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BALKAN SECURITY:
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

Occupying the part of Europe closest to the Middle East, Southeast Europe has been throughout history a meeting place of competing nationalities and a path for conquerors¹. Today, the Balkan peninsula and the surrounding maritime areas constitute the geostrategic link between two of the world's most critical regions—Western Europe and the Middle East.

The traditional separation of the Balkans from Western European politics can be traced back as far as the division of the Roman Empire in the 4th century A.D. The Byzantine and Ottoman empires ruled much of this area from then up to the 19th century. This course of history shaped a feeling of belonging to a geographical and historical community, even though there was an increasing consciousness of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Common religion (orthodoxy) as well as parallel or common fighting for national liberation during the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th (Balkan wars) further enhanced this sense of belonging to a distinct community. This tendency reached its heyday in the inter-war period, when efforts to create an economic and political community were institutionalized.

The Second World War and the following period of bipolarity reintegrated Southeast Europe into the politics of the Old Continent and determined the policy choices. In the late 1940s the Balkans became the southern and perhaps the more unstable flank of East-West rivalry. Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia and Albania chose socialist regimes, whereas, under the pressure of a perceived communist threat, Greece and Turkey opted for the Western world. Progressively, tension lessened and increasing stabilization brought important diversification in its wake. Yugoslavia's and Albania's withdrawal from the Eastern bloc (in 1948 and 1961 respectively) were facilitated by geography and a more

1. On the earlier history of the Balkans see P. F. Sugar-D. W. Treadgold (eds), *A history of East Central Europe*; Seattle: University of Washington Press, vols VIII and IX, 1974-77; L. S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*; New York: Rinehart, 1958; and B. Jelavitch, *History of the Balkans*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983 (2 vols).

nationalistic and individualistic outlook of their leadership that arose from the wartime partisan experience.

By a similar but not directly comparable process, the Cyprus question between Greece and Turkey resurrected the historical mistrust between the two NATO countries and established a situation of permanent crisis in their mutual relationship after the 1974 Cyprus crisis and the quarrel over the potentially more explosive Aegean issue.

Thus, by the early 1980s, the once monolithic southern flanks of East and West had evolved into an impressively diverse region: the two NATO members are in a constant posture of confrontation with each other; the two Warsaw Pact countries display important differences in their foreign policy attitudes and the two states that remain outside the alliance systems, are engaged in a profound minority dispute (Kosovo).

Ironically, the stabilization of East-West rivalry in Europe and the approximate balance between the two sides caused the Balkan states to look again at old and new disputes through national eyes.

Many analysts believe that the recent pattern of stability in the Balkans has created a situation in which the possibility of an East-West war starting in that area is a more remote threat than one in Central Europe, for example. There are, however, other analysts who argue that precisely because of the dangers involved in the central region, flank attacks are more likely. According to this line of thought, current political stability in the Balkans is only apparent and does not take into consideration that a significant if less spectacular arms race has developed here, too². One aspect is the intense great-power competition in naval armament in the Mediterranean. Furthermore, targets in the Balkan peninsula can readily be hit from extra-Balkan bases. Thus, Bulgaria argues that the deployment of cruise missiles in Sicily is threatening its security³; similarly, NATO notes that some of the SS-20s are targeted against Greece and Turkey⁴.

Be that as it may, it is clear that geography has prevented the INF question from acquiring paramount importance. It has, however, contributed to a renewed interest in a Balkan nuclear-weapon-free zone.

2. See for example J. C. Snyder, "Strategic Bias and Southern Flank Security", *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 1985, pp. 123-141.

3. See the article written by the Bulgarian Minister of Defense in *Rabotnichesko Delo* (Sofia), March 9, 1983, pp. 1 and 6 (quoted in *FBIS, Daily Report, Eastern Europe*, March 16, 1983, C5-C8).

4. L. Ruehl, "Le défi du SS-20 et la stratégie soviétique à l'égard de l'Europe", *Politique Etrangère*, 1979/3, p. 440.

The establishment of a Balkan Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (BNWFZ) has been proposed for the first time by Romania, in September 1957. This initiative that called specifically for a Balkan conference at the Prime Minister level, was reiterated in June 1959. At that time, the proposal put forward by the Warsaw Pact countries aimed at averting the deployment of NATO's intermediate-range ballistic missiles (of the Thor and Jupiter types) in Turkey, Italy and the United Kingdom⁵. These missiles were withdrawn in the early '60's, but the NATO weaponry of tactical nuclear systems in the Balkans remained. These latter weapons also deployed in the early '60's, included Honest John and Nike-Hercules missiles, as well as nuclear-capable aircraft (F-4 and F-104) and artillery⁶.

