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**SECURITY CHALLENGES
IN SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE**

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The New Security Environment in South-Eastern Europe

The conflicts in Southeastern Europe, dominated by ethnic, national and religious factors, have been generated by the serious economic crisis and the profound weakness and fragmentation of civilian society left by the collapse of communism. The feelings of frustrations and impotence produced by this situation drive the people to seek protection in the most rudimentary and traditional forms of identity and solidarity, such as belonging to the same religion, ethnic group, or nation. This trend legitimates nationalistic, ethnic or religious political regimes and often favours conservative forces.

The patterns of conflict are quite similar to those in the Middle East. The attempts of the ethnic/nationalistic majorities (in Serbia and Croatia, in the future in Macedonia) to assert their dominion within the borders alarm the minorities and cause them to look for help abroad. This provokes internal and external conflicts in response to which the regimes seek territorial adjustments. On the other hand, the democratic forces that came to power in some countries (Albania and Bulgaria) have inherited such disastrous economic situations that they lose consensus, which turns toward nationalistic and conservative forces. This causes tension and domestic conflicts, which are bound to have regional repercussions.

Such conflicts are typical of the new international situation facing the West in what has been called the "new arc of crisis". Although they do not pose a direct or immediate threat, they do present risks of involvement and indirect consequences (e.g. the flow of refugees) which the West is not well-equipped to handle.

The armed conflict in the former Yugoslavia has spread to Bosnia-Herzegovina. It could spread further within the former Yugoslavia and to other countries in southeastern Europe.

The Kosovo dispute could provide the grounds for this spread. The Serbs' severe repression of the aspirations of the Kosovars' (approximately 90% of which are Albanians) to achieve republic status (referendum of Sept. 1991) has exasperated the ethnic sentiments of the Kosovars and stimulated plans for unification with Albania. The current Kosovo leadership prefers a low profile and passivity towards Belgrade. But intensified Serbian nationalism resulting from the course of the conflict in Bosnia could exasperate the Kosovars and provoke another conflict.

Conflict could also spread to Macedonia. This republic's intention to become independent (referendum of Sept. 1991) also aroused Serbia's opposition. The government in Belgrade immediately expressed concern for the Serbian minority in Macedonia, thus setting the scene for a conflict similar to the one in Croatia and in Bosnia.

There is potential for yet other conflicts in the region, besides those in the former Yugoslavia: between Rumania and Hungary over the Magyar minority in Transylvania; and between Hungary and Serbia over the Magyar minorities in

Vojvodina. Turkish minorities are disputed in Bulgaria and Greece. Clearly pro-Albanian developments in the Kosovo could draw in Albania, although irredentism towards the Kosovo is not one of Tirana's priorities.

Yet, the spread of armed conflict outside of the former Yugoslavia seems to be linked above all to developments in Macedonia and involves Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey.

Following the referendum on independence held in September 1991, Bulgaria recognized Macedonia. Sofia considers most Macedonians as ethnic Bulgarians, but it admits that these Bulgarians live in another state. Greece, on the other hand, is against Macedonian independence -- and the use of a name that is part of the Hellenic heritage -- as it fears that such a state could develop irredentist claims towards Greece that would, perhaps, be supported by Turkey. This is one of the reasons why Greece has in recent years sought closer relations with Serbia, also opposed to Macedonia independence.

If Serbia were to invade Macedonia with the excuse of the Serbian minority in that country, and if Macedonia were to request the help of Bulgaria, Greece could be forced to intervene alongside Serbia. Turkey, in turn, could come to the aid of Bulgaria.

This is a pessimistic scenario, to which serious objections can be raised. However, it shows that the premise for a new war in the Balkans is contained in the progressive spread of the conflict between the components of the former Yugoslavia.

In the post-Cold War world, conflict in the Balkans can no longer lead to a global conflict. Nevertheless, international involvement could not be ruled out if Greece and Turkey were to become involved.

At any rate, it should be pointed out that even if it does not and will not involve other countries outside of the region, the escalating conflict in southeastern Europe is causing serious damage to international cooperation and is generating negative trends in other countries and regions.

- It hinders and could delay the creation of a pan-European order within the framework of the CSCE;
- It severely tests the cohesion of the European Community and could contribute to blocking the deepening decided upon at Maastricht;
- It has a negative impact on the growth of cooperation in Russia, strengthening nationalistic and conservative forces (in occasion of the adherence of the Russian government to the UN resolution on Bosnia, the president of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Russian Parliament, Ambarzumov, lamented his country's support of the American position and the abandonment of the historical alliance between Russia and Serbia);
- It contributes to reinforcing Ankara's pan-Turkism ("from the shores of the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China", as the moderate Demirel put it during his trip to Central Asia);
- It intensifies the controversy between the West and Islam, given the involvement of the Bosnian Muslims (and in the future, those of Albania);
- It contributes, more generally, to fuelling religious controversies, such as those between Orthodox and Catholics, and provokes the interference of the Churches in foreign policy matters;

- It aggravates the Greek-Turkish dispute and therefore damages the cohesion of the European Community and the Atlantic Alliance.

Western, and in particular, European security is seriously damaged by the developments in southeastern Europe, even if these developments are contained within the region. The crisis in southeastern Europe has already had some global effects. The reasons advising against military intervention are numerous as are those justifying diplomatic and political failures. However, a more determined and consistent Western policy is both possible and to be hoped for. Governments are complacent in the knowledge that it is not a matter of threats, but only risks. But if not effectively contained, the risks of today can turn into the threats--or even more disastrous events--of tomorrow.