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Paper presented at the International Conference on "The Mediterranean: Risks and Challenges"

Rome, 27-28 November 1992

ISTITUTO AFFARI INTERNAZIONALI

IAI9234

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Introduction

The outline of Southeast European security in the 1990s must be projected from historical and more recent experiences and one may assume that many of the new features of the post cold-war disorder will continue to dominate the new decade. As shown by events in the early 1990s however, fundamental change that was totally unforeseen could take place.

Southeast Europe has been thoughout history a meeting place of competing nationalities and a path for conquerors. The traditional separation of the Balkans from Western European politics can be traced back as far as the Roman Empire in the 4th century A.D. The Byzantine and Ottoman Empires ruled much of this area from then until the 19th century. This course of history shaped a feeling of belonging to a geographical and historical community, even though there was an increasing consciousness of different ethnic backgrounds. Common religion (Orthodoxy), as well as common struggles for national liberation during the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th (the Balkan wars) further enhanced this sense of belonging to a distinct community. This tendency reached its heyday in the inter-war period, when efforts to create an economic and political community were institutionalized (1).

The Second World War and the era of bipolarity reintegrated Southeastern Europe into the politics of the Old Continent and determined policy. Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia and Albania came under communist regimes, whereas, under the "northern threat", Greece and Turkey opted for the West.

The Collapse of the Cold War System

Within the three years which elapsed since the end of 1989 there was a drastic change in the political climate of the Balkans. As long as the major world systems remained what they were, the major political and ideological divisions were superimposed on the still- existing (but then muted) ethnic, cultural and religious rivalries and could thus scarcely be overcome. Until the end of 1989, the delicate balance that still prevailed in the region, was achieved by the participation in doubles in each bloc (Greece and Turkey in NATO, Bulgaria and Romania in the Warsaw Pact) but also by the non-participation in either of non-aligned Yugoslavia and self-isolated Albania. Thus, from many aspects, the Balkans represented during the cold war era a microcosm of international politics.

The collapse of communism has thrust Southeastern Europe back into the forefront of European politics. As a result of changes in the Soviet Union, the several Balkan varieties of the orthodox communist model started to crumble, first in Bulgaria (with the indirect support of M. Gorbachev), later in Romania and Albania, whilst at the same time Yugoslavia was rent by a multi-faceted crisis. At the same time Balkan politics have taken on a new fluidity and potential new alignments have begun to emerge. Moreover, the rise of nationalism has produced a fundamentally new situation of ethnic rivalries. As the new decade proceeds these trends are likely to exacerbate and nationalistic clashes will probably remain to haunt the whole region; indeed, "the Balkans could prove to be one of the main stumbling blocks to the creation of a stable security order in Europe in the post-Cold War era" (2).

The end of the cold war is thus frought with new challenges; Contrary to initial assertions, instability and ethnic conflict did not become increasingly peripheral and marginalized as the "new world order" extended its influence. As pointed out by an analyst, "Eastern Europe has become Western Europe's "Eastern Question" as a result of the logic of history and geography, the stated policies of West European leaders and the implicit decision of the United States (both government and the private sector) not to play a major economic role there" (3). Once again, it seems likely that the major security problems for Europe will develop in the East, so that the primary focus of NATO's and the European Community's future security concerns will continue on the patterns of the past.

New Risks and Challenges

Could Southeastern Europe and the Balkans in particular, emerge again as the powderkeg of Europe?

The new challenges will, be of a different nature and magnitude; and the impact Southeast European disintegration will not be felt equally by all Westerners. Thus, if for the Americans (particularly in the post-Bush era) and for most of the Europeans the new "arc of crisis" (Eastern Europe - Caucasus - P. Gulf) appears to be geographically remote (4), in the eyes of the countries bordering on this area it seems all too close and threatening.

The new challenges to the West will primarily stem from the re-emergence of intra-regional disparities, which had been long muted under the Cold War East-West division; the power vacuum generated by the dissolution of the communist alliance system will be further aggravated by nationalist passions and political instability fuelled by the economic

and social difficulties of the transition process to a market economy, as well as by incomplete democratization.

a) The Re-Emergence of Intra-Regional Disparities

The end of the Cold War has obviously reduced the importance of NATO's southeastern flank as a barrier to Soviet and communist expansionism. The dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the confusion as to NATO's exact future missions have forced the former WTO members to rediscover the long-muted but still existing (and even increasingly widening) intra-regional disparities. The perception of such economic, military and political imbalances feeds into already strong feelings of insecurity and confusion. During the cold war years,

(i) intra-alliance disputes had been contained and managed for fear of their eventual exploitation by the opposite camp, and

(ii) regional military conflicts tended to escalate into superpower political contests, thus inflating the stakes involved in such conflicts, while paradoxically containing their explosive potential (5).

