

FUTURE OF THE SOUTH BALKANS

12 December 1998

Princeton, New Jersey

Conference Summary

Problem of Democratization

The renewed initiative of democratization of the Serb society is appreciated and necessary, but represents in its effects a long-term project and a difficult combination. The new international focus on President Milosevic and his elimination as “the source of all conflicts in the Balkans” are now another focus of (U.S.) international activity. – Besides these aspects exist the ongoing negotiations for the future of Kosovo which is still an integral part of the state of Serbia and the FRY. All two/three initiatives are not necessarily compatible at the same time, but they can become mutually neutralizing and jeopardizing. It is certainly more difficult to extract concessions from a government and leadership under fire and obviously in the sights of the outside world. As a response, a certain “ruthlessness” and radicalization of that government as well as intransigence and increasing domestic rallying effect in the FRY can be expected. Also this enhances the bunker mentality in the FRY and enforces traditionally suspicious feelings against the West and Northwestern Part of Europe (“unloved appendix”). Even if agreements are made under this kind of pressure, they still need not to be implemented – and there would be ample excuses for domestic political consumption. In addition there has emerged a special “bilateral relationship” between Pres. Milosevic and Amb. Holbrooke which not necessarily ascertains full implementation in daily (Balkan) reality. There is a need for coordination of the various initiatives and putting them into perspective with the ongoing negotiations and their aims. Any program of democratization should be clearly defined and adapted to the local situation, not to be too ambitious but gradual.

Factor Time, Window of Opportunity

Donor Fatigue, Balkan Fatigue, and an increasing exasperation by those involved in the Balkans and the ongoing negotiations adds to the already existing pressure on time – to produce some results and to overcome the intransigence. Window of opportunity today – to find some agreement, to have them accept the plan but Albanians do not want fewer rights than they had before. Influence of ‘out-of- area’ events on peace and stability in the Balkans

Major developments ‘out of area’ such as those in the United States and in the Middle East influence the region, i.e. the behavior of certain leaders. They also shape the framework of operation for the official representatives of the United States. The crisis of the U.S. Presidency has emboldened politicians to attack the American President in a way unthinkable before. [Particularly as of Dec. 22, 1998 the impeachment of the President of the United States of America and the Bombing of Iraq by American and British Forces have introduced a new aura in the international system which appears to offer more room for transgression from previously accepted rules while on the other hand raising uncertainty about unilateral acts by the only super power. That situation also invites other powers to counter-balance; see the discussions around a

strengthening Russian-Indian-Chinese alliance, which in turn emboldens those who are already in an antagonistic position to the Western Alliance and the United States.]

Belgrade – Serbs and Kosovo

The Kosovo myth as has been played by the Belgrade leadership is at its end. The Yugoslav Leadership has emptied it—and many Serbs today believe that they have indeed lost Kosovo out; with all the internationalization (KDOM and OSCE Verifiers) being present there, they are even more convinced. There is hence increasing feeling that Pres. Milosevic lost that round. Kosovo crisis has changed Serbia, even influences Bosnia and other ethnic groups. The clamping down on opposition groups, media, and university, and particularly the exchange of leaders represents a reaction by an encircled and embattled government. People feel a “Stalinization” of the society; while everybody suffers increasingly from the daily worsening living conditions, a catastrophic economic situation, and increasing lack of perspective and hope for the future has engulfed all levels of society. The international sanctions, the miserable living conditions and unemployment as a result there from, entice the appeal, power, and influence of illegal activities and of organized criminality in day to day realities. Also increasing resentment exists in rest-Yugoslavia about how much is done for the Kosovo Albanians (economy, hospitals, etc.) while the other citizens are suffering more than ever. Serbs from Kosovo and Metohjia increasingly leave the region—especially once the Kos Albanians abroad get more established and compare. (A bit like Krajina and Sarajevo experience in 1994, 1995-96). On the other hand, the Kosovo Serbs have become an “instrument” for Belgrade (over the past 10 years) to conduct and exploit its policy of nationalism against Kos. Albanians and shape radicalization – and nationalization – on the back of the Kosovo Serbs. Serbia has to find its new identity – and borders. Generally, it has been found that there will not be peace as long as external hard borders run through territory with similar ethnic population on both sides of the border. On the other hand, this means problems for ethnic groups like the Albanians, the Hungarians, the Romanians, the Serbs, etc. It implies serious international involvement for the control of borders. In order to address the issue of borders integration and regionalization may be a major factor; a major regional integrative and economic initiative, and the establishment of a serious security framework.

