

SECURITY ISSUES IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

prof. dr. Radovan Vukadinović

ABSTRACT

The vigorous participation of the international community has brought about the Dayton Accord, the Royamont Initiative, the EU's Regional Approach, the SECI, the Stability Pact, and - finally - the fall of Milošević. The change in the international climate and the presence of military forces in the Balkans (SFOR, KFOR or NATO) essentially nullifies the threat of future conflict. One condition is that the international community commit to a long-term presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. Given such a military and political commitment, Southeastern Europe could be made secure. Along with the classic challenges to the security of the Balkans, new challenges are emerging: the transition from a socialist into a capitalistic system; accelerated opening of Eastern Europe; new immigration patterns; terrorism; arms and drug trafficking; prostitution; and the rampant spread of organized crime.

Security Issues in Southeast Europe

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Classifying challenges

Threats and challenges to regional stability can be classified simply as military or not. Military conflicts could include Greek-Turkish relations, the further disintegration of Yugoslavia, the creation of a Kosovo state, or the emergence of a Greater Albania. These events would necessitate military force and would probably escalate to regional involvement.

These military threats include the unfinished process of conventional arms control within the CFE, which emphasizes the fact that conventional arms control has not been established, nor have the Balkans been fully incorporated into the European security system. Although Annex II. of the Dayton Accord addresses this, a comprehensive system linked to the OSCE would be preferable.

The international community, however, has the military might and mobility to abort and/or destroy any rogue military adventure, no matter its strength. NATO's strike against Serbia announced that it would not countenance military oppression in the Balkans.

Ergo: the non-military challenges, which now abound and are constantly increasing, are the foremost concerns, whether they arise from history, ethnicity, religion, or transitional difficulties resulting from the devastation of war. They can be grouped in these four areas:

Traditional Balkan conflicts;

Adjunct crises;

Future security challenges.

Traditional Balkan Conflicts

The ongoing Greek - Turkish arguments over the territorial demarcation in the Aegean Sea and Cyprus¹ are ancient in vintage and animosity. Although members of NATO, they continue to disagree; each new incident incites intense nationalism on both sides, including mobilizing troops to protect each country's interests and positions. The South Wing of NATO has been unable to diminish this nationalistic fervor, and thus arbitrate a political solution. Greece has long resolutely blocked Turkish efforts to gain EU membership. The animosity between Greece and Turkey is a carryover from classical times (i.e., the Hellenes vs. the Barbarians). And the old perceptions of each other survive into the present and are not likely to change.

Conflicts between Albania and Yugoslavia regarding Kosovo are also traditional tensions not about to disappear. During the days of friendship and cooperation after World War Two, when both countries were members of the peoples' democracy, both dismissed the issue is unimportant. In the plan to create a Balkan socialist federation along with Bulgaria, both countries were to act as examples for other countries. But after the Informburo Resolution of 1948, the Enver Hoxha regime revived the Kosovo issue in its attacks against Yugoslavia. After Stalin's death, relations were normalized, but the Kosovo issue kept surfacing.

Isolated Albania lacked the strength and support to further its claims. After the fall of socialism and Berisha's rise to the presidency, the question of Kosovo was openly repositioned at the center of political action. In an attempt to divert attention from internal problems, Berisha advocated gathering and locating all Albanians in one country and started agitating for the internationalization of the Kosovo issue. Milošević's brutal regime, especially its policy of genocide, again opened the door for the internationalization of the Kosovo issue and the engagement of international organizations and mediators; later, however, the negotiations in Rambouillet were abandoned and NATO intervened.

The present situation led to the deployment of the UN, NATO, and Russian forces in Kosovo, the return of Albanian refugees, the exodus of Serbian and other non-Albanian peoples from Kosovo, the creation of KFOR as the principal military, political, and police force, and the final exclusion of Kosovo from the Serbian state systems (monetary, energy, transport, economic, and educational). Both the West and Russia recognize that Kosovo is an integral part of Yugoslavia; that fact, however, has not altered the situation. Instead, the West resolutely opposes the secession of Kosovo and/or changing its borders. Controlled stabilization, it is felt, would offer the possibility of multi-ethnic life. According to President Clinton, most important is "to preserve the democracy, self-determination, and freedom, and that in these countries (meaning Balkan countries) there should be no ethnic, religious, or racial persecution, regardless of the national borders."² How will this satisfy the Albanian population, who want the expulsion of Serbian authorities and Serbs? It remains to be seen how many non-Albanians will return to Kosovo. Finally, UCK's position in this issue is significant; for this organization influences the majority of Albanians, and their political leadership leans toward total secession from Yugoslavia.³

If this succeeds, a new set of questions arises; i.e. would an independent Kosovo become an independent state? Would it become part of present Albania? Would it become part of a Greater Albania in which other territories with Albanian majorities would be included (parts of Macedonia and Montenegro)?