The end of East-West opposition has dramatically altered the potential for regional conflicts, which are now decoupled from the earlier linkage with superpower rivalry. As pointed out by Z. Brzezinski, "regional conflicts may now be gloabally less critical but, conversely, they may be free to escalate to higher levels of violence" (6).

Local as well as wider alliances have appeared to the Southeast European countries as their most immediate and increasingly nervous response to the shifting of regional balances (either within their alliance, or within their wider vicinity). This reaction should be seen within its larger context; in fact, in the whole of the former communist zone, the end of the Cold War has left the ex-communist countries in a state of flux and uncertainty. The real difficulty in terms of strategic choices involved their security policy

and much less their economic course (which seems to be almost preordained by the well-established values of a market economy). Beyond a generally pro-Western choice, however, they have little, if any, guidance as to how they should define a policy that is regionally effective, politically sound and financially sustainable. Accommodating the most "difficult" neighbour has been one alternative. Romania felt desperate enough to initially enter into a treaty with Moscow, but the failed coup of August 1991, as well as the collapse of the Soviet Union, have reduced the impact of this isolated move (7). Bulgaria's rapprochement with Turkey was probably dictated by similar concerns, aimed at accommodating a powerful neighbour in view of an increasingly anarchic international environment.

Entering wider security communities such as the CSCE and NATO was another alternative. The CSCE, however, quickly dissipated such hopes and NATO's decision to include the former communist countries in the North Atlantic Cooperation Council could not palliate their sense of insecurity. The break-up of former Yugoslavia and Soviet Union, which led incrementally to full-scale local wars, and the inability of international institutions to stop violence have created a climate of hopelessness; some states seem now to quickly revert to the traditional system of local alliances and axes, thus further decreasing the chances of a larger system of regional stabilization. Extra-regional state actors are only eager to take sides and thus fuel an already explosive situation.

b) Nationalist Passions

The collapse of Soviet power has shown how the system, in repressing nationalism, failed completely not only to stamp out the national and cultural traditions of the community in favor of an internationalist ideology, but also to temper its violence. "Nationalism in Eastern Europe, the Balkans and parts of the Soviet empire (...) is the result of the inability of other ideals to galvanize popular support, to inspire feelings of loyalty, or to create an effective socio-economic system and power structures" (8).

Nationalist tendencies range from xenophobic intolerance (in both Western and Eastern Europe) to the break-up of states, thus conducive to the very real dangers of attempts at annexations and the redrawing of international boundaries.

Conflict between independent states has spread in the former communist zone and even though the establishment of pluralist democracy may ultimately limit uncontrolled violence, it is rapidly becoming a serious threat to stability and peace and could also threaten the security of Western Europe.

The end of communism has brought about freedom and human rights but also a "minorities revolution", to the point where even the smallest communities proclaim themselves sovereign and autonomous. The combination of this re-emergence of nationalism with the trend for minority protection can sometimes be particularly destabilizing. Although in varying degrees, there is not a single Southeast European country that is not concerned with such issues. Time has tended, however, to attenuate some minority questions, while other situations are becoming more difficult with the passage of time (i.e. Kosovo) (9).

A more effective system of human rights enforcement and minorities protection is certainly essential in an era of overall democratization and vis-a-vis populations that have lived for decades under authoritarian regimes. However, efforts in the direction of minorities protection have to be balanced with safety valves deterring state disintegration and exaggerated fragmentation. The cultural rights of minorities should not automatically or necessarily lead to secession. As suggested by an experienced diplomat ,

"It is very difficult to say how far the fragmentation into subgroups can or might progress. Is there a minimum number of members required for a sub-group to qualify as a minority? What if one subgroup is split into further sub-groups, which in turn would subdivide into mini-groups? The logical projection of such a process of continuous

fragmentation leads to the "minority of one", namely the individual. Therefore, in final analysis, securing to the individual his/her right to full and free expression of his/her personality and religious, cultural or other particularity should be the cornerstone of any protection system, rather than the hazily defined entities of subgroups, sub-subgroups, mini-groups etc." (10).

