to continue automatically the membership of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the United Nations was not generally accepted therefore recommends to the General Assembly that it decide that the Federation Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) should apply for membership in the United Nations and that it shall not participate in the work of the General Assembly. UNDOC. S/RES/777/1992.

place frequently unlike the constant changes within a State, an examination of the politico-legal analysis, clearly specifies that the birth and death of the States in different period always account for the varied highly sensitive political contexts and ultimately leads to the emergence of new States. In whatever manner, a change takes place in the personality of a state, obviously it will affect the rubric of 'State succession'.

State succession means the juridical transmission of sovereignty along with some or all rights and duties over a given territory by a new State in the place of an old State. Under the general principles of international law, the issue of transfer of sovereignty from one State to another, generally, takes place in different types, depending upon the political contexts. However, in general the birth and death of States can be broadly classified as either a 'continuation' or 'dissolution' depending upon the extent the legal personality of a State is affected. In the case of the former, one or more sub-state entities breaks away from the main State and forms as independent State or States. This means the remaining part of the State is referred to as the "Predecessor State" or an "Old State" which normally, assumes the rights and obligations of the "Predecessor State". The breaking away States are referred to as 'new' States or successors. Whereas in the case of dissolution, the predecessor State dissolves into a number of successor States and none of them can be considered as a continuing or predecessor state. The new States are generally referred to as "Clean States" or "Successor States" which do not have any obligation to accept the treaty obligations governing state succession except those

9. The birth of the Latin American States in the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, the Eastern European States after the First World War, the Emergence of the New States in Asia and Africa through the Phenomenon of Decolonization after the Second World War, the Unification of Germany, the dissolution of the USSR, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia in the 90's are the certain centrifugal changes that took place in the international arena.


11. The different types are (a) Creation (b) Conquest or annexation (c) Fusion with other states (d) Entry into a Federation (e) Dismemberment or partition and (f) Separation or Succession.

12. "There is a fundamental distinction between State continua and State succession, that is to say, between cases where the "same" State can be said to continue to exist despite changes of Government, territory or population and cases where one state can be said to have replaced another with respect to certain territory." J.Crawford, The Creation of States in International Law (1979) p.400.
norms or conventions which had become part of the customary international law.

Whatever may be the mode and impact of these changes on the political and factual circumstances, in the language of law, one thing is common among them, namely, that in both the cases a specific portion of territory passes from one sovereign State to another without any exception. This common feature is not only confined to the transfer of territory, but also extends to the substitution of legal rights and obligations between the ‘predecessor’ and the ‘successor’ State in fact as well as in law. It is here the problem of state succession assumes significance to deal with the juridical relations (between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ States) that arise due to the transfer of sovereignty, which includes the relations with non-state entities.

Certainly, in respect to succession to the membership of international organizations, the rules with respect to the admission of new members are mainly governed by the relevant charters or constitutional provisions of the respective organizations, than the principles of the law of state succession. Hence, the norms governing acquisition of membership laid down in the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and other rules relating to the admission of new members are paramount. Although, the law of states succession has a limited role in respect of succession of States to the membership of international organizations, still it plays a prominent role in distinguishing between old and new States (i.e. the identity and continuity of States in cases of State succession) in discharging their legal relations with other States and International Organizations. In fact, it is this distinction of identity and continuity of States which will help the international organizations in arriving at a conclusion upon the break-up of a State, whether there is any predecessor.