The issue of Kosovo, and that of Albanian-Serbian (Yugoslav) relations, will continue to be a problem of more than regional significance. The international engagement,⁴ as well as other efforts to restore stability in the area, makes Kosovo a problem of wide international concern, one that continues to test the willingness and ability of the international community to solve within the context of the new world order.

The collapse of Milošević's regime and the election of a new Yugoslav president, Kostunica, renews hope for a solution to the Kosovo crisis. One approach is the gradual building of a democratic society organized as a federation of Serbia, Montenegro, Vojvodina, and Kosovo. But the majority of Albanians in Kosovo would reject that solution; if they cannot have their own state, the international protectorate is acceptable for now.

The Turkish - Bulgarian dispute, although now inactive, remains visible. The 800,000 Turks (Pomaks) who live in Bulgaria were forcefully "bulgarianized" during the previous socialist regime. In the Muslim communities (there are many in the Balkans) there is no desire to commit to or be included in the government of the state where they live. Muslims, often moved by their fundamentalist beliefs, are thus considered a possible destabilizing force, and Bulgaria has a considerable Muslim-Pomak population. Nevertheless, plans go forward to incorporate Pomaks into Bulgarian social, political, and economic life. For Bulgaria has committed itself to the European path, which assumes respect for human and minority rights.⁵

The often tense post-Cold War relations between Romania and Hungary were due to the position of Hungarians living in Romania. In Ceausescu's times a policy of national homogenization required that all citizens demonstrate their loyalty to the state. But a large Hungarian population in Transylvania with a strong sense of national identity looked ahead to better prospects after the fall of Ceausescu's regime. Although Romania would never cede Transylvania back to Hungary, Romanian Hungarians, as well as those in Hungary, continued to call for full autonomy and eventually self-determination.

Romanian authorities were obdurate in their opposition. At one point, Hungarian-Romanian relations even became a matter of possible military intervention. The situation was even seen as an example for future deployment of European forces. The then-Secretary of the WEU, Van Eckelen, pointed to this situation as a possible test for WEU action.

Fortunately, however, both parties demonstrated restraint. Also, the EU applied pressure, making it clear to both states that closer relations with the EU depends on their establishing normal relations.

Both countries were also influenced by a desire to become members of the Partnership for Peace. An agreement on bilateral relations was signed that regulates the issue of the Hungarian minority in Romania.⁶

In addition, relations with Moldova are also a Romanian concern. According to Romanian political circles, Moldova, a state that was created after the fall of the Soviet Union, was to unite with Romania. That it did not happen caused concern in Bucharest; because Moldova was formerly Romanian territory, it is natural that the two countries unite. But along with Romanians, the mix also contains Ukrainians, Russians, Turks, Jews, and Bulgarians. Any unification with Romania would only generate new ethnic conflict. Fearing that Moldova will become part of Romania, the Ukrainian and Russian population created in 1990 the Transdnestra Republic in the south of Moldova, that still exists.

Romania is presently engrossed with difficult internal problems. This is the principal reason for its putting aside issues of all nationalism. Romania's future lies in NATO membership, and an Association Agreement with the EU. Europe is its priority, not the constant disputes over nationalistic and territorial claims. Besides, Moldavian independence is near becoming accepted fact, and the Moldavian political structures do not consider unification with Romania an attractive economic option. Moldova is expecting much more from the SECI and eventual connection to the EU; this is the only way it can solve its many economic problems.

New Balkan traumas and New Independence

The disintegration of Yugoslavia has fueled new disputes, as well as re-charged some old animosities in the area. It is certain the international community must continue to monitor the behavior of the new states.

Relations between Croatia and Serbia have deep roots in their common life, but also deep divisions. The Dayton Accord and the Agreement of Normalization of Relations between the two states (1996), are incentives to hasten normalization between the two factions. Prevlaka, however, remains an open dispute. Croatia views it as only a security issue; Yugoslavia demands a change of borders in its favor. Other troublesome concerns are the return of refugees and the attendant property issues. Also, reparation for war damages suffered by Croatia is an open matter.

Although the relations between the two countries are best described as "cold peace" time, the influence of the international community will effect better relations. Even now, the regimes in Zagreb and Belgrade portend an improvement in bilateral relations. Their

common interest must prevail to settle the question of strict adherence to the Dayton Accords, Serbian apology for the war in Croatia, etc.

Disputes also exist between Croatia and Slovenia. The present demarcation in the Bay of Piran is not acceptable to Slovenia and has occasioned sharp political asides from both parties. This dispute, along with those connected to the Krško nuclear plant and the restitution to Croatian clients of the Ljubljanska Banka, is near solution. These issues are benign in nature, not a cause of tension in the area.

