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THE STABILIZATION EFFORTS IN THE BALKAN -SEVEN THESES -

Preliminary Remarks

In the Balkans, the international community has made numerous costly efforts with the intention of laying the foundations for political stability and economic prosperity as well as giving the local population social perspectives. In view of recent developments in international politics (e.g. the fight against terrorism, the developments in Afghanistan) and political focal points such as the conflict between Israel and Palestine, we should, however, critically take stock of what has been achieved so far and consider measures of adjustment, where necessary. The following theses are food for thought, and I hope they will trigger a lively discussion.

Thesis 1: The “Tangle” of International Institutions in the Region Must Be Unraveled

Given the great number of international players, I consider the entire region as a highly complex and organisationally hardly manageable tangle of international, regional and national organisations. The major players within this tangle are the quite bureaucratic and cumbersome international organisations, such as the UNO, the OSCE, NATO, the EU, the OIC, etc. Further players are the states which have a strong political interest in the region, particularly the USA, Russia, France and Arabic countries. Last but not least, there are those states which are directly affected by this “organised aid,” i.e. the Balkan states (Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) with Kosovo and Montenegro, the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia) but also numerous adjacent states.

Therefore, the Balkans are a region where an incredible number of international players has become active in order to promote their interests. In this context, it should be mentioned that many of these players have acted professionally, intending to seriously drive matters forward. However, there are also some representatives of international organisations and NGOs whose activities and behaviour are characterised by arrogance and lack of knowledge. Their conduct can only be described as “absolutist,” a fact which is clearly reflected in their performance in the region.

From an organisational point of view, the result produced by the great number of players in the region is an example of how it should not be done. Ultimately, this implies that national resources are wasted. Therefore, the end of the UNMIBH mandate in 2002 makes it necessary to reconsider and to reorganise the “international security architecture in Bosnia and Herzegovina”. This need could provide additionally an opportunity to critically review and refocus the structure of international organisations and the use of resources in the entire region.

Thesis 2: There are Lessons the West can Learn from the Handling of Germany’s Past

Though details as well as the dimension of the cases differ considerably, there are basic parallels between post-war Germany and post-war Serbia. Both countries waged a war based on nationalist blindness and lost parts of their territories after the war. Moreover, both countries were and still are compelled to admit their guilt. With regard to its attitude towards the FRY, the most important lesson the West can learn from the German and European post-war history is based on two experiences. The first one is the enormous success of the economic assistance the United States provided for the reconstruction of Europe. And the second – maybe even more important one – is the offer made by the Western powers to give the former enemy a position of equal status in a political structure that aims at overcoming the past and paving the way for the future – i.e. towards European integration. Today, economic assistance is already being rendered. However, the second aspect – to give the whole region

an adequate and concrete political perspective – is a task which still remains to be accomplished.

Thesis 3: Without the Serbs' Acknowledgment of their Heritage Or Guilt Reconciliation in the Balkans is Impossible

In the entire Balkan region, there can only be political stability when those who have triggered the manifold conflicts are ready to acknowledge their guilt and constructively deal with it. It would be fallacious to assume that this issue could be ignored. Hence, particularly the Serbian community must confess to the events and developments of the past and must acknowledge its guilt.

Karadjic and Mladic are still at large. What happened in Srebrenica was a tragedy, and the way the Western states behaved in that situation was a disgrace. Kosovar Albanians will not forget what they had to go through, particularly in 1999. People whose closest relatives were killed in a sometimes more than cruel way will not rest until the noble words of the international community are followed by appropriate deeds.

Currently, some nationalist Serbian parties would like to move on to the daily political routine and let the last 30 years of their questionable past fall into oblivion. After World War II such an approach would certainly not have brought Germany lasting political stability and reconciliation with its European neighbours.

Sarovic and Ivanic in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kostunica and Djindjic in Belgrade must be reminded of this responsibility and must deal with the political legacy of their nations. To acknowledge their guilt would not mean to eternally show repentance. However, it currently is an urgent political necessity and would give the people in the Balkans, who have suffered so much, their peace of mind. Without repentance, there cannot be peace in the Balkans.

