

10. Summary Overview to: “Unfinished Peace”

REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE BALKANS.

In the spring of 1914, the report of the first Carnegie International Commission on the Balkans asked: “Must we allow these Balkan wars to pass, without at least trying to draw some lesson from them, without knowing whether they have been a benefit or an evil, if they should begin again tomorrow and go on forever extending?” The Commission commented that “Europe and the great military powers . . . could, in spite of everything, solve the problem if they were not determined to remain blind.”

This Commission believes that turning a blind eye to the Balkans would be no less a recipe for disaster at the end of the twentieth century than it was at its outset. Outside guarantors, even enforcers, of the peace will have to remain in the region first and foremost in Bosnia for a considerable period of time.

Because the prospects for peace and stability in the region remain tenuous, the Commission believes it is imperative to muster the political will and the strategic consensus to do now what the world was unable to do in the midst of conflict. The lessons of the past few years are that the United Nations, torn by conflicting national perspectives, cannot organize international action in time, that the United States and Europe must work together if they want to affect a particular situation, and that diplomacy not backed by force is tantamount to hollow gesturing.

The disappearance of the likelihood of East-West conflict in Europe contributed to the dilatory nature of the West’s response to the dissolution of Yugoslavia and to the war. At the same time, changed strategic considerations suggest that outside guarantors of the peace have room within which to work against older patterns of intra-regional conflict, and that these may be amenable to new approaches to establishing security, ensuring minority rights, and instilling democracy.

Three historical explanations have been offered concerning the origins of the recent Balkan war. The first, widely held in the Balkans, sees today’s return of nationalist conflicts as reflecting ambitions of great powers to re-establish Balkan spheres of influence. The second, widely held in the West, emphasizes the “return of ancestral hatreds” or the “return of the suppressed nations.” A third thesis looks for origins of the war in cultural and religious fault-lines a “clash of civilizations.”

There are elements of truth here, and no one should underestimate the weight of history in the Balkans. But the main causes of the war lie in the sparks of aggressive nationalism fanned into flames by those political leaders of the dissolving Yugoslav federation who have invoked the “ancient hatreds”

to pursue their respective nationalist agendas and have deliberately used their propaganda machines to justify the unjustifiable: the use of violence for territorial conquest, expulsion of 'other peoples, and the perpetuation of authoritarian systems of power.

The stakes for the West in restraining aggressiveness in the Balkans remain high. Renewed fighting would doubtless entail more 'ethnic cleansing either requiring large-scale intervention to stop it, or occasioning another failure of the major powers to intervene that could raise further questions about what values both sides of the Atlantic are willing to defend.

Worsened ethnic relations and deterioration in the treatment of minorities in the Balkans would have repercussions elsewhere in Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union, where demographics and political boundaries do not coincide. Moreover, the fate of the Muslims their political integration or separateness could become a touchstone of relations between Europe and the Islamic world.

REGIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Security

The Commission found in Southeastern Europe a potential for conflict much greater than that to be found anywhere else in Europe outside the former Soviet Union. There are two major epicentres of conflict in the Balkans today. The first, the northern tier, centers on Bosnia but involves more broadly the Servo-Croatian relationship. Dayton stopped the fighting but not some of the sources of conflict in the region. The second, the southern tier, centers on Kosovo and directly concerns Serbia, Albania, and Macedonia; it also potentially involves Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey.

Improved ethnic relations, democracy, and Balkan cooperation are necessary for lasting peace and security. But these will require a framework of peace and military security arms-control, confidence-building, and collective security measures within the region, and, more immediately, a continuing and coherent military engagement by NATO. The Dayton Accords set out measures for: (1) confidence and security-building in Bosnia and Herzegovina; (2) sub-regional arms control agreements covering all three republics; and (3) a longer-term objective of a regional arms-control agreement for the area in and around former Yugoslavia.

Many Americans argue that the internationally recognized Bosnian government cannot again be left defenseless; Europeans, on the other hand, maintain that whatever is provided to Sarajevo's forces could easily be countered by weapons from Russia and other sources leading to an arms race and, ultimately, less security for the Sarajevo government. The Commission itself is divided on whether or not to arm and train the Bosnian army but believes that an international security presence in particular, a follow-on

mission to the Implementation Force (IFOR) could help resolve the dilemma until progress is made in cooperation among the parties.