13. The International Practice shows that the successor or the new states are not reluctant to accept the obligations of their predecessors. But due to the lack of a clear cut guide lines or norms on the law of state succession, most of the treaties cannot be applied automatically and without change, due to the change in the legal personality. Even if both the Vienna Conventions on State succession were in force and ratified by various States, the conventions would not be obligatory for new states as new subjects of international law. Of course, in the case of decolonization the treaty obligations are developed on the new States in accordance with the agreements reached before the predecessor and successor state are only a special case and cannot be considered as a general rule. "The continuity of the former Yugoslav States" (1993), 43, ICLQ 473-475 at sec. 484. O’Connell, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 32-37. Vienna Convention on Succession of States in Respect of Treaties, 1978, A/CONF.72 p.971 Vienna Convention on the succession of States in Respect of State Property, Archives and Debts, 1983 ILM Vol 22.
The Effect of State Succession on the Membership of the United Nations

The State is in existence or not in respect to succession of membership to the international organizations. In accordance with the general principles of international law upon the break-up of a State, it is generally assumed that if a State is in existence, it is considered as the continuing State and will succeed to the membership of its predecessor State automatically without any problem. The newly independent State or States have to undergo through the procedures prescribed in the relevant constitution of the respective organizations to acquire membership. Whereas, on the other hand, in the case of a dissolution of a State, there are no clear-cut rules or practices in existence as to which State may succeed to the membership of the international organizations. This is because not only due to the lack of proper norms of State succession, but also no clear-cut precedent existed outside the area of decolonization, whether the legal transfer of sovereignty constituted as a continuation or dissolution.

2. Past Practice of the United Nations

The United Nations since its establishment in 1945 faced the issue of succession of membership from its members, which was due to the succession of one or more of its constituent parts and its ensuing loss of territory and population on several occasions. In the series, the first issue that came up for the consideration of the UN was the independence and partition of British India in 1947. British India as an original member of the organization became independent and was simultaneously partitioned into two states, namely India and Pakistan. The UN in resolving the issue acted upon the legal advice of the secretariat. The secretariat in response to that situation, in its opinion concluded that...

...from the point of view of international law, the situation is one in which a part of an existing state breaks off and becomes a new state. This had no effect on the international status of India, which continued to be a member of the United Nations. But the territory which breaks off, Pakistan, will be a new state: it will not have the treaty rights and obligations of the old State, and will not, of course, have the membership of the United Nations.

The United Nations subsequently applied the same view in respect to succession of membership of the United Nations, whenever an existing member of it breaks off into two or more parts, until the dissolution of the Union of Soviet

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17. Ibid at pp.177,209.
21. The United Nations applied this methodology in the case of Syria/Pakistan USSR etc., for a detailed discussion see O'Connell, supra n.16 at 188-211.
Socialist Republic of Russia in 1991. Among the various cases, the case of Syria can be quoted as a classic example. In this case, the United Nations has brushed aside the rules relating to acquisition of membership and allowed Syria to resume its membership without a fresh application after the secession of Syria from UAR. Accordingly, it can be inferred that the stand taken by the UN in the case of Yugoslavia is not consistent with its earlier practice.

In view of the stand taken by the new FR Yugoslavia as a continuation of former SFR Yugoslavia and the divergent opinions aired on the decision of the UN, it is pertinent to analyze in brief, the political and legal issues involved in the problem, in order to find out whether the dissolution of Yugoslavia constituted a universal or partial success.

(a) Universal Success

The European Community in their efforts to resolve the crisis in Yugoslavia appointed an Arbitration commission authorizing it to address various issues connected with the dissolution of SFR Yugoslavia, including the most important question on the legal status of Yugoslavia. The commission in its opinion No. 1, held that, “the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is in the process of dissolution”, and “it is up to those republics that so wish to work together to form a new association endowed with the democratic institutions of their choice”.

The Belgrade authorities (Serbia and Montenegro) totally rejected the opinion of the Commission and said that it is a successor State of the SFR Yugoslavia. In order to clarify further on the legal status of SFR Yugoslavia, Lord Carrington, who was then chairing the Peace Conference on Yugoslavia has asked the Commission with a new set of questions relating to the legal consequences of the dissolution of SFR Yugoslavia. The Commission in its continuous opinions made it clear that the process of the dissolution of SFR Yugoslavia is complete and that the SFR Yugoslavia no longer exists.