The Macedonian-Greek dispute arose after the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the creation of the independent Macedonian state. Greece immediately found justification for rejecting the new state. The most serious concern for Greece was Macedonian-Turkish relations. Greece will prevent the incursion of Turkey into the Balkans at any cost.⁷ But the initial hostility on both sides is gradually easing; Greece lifted the blockade that isolated Macedonia in the south; an agreement was reached to make changes on the Macedonian national flag and to a provision of the Constitution; but the matter of the official name - the Republic of Macedonia - remains open.

The Kosovo crisis and the changes in Belgrade will have a positive effect on Macedonian - Greek relations, for both want peace in the Balkans.

Macedonian - Bulgarian relations are also very complex. Although Bulgaria was the first to recognize an independent Macedonia it did not recognize the existence of a Macedonian nation, which supports the interpretation that Macedonians are indeed Bulgarians. This notion could adversely affect Macedonia; for example, an attempt to separate those areas of western Macedonia populated mostly by an Albanian minority. However, the international presence in Macedonia would frustrate any such aspirations. The EU has sufficient resources to neutralize any dispute with minimal efforts.

Potential points of crisis

Among these, the problems relating to Bosnia and Herzegovina are dominant. The formula of one state, two entities and three nations presents the best democratic solution, though its success is questionable given the passions of the recent war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁸ The willingness to continue the international presence is crucial for future stability. And it is the duration of the international presence that acts both as a controller and a protector. If the international forces remain in Bosnia and Herzegovina, refugees and displaced persons could be returned, creating the

conditions for a multi-cultural environment mutual prosperity. The key question is how long? A decade or two would be optimal.

FR Yugoslavia has been radiating stability in the Balkans for ten years and represents the most serious challenge to Balkan security. FR Yugoslavia, after Milošević, is beset by problems: Montenegro is on the brink of separation; Kosovo can be practically written-off for Serbia; Sandžak is demanding autonomy, as well as the Hungarian minority, who aspires for full secession from Yugoslavia. Milošević's regime survived and fed on crisis; it lost every war it initiated and threatened the very territorial survival of SR Yugoslavia.

But the international community does not appear willing to sanction a complete break-up of Yugoslavia. The Montenegrin proposal to create an alliance of two independent and internationally recognized states - Montenegro and Serbia - was not endorsed by Washington, Western Europe, or Moscow. Kosovo is also still a part of Yugoslavia and will probably remain so. Sandžak and Vojvodina could be granted a low level of autonomy, but the international community would not support full secession from FR Yugoslavia.

The world would prefer that democratic changes take place in Belgrade, thus forming a precedent for democratic solutions to other problems. A democratic Yugoslavia could solve the problem of union with Montenegro, and that of autonomy for mu[ti-ethnic Kosovo, Sandžak, and Vojvodina.

But what forces will initiate the changes that will clear the way for democratization? Also, the democratization process would not be limited to Serbia; it would be a universal revitalization of civic societies: an eradication of war criminals; a commitment to human and minority rights; and an acceptance of European codes of behavior.

Until the democratization and Europeanization of the Balkans occurs, territorial and minority issues will remain the norm in the area. No territorial or minority dispute in the Balkans has yet been resolved. The recent war makes solutions more difficult to find. The fate of Albanians living in Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, Macedonia, and Greece, remains unresolved. Is this a human-and-minority rights issue? Or would an independent Albanian be the answer?

Milosević's grand design of conquest has resulted in a returning swarm of Serbian refugees from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo, to their homeland. Will the Europeanization of the Balkans solve this problem? Can it solve the Macedonian national problem of the Macedonians living in Bulgaria and Greece?

The advocates for small national states would add the Muslims, a large number of whom live outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sandžak).

Given the present circumstances, it may be easier and, at the same time, more difficult to neutralize these many challenges to security: easier because the Balkans no longer depend exclusively on Balkan actors and their "ways" of solving problems; more difficult because the bloodshed and suffering of the past decade in the area is impossible to ignore or forget. But as long as the international community maintains a force in the Balkans, it will deter, frustrate, and/or destroy any attempts to achieve national aspirations by force.

New Challenges to Security

The new challenges to the security of the Balkans have their genesis in the geostrategic position of southeast Europe; in a permanent lack of resources to build and maintain a modern, efficient military force; in the pre-existence of strong bilateral and/or multilateral alliances (apart from the Partnership for Peace); and in attempts to create preconditions for multilateral linkage; i.e., accelerated NATO membership.

Along with these classic issues, new challenges are emerging, of which the following are foremost: the transition from a socialist into a capitalistic system; accelerated opening of Eastern Europe; organized crime; new immigration patterns; terrorism; arms and drug trafficking; prostitution; and the rampant spread of organized crime.