NATO's Partnership for Peace offers a way, short of membership, to respond to Balkan aspirations to join NATO without abandoning the Western Alliance's ability to influence the region. The Commission therefore recommends creation of a "Balkan Association of Partnership for Peace" to ensure through a coordination office that all NATO members keep a continuing active interest in the security of the region. But for the foreseeable future, the need for a NATO commitment that goes beyond Partnership for Peace will remain. The Contact Group, which could be expanded to include Italy, must be maintained as a mechanism for common decision-making on Bosnia, but perhaps for Balkans policy in general. Given the credibility of American military power in the region, a military presence of the United States must be maintained.

The success of Dayton will depend on Americans and Europeans continuing to work together, and the question of a post-IFOR deployment is becoming a test-case both for a European common foreign and security policy (CSFP) and for a new division of roles within NATO. Fortunately, there is increased appreciation on both sides of the Atlantic that transatlantic unity and a European defense identity are not contradictory; development of policy on the Balkans must foster both.

Finally, NATO members should recognize that it may be necessary to demonstrate their will with military force. Another Bosnia in the Balkans, or Bosnia itself might not directly threaten the West, but it would again corrode its sense of unity and purpose. And, as in the experience of early 1990s, intervention probably would occur sooner or later.

The outside factors that made possible the mass slaughter at Srebrenica were numerous: the refusal of the leading international powers, until summer 1995, to exert a credible threat of force to impose a solution; the gap between the rhetoric and the willingness of the international powers to back their words with actions; the under-equipping of the U.N. forces; the inability of humanitarian intervention to substitute for a political strategy involving, if necessary, the use of force; the tendency of many U.N. officials to equate impartiality with neutrality between warring parties, even when one or more were violating Security Council mandates; and the tendency of the U.N. Secretariat especially when faced with impracticable, unenforceable, and crucially ambiguous mandates, to "redefine" the mandates to minimize the risks of implementation. It must not be allowed to happen again.

Reconstruction and Development

In Bosnia, the immediate need is for reconstruction, but the entire region also requires removal of the obstacles to dismantling state socialism and reversal of the effects of war and sanctions. The needs include: a proper banking system, legal and fiscal rules, and a dismantling of trade barriers to foster regional cooperation. The Commission believes that small-scale capitalism except in the urgent case of Bosnian infrastructure development in industry, agriculture, and commerce and services, will be more important than large-scale projects for future prosperity and cooperation in the Balkans.

International assistance is indispensable: to improve market access for Balkan exports, especially those of the Yugoslav successor states; to provide quick financial assistance for rebuilding infrastructure and for settling refugees (necessary before private capital will flow); to provide, through the IMF, the World Bank, and other institutions, assistance for stabilization, market reform, and structural adjustment efforts, in Bosnia especially; and to help settle the claims of international banks, governments, and citizens on the Yugoslav successor states. xvi

Democracy

Obstacles to effective democracy in the Balkans stem from the legacies of war, of communism, and of history. The obstacles include: the fragility of parliamentary democratic institutions; the absence of institutions independent of the state and of social forces capable of sustaining them; the weakness, or indeed, absence of an organized democratic opposition; and “apparatus nationalism,” or the legacy of attempts by Balkan communist leaders to assert autonomy vis-a-vis Moscow while sustaining domestic totalitarianism in the name of national unity.

Moreover, the adoption of presidential, rather than parliamentary, systems in some Balkan countries tends to reinforce centralized authoritarian features, as does the subordination of the state administration to ruling-party whims normal practice in Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, or Croatia. Meanwhile, control of the media, especially television and radio, by ruling parties leaves the opposition without a voice, while intense nationalism undermines the development of political pluralism.

The Commission recommends that public and private Western institutions adopt as a long-term priority the development and revival of the institutions of civil society, including independent cultural or professional associations, independent judiciaries, and free media. International NGOs should strive to identify local priorities and coordinate better to avoid duplication.

Independent media are a problem of vital importance for the prospects for democracy in the whole region. The ugly propaganda campaigns that nationalist media mounted to foment war in former Yugoslavia must not be

overlooked or forgotten. Western governments and international institutions should place a high priority on freedom of the media in their dealings with the countries of the region.