All these systems are considered in the West as obsolete. The Honest John missile has been replaced in the 1970's in all relevant NATO armies by the newer Lance missile, which has greater range (130 kms) and accuracy. The Nike-Hercules missile is being replaced by the Patriot type, which has only a conventional role. The modernization trend has also touched the artillery.

In fall 1983 NATO reached the so-called Montebello resolution which foresees that the Alliance's current nuclear arsenal in Europe of 6.000 bombs and warheads will be reduced within 4-5 years to 4.600⁷. It seems that this reduction will be accompanied by a simultaneous modernization of the remaining systems and by a renewed emphasis on NATO's conventional weaponry. The Greek government has repeatedly stated that it wants to see all nuclear weapons withdrawn from Greek territory⁸, but the Ankara government is reportedly interested in the modernization of the existing US nuclear arsenal on its soil (particularly in the replacement of the Honest John by the Lance missile and in new, dual-capable artillery)⁹. Greece believes that the Turkish plans could lead to general tension in the whole region, since it is unrealistic

5. Y. Valinakis, "Strategy and disarmament in the Balkans" (in Greek), *Diethnes Dikaio kai Diethnis Politiki*, 1985/9, p. 131; G. Harris, *Troubled Alliance*; Washington D.C.: AEI-Hoover Institution, 1972, pp. 92-95.

6. Y. Valinakis, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-133.

7. *The International Herald Tribune*, October 28, 1983; *The Wall Street Journal*, July 18, 1983.

8. A. Papandreou, *Greek Government Programme*; Athens: General Secretariat for Press and Information, 1981, p. 16.

9. On the Turkish view of the Balkan NWFZ see A. Karaosmanoglu: A NWFZ in the Balkans: Can it Enhance Security? in: SISAV, *Disarmament and Peace Seminar*; Istanbul: The Political and Social Studies Foundation, 1984, pp. 21-33.

to expect that the Warsaw Pact would not take any countermeasures.

It is commonly believed that the only complete nuclear weapon systems (i.e. including both launchers and nuclear warheads and bombs) are to be found in Greece and Turkey. The two Warsaw Pact states of the Balkan area, Bulgaria and Romania, do have nuclear-capable systems on their soil, but do not seem to possess any nuclear bombs or warheads. Complete nuclear weapon systems are deployed by the Soviet Union in Eastern European countries only in those states, where Soviet troops of an Army corps level are stationed¹⁰. This practice has averted the storage of nuclear bombs and warheads in Bulgaria and Romania, where there are no such troops¹¹. It should be noted, however, that some weapon systems deployed in the two countries are dual-capable (nuclear-conventional). Most of these weapons, particularly the missiles, are considered rather obsolete and are already being replaced in the Soviet Army by new models. Thus, the SS-21 missile (with a slightly greater range, i.e. 120 km) is the successor of the FROG missile, whereas the SS-23 (with a 350 to 500 km range) will replace the SCUD¹².

PASOK has pledged support for the creation of a BNWFZ since the time it was in the opposition. As soon as it came to power, in October 1981, Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou included this goal in his government's immediate program and stated the following:

"In order to denuclearize certain geographic areas, the government proposes a denuclearized zone in the Balkans, as a first stage. After the necessary deliberations have been concluded, Greece will be the first to apply this principle, by removing the nuclear weapons from its territory in a short period of time"¹³.

During the eighteen months that elapsed until May 1983 the diplomatic staffs of the Balkan countries had numerous deliberations on this idea. A major obstacle has been the Turkish government's negative attitude vis-a-vis the establishment of such a zone. The Ankara government rejects the idea of a BNWFZ because under NATO's strategic doctrine, the "flexible response", the nuclear weapons deployed in Greece and Turkey are aimed at offsetting the Warsaw Pact's conventional superiority and geographic advantage.

10. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 26, 1983; *Christian Science Monitor*, July 5, 1983.

11. According to Bulgarian officials there are no "nuclear missiles" on Bulgarian soil; *Berliner Zeitung*, August 13, 1983.