New immigration patterns are a significant issue in areas situated at the cross-roads of Europe: Eastern Europe, Russia, the Balkans, and the Middle East. Illegal immigration is a magnet for social and economic problems. Big money is involved in "smuggling"; organized crime is already involved in this activity. Also, the mob forces immigrants into prostitution and exploits them as a cheap labor force. No countries in the region have air-tight borders; no containment is possible or expected.

Terrorism has deep roots in the Balkans and easily finds adherents in national and ethnic conflicts. Unsatisfied minority groups are common, as are outside-agitated nationalistic movements; e.g., the Serb rebellion in Croatia. Outside support makes the fight against terrorism difficult.

Arms and drug trafficking has rapidly grown since the Cold-War system dissolved. The wars in the territories of former Yugoslavia created the environment for the adjacent areas to profit from trading in arms. The ineffective arms embargo has increased the profits from arms supplied to the combatants.

The channels for drug trafficking were in place before recent events as transit routes across southeast Europe; but the increase in activity is linked directly to recent wars. Arms purchases were financed by drug trafficking or by easing its transit. Southeastern Europe is thus producing and transporting drugs as well as adding to its addicts.

The prostitution that is endemic in Southeastern Europe is also a fallout of the wars in former Yugoslavia. The bulk of prostitutes come from the East: Ukraine, Russia, and Romania. There are thousands of these prostitutes in Bosnia and Herzegovina who generate profits for criminals as well as for corrupt government officials.

The spread of organized crime in southeast Europe is the principal threat to political stability and economic development. It thrives on chaos, insecurity, disorganization, the non-existence of a Rule of Law, and links to high ranking officials and segments of the military. The mob's access to and influence on politicians contaminates and compromises public institutions and erodes citizen confidence in the Rule of Law.

The Russian, Turkish, Italian, Albanian, and Serbian mobs have created expansive spheres of influence. The Turks control Bulgaria and part of Macedonia. Russia, traditionally strong in Bulgaria, is now dominant in Serbia. The Italians control Montenegro and Albania. Organized crime in Albania is now international, its network stretching from Albania and Kosovo to western Europe. Arms and drug trafficking, gambling, money laundering, real estate, and the sale of nuclear technology and materials flourished during the war in the territories of former Yugoslavia.

Internal crises in Albania accelerated the growth of the Albanian mob that now almost supplants the state authorities. Prostitution, arms and drug trafficking, contraband cigarettes, illegal immigrants, and the oil trade comprise Albanian mob business, and its influence is spreading toward Kosovo. If Kosovo falls to the Albanian mafia, the local government and international activities would be in crisis.

Cooperation among the states of the region in fighting the crime was mostly bilateral or through the Interpol, both insufficient. Romania created a research center to combat organized crime; Bulgaria has a similar program, and the international community is pressing for the same in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Separate actions are also underway in other countries. But these countries face a new, unique situation, a non-traditional challenge to security in Southeastern Europe caused by the recent wars in the region. The situation demands a firm stance and decisive action against the shared activities of political officials and organized crime. Also effective in the fight would be the immediate inclusion of Southeastern Europe

into the European systems; this would help stabilize the area and, at the same time, eradicate much of the corruption and crime that pollute it.

By such forceful efforts, we can eradicate the existing plague and meet the pre-conditions for integration of southeast Europe into the European Union.

- 1 Official Turkey adds to these the question of the Turkish minority in the Trakia region, arguing that the Greeks do not recognize the ethnic identity of 150,000 Turks.
- 2 President Clinton, during a conversation with journalists in Sarajevo, Feral Tribune, 09.08.1999.
- 3 N.Dobrkoviae, "Political perspectives of the federal Republic of Yugoslavia - Disintegration vs. Integration", in Zur problematik der Stabilisierung des Westbalkans, Wien, 200, pp. 83-85.
- 4 See Kosovo and NATO: Impending Challenges, Washington, 1999.
- 5 Ts. Tsvetkov, Bulgarian Security Policy: Alternatives and Choice, Groningen, 1999, p. 33.
- 6 A. Agh, The Politics of Central Europe, London, 1998, p. 157.
- 7 D. Triantaphyllou, "The Greek Approach in the Balkans," The Southeast European Yearbook 1997-1998, Athens, 1998., pp. 212-214.
- 8 For example, see: M. O. Hanion, "Bosnia: Better Left Partitioned", Washington Post, April 10, 1997.
- H. A. Kissinger, "Limits to What US Can Do in Bosnia", Washington Post, September 22,1977.
- J. J. Mearsheimer, "The Only Exit From Bosnia", New York Times, October 7, 1997.
- R. N. Haas, The Reluctant Sheriff: The United States after the Cold War, New York, 1997. pp. 124-125.