Ethnic Relations and Treatment of Minorities

The ‘ethnic cleansing’ or forced assimilation that has prevailed in much of the Balkans since the nineteenth century has been a response to the notion that one state should correspond to one nation, one culture, one religion. Some argue that ethno-nationalism can be defused politically by granting minorities cultural rights (language, religion, etc.) so that cultural autonomy will preempt demands for territorial autonomy.

This is unlikely to work in the Balkans: Minorities will not trust legal guarantees if they are not accompanied by territorial autonomy, while the major national groups fear that granting collective rights and autonomy will encourage disintegration and irredentism.

The Commission believes that: state constitutions should provide the protection of minority rights; that these rights should be specified and not left for interpretation by local officials; that proportional representation, despite its potential for fostering fragmentation, should be included in the electoral systems; and that decentralization and some degree of autonomy on the regional and municipal levels are essential in mixed territories. Above all, however, a “community of security” requires a civil society (in which ethnicity is not the exclusive organizing principle), the rule of law (guaranteeing human rights and minority rights), and institutional means of mediation and arbitration to settle disputes.

The Commission recommends the development of an international tribunal (the World Court or the European Commission and Court on Human Rights could be assigned the task) to deliberate on the limits of self-determination in effect, helping to resolve the inherent tension between the right to self-determination expressed in the U.N. Charter and the international commitment to the inviolability of borders.

Regional Cooperation

The potential for further conflict in the Balkans has led to suggestions for some form of preemptive international conference. The Commission, however, questions the feasibility of either an International Conference on Security in the Balkans or an even more ambitious conference aimed at creating a South Balkans Confederation. Such an approach, because it would not be able to gain the necessary compromises by all parties from the outset, would be unlikely to succeed.

Instead, to begin the slow process toward Balkan cooperation, the Commission recommends the establishment with the EU and the United States taking the diplomatic initiative of a network of regional commissions to

work on specific problems, including: ethnic and minority relations, religious reconciliation and cooperation, civil society, economic and infrastructural development, the environment, transnational crime, and relations with Western institutions.

Should some Balkan nations oppose participation in or even the establishment of these commissions many in the region see any commitment to cooperation as only postponing the aim of joining Europe, not as preparing for it would probably be necessary for the West to use pressure, by taking advantage of the Balkan nations eagerly sought "acceptance" by Europe. The EU could offer bilateral Trade and Cooperation Treaties to Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia, and Albania; association agreements with several Balkan states already exist or have been promised.

A free trade area seems to the Commission the most politically realistic and economically expedient starting point; it would afford its members maximum economic and political sovereignty. Eventually such a free trade area might become part of the Central European Free Trade Area (CEFTA) thereby lessening fears among the Balkan countries that regional cooperation is a prelude to re-establishing "Yugoslavia."

COUNTRY-BY-COUNTRY RECOMMENDATIONS

Bosnia and Herzegovina

With respect to Bosnia, the Dayton settlement is inherently contradictory: It accepts the status quo of ethnic territorial lines achieved by force, yet tries to protect and restore the multi-ethnic character of Bosnia. The latter is a very difficult task; with Bosnian Serbs gravitating toward Serbia and Bosnia Croats toward Croatia, the Bosniaks alone of the three constituent peoples will be left with a vital interest in preserving the new state. Indeed, a confederal arrangement tending to undermine the new Bosnia from the start is implied by the Dayton Accords formulation that the entities have the right to establish "special parallel relations with neighboring states consistent with the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina."

Of three scenarios for Bosnia (1) restoration of multi-ethnic Bosnia; (2) peaceful coexistence of three communities within two entities, under a common roof; and (3) partition, first into two and then into three parts, possibly leading to defacto annexation by Croatia and Serbia, leaving some 30 per cent of Bosnia as a tiny rump state for Bosniaks the third may be the most likely. Although some hold that such full, three-way partition is inevitable and thus should be accepted now, we believe that to leave an Islamic state sandwiched between a 'Greater Serbia and a 'Greater Croatia is a recipe for instability and would have decidedly negative effects on Islamic relations with Europe.