Serbia, and perhaps others as well, are groping for an ethnic state – “to be left alone” –while the international community is rushing the solution for Serbia, Kosovo and Montenegro. Serbia’s leadership policy follows a nationalist autocratic concept—unacceptable for the others. Unfortunately, the regional re-arrangement and disintegration process is still continuing – see possible separation of Kosovo’s Western parts, exchange territory and population. [see the related discussion at WWS on April 1, 1998 in the addendum]

Kosovo Albanians

An otherwise fragmented society is unified by the drive for classical self-determination—though it is not yet clear where its end may be. Those for a continuing negotiation process face those (increasingly) opposed a seemingly hopeless negotiation process – with lack of international neutrality; hence the need of an armed solution – to get it over with ... “This situation as is, the latest Hill proposal and stalled negotiations are actually prone to unify all Albanians.” The

Albanians however would never accept anything less than at least the 1974 Constitution – even if this was under the existence still of the SRY and within its sovereign borders. The “Third Republic” does exist as an interim position and with the eventual right to opt for self-determination sometimes in the future (3 years). But Prishtina brandished the radical shift of Amb. Hill in his 12/2/1998 plan. So far exists a lack of real confidence building measures (return of refugees, guarantee by international community to react to human rights violations) which would help establish trust for the Kos Albanians in the negot. Process, the future and the Serbs. Once trust between Alb and Serbs, than international community’s involvement not any more necessary. But this all would require the need for greater negotiation flexibility. Kosovo crisis has become test case for region reaction – how to deal in the South Balkans with such a problem, how to stabilize one’s own state and government.

Leadership

Potential generational change in the region (Pres. Gligorov, Tudjman, Milosevic). Challenges to leadership by democratic or non-democratic change in government can have a significant impact in a region where societies are dominated by leaders. Hence the role of leadership in the South Balkans is significant (re. President Gligorov of Macedonia, etc).

Macedonia

Delicate balance of coalition government today and its relationship with the more radical/nationalistic forces. It was a major concessions of new government to NATO to allow pre-dispositioning of RRF for extraction of KdoM or OSCE Verifiers from Kosovo in case of emergency. Macedonia may face tremendous internal problems in case of two developments: the passing away or seriously weakening of President Gligorov and the too long dragging on of Kosovo crisis which then causes extensive spill over (refugees, arms, etc.) and entices Albanian minority and rifts existing consensus. This all can be exacerbated by exterior and ulterior motives of outside actors – like foreign powers, organization or illegal interests (organized national and international crime).

Organized Criminality

“In the Balkans there are only two kinds of states: those who do admit that they have organized crime and other large-scale criminal activities and those who don’t admit it”

Organized crime or participation in some extensive form of illegal occupation has become a forceful issue in the everyday life in Southeastern Europe – indeed a serious and viable alternative to earn a living as well as to run a business, and to obtain large sums of money quickly. Furthermore, even many ordinary citizens are faced with the option to continue to suffer in an illegal economy with totally insufficient legal income, or to operate in a gray or black zone with the additional benefit of avoiding taxation. Thus participation in illegal or criminal operation has become a significant origin of income – alas also a source of significant revenue for local and other governments which in turn reinvigorates the illegal spiral already in place. The problem of organized criminality is linked to one fundamental issue: to earn money; Either by profiting from the (legal) production and distribution of an illegal product, or by the illegal

production and distribution of a legal product or service.