12. IISS, *The Military Balance 1983/84*; London: IISS, 1983.

13. A. Papandreou, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

According to the Alliance's doctrine these nuclear systems have a deterring effect and represent Greece's and Turkey's contribution to the "shared risk" principle. Furthermore, Turkish officials have often stressed that the denuclearization of the Balkans cannot take place before all nuclear weapons are removed from the rest of Europe.

In May 1983 Prime Minister A. Papandreou invited the other Balkan leaders to send delegations of experts to Athens to discuss Balkan cooperation, including procedures for the turning of the Balkans into a NWFZ¹⁴. There followed an intensive exchange of letters and all countries presented their views on this endeavour and on the formulation of the agenda.

It was subsequently agreed that the first Conference of Experts of the Balkan Countries would be convened in Athens, in January 1984. Only Albania refused to participate on the ground that she was already a country without nuclear arms and that the whole idea would be meaningless as long as four states of the area belonged to military alliances. A few hours before the beginning of the Conference, Turkey changed her mind and refused to participate in a last minute's effort to wreck the Conference. She finally participated in the first phase of the meetings as an observer, but agreed to take full part in the second phase of the Conference that took place from February 13 to 18, 1984¹⁵.

During the two phases of this First Conference (January 16-18 and February 13-18) the Balkan experts exchanged views on cooperation and security in the Balkans. Each delegation presented its views and concrete proposals were put forward in respect to the establishment of a NWFZ in the area. The security problems that were discussed in a Balkan forum for the first time in the post-World War II period, were of particular interest. Proposals for Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) of politico-military character were also put forward in this framework. Measures such as the prenotification of military maneuvers, the invitation of observers, etc, are currently being discussed in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament in Europe (CDE) in Stockholm. It has been stressed, however, that CBMs in the Balkans could go far beyond those to be agreed upon in Stockholm, both in quantity and quality¹⁶.

The five Balkan delegations concluded their work on February 18 and

14. The invitation letter was published in *Pontiki* (Athens), June 17, 1983.

15. *To Vima* (Athens), January 22, 1984.

16. See the interview of the head of the Greek delegation, Ambassador Em. Spyridakis in *ANA-Feature Stories*, February 21, 1984.

agreed to study the proposals and ideas that had been put forward during the negotiations and to inform their leaderships on the views of the other delegations. It was also agreed that consideration would be given to a Romanian proposal to hold the second Conference in Bucharest¹⁷.

The Greek government has repeatedly stressed its willingness to go on with this project in spite of the inherent difficulties and Turkey's negative attitude.

A Balkan nuclear-free zone is seen by its supporters as setting a good example for overall European and international security. Moreover, even if this ambitious goal is not readily achieved, a possible security arrangement is seen as at least having the desirable by-product of creating a political momentum that would allow Southeast European countries greater room for maneuver and flexibility. A dynamic Balkan cooperation is thus seen as a means to mitigate the sharp post-war division of the region. A Balkan nuclear-free zone would, in the view of its supporters and until the model is adopted in the rest of Europe, virtually insulate S.E. Europe from a possible East-West nuclear confrontation in other theaters (Central and Northern Europe, for example). The same is true of a "zone of peace in the Mediterranean" that would eliminate in the view of its supporters the naval arms race of the Superpowers in the region.

The danger of an East-West war is a fundamental issue in all Balkan countries, but almost all have come to focus on more urgent threats. Greece is a clear example in this respect. For this country, the imminent danger is not seen as stemming from its border with Bulgaria, but from Turkish threats to Greek sovereignty in the Aegean Sea (islands, continental shelf, etc.)¹⁸. According to the declarations of the present Greek government, NATO is almost superfluous to Greek security, since it is irrelevant to the imminent source of danger to the country—Turkey.

Romania also holds somewhat unique security and threat perceptions. It is geographically removed from the dividing line of East-West conflict and is anxious to demonstrate individuality in its foreign policy. While Romania remains committed to the Warsaw Treaty and acknowledges a duty to join

17. *Joint Communiqué of the Conference of Experts of the Balkan Countries*, February 18, 1984.

