

3. Greek Views Concerning the Balkan Crisis

I Active Involvement

Generally, developments in the Balkans have major implications on Greece's national interests, and Greece has an obligation, as an active member of the EU, NATO and as a Balkan country that knows and understands the region better than other partners in the EU, to contribute multi-dimensionally to the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive European Union Policy. In recent EU meetings Greece presented various ideas and plans for a more active involvement of the EU in the Balkan Peninsula, in order to facilitate the positive developments for ending the crisis and the stalemate in one of the most war-torn corners of our planet. Athens has dynamically and credibly supported the stability, democracy, security and the respecting of human rights in the entire region.

Nowadays, the EU has the excellent and historic opportunity to increase its leverage in the Balkans and become a very stable and strong force, aiming at promoting a unified strategy that could include all disparate initiatives, presented at various times by specific governments as well regional institutions.

Three of the most crucial issues of strategic importance for long-term Balkan stability as well as for Greece's security are:

First: The future of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (predominantly the constitutional one). Even if one accepts that the current federal character of Yugoslavia has completed its post-war cycle, no one can deny the uncontrollable dissolution of FRY into independent states. The continuous fragmentation of FRY into weak state entities will be a permanent source of insecurity and instability. The EU and the broader international community should take a clear stand on this issue. The constitutional future of the FRY is predominantly a problem for the parties involved and should not result from unilateral actions of secessionism.

Second: The future status of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). According to various reports and statistical data, in few years, the composition of the population of FYROM will be dramatically altered. The demographic changes and the dynamic tendencies within the Albanian communities in the entire Balkan region (especially after the Kosovo crisis), in connection to the increasing number of irredentist tendencies could create further problems for the fragile mosaic of FYROM; FYROM's territorial integrity is of high importance for the national security of Greece. No one can be sure that the land-locked country will survive in the coming years. The EU and NATO should closely follow the developments there and act in a stabilising role.

Third: Developments in the Balkans, especially since the start of the Yugoslav break-up, insecurity, the lack of democratic norms and traditions and economic recession have all contributed to the rise of extreme nationalism, irredentism and secessionism as magic solutions and answers for solving these problems. Secessionism among various population groups is being directed by ultra-nationalist circles. The Balkan region should be an active sub-space of a European one, and therefore should not be acceptable in the form of ethnically "pure" states. On the contrary, the Balkan future should be based on democratic principles and promotion of multicultural societies.

The European Union, but also the Atlantic Alliance, should undertake a number of initiatives in three different directions:

- Formulating a (comprehensive) policy to strengthen the European orientation of the Balkans. The prospect of membership in Euro-Atlantic institutions is an extremely important issue and incentive. Athens can and should support the future entry of its neighbouring states to the EU and NATO.
- Enlarging and strengthening specific mechanisms for regional and sub regional co-operation, supporting democratic institutions and a comprehensive Balk vision and eliminating the economic crises, social underdevelopment and extended poverty.
- Guaranteeing the inviolability of the intra-Balkan borders and proposing an international conference to be held in Geneva or New York under the auspices of the UN (topics to be included such as fighting organised crime and Mafia introducing CSBMs, halting the proliferation of light weapons, supporting regional co-operative initiatives and environmental proposals. etc.). The European Union, through the Stability Pact (in which Greece is one of the most active and energetic member), and the Atlantic Alliance, through the Partnership for Peace programme, have the potential and power to contribute to the construction of a new “politico-economic and security environment“. Contemporary Greek economic and business activities in the Balkans could prove mutually profitable, while Greek investments in the region are “financial injections in stability, security and economic well-being of the regional populations“.

II Proposals

- There is an urgent need for the full implementation of UN Security Council Draft Resolution 1244, without delay and without “holes“, if we wish to create a multiethnic Kosovo, with respect for human rights and for safeguarding the rights of the Serbs and other communities. Albanian Kosovars should learn to respect the internationally - accepted human rights, guarantee the return of all refugees to their homes and ensure the participation of all citizens in the local elections and institutions.
- The European countries should support the moderate forces among Serbs and Albanians in the Kosovo (e.g. the Serbs of *Gracanica* and others). They should offer them real responsibilities within the democratic functioning of local-regional authorities. In the light of democratic developments in Serbia, and by taking into consideration certain aspects of the so-called *Rambouillet* agreements, the future regime of Kosovo might be decided at least in the mid-term through negotiations. Unilateral actions by whatever circles must be avoided. A change in the Serbian regime will hopefully end the isolation of the FRY from the rest of the world. Then the existing sanctions should be lifted as soon as possible. The European Union should start immediately to reinforce ailing Serbia with massive package of economic and humanitarian aid.
- Channels of further communication in accordance with the Stability Pact should be set up, such as contacts among young people, churches, NGOs, universities, municipalities, military-to-military contacts etc. The European Union has an historic opportunity through the Stability Pact to fully contribute to democratic developments in Yugoslavia and to stability, peace and growth in the Balkans. Security and peace will be the normal state of affairs and relations in Southeast Europe and Greece has a major and key-role to play in the Balkans and the Adriatic-Mediterranean.

Greece has played a prominent role in the Balkans during the last years, by:

- Supporting the deployment of KFOR troops through operation *Joint Guardian* from *Thessaloniki* via FYROM to Kosovo.

- Promoting a lot of trilateral meetings with Bulgaria and Turkey at the *Evros* area and with Albania and FYROM at the *Prespes Lake* at various levels.
- Participating actively and multi-dimensionally in the peacekeeping and humanitarian operations SFOR (Bosnia), ALBA (Albania) and AFOR (Albania, during the Kosovo crisis).
- Involving itself in the Southeast Multinational Brigade Act PSO HUMOPs.
- Establishing a considerable number of bilateral military and support agreements with its neighbours and fully supporting various European and NATO initiatives in the Balkans. Together with the Russian Federation, Switzerland and the Czech Republic contributed a lot to the relief of Kosovar refugees.
- Engaging itself in an active and positive Defence Diplomacy in the entire region (at MoD and General Staff level).

Greece remained and remains wholeheartedly committed to the Atlantic and European ideas and policies. As a country with a long history and involvement in the region, Greece is a factor of stability, security and prosperity as well a promoter of economic and sustainable development throughout the entire region. Democratic Greece is an active participant in and member of the EU and NATO and undoubtedly needs the support of all countries to succeed in the long way to peace and security in the Balkans and Southeast Europe.

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