Part of the causes for the increase of the problem and its rapid internationalization can be found in the dissolution of communism, the remaining of (former communist) elites in power, secret service and secret police operations, etc and lots of free former party cash. In many countries in Southeastern Europe organized crime is today involved in trade with armament, drugs, oil, petrol, gas, CDs, even food – flour, sugar, etc. Certainly in smuggling of refugees and illegal participation in international assistance programs and humanitarian operations. This entails corruption and otherwise illegal involvement of governmental and law and order personnel to varying degrees. In view of their meager income, usually inappropriate training and equipment they fall easy pray to well organized and equipped – and highly motivated – criminal operators.

In addition to the traditionally existing “Marlborough Economy” in Eastern Europe (Black or gray marketeering with cigarettes) exists a high degree of money laundering, International criminal networks help support regional intentions and offer supplies. In case a government manages to close one line of support, another one will be opened.

Political influence in political parties even opposition leaders

Crime and corruption is tradition, but has now aggravated because of fall of communism and money and impact of sanctions (some states profited tremendously from sanctions imposed on FRY).

It was argued that a clearly determined national government, with the support by the international community can successfully fight crime at home—though there is a real problem regarding the flexibility from well coordinated international networking. Strict currency controls – such as the establishment of a national/ regional currency board enhances transparency and assists further in reducing the scope and efficiency of international coordination by criminal organizations.

However it became clear that ongoing degradation in the effects and scope of international organized criminality will have a profound impact on the readiness of peoples abroad to mobilize further international assistance and engagement in the Balkans – the feeling of an increasingly futile endeavor which assists the elimination of much of the international assistance and in turn, via refugees, brings parts of the criminal activity back home.

NATO – EU membership

“Better to be in a house in a safe and prosperous region than to be in a safe house but in an unsafe environment”

Integration is essential to provide more assistance, greater security, and give the peoples a sense of hope in the region. Need for functioning security framework in the region Regional organization with strong support from NATO and involvement.

Regionally uneven democratization over time can bring disparities, enhance discrepancies and

cause tensions between those who have and those who have not. This adds to existing economic inequality. Even the internationalization of the Kosovo crisis brings new (positive, economic) dynamic to the Kosovo region, I.Os, activity, mobilization, can help turn Kosovo into better shape than the rest of Serbia.

Appendix

“Kosovo could be swapped for Republica Srbska” as part of a deal between President Slobodan Milosevic and the International Community

A special two-day meeting April 1st, 1998 at Princeton University under the auspices of the Woodrow Wilson School’s Liechtenstein Research Program on Self-Determination brought together experts from Kosovo, Serbia, and European representatives of the UN, as well as some 20 graduate students specializing in problems on Self-Determination. Prof. Wolfgang Danspeckgruber organized the meeting as a case study in his Seminar on “Self-Determination in the International System.”

“We ought to prepare for a possible swap between Kosovo or Parts of it and Republica Srbska (RS), instigated by President Milosevic of Yugoslavia,” argued Sonja Biserko. The swap would add the RS—today an integral part of Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH)—to Yugoslav, i.e. Serbian territory, and would release Kosovo or part of it to the international community; possibly creating havoc in the immediate neighborhood. To this date, Belgrade has failed to establish official diplomatic relations with BiH and Macedonia, and the new Bosnian-Serb Prime Minister Dodik is to be considered an old Milosevic ally. Obviously, such a solution would destroy the Dayton Accords’ objective of a unified Bosnia-Herzegovina and completely redraw the map of Southeastern Europe, particularly of Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and also Macedonia.

The Seminar discussed the Case of Kosovo as an example for self-governance. Conceptually several degrees of self-governance could be possible: complete independence and classical sovereignty, or maximum autonomy within the existing international boundaries but with great rights, and obligations, for Kosovo. This would also entail becoming a Republic within the remaining Yugoslav federation.

Mrs. Sonja Biserko, Executive Director of the Serbian Helsinki Committee in Belgrade also found that once the Kosovo case is opened, re-emerging interests of Serbia in parts of Macedonia may surface as well. Veton Surroi demonstrated that to this day, the borders between Serbia and Macedonia, have neither been fully delineated nor implemented. Indicators demonstrate continued interest from Serbian orthodox church in Macedonia. “Only ethnically pure states are secure states” appears to be an accepted assumption in the Balkans, and Presidents Tudjman and Milosevic have fully accepted this dictum. This observation came from Dr. Zarko Korac, Professor of Psychology at the University of Belgrade, and President of UDV. On the other hand, Belgrade will try to just muddle along and gain time, but avoid receiving economic sanctions, while trying to maximize its gain and split of the international community.