18. See T. Veremis, *Greek Security; Issues and Politics*; London: IISS, Adelphi Paper 179, 1982; A. Wilson, *The Aegean Dispute*; London: IISS, Adelphi Paper 155, 1980; Y. Valinakis, "Greece", in: Institute for East-West Security Studies: *European Security-A Survey of National Perceptions and Policies*; New York: IEWSS, pp. 27-38.

a bloc response in an East-West context against any aggression toward the WTO from NATO, its defense doctrine emphasizes Romanian national capacity to counter a conventional attack on its own territory through mass participation including guerilla warfare. The source of this attack is never mentioned, but the Romanian sources leave no doubt that they refer to the Soviet Union¹⁹.

Turkey's experiences and geographic location have generated an expansion of its range of perceived threats. Internal problems (minorities, terrorism, socio-political instability) and their perceived links to outside interference, as well as the border Turkey shares with belligerent Iraq and Iran, constitute new additions to the Turkish security horizon²⁰. Turkey's stability and pro-Western attitude is today taken for granted, but so was also the case in 1973, when after a two-year-long intervention, the army returned to the barracks; it soon found out that the seriousness of the situation (ungovernability, economic/social problems, terrorism) had only worsened.

Yugoslavia is another special case. A mosaic of peoples that have been admirably cooperating in times of economic expansion and charismatic leadership is now being tested in times of deep recession and rotating leadership. Another important feature of this country is the necessity for carefully steering between the blocks.

Albania is an interesting example of uniqueness. Having experienced close alliances with the Soviet Union and China, this least developed European state has decided to adopt a line of equidistance between the Superpowers and of rather extreme isolationism. The Albanians have refrained from joining forces with the non-aligned movement and were the only nation to abstain from all-European cooperation fora, particularly the CSCE.

Bulgaria is perhaps less striking in its security perceptions, although one could argue that its remarkable stability and close alliance with the Soviet Union are rather rare phenomena in an area of such great variety as S.E. Europe.

Economic difficulties are another common element in Balkan security considerations, because of their potential to spill over to political instability. After having experienced remarkable growth rates in the 1960s and 1970s, S.E. European states were severely affected by the worldwide recession of

19. See Y. Valinakis, "Romania", in: Institute for East-West Security Studies, *op. cit.* pp. 59-68.

20. See D. Bazoglu-Sezer, *Turkey's Security Problems*, London: IISS, Adelphi Paper 164, 1981.

the mid—and late—1970s. Heavily dependent on extra-Balkan trade and energy supply, the Balkan states were particularly hurt, although to varying degrees. With oil prices declining, their prospects for recovery are increasingly differentiated, with some states better off than others²¹. A better economic climate in the Balkans could contribute to a substantial expansion of cooperation in the region (trade, joint ventures, transport, etc).

Another source of concern throughout the Balkans involves the fate of minorities. Although the issue is of a completely different magnitude than the area's past reputation might suggest, and all states appear committed to the principle of the inviolability of present frontiers, minorities continue to be a source of friction²². Although to varying degrees, there is not a single Balkan country that is not concerned by this issue. What is more important, however, is that time tends to attenuate some minority questions, while other situations are becoming more difficult with the passage of time. In this connection, significant gaps between the birth rates of majorities and minorities may become an important long-term factor influencing both the degree of change and the intensity of the problem. State policy choices between integration and providing equal rights to minorities can also have an important effect on the severity of the problem.

The Balkans have long been a region of great diversity, deep seated rivalries and intermittent clashes. Although a major political legacy of World War II has been the containment of these rivalries through a balance of power that seemingly ensures the inviolability of existing frontiers, a structure of great political diversity has taken its place. Superimposed on the still-existing but now muted ethnic, religious and national rivalries, are major political and ideological divisions that cannot easily be overcome as long as the major world systems remain what they are. Since the Balkans have always been regarded as a rather finite region, proposals for regional cooperation have been advanced from time to time. Meetings have become more frequent in recent years although they have generally been used more as a tactical means of pursuing national policy objectives than for their substance. Although it would be at least premature to expect any substantial framework for Balkan

21. See P. Marer, "East European Economies—Achievements, Problems, Prospects", in T. Rakowska-Harmstone, *Communism in Eastern Europe*; Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1984(2), pp. 283-328.

22. See P. Ramet (ed.), *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics*; Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1984, chaps 9-12.

political cooperation to emerge, it is possible that these tendencies could give rise to some positive achievements whose contributions to regional stability and security would be helpful if not on the scale of spectacular breakthroughs.

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