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**STABILITY AND SECURITY IN SOUTH
EASTERN EUROPE**

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The NATO interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo, as well as the military presence of some Allies in Albania and Macedonia have brought to the region a higher level of military security. Yet, political stability remains elusive and uncertain. The interesting and articulate research made by RAND clearly underscores that attaining a satisfactory level of regional stability will require further efforts and new difficult choices. In fact, the biggest challenges remain ahead of us. There are plenty. On the menu we see a long list of objectives, largely interrelated:

- a peaceful settlement of the Kosovo problem (choosing between a number of devil's alternatives such as autonomy, independence, a third Yugoslav republic, partition or international protectorate),
- democracy and stability in Albania,
- stability in Macedonia,
- democracy in Serbia,
- democracy and reform in Montenegro,
- stability of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina
- success of the "Stability Pact" of the EU
- reconstruction with economic reforms
- security framework for the Balkans
- better regional cooperation
- progressive Balkan integration in NATO and the EU
- balanced relationship with Russia.

These different objectives are all related to each other. A failure on Kosovo or in Bosnia would negatively affect our aims for Serbia or Albania; no democracy can be stable without economic development and reforms; a regional security framework will also depend from positive domestic developments, while a good relationship with the major external powers can accelerate positively the stabilization process, and so on. Yet, to confront such a large menu it is also necessary to identify some priorities, selecting those aims whose successful attainment may allow the development of this entire set of policies, and without which no stability will be possible in South Eastern Europe.

First Priority: a successful transatlantic cooperation

The key of any successful approach to the Balkan question is a strong transatlantic agreement. After Bosnia and Kosovo, it is now generally accepted that NATO plays a unique military role while the EU has fundamental economic responsibilities. Also, it is clear that no single international institution has the authority and the ability to manage all major crises from beginning to end, and to prevent them. The United Nations may have the necessary legitimacy, but lack readiness and effectiveness, and can be blocked by a veto. Both Bosnia and Kosovo, as well as many other crises, have been managed through *ad hoc* arrangements, utilizing existing fora (such as the G-8) or creating new and less institutionalized ones. It is likely that crisis management operations will continue for a long time to depend from a mix of *ad-hockery* and of inter-institutional cooperation. Each crisis is a case by itself, for which a specific consensus should be gathered, and specific aims, means and operational strategies are identified. The Gulf, Somalia, Bosnia, Albania, Kosovo (to quote just a few) have been dealt with in different ways, with dissimilar coalitions and varying political approaches.

It follows as a consequence that each crisis management decision puts the transatlantic consensus under severe strains. The successful experience of the Kosovo campaign should be compared with the failure in Somalia and the long period of dissent among the Allies before Dayton. To counter such a risk for the future, the Washington Summit of the Atlantic Alliance has given fresh impetus to the development of a new Alliance, combining together transatlantic solidarity and the possibility of greater European responsibilities and ability to act autonomously. Also, the Kosovo experience has triggered a reassessment of the existing Allied military capabilities, refuelling the debate on the European contribution: NATO needs more military muscles of a specific kind, but the problem is of the Europeans, and shall be solved in Europe first and foremost. The most effective way to gather the necessary additional consensus, effectiveness and means is the development of a successful European common foreign and security policy of the EU strictly connected with NATO.

To overcome their military weaknesses and to confront their new responsibilities, the Europeans shall confront difficult budgetary, organizational, industrial and institutional decisions. At the same time, to make room for a new European assertiveness and to establish an effective working relationship with the EU, the Atlantic Alliance shall adapt its decision making and command structures and accept the limitations as well as the benefits deriving from a deeper institutional relationship. The fact that these challenges come together with the need to identify and implement a successful Balkan strategy will not simplify the matter.

While the Washington Summit and the European Council of Cologne have designed the blueprint of future institutional and political developments as far as Europe and the Alliance are concerned, it may be necessary to solidify them by clarifying how they will combine within the larger picture, including the necessity to reform the United Nations and to strengthen and possibly institutionalize the diversified systems of international consultation and decision making which have been experimented during these crises. A joint study and a common proposal made by the G-8 may have the necessary flexibility and scope while at the same time carrying enough weight to secure the continuation of the process of global institutional reform and its coherence.

Second priority: Serbia (and the Yugoslav Federation)

The Atlantic approach to the Balkan problems has achieved a number of important

successes, most notably in Bosnia and Kosovo. Yet, these interventions are confronting the symptoms more than the source of the disease. Moreover, the unfolding of the Kosovo question can negatively affect the course of the Bosnian one.