To prevent full partition and, over time, promote reintegration of a truly multi-ethnic Bosnia, the provisions of Dayton, now flouted with impunity, must be fully implemented. Moreover, the United States and Western Europe must be united in purpose. The Commission would base a transatlantic strategy for Bosnia on the following principles:

- A guarantee of long-term security a guarantee that will require first of all an international military presence that continues for several years after December 1996;
- The preservation and strengthening of all the main common institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Enforcement of the Dayton signatories solemn commitment to cooperate in delivering indicted individuals to the U.N. War Crimes Tribunal; if they are not delivered, the Tribunal should try them "in absentia."
- Guaranteeing the existence of free and independent media and removing effective monopolies of the most influential media in Bosnia by the various party-regimes;
- The building of civil society the nationally mixed institutions and social infrastructure destroyed in the war with help from Western governments, foundations, and NGOs;
- Since the environment in which the September 1996 elections are scheduled to be held (before this Report is released) can hardly be described as being free and fair, international efforts should focus now on ensuring that new elections are held within two years under truly free and fair conditions;
- Reconstruction efforts should give priority to projects promoting Bosnia's economic integration;
- The civilian side of the Western presence must be rationalized and strengthened, including giving a long-term mandate to the High Representative and improving coordination between IFOR (and post-IFOR) troops and civilian components, to ensure military support for civilian tasks;
- The right of refugees to return must be preserved. If refugees, the prime (living) victims of the war, cannot go home if they wish, it is improper to speak of a just peace at all. The financial burden of the refugees Should be shared among EU countries, which will also need to be more forthcoming on offering permanent visas to refugees and their families.

Croatia

With Croatia bent on "reintegration with Europe" (President Tudjman's words), European and American governments should raise the price for their friendship and support and make clear their expectations of improvement in the treatment of minorities, the return of refugee Serbs, freedom of the press, and the promotion of the local dimension of democracy. Above all, Zagreb should be expected to establish constructive relations with Bosnia and

Herzegovina, help dissolve the 'Croat Republic of Herceg-Bosna, promote the functioning of the Bosniak Croat Federation, and take part in Bosnia's economic recovery. Sustained Western pressure will be needed.

Serbia

The West should not encourage the notion that implementing Dayton requires giving President Milosevic a free hand in Serbia and Kosovo. Serbia's quest for legitimization offers the West leverage, and Serbia's reintegration into the community of nations should be made contingent on its respect for the sovereignty of Bosnia and its compliance with Dayton including its provisions relating to indicted war criminals. Belgrade should accept the draft treaty on the succession of former Yugoslavia, regulating the distribution of its debts and assets. And in light of the U.N. resolution stating that Yugoslavia has ceased to exist, Belgrade should be expected to reapply for admission to the United Nations and other international institutions; the West should coordinate its strategy for recognizing the new Yugoslavia.

Kosovo

The Serb minority in Kosovo has been dwindling, leading most Albanians in Kosovo to believe that "time and patience" will bring the province independence from Serbia and sovereignty. A stand-off has evolved between the official Serbian state and a "parallel" Albania state, but this reflects less a coexistence based on tolerance than an apartheid based on growing Albanian hatred of Serb maltreatment and humiliation and Serbian fear of being eventually overwhelmed. The longer a solution to the Kosovo problem is delayed, the greater the risk of a conflagration one that might easily spread beyond Kosovo's borders.

The Commission suggests that:

- Serbia should lift martial law entirely, restore autonomy, and, before negotiations begin, gradually withdraw troops and police. A normal civil and cultural life should be restored to Kosovo through efforts by the Albanian leadership, Western foundations and NGOs, and the Serbs. Pristina University must be restored as an open and pluralistic institution.
- The Kosovo Albanian leadership should be ready to enter negotiations without preconditions, backing off from their refusal to talk about anything other than independence.
- A final outcome should take into account legitimate Serb concerns, including reliable guarantees of the rights of the Serbian minority in Kosovo, and also acknowledge the right of the Kosovo Albanians to self-government including, but not limited to, control of their own police and judiciary, and health, cultural, and educational institutions.

