

THE POLICIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND NATO

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ABSTRACT

In the course of de-Balkanizing the region, the EU has taken on an increasingly dynamic role, and NATO a more static role. In spite of the outstanding problems, there is reason for optimism in the assessment of the South European situation because though "many difficulties and potential instabilities" exist there is no longer a real threat of war in the region. In order to facilitate the broadest reorganization of the region in the course of European integration "the goals and values of Western intervention remain fully valid and are strongly supported by both the EU and NATO: democratization, free market, inter-ethnicity, respect of human rights, and secondarily, protection of the rights of different peoples and nationalities." With this and the events in Europe of the last decade in mind, NATO's role has been transformed "from an organization specializing in common defense only, to one which is devoted to collective security." In this way NATO ensures a continuing American presence in Europe and offers "the framework for European integration ." The recent change in the American political administration signals a change in American policy towards Bosnia-Herzegovina, which would see a gradual reduction in American troops stationed in Bosnia and a larger role for the EU. The international community's main role would be to serve as support for the strengthening of civil institutions and states "in order to build bridges between them, not trying to impose the future from outside; that is, without taking into account the historical, cultural and psychological factors ."

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1. The Geopolitical Context

In the past year, the situation in Southeastern Europe (SEE) has and FRY deserved strong support by the West. The prospects are better than before, though many problems and instabilities still exist. The challenge has now shifted from preventing mass bloodshed and conflicts to consolidating the present geopolitical situation by means of socio-political reform and economic development. The continuation of the EU and NATO engagements is crucial to enable the transitional phase, but their relative roles have changed. Now NATO has a more static role; that is, continuing to guarantee strategic stability. Europe has a more dynamic role: continuing its efforts to de-Balkanize the region and to create the conditions for its progressive association and integration into the EU.

In the year 2000, dramatic changes have occurred externally and regionally.

Externally, a crucial factor for the region was the development of EU integration at the Nice IGC. A more flexible decision-making process was approved (extension of qualified majority vote in the European Council and legitimacy of reinforced cooperation by contingent groups of member States, without creating a "two-speed" Union with a permanent "hard core") and the implementation of the Cologne and Helsinki European Summit decisions on the creation of structures capable of contributing to the goals of a European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), especially in the crisis management sector. Moreover, the new US Administration has a different stance than the Clinton Administration on US military involvement in the Balkans, which it wishes to reduce. Although no major changes are likely in the short term, except for the streamlining of the American presence in BiH, European direct involvement - also in strategic security - will increase. However, there are developing divergences between Brussels and Washington (from trade to ecology, from NMD to the ESDP, and Middle East policy and the Gulf). These divergences could cause some difficulty in coordinating EU and NATO activities in the SEE region as well. The Stability Pact has yet to define its vision of the future of the region, and devise an overall strategy in the general coordination of the three Working Tables (in particular, Table III A), especially in the political and security sectors, though instability in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) has played a role in this.

On the regional level, many difficulties and potential instabilities remain, though they are not capable of triggering new, major conflicts. Many are preoccupied with the current political instability

in Belgrade, owing to possible personality clashes between the President and the Premier, and to the need to take harsh socio-economic decisions to rehabilitate the country. The problems of Montenegro, Kosovo, and Macedonia have also not yet been resolved. As far as Montenegro is concerned, recourse to violence is unlikely even if the referendum on independence should succeed. Future relations between Podgorica and Belgrade will very likely be decided at the negotiation table; however, no solution of this issue can be achieved before a decision is made over the final status of Kosovo. The ongoing talks are productive only in the sense that they buy time. But the final solution to Kosovo's ambiguous status is conditioned by the present changes in FYROM. No change is possible as long as Macedonia's integrity is threatened. As far as Kosovo is concerned, the ethnic Albanians are frustrated by the international community's strong reaction against all attempts to change, de facto, UN Resolution 1244 by resorting to violence. They fail to understand that the goals of NATO's intervention in the Kosovo crisis were neither to provide UCK with powerful air power, nor to support its demand for independence. Many ethnic Albanians, even the moderates, are beginning to believe that their interests have been sacrificed to appease the Serbs. The events in the buffer zone of Presevo Valley seem to confirm this perception. Some fear that this could trigger terrorist attacks on KFOR. Others are convinced that the main interest of ethnic Albanians, not only in Kosovo but also in Macedonia and in Albania proper, is the continuation of their illicit activities. But UN Resolution 1244 can only be changed through an agreement between Pristina and Belgrade; the new stance of FRY's Kostunica provides hope in this area. Should the status quo remain, the present stalemate will continue independently of the result of the political elections in Kosovo. The ethnic Albanian terrorists in the Presevo Valley and FYROM are too weak to change the situation or to cause a large-scale conflict. Greece and Bulgaria, which used to have strong reservations on FYROM, have also changed their minds and are now the Skopje government's greatest supporters.