The Commission further answering on the question of succession and the status of FR Yugoslavia held that, “new States have been created on the territory of former SFR Yugoslavia and replaced it. All are successor States to SFR Yugoslavia”, hence “the State of FR Yugoslavia”.

22. UN Doc. 1991/10, Russia, December 24.
23. In the year 1956 Syria merged with Egypt and formed an Arab Republic. After the formation of UAR it had declared that the union continues as a single member of the United Nations. However, in the year 1961 Syria decided to withdraw from the UAR and resumed its membership in the United Nations without going through the procedure of admission. In this case neither the membership of UAR nor that of Syria had been affected after the dissolution of the Union. See R. Young, “The State of Syria: Old or New? (1962) AJIL, 48, 226 also see the UN Doc. A/4914: A/CN.4/149, 1961, p. 10.
25. Id at 1516-19.
(Serbia and Montenegro) in the new State which cannot be considered as sole successor of SFRY". 26

The Government of FRJ emphatically denied the opinions expressed by the Commission and requested the United Nations to allow her to occupy the seat of SFRY as a successor to it. As stated already, the Security Council opined that FRJ cannot be considered as a successor of SFRY and asked to apply for the membership of the United Nations as a new State. The decision of the Security Council was endorsed by the General Assembly. 27

A section of scholars 28 taking into consideration of the opinions of the Arbitration Commission and the views expressed by the UN argue that the dissolution of SFRJ is a clear cut case of dissolution in the history of the United Nations, hence FRJ cannot claim to be successor of SFRJ. They further contend that the sanctions imposed on the rump Yugoslavia by the Security Council, clearly specifies that the claim by FRJ to be declared as a successor of former Yugoslavia, in no way complies with Article 4(1) of the Charter of the United Nations.

Even the US Mission to the UN in its press note also made it clear that it is unfortunate in the history of the UN, for the first time a member State is facing a dissolution without any successor. It was further held that had there been any agreement entered by the successor States to confirm the status of former SFRJ, it would have became easy for us to accept the claim of the new FRJ. The note further add that since none of the successors of the former Republic are not holding a predominant portion of territory or population, which is an essential requirement to recognize a State as a successor from the past practice of the United Nations. 29

(b) Partial Succession

As stated already, FRJ claims as a successor State of former SFRJ, on the basis that since it is the only State which has held 40% of the territory and 45% of the population of the former SFRJ and agreed to discharge all the treaty rights and obligations, 30 it should be considered as a continuation of the former SFRJ in accordance with the Customary principles of international law and the past practice of the United Nations.

26. id at 1521 et seq 1523, 24, 25, 26.
Professor Blum and other scholars argue that the dissolution of Yugoslavia constituted only as a secession and cannot be considered as dismemberment. Blum, in his stark criticism on the decision of the United Nations, opines that...

to deny the Belgrade authorities the right to occupy the seat of Yugoslavia at the United Nations, however, reprehensible their policies seem to some or even the overwhelming majority of the organization’s members.32

Blum further contends that the resolution 47/1,33 of the General Assembly has neither terminated nor suspended the membership of Yugoslavia from the United Nations. Hence, it is illogical to suggest such a State to apply for the membership of the organization as a new member as was asked by both the primary organs of the organization.34

Marc Weller contends that the whole Yugoslav issue was used as a political tool for the interests of some of the members of the European Community. In fact, even in the recognition of the other republics, the criteria used was radically different from the customary principles of international law of recognition.35 Clearly specifies the political intentions of the European Community. He further argues that legally both the entities (Serbia and Montenegro) had fulfilled all the requirements of Statehood, and in the absence of recognition, the claim perceived by FRY as a successor State by all means confirms its claim.36