A decisive breakthrough to political stability in the Balkans requires those who are guilty to acknowledge their guilt. "This paves the way for

reconciliation and opens the door to a peaceful balancing of interests and to political stability in the entire region.”

The political, military and legal agencies which are fighting at this front must be given strong support. This aspect must not fade into the background in view of the pragmatism of the daily political routine. However, one should not delude oneself that the sensitivity and complexity of the issue as well as the resistance that is likely to be found will be easy to deal with. This task will require great intuition, much political goodwill and a lot of energy.

Thesis 4: The Protection of Minorities and a Peaceful Balancing of Interests are the Prerequisites for Political Stability

The mistakes and errors of Western politics in the Balkans do not only stem from ignorance, inability and disagreement but also from an absolutely wrong perception of the nature of the conflicts. People who live at the same time do not necessarily live in the same era. The West has erroneously assumed that the peoples in the Balkans would live in the post-national period of Western Europe. In reality, however, they are in different phases of national self-discovery, and obviously their priorities are different from ours. This lack in simultaneity is nothing these people could be blamed for – our own history should prevent us from such an arrogant assumption.

It would be inappropriate and ill-advised to like or dislike one people or another in the Balkans. As the past has often revealed, the readiness to use force is not a question of ethnic disposition but rather a matter of power. Protectorates that rely on military support and that are created for an indefinitely long period of time are no solution. They entail dependency and are rejected by the local people. A lasting political order can only be established if it gives the local people a chance to act responsibly and if it forces them, at the same time, to cooperate with others.

Meanwhile, the different ethnic groups have been almost completely separated from each other. Nevertheless, their current spatial distribution makes it impossible to demarcate national borders exactly along these ethnic boundaries. Minorities will remain within larger ethnic groups and must be protected. Otherwise, they might ignite new interstate conflicts considering themselves as belonging to an adjacent mother country. These problems must be resolved by means of a policy which aims at peacefully balancing each group's interests. Among other nations, Croatia, BiH and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as the countries of most war sufferings and atrocities could take a leading role in this regard, becoming a driving force that could lead the entire Balkan area towards Europe by enhancing mutual cooperation between each other in all areas of politics. They should seize this opportunity.

Thesis 5: The Developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina are Crucial for the Entire Balkan Region

Even seven years after the implementation of GFAP, discussions about the political future of Bosnia and Herzegovina have not yet been terminated. This has far-reaching regional consequences. Other currently relevant problems are related to the FRY with Kosovo and Montenegro. In addition, Macedonia, Sandzak, Vojvodina, etc. may be potential hot spots, too.

What role do Bosnia and Herzegovina and the work of the international community play within the framework of the GFAP implementation regarding the overarching political task of shaping the future of the region?

The Dayton Peace Agreement does certainly not represent an optimal political and organisational solution in all respects. It must be adapted and should be implemented in a more pragmatic and energetic manner. Bosnia and Herzegovina has mastered more than half of the way and there seems to be no alternative to continuing the process – continuing it more effectively, though. If this goal is achieved, an important part of the Balkans will be politically stable. This again will have a spin-off effect on the other efforts in the region.

Apart from that, we should not forget the following aspect: Particularly the FRY and its future national organisation raises a number of questions (Kosovo, Montenegro, Vojvodina, Sandzak, Albania). In my opinion, it is important to not stir up a new discussion about borders (e.g. Montenegro or Kosovo) in the Balkans because this would make all the other problems immediately urgent as well. The result would be a region of permanent political instability, in which – even if territories should be demarcated peacefully – nobody would make any investments for decades.

The **Dayton philosophy**, which was actually thrust upon Bosnia and Herzegovina, pursues the **aim of a “peaceful and cooperative coexistence within existing borders.”** In my opinion, this philosophy – not its organisational details, though – could serve as a **central political guideline for the other operations in the Balkans**. If an agreement on this issue could be reached, the tiresome discussion about borders in the Balkans would finally come to an important point: to the end!