Since the beginning of the crisis of former Yugoslavia, the Serbian question has remained unsolved, fueling an unending stream of new crises and wars. To counter these developments, the international interventions have brought about the political isolation of Serbia, its military humiliation and its economic downfall, but the Serbian question has not vanished and cannot be denied. The West has attempted to contain the conflicts and to build a number of fire walls to isolate some of them. Yet, the avoidance of this central question has obliged NATO and the EU to increase their commitment in the Balkans, while at the same time increasing Serbian frustration, nationalism and desire for revenge. Without some change of strategy, it is likely that this vicious circle will continue to develop. Moreover, the risk will increase that new interventions will negatively interact with previous attempt to stabilize or contain the disease.

Today, Kosovo presents us with a number of devil's alternatives. Regional autonomy within the Yugoslav Federation falls short of the Albanian expectations and could require the presence of NATO forces in Kosovo for many years to come. The creation of a third, Kosovo Republic, within Yugoslavia, would be opposed in Montenegro as well as in Serbia, could fuel analogous ambitions in Vojvodina, and may become the first step toward full independence. In fact, An independent Kosovo would destabilize all its neighbors and strongly undermine the credibility of the Dayton plan for Bosnia. While apparently solving one problem it would make the others much worst. Also an ethnic partition of Kosovo would be very difficult to achieve satisfactorily. Moreover, a territorially diminished Kosovo could not survive economically and would most probably revive the dream of a Greater Albania (which, in turn, would increase the call for a Greater Serbia and a Greater Croatia as well). Finally, the establishment of an international protectorate would be a very expensive way to freeze the situation without confronting the question of its final solution and encourage irresponsible behavior in other places such as Bosnia or Macedonia.

The official international aim is to give back to Kosovo a status of regional autonomy within the Yugoslav Federation. Other compromises could be negotiated, like the creation of a Kosovo Republic inside the Yugoslav Federation coupled with the institution of a number of "Cantons" with different ethnic characters. However, the only way to reach these objectives is through a negotiation with the Federation and the establishment of a new political relationship between Serbs and Albanians. To do that, first of all we need a deep process of democratization and reform of the Federation itself, based on positive political developments in Serbia. Therefore, the first priority of any future crisis management strategy for the Balkans must be Serbia and its democratization. This aim will certainly require the timely removal of the Milosevic regime, but will also need strong political and economic incentives as well as the concrete possibility of rebuilding a viable and prosperous economy. Unfortunately, the moral and legal obligation to prosecute the present Serbian leadership for its crimes is slowing down the implementation of a positive international approach to the Serbian question. On the positive side, this situation accelerate the need of important political changes and strengthen the call of the opposition to have new elections. However, their credibility and the actual perspective of rapidly removing Milosevic without starting a new vicious circle of ethnic nationalism and revenge need a more generous and forthcoming approach toward Serbia and its future.

The war has destroyed Serbian economy and basic infrastructures, including

electricity (which is largely used in the Serbian towns as the main heating source). Today's per capita GNP of the Serbian population has been cut almost by half and is the lowest in Europe (below 900\$). The costs of reconstruction are estimated well over 60 billion dollars. A great humanitarian crisis is on the making, already this winter, that could not be ignored by the Europeans and that would not help in any way nor the opposition parties, nor the democratization of Serbia.

A distinction must be maintained between humanitarian interventions and other forms of economic assistance. Some aid should be given immediately to avoid or diminish the likelihood of a humanitarian crisis in Serbia. Also the donors could try to make their interventions as independent as possible from the Milosevic government. Other interventions could also be devised, making them conditional to the calling of elections and/or the dismissal of the present Serbian leadership. Both NATO and the EU should work out openly with the Serbian opposition forces to draw concrete plans of institutional and economic reforms of the Yugoslav Federation as well as of its reconstruction and economic development, agreeing on clear commitments for the political future of Serbia. Most important, it should be made clear that the European and Atlantic institutions stand ready to accept and to integrate the Yugoslav Federation, on the same footing of the other Balkan countries, as soon as these commitments will begin to be implemented and that the Serbian interests and identity will be preserved and even encouraged to become a fundamental pillar of any future regional stability. Things like the permeability of intra-Serbian frontiers to trade and civilian movements, or the protection of Serbian minorities in other Balkan countries should be confronted and solved with a strong support of the international community.

Third Priority: Albania

Like the Serbs, the Albanians are divided among various nations. Their problems, therefore, have the potential to undermine the security and stability of a number of Balkan countries and to exacerbate ethnic conflicts. Hopefully, mainly thanks to a number of positive steps taken in the past by the international community, today's Albania has already started its process of democratization, and its leadership is largely in agreement with the European and Atlantic requirements and priorities. The main Albanian problem is one of economic development and law and order. Already in 1997 the Albanian state was on the brink of fragmentation and failure. These problems have been intensified by the Kosovo events. A new, deep Albanian crisis would immediately affect Kosovo, Montenegro and Macedonia, thus opening a new round of regional instability.