Further retaining the flag at the compound of the Headquarters of the UN and the name plate of Yugoslavia in the General Assembly along with other members confirm the stand taken by FRY beyond any doubt. In fact, this point of view is even emphasized by the Permanent Representatives of Russia and China at the time of the adoption of the Resolution 777 by the Security Council.37 This position can be further substantiated by the legal opinion rendered by the UN Legal Council that “the only practical consequence that the (General Assembly’s) resolution (47/1) draws is that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) shall not participate in the work of the General Assembly because its membership was suspended by the resolution 47/1.”38

Critical Appraisal of the Resolution

From the above, it can be seen that the resolution 47/1 is an effective tool in providing a solution to the situation arising from the problem of State succession. It is clear that whatever may be the basis for the decision none of the international tribunals have not supported either the entity of the international community.

The stand taken by FRY can be supported from the Act 813, 1992. The Prime Minister of the present State of Yugoslavia, speaking at the UN General Assembly, has mentioned that FRY was a party to the UN Charter and the implementation of the obligations of the Charter of the United Nations is one of the most effective ways to prevent and reduce the effects of international human rights violations and to bring to justice those who have committed war crimes and breaches of the character of the United Nations.

Further, with regard to the general legal position of the FRY, the decision of the European Court of Justice, the claim of the former State that the newly formed States are independent entities is not correct. They have to apply for the membership of the organization on the basis of the fulfillment of all the criteria of Statehood and adopted by the UN Security Council.39

33. Blum, id. at 833.
35. Blum, supra n.31 at 251.
36. For the customary criteria on Recognition see Ian Brownlie, op. cit., pp.72-79.

participate in the work of the General Assembly...the resolution neither terminates nor suspends Yugoslavia's membership in the organization. 38

Critical Appraisal of the Problem

From the above discussion, it can be inferred that the issue of Yugoslavia has not been handled properly from the beginning. The United Nations instead of providing a solution to the problem, left in a haphazard fashion by taking a compromising stand between the conflicting interests of some of the member States and the legal principles. From the point of view of the customary principles of international law of State succession and the past practice of the United Nations it is crystal clear that new Yugoslavia is the successor of the former SFRY by all means. Hence, whatever may be the political motives and considerations of the member States finds no support either from the point of view of international law or from the practice of the international institutions.

The stand taken by the rump Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) might be supported from the interim orders of the International Court of Justice of 8th April 1993; 13 September 1993, 39 in the case filed by Bosina- Herzegovina against the present State of Yugoslavia. The Court in its interim orders held that the convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of Genocide of 1948, provided a prima facie basis for its jurisdiction to indicate provisional measures on Yugoslavia, since SFRY was a party to the Convention. Even in accordance with the rules of the international human rights law and the principles of self-determination, the rump Yugoslavia has every right to resume the membership of SFRY in exercise of its inherent power of sovereignty.

Further, with regard to succession of membership of the United Nations, the general legal position is that upon the break-up of an existing member of the organization, the continuing State or States to continue it will retain the membership of the former State irrespective of the constitutional and territorial changes if its international identity is preserved. 40 This means the new Successor State or States have to apply for the membership of the United Nations in accordance with the provisions of the Charter. Since its establishment, this position was firmly established and adopted by the United Nations on various occasions. 41 However, at

38. UN DOC. S/47/485, Annex, September 30, 1992 (The emphasis added here is the original of the text).


41. This view was first adopted at the time of the admission of Pakistan in 1947, followed by the separation of Singapore from Malaysia in 1965, Separation of Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971 and more recently this view was adopted in the case of Russian after the disintegration USSR in 1992.
times an important question such as this has been subordinated to the political considerations than to apply the well established legal criteria. This has resulted in an acrimonious situation in deciding the case of Yugoslavia.