Self-determination of minorities is an extremely delicate and complex issue and should be dealt with caution, particularly when combined with other disruptive factors; it is then transformed into an explosive issue and results in conflicts between nations. Destabilizing situations can arise, for example, when states appoint themselves "protectors" of minorities living in neighbouring countries; They may incite these minorities towards civil disobedience, subversion or insurgence with the final objective of territorial expansion under the guise of protection of "its" minority. Throughout history calls for "protection" have been used to justify expansionist goals (11).

Two factors are essential in determining the seriousness of minority issues:

i) significant gaps between the birth rates of majorities and minorities may become an important long-term factor influencing both the degree of change and the intensity of the problem,

ii) the existence of a real or perceived "umbilical cord" binding a minority with a neighboring state; the closer the geographic distance and the worse the neighborly relationship, the more explosive the issue.

Thus, nationalism does not present a threat in itself. However, the spiral of minorities in conflict with majorities fuelling nationalist forces, and nationalism in turn rejecting "rational" compromise solutions, present a real threat in today's Southeastern Europe.

c) Political Instability

The ex-communist countries had developed over the years a complex fabric of institutions, relations and habits. The legacies of the past will therefore weigh heavily in their attitudes and calculations in the formulation of their new policies. Decision-making in these countries will also be heavily influenced by a common feeling of uneasiness about too much change on the one hand and a failure of reforms on the other, leading to a mixture of fears that differ from country to country. As a result, political instability might become endemic in at least some of the former communist countries and this may have important implications for regional relations. The main factors that are likely to influence the course of events are:

(i) Economic and Social Causes

East and Southeast European states now face the tribulations of economic restructuring and integration into the European system. These problems are likely to last far longer than most commentators foresee. Although the acute period of adjustment may end within a few years, the political impact of economic transformation will last far longer as populations learn to adapt to the new socio-political environment of the market economy.

Under different circumstances, massive Western aid to the Southeast European states would have perhaps solved these problems of transition. However, the East's emancipation came at a time when the US was unwilling to take the leading role in providing economic assistance to Europe, as it had done after the Second World War with the Marshall Plan (12). Furthermore, the EC does not feel it has the resources for a programme of such magnitude and is too absorbed by the complications of its ambitious project on the EMU and Political Union. The creation of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (BERD) was designed to ease the transition, but

popular discontent at the pains and delays of the modernization process may prove strong enough to generate acute political crises and endemic instability; it may even derail these efforts to feed into nationalist tensions and expansionist aims.

Economic malaise and social tension in Eastern and Southeastern Europe will affect the West (and above all the region's immediate neighbourhood) primarily in the form of immigration pressures. Indeed, the fear that chaos and anarchy in Eastern Europe could lead to vast migrations westwards and southwards is widely perceived as another major risk. The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina has already created the highest number of refuggees in Europe since World War II (13).

The introduction of legal restrictions on immigration and inter-state agreements are the usual measures adopted, but illegal immigration cannot be controlled. EC governments are facing increasing domestic pressures to tighten controls, but the anti-immigrant extremist rhetoric brings votes or is even emulated by mainstream politicians. Fear of asylum-seekers can be further fuelled by fears of immigration from neighboring countries with the intended or unintended aim to create ethnic minorities in border areas.

The prospect of a flood of desperate refugees has been particularly terrifying for a geographically isolated EC country such as Greece: bordering all around with economically poorer and politically unstable countries, the immigration pressures are mounting. The harshening response to the influx of Albanian refugees was a clear precursor, and Athens faces Tirana's requests to "absorb" as many as 200,000 Albanian immigrants (14). Similar situations may arise along the rest of Greece's northern and eastern borders and violence in the Yugoslav south may further aggravate this problem.