To stabilize Albania it is necessary to secure the building of the Albanian state almost from scratch: things like the education system, the judiciary and police, the Armed Forces, health, taxation, and so on, require the know-how and the personal commitment of Western experts. At the same time, it is necessary to help the Albanian Government to coordinate these external contributions and to finalize the interventions, to avoid the present state of general confusion, duplication and incoherence.. Clearly, a long term Western commitment to stabilize Albania should also require the explicit commitment of the Albanian leadership to reform the present system of widespread corruption and illegality.

In the present circumstances, a high level of international commitment to Albania may require the support of a significant international military presence. While helping to protect the international presence in the country, such a military commitment would not be justified

by imminent threats to the country or by any traditional peace-keeping role, but would be an important factor to assert the authority of the State over its territory, to support and allow the rebuilding of Armed and Police Forces, and to underline the importance of Albanian stability.

Fourth priority: the path toward NATO and the EU

In the longer term, all Balkan countries want to become full members of both NATO and the EU. It is common wisdom that a successful enlargement of these two international organizations in the region could stabilize democracy and open new perspectives of economic development, as well as helping to overcome ethnic rivalries and exacerbated nationalism. Yet it is also quite clear that none of these countries (with the possible exception of Slovenia) fully meet the necessary criteria for accession, and that both the EU and NATO hesitate to commit themselves to precise time schedules. On the contrary, both organizations have adopted a kind of ironic cavalier posture, suggesting that the other go first: *<Messieurs les Français, tirez les premiers!>*, *<A vous l'honneur!>*¹. More seriously, it is very unlikely that any enlargement of these organizations in the Balkans could include at the same time all the various candidates. A selection will be inevitable, with the consequence of increasing national disparities and rivalries. A slow process of enlargement could end up by undermining regional stability instead of helping it. Equally, a diversified approach, which would integrate some countries inside NATO and others in the EU, would complicate the regional framework and could create new and unnecessary tensions and misunderstandings between the two organizations. Also, some Balkan countries would probably remain outside both of them.

A way to encourage regional cooperation is to accelerate the financing and the actual implementation of great regional infrastructures such as the so-called “Corridors”, large, multinational energy projects, common standards for new investments in key areas such as communications, etc.

The Western aim is to increase regional cooperation and the overall stability of the Balkans. Therefore, the enlargement policy should devise a global approach towards all the relevant countries and the region as a whole. A possibility could be to help building a new Balkan Community, linked both to NATO and to the EU, based on specially conceived forms of association and cooperation, coupled with a pre-defined timing and a set of specific objectives to be reached by each country and collectively, in a way that would increase the vested interest of each country in the development and stability of the others, in order to reach the status of full members. Other formulas could be devised, but their common requirement should be that they are bound to increase regional solidarity.

¹ The quotation refers to the battle of Fontenoy, between French and British troops (May 11, 1745). According to Voltaire, after this exchange, the British did in fact open the fire first. Other historians challenge his reconstruction of the events and believe that the British commander of the Grenadier Guards, a Lord Hay, which was confronting the French Guards, walked out of the lines, pulled out a flask, drank a toast, shouted a polite taunt, then saluted, led his troops in three hearty cheers and dashed back to his own lines; while the French were returning the salute and cheers, the first volley was fired from the English. The thing on which all historians agree is that this English volley had murderous consequences for the French, shattering their first line and obliging them to retreat and regroup. Yet, the gallant attitude taken by Louis XV and the tactical ability of Marshal Saxe, leading the French troops, finally won the day, defeating the Duke of Cumberland and his army and opening the way for the French conquest of the Flanders

Conclusion

The Balkan question encompasses many different aspects. All of them require careful analysis and political attention. Abrupt crises could oblige a revision of the priorities stated above. Other important problems such as the role of Russia, the impact of the Greek-Turkish conflict, the full democratization of Croatia, etc., are also important and have been largely and effectively analyzed by the RAND study. While not ignoring nor dismissing these important points, however, I think that the scarce resources at our disposal would be better employed if we succeed in the effort to concentrate on few crucial priorities.

During the past years, Western policy has been driven by crises, obliged by the pressure of the events to rush from Albania to Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia or Montenegro. In such a way we have been containing the fire, without confronting its core. After the Kosovo campaign and the military humiliation of Serbia, it may be possible to follow a more comprehensive approach.