Although the issue of Yugoslavia is generally considered by the organization that the former Yugoslavia has ceased to exist and none of the successor States are eligible to claim for the automatic continuation or its membership, from the statements made by some of the members in the Security Council, the General Assembly, and the UN Legal Council's opinion makes it clear that the issue is still legally outstanding before the United Nations. Moreover, the statement made by the United States Mission in the UN that the membership with respect to the successor of the former Yugoslavia, would have been resolved if there had been a devolution agreement entered between the successor States specifying the successor over whom the membership to be conferred upon is apparently contrary to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Nevertheless, even if it is a valid document from the past practices of the UN, it is still doubtful to what extent the validity of such an agreement would have been considered in the perplexing niceties of political equations. For example, in the case of Czechoslovakia despite the entry of a Devolution Agreement between the Czech Republic and Soviet Union upon the dissolution of the Federal Republic of Czechoslovakia in 1993, neither of them were considered as the continuing personality of the former Czechoslovakia and both of them were admitted as new members of the organization. Hence it is submitted that, as was rightly pointed by Prof. Blum, the UN should interpret the provisions of the Charter and rules framed thereunder in the right spirit, and should reconsider its decision in accordance with the

42. The legal criteria was brushed aside when the Union of the United Arab Republic was dissolved in 1961. Syria resumed its seat. Tanganyika continued its membership after the formation of the United Republic of Tanzania in 1964 with merger of Tanganyika. The anomaly is so evident when Transvaal resumed its seat a few years later with little or no discussion after its voluntary withdrawal from the organization. Even in the case of Russia it has been allowed to continue as an original member including the permanent membership in the Security Council, though the Alma-Ata Declaration of December 21, 1991, made it clear that with the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic ceased to exist. For the text of the Declaration see ILM, Vol.31, 1992, pp.148-149.

43. See for the statements of Russia, India, Zimbabwe, China: UN DOC. S/PU.31/6, 1992 at pp.3, 7-9 14.

44. For the statements of Ghana, Kenya, Zambia, Tanzania, Malawi, Brazil, Jamaica and Guyana UN DOC A.47/PV.7, 1992 p.158 et seq 166, 172, 177, 180, 190, 193, 194.

45. UNDOC A/47/474, September 25, 1992.


47. Supra n. 29.


50. Blum, supra n.31 at 221.
legal provisions and the past practice than to resort to the political considerations of few of its member states.

Conclusion

The above analysis, clearly establishes that the problems connected to succession of States to international organizations are no more resolved completely even today. Though the practice of the United Nations and some of its constituent organizations appears to be settled in the event of change of sovereignty of an existing member the way they handled the problem of Yugoslavia (to a certain extent Czechoslovakia too) proves the point beyond any doubt that there is no uniform practice or principle existed. The way the Yugoslavian crisis has been handled reveals that the international organizations are also not above the politics of power. This is rather an unfortunate situation that the international organizations are also willing to discharge their duties then to strictly adhere to the well founded principles of international law and past practice and in accordance with their respective constitutional arrangements.

This type of political compromises by the UN over the established legal norms in deciding a crucial question of succession of membership by one of its continuing members may prove to be a set back on the system on which the whole community of nations as well as the mankind reposed their confidence. In order to overcome this type of obstacles and for the effective functioning of the system in future, there is a need for codification of the law with respect to the problem of succession to international organizations. In this connection, it is to be remembered that the International Law Commission already identified the area for codification along with the problem of state succession. However, the Commission felt that the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, 1969, the Vienna Convention on succession of States in Respect of Treaties 1978, and the existing provisions of the constitutions of the various organizations and the charter of the UN may fill the need of the states and left the issue for further consideration. But, the problems are not yet settled as felt by the Commission and may recur even in future. In order to eliminate the problems in the rubric, the General Assembly is required immediately to request the International Law Commission to codify the area taking into consideration of the past practices of the UN, the principles of International Law of State Succession and the constitutions of the organizations to formulate a comprehensive law. Such a comprehensive law shall not only eliminate the political motivations of the States, but also lends support for the effective functioning of the United Nations and its other organs to serve the shared ideals, practical needs of the member States in a more democratic and congenial atmosphere.