Despite all reservations, Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the actual implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords, could become a model for the peaceful integration of different nationalities in a Europe, in which globalisation has pushed national aspects into the background. By applying the Dayton philosophy (which was originally designed for Bosnia and Herzegovina) to the FRY, Kosovo and Montenegro, these regions could manage to gain more autonomy while at the same time remaining integral parts of the FRY. However, such a development requires political pressure and the goodwill of all parties involved.

We should be aware of the fact that the success of the international work in Bosnia and Herzegovina – may it be in accordance with Dayton or not – is a key factor for the stability of the entire region.

Thesis 6: The European Union should take the Overall Lead in all Civilian Efforts

What principles should a promising policy for the Balkans be based on? The local population must not be thrust upon a solution from the outside.

On the other hand, it seems that a lack of understanding, mistrust, hatred and enmity are too deeply rooted to let the people in the Balkans develop promising ideas for their region as a whole without help from the outside. Therefore, the Western countries and particularly the European Union need to devise concrete plans which offer fair solutions to the matters of all ethnic communities and which give the region a positive future. Such an approach requires the West, and above all the European Union, to proceed unanimously.

There are basically two approaches available which need to be linked to each other:

- Enhanced cooperation between the regional players must be the starting point. It is the prerequisite for the second approach, too. The Stability Pact plays a crucial role in these efforts. It has achieved some first results in the work of its Working Tables 1 - 3. But, it could facilitate a stronger cooperation of the Balkan states by developing a more executive apparatus for its work : a common regional market, a regionally coordinated domestic and foreign economic policy, an enhanced cooperation between the different armed forces, and last but not least a minority policy based on mutual consultation.
- The second approach mainly aims at external integration with the rest of Europe. This approach would be based on the European Union. Again, using the Stability Pact and structures of the IC in a more effective way. The EU's policy would have to be related to the two areas that are of crucial importance for security and stability in the region: the support for efficient and competitive economies in the whole area and the fostering of secure relations between the states. In this context, conceptual considerations regarding a European "new deal" for the Balkans should be developed. Its primary aim would be to take the regional efforts mentioned above and to develop a coherent concept for further association and enhanced cooperation with the EU.

Thesis 7: The Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe is the Best Tool for Leading the Balkans Towards Europe

The entire Balkans are an integral part of Europe. Therefore, particularly the Western and Central European countries have an original interest in the stability and prosperity of this part of the continent. In the future, Europe should more often take the leading role and express its interest in the region more clearly while performing its tasks. The West should try to get away from the “multiple players” approach, which ultimately results in a waste of national resources. At least for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the end of the UNMIBH mission represents a “window of opportunity” for gradually reviewing and adjusting political guidelines – first in Bosnia and Herzegovina and later on in other regions of the Balkans (e.g. changing UNMIK into EUMIK?).

As an instrument of preparing the five Western Balkan countries of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia in the long term for their accession to the EU, the Stability Pact has given these countries for the first time in their history a goal that is worth to be pursued. Furthermore, the politicians in the region have realised that their countries can join the EU only if they get on with their neighbouring countries and if they are capable of regional cooperation.

In order to make this work more efficient, the EU and the Stability Pact should take this challenge and develop its structure into a more executive regional organisation which would be incorporated as a substructure into the EU administrative organisation. The coordinator of the Stability Pact would become the Executive Regional Coordinator under EU lead with overall responsibility for OHR in BiH and UNMIK (EUMIK) in Kosovo. The currently existing Working Tables 1-3 could be transformed into real “intergovernmental cooperation bodies” which would coordinate all related regional activities.

Such an approach would facilitate the European Common Foreign and Security Policy by providing Brussels with a concrete task and concentrating EU efforts in an area closely related to overall European

security concerns. Furthermore, it would enhance mutual regional cooperation between the Balkan countries in a more binding way, thus leading to more political stability and economic prosperity in the whole area.

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