(ii) Incomplete Democratization

The process of moving from communism towards democracy is much more complicated and potentially destabilizing than is the case with traditional dictatorships. "We have to deal with an extremely intricate process of interdependent and simultaneous changes linked to the passages from external dominance to full sovereignty, from Communist Party dictatorship to a liberal, parliamentary democracy, from a command economy to a free-market system, from a society stifled by statism to a democratic, civic one", an analyst notes (15). In fact, the liberalization of social and political life has given rise to a general sense of chaos and anarchy, closely resembling the situation in the Weimar Republic. Under these circumstances, the need for a structured view of the world makes society susceptible to the influence of individuals who claim to have instant "solutions" for difficult situations. Disorientation, as well as the frustration of incomplete modernization are bringing radical forces to the fore. Such forces are very responsive to nationalistic rhetoric and could easily gain the support of the "dislocated strata" and the "homeless" masses. "The community's search for identity can be coupled with its longing for a leader who can show the way out of a menacing world" (16). In fact, the underdevelopment of existing political structures and the absence of a democratic tradition encourages the fragmentation of political forces and the emergence of dictatorial tendencies. Throughout the Balkans, electoral results have been unable to produce strong and viable governments with clear mandates. Shaky alliances of sometimes heterogenic forces have only added to the overall political confusion.

This situation is further aggravated by the lack of a clearly discernible point of severance with the past. Contrary to a widespread Western perception of the Serbian leader S. Milosevic as "Eastern Europe's last dictatorial leader, whose role though labelled socialist, is in the repressive communist mould" (17), many leaders of the new CSCE members are in fact "recycled communists".

The Yugoslavian Catalyst

Yugoslavia has harboured two basic tendencies since her foundation as a modern state in the aftermath of the First World War:

The one, championed by the Serbs, whose nationalist aspiration to unite the South Slavs under their guidance has been the consistent force behind Yugoslav unity and the other, harboured by the Slovenes and the Croats who believed that they could safeguard their independence from the Hasburg Empire within the framework of the new state (18). The experiences and conjunctures that brought different ethnicities and religions into a unitary state in the interwar period and a federation after the Second World War, did not allay the original diversity of purpose between the two incompatible motives in the construction of Yugoslavia.

The Communist ideology, expounded by the Croat partisan who led the dominant resistance movement against the axis occupation forces, subscribed to the principles of a unified Yugoslavia. By destroying the fascist separatist Ustasha Croats, Tito upheld in essence the cause of the Serbs. The federal structure which he adopted was aimed at minimising the friction between nationalities and religious groups. In fact however the system "provided the framework for some nationalities to create embryonic nation states" (19). The subsequent friction between the federal government and the republics became a constant feature of Tito's regime, kept under control only due to his own personal authority and vigilance over republican and provincial leaders. However incompatible the two tendencies of unity and independence have been, they share at least one characteristic: Nationalism. The Serbs that aspire to unify the racial community of South Slavs, are no less nationalistic than their separatist Croat adversaries who look to national independence for fullfiling their own destiny. Serbia clinged to its special brand of communism longer because of the unifying mission of the particular ideology. Western

Europeans who believe that anti-communism is always a democratic credential. overlook the fascist background of hard-core Croatian nationalism.

The nationalist variations in Yugoslavia defy exact description. To the Democratic and totalitarian (Fascist, Communist) varieties we must also add the contrived nationalism of the "Macedonian Republic" and the transformation of a religous community into an ethnic label in Bosnia-Hercegovina.

The absence of consistency has characterized the policy of most Western institutions and states wavering, initially between the integrity of Yugoslavia and self-determination of its constituent parts, and today between tacitly accepting the new status quo and militarily re-establishing the international borders of the short-lived and ill-conceived Bosnian Republic.

The position of the Western states has been influenced by varied and often conflicting motives which defy neat classification, such as 1) fear of cultural assimilation in a future federation of Europe prods some smaller members of the EC to sympathize with the break-away Republics, 2) there are those whose preference for upholding present borders is influenced by their own vulnerability to secessionist demands, 3) the aspiration to a sub-regional or regional role has elicited words of support for secession, 4) secession is also encouraged by the advocacy of self-determination, 5) fear of undermining the territorial status quo of the Balkans with unforeseen consequences for the rest of Europe, (which probably constitutes the most sober position).

The above categories are neither exhaustive nor consistently in force, but they provide an indication of the complexity that bedevils any Western attempt at mediation in Yugoslavia. In fact most of the Western states have not yet finalized their decision as to how far their support for self-determination will go.