Mrs. Sonja Biserko suggested that “economic sanctions” are today indeed a threat taken very seriously by Milosevic and the newly rich marketeers within the FRY – this in contrast to the

common understanding that economic sanctions will not work. Mrs. Biserko's assumption is supported by the interest of the regions' and Belgrade's newly rich to legalize and open up their business interests and to gain acceptance in the international community, especially in Europe. They would like to white-wash financial gains from corruption, embezzlement, war-mongering, and other illegal or shadowy economic operations. Re-imposed sanctions would hinder that and freezing of international assets by Yugoslavs (in Cyprus and even Hong Kong) would hamper if not harm those interests.

As usually, the international community remains in a re-active mode—rather than an anticipatory one: while attempting to solve one particular problem others appear elsewhere in South Eastern Europe. Wolfgang Danspeckgruber argued that “we deal with several realities, with only the most public and burning one being addressed by outside powers.” This demands for a comprehensive approach to effective crisis solution in the Balkans. The channeling, analysis, organization and implementation should be arranged through a clearing mechanism, perhaps based on the Contact Group organization, Danspeckgruber suggested—otherwise even duplication of efforts and/or rivalry among international organizations will be the consequence, and continuous absence of anticipatory strategy. For instance today throughout the area of entire former Yugoslavia, exchanges of territories and properties, population movements, and resettlement continue under the direction from the respective leaderships in Zagreb, Belgrade, Pale and Sarajevo, in order to purify the populations and streamline the territories. Examples can be found in Bosnia, Eastern Slavonia, Vojvodina, Sandjak, and Montenegro. That means that while the international community is pre-occupied with one specific problem—like today Kosovo—in the regional reality, several other dimensions with significant long-term effect develop, warned Wolfgang Danspeckgruber, chair of the Seminar and director of Princeton's Liechtenstein Research Program on Self-Determination, which sponsored the seminar. Furthermore, other minorities in the region begin to take up the issue of greater self-governance. Examples are the 200,000 Romanians in Serbia, the more than 100,000 Albanians in Montenegro, the Albanians in Greece and Macedonia, and the Hungarians and Roma in Romania.

Veton Surroi, publisher of Koha Ditore and member in the negotiation team of Kosovar President Rugova, finds that Kosovo has to have all freedoms, and any discussion about them would be a step back. Only NATO and OSCE but not the UN are desired international instruments to assist Kosovo. The UN's involvement has proven too cumbersome and ineffective in Bosnia, Russia and China, the permanent members in the Security Council, will be continuously opposed to greater autonomy or back Serbian interests. Surroi insists that the most important first step should be NATO involvement to stabilize the region and avoid further bloodshed. At this point, the Kosovars are not willing any longer to just give up their demands for self-governance—rather they want to fight. And the UCK attracts increasing popular support. Surroi however emphasized the importance to treat the Serbian minority in Kosovo, some 200,000 people, with all respects of accepted international standards. Then a greater Albania including that region, but perhaps also the 100,000 Albanians in Montenegro is a likely consequence and may pose a vital threat to the territorial stability of Macedonia (so far some 15,000 refugees joined their friends and relatives among the more than 25% Albanians in the Macedonian population).

Both Biserko and Surroi demanded an international conference on Kosovo – like a Dayton II. In its absence however, continuous bloodshed may develop until the international community will undertake more specific steps. In view of the latest bloodshed, it appears unlikely that Pristina will accept any limitations to self-government in the area of education, health, even finance and—increasingly—security. The status of a third republic independent from Serbia but within the Yugoslav Federation is a possibility—Though another cycle of violence and continuing Serb suppression will intensify the drive to complete independence. But the borders with Albania and Macedonia continue to remain uncontrollable as always. It appears that as long as Messrs Milosevic and Tudjman remain in power there will be continuous effort to solidify gains, purify population and stratify borders in the region of the former Yugoslavia.