The situation in BiH is also unstable and the Dayton Agreements could be implemented, with all their inherent limitations, to maintain the unity of the State and Federation by weakening their powers and establishing a "passive tyranny" of one of the constituent peoples over the others. Only integration into Europe will eliminate the ethnicity principle which was adopted at Dayton as the organizational basis for the constitution of BiH.

The goals of the Western intervention - to reorganize the region and prepare its integration into Europe - are strongly supported by both the EU and NATO: democratization, free market, inter-ethnicity, respect for human rights, and protection of the rights of different

peoples and nationalities by means of a strong devolution of powers to local communities and components of a pluralistic civil society. Despite the Dayton Agreement's flaws and failures, it is clear that ethnicity - which was central in the agreements - will lose its importance with the growing focus on individual rights. This point is crucial for cooperation with and partnership of the EU, and takes into account the approval at the Nice Summit of the European Charter of Rights, which extends individual rights into the social sphere, and is considered by the European Convention to be an integral part of the Constitution of BiH.

The desire to be integrated into Europe and into the Atlantic Alliance is still strong in all the peoples of the region, although they are aware that it will not be a gift, but will involve great responsibilities and considerable effort. The willingness of EU to integrate the Western Balkans was underlined in the Zagreb Summit Declaration of November 24, 2000.

2. NATO's Position

NATO has transformed itself from an organization specializing in common defense to one which also deals with collective security. Its more recurrent task is projecting stability on the peripheries of Europe, although its core remains common defense; for instance, against the threat of proliferation. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has become a metaphor for the political-strategic agreement and cooperation between the US and Europe. It is the guarantor of the American presence in Europe and provides the framework for European integration.

NATO's grand strategy, expressed in "NATO Strategic Concept", is based on engagement and enlargement to create a pan-European cooperation security system - which externally includes Russia and the ex-Soviet republics - that offers the flexibility of the PfP programs, one of whose goals is preparing candidates for future integration membership. With European integration, the Alliance is changing from a relationship between the different member States (now 19) to an agreement between the US and Europe. The process has just begun, but is given impetus by the progress of ESDP and by the success of the next European Intergovernmental Conference, scheduled for 2004. The German Chancellor and Foreign Minister have made many interesting proposals to further strengthen the decision-making capabilities and the federal dimensions of the Union, which functions presently as an intergovernmental organization. Thus, future enlargements will not erode the level of the so-called "acquis communautaire." As in Austria in 2000, domestic policies will be the focus even for countries which are already members of the Union. NATO is the guarantor of

stability throughout SEE, although its presence is limited to BiH and Kosovo (with some "queues" in Albania and FYROM to protect KFOR's lines of communications). It will stay there as long as necessary, although it is likely that the number of troops will be cut for economic reasons. Its military might and willingness to intervene remain strong, although they are being transformed from real to virtual factors. NATO, therefore, plays an integration role similar to that played by Europe in the aftermath of World War II.