In view of the forces of fusion still dominating in Western Europe, the tendencies of fission will probably prove an impediment to the prospects of unification. States as we know them, are the constituent parts of a possibly more integrated European system now evolving with guarantees for the preservation of the character of its integral parts. Within each state, ethnic, religious and cultural subgroups will also be protected from forced assimilation. Should the process of fission lead to fragmentation of states into ever-increasing weak units - in the image of Medieval Europe, larger powers will sooner or later engulf or dominate them. Instead of a united Europe, a Carolingian cluster of fiefdoms could develop under the influence of the larger regional powers.

Former Yugoslavia in particular could be likened to a Russian doll - within each Republic are sub-groups and in each sub-group there are perhaps others. Securing the individual right and their full and free expression of religious, cultural and other preferences, is the cornerstone of any federal system. However, the claims of minorities or sub-groups, to a separate state-existence, will create disturbances not only in the state directly concerned, but in the larger region of such occurances. In the Yugoslav case, the secession of Kossovo could lead to the change - for the first time - of even the external borders of former Yugoslavia through its eventual annexation by Albania, which might also aspire to the western part of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia with its sizable Albanian minority (20-30%).

Conclusions

In short, the East European revolution has led to a darkening of Southeastern Europe's security horizons at the start of the 1990s. The end of the Cold War has already released a variety of explosive ethnic, political, social and economic tensions with serious destabilizing implications for the West and particularly for the area's immediate neighbourhood. However, the

most important complicating factor for regional stability has probably been the inability of international institutions to avert local wars and stop violence. The prospect of extra-regional state actors jumping in to fill the resulting security vacuum can only be further destabilizing and explosive. The magnitude of the stakes involved in the Balkan crisis should not be underestimated by the West.

NOTES

(1) See T. Veremis: *Greek Security, Issues and Politics*, London: IISS, Adelphi Paper No 179, 1982

(2) S. F. Larrabee, Paper presented at the ELIAMEP-RAND Corp. Conference, Rhodos, September 1991.

(3) *The World Today*, p. 215.

(4) See G. Joffe: "European Security and the New Arc of Crisis -Paper II", in: *New Dimensions in International Security*, London: IISS, Adelphi Paper No 265, Part I, Winter 1991/92, pp. 53-68 and 69-81.

(5) Z. Brzezinski: "The Consequences of the End of the Cold War for International Security", in ibid, p. 3.

(6) Ibid, p. 4.

(7) See M. Sturdza: "The Miners' Crackdown on the Opposition", *RFE/RL, Report on Eastern Europe*, 1991/2, pp. 25-33.

(8) B. Kodmani-Darwish: "International Security and the Forces of Nationalism and Fundamentalism: Paper II", in *New Dimensions in International Security*, Part II, London: IISS, Adelphi Paper No 266, Winter 1991/92, p. 44.

(9) See J. Reuter: "Das Kosovo-Problem im Kontext der jugoslawisch-albanischen Beziehungen", in: F. L. Altmann, op. cit., pp. 81-96.

(10) See B. Theodoropoulos: "On Minorities", in *The Southeast European Yearbook 1990*, ELIAMEP 1991, pp. 49-54.

(11) See the comments and conclusion by F. Heisbourg in *New Dimensions .....*, op. cit., part II, pp. 99.

(12) *The World Today*, p. 37.

(13) *IHT*, 28.4.1992.

(14) *To Vima*, 3.5.1992. On the situation in Albania, see *ATA*, 21.9.1992, and *Corriere della Sera*, 7.1.1992.

(15) A. Smolar: "Democratization in Central-Eastern Europe and International Security", *New Dimensions in International Security*, part II, London: IISS, Winter 1991/92, p. 25. For an interesting comparison, see G. Pridham: "Political Parties and Elections in the New Eastern European Experience, *The Southeast European Yearbook 1990*, Athens: ELIAMEP, 1991, pp. 253-266.

(16) Smolar, op. cit., pp. 33-34.
(17) *The European*, 30.4.1992, p. 2.

(18) James Gow, "Deconstructing Yugoslavia", *SURVIVAL* Vol . XXXIII, No 4, July-August 1991, p. 292. Paul Lendvai, "Yugoslavia without Yugoslavs: the Roots of the Crisis", *International Affairs*, Vol. 67, No. 2, April 1991 pp. 254-255.

(19)_Gow, op. cit. p. 292.