If no agreement can be reached within a reasonable period of time, say two years, the West should support a binding international arbitration to

determine the future political structure of Kosovo, including, if the arbitrators so recommend, a Kosovowide referendum on the various options.

Albania

The Commission believes that the pro-Western orientation of Albania should continue to be encouraged, but that the Berisha government should not be allowed to interpret this as a license for undemocratic behavior; that Albania's infrastructure should be brought up to the level of its neighbors—a task especially for the EU and for Italy and Greece; and that Turkish and other Balkan ties should be encouraged over other Islamic ties. Albanians do not define their country in religious terms, and any move to do so would be a mistake.

Macedonia

Macedonia has proven to be one of the more stable successor states of former Yugoslavia, but much will depend on how it deals with the problem of its Albanian minority. The primary goal of outside influence should be to encourage an Albanian stake in Macedonian statehood an approach that will require a high degree of decentralization in Macedonia and continued political restraint on both sides. The presence of UNPREDEP should be maintained pending substantial progress in resolving the Kosovo problem. The Macedonian government should take the lead in defusing the tense Tetovo University dispute. Restoring normal operations at Pristina University in Kosovo together with complete opening of the Kosovo-Macedonia border could help.

Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Turks, and Turkey

In Bulgaria, former President Zhivkov's successors reversed the brutal Turkish assimilation policy of the 1980s, and many, perhaps half, of those in the Turkish minority who moved to Turkey returned. But many Bulgarians, even among liberals, are apprehensive of Turkey as a powerful and increasingly assertive neighbor and over Turkey's relations with Bulgaria's Turkish minority.

Greece and Turkey in the Balkans

Strained Greek-Turkish relations have been reflected throughout the Balkans, and Greeks, more than Turks, see their mutual rivalry as zero-sum. There is a dangerous arms buildup on both sides, and Cyprus is a worrying reminder that ethnic conflict can threaten regional stability.

The most direct form of Balkan intervention for either country so far was Greece's economic blockade of Macedonia between 1993 and 1995, and

nothing has been less rational than the initial hysteria whipped up in Greece over Macedonia. But there has been movement toward a settlement with Macedonia; and Greece, as a member of EU and NATO, could yet prove to be Macedonia's political, commercial, and intellectual conduit to the world at large.

For Turkey, the Balkans are not an overwhelming strategic preoccupation—compared to the Caucasus and pipeline problems but loom large emotionally as a symbol of secular Islam's fate within Europe, as the birthplace of peoples sprinkled throughout Turkish society, and as the detritus of empire, leaving behind Turkish and Muslim communities whose fate cannot be ignored.

Within Turkey, long-standing minority communities of Bosnians and Albanians have pushed Ankara toward a more active policy in the Balkans. Recognition of historical if not ethnic kinship with Bosniaks has a religious dimension that encourages some Turks to see in the Bosnian carnage a Western disdain for Muslims. Even sophisticated Turks, however see the failure of Bosnia's national experiment as casting a shadow over Turkey's survival as a pluralist Muslim community with aspirations to join Europe. And at bottom is the grievance that Western Europe cannot identify with a Muslim society, however secular. Meanwhile the Bosnia theme has been a potent weapon in the hands of Turkey's Islamists, who now hold the Prime Ministership and are making unprecedented advances on the domestic political scene.

The Balkans should not be seen solely through the prism of the Bosnian tragedy. Today they stand at the crossroads, confronted with the prospect of being marginalized once again or of overcoming the present crisis and creating the conditions for their integration into the European mainstream. The ultimate challenge, for both the West and the Balkan peoples themselves, is to create a framework that gives everyone a stake in peace. This applies especially to the former warring parties of ex-Yugoslavia. In order to avoid a new nationalistic eruption, it is not enough to propose technical solutions. Each side must feel it is gaining something in exchange for sacrificing something. The Western powers are unlikely to maintain their forces in the Balkans forever. Thus, each side must be made to see the cost of resuming war as higher than the cost of maintaining peace.

The peoples of the Balkans deserve the chance to leave their tragic past behind. The nations that have done so earlier owe it to their sense of humanity, their dignity, and peace of conscience to help the fragile nations in the region overcome their present predicament and transform the bloody Balkans of yesteryear into the Southeastern Europe of the future.