NATO has other important functions: the PfP program in the sectors of armed forces reduction, and restructuring and democratization in the SEE countries, though FRY has thus far lacked access to the program for psychological reasons. The level of cooperation between KFOR and the Yugoslav Armed Forces is nonetheless satisfactory for anti-terrorism activities- in the Presevo area. The FYROM Armed Forces receive NATO's training, equipment, and intelligence support. The second NATO enlargement taking place at the 2002 NATO summit will be a crucial factor for short-term SEE stability. Several countries of the region, in particular Slovenia and Romania, expect to enter NATO accordance with their request of 1997 at the NATO Summit in Madrid. Bulgaria is another possible candidate. NATO also plays an active role in the Stability Pact (SP), not only with the PfP programs but also with the SEE Initiative and the Sofia Process, in which many NATO countries are directly involved. ■ The responsibility of guaranteeing strategic stability in BiH could be taken over by the EU, as the European capabilities - both military and institutional - will be consolidated as scheduled in Helsinki, Nice and Stockholm. Due to the reluctance of the US Administration to become more deeply involved in the region, a European military presence in FYROM is possible if the situation should worsen. But the EU also has strong reservations about military involvement in a messy domestic problem where political and economic measures have already failed. This could be an important test of the ESDP mechanisms and a demonstration that EU ambitions are not political-diplomatic rhetoric, but translate into effective action.

3. *The Policy of the EU*

Although the Balkans are not yet in Europe, Europe is already in the Balkans, owing to the level of its involvement in the region's Europeanization. Europe's main interests are not only the integration of this area, but also avoiding the risk that chronic instability transforms SEE into a safe haven for organized crime, and that immigration pressures create tensions and xenophobic reactions in the European countries.

Organized crime, accompanied by large-scale corruption, is the main problem in the area. The eligibility of the different SEE countries to association and integration into Europe will depend on their success in the war on crime and corruption. It also implies the consolidation and accountability of public institutions; the improvement of democracy; the liberalization of the economy, which must be freed from politics; and the establishment of the rule of law and social-economic development. Despite all its difficulties and flaws, the main instrument of EU policies remains the SR. Limited direct intervention by the SG/HR of the European Council, as well as by the Commission for Foreign Affairs, were and will remain necessary in crisis situations. After their negative experiences in BiH, where the international community provided roughly twice the pro capita investments of the Marshall Plan without achieving a restoration of productive capabilities, they are now inclined to delegate more responsibility to the local authorities in order to avoid their dependency on foreign assistance, but only under strict controls. Western taxpayers are demanding closer control over the money used in the recovery of the region so that it is not being diverted to the pockets of corrupt elites. Another pivotal issue is the return of refugees and displaced persons to their former locations. The progress achieved thus far is not encouraging.

The SP has not yet succeeded in implementing a consistent, coherent policy for the region. Its geopolitical vision is clear: Europeanization and integration into Europe. However, the policies which will be used to attain this goal are less clear. First, an ambiguity exists between the relationship and relative priority for regional (horizontal) integration and vertical integration in Europe. Second, it is also far from clear whether integration will involve individual countries or the region as a whole. Third, it is still to be decided whether a strategic cooperation initiative should be activated in northern SEE, involving the countries that take part in the Subregional Arms Control (art. IV-Annex I-B of Dayton). Fourth, Table III-A of the SP has moved into the marginal aspects of security instead of attempting to coordinate the various existing initiatives in the sector. Last but not least, there is a general feeling that, as far as geopolitical aspects are concerned, the SP is a typical Enlightenment Project, inconsistent with the local realities and cultures.

For instance, the efforts of many SEE countries to transform themselves immediately from pre-modern structures into postmodern realities of regional integration conforming to EU standards are totally unrealistic. So far, democracy has only emerged in closed systems - such as the Greek polis or Europe's nation-states - and not in open ones. The main task of international assistance should be strengthening the States and the public

institutions in order to build bridges between them, not trying to impose the future from the outside without considering the historical, cultural, and psychological factors.

At any rate, the process is ongoing and there are more and more Association Stabilization Agreements with the EU, whose main function is stimulating the political elites and peoples to reach a standard that can enable their integration into Europe.

4. Final Remarks

The recent political changes in SEE - despite the turbulence of the ethnic-Albanian issue - create optimism for the SEE situation and its prospects. The reopening of the Danube, mixed economic progress, and the effort to improve communications through Pan-European Corridor 10, fuel hopes that inter-Balkan trade - not just smuggling - will flourish. Black economy is the only regionally integrated reality and was greatly reinforced by the instabilities and conflicts, and the sanctions and embargoes imposed on the area by the West. Although many former-Yugoslav Republics will not be involved in the NATO and EU enlargements this decade, they may have realistic hopes for the following round. Clearly, this does not depend on Europe and NATO, but on the governments and peoples in the area and on their will to bury the old demons once and for all.