

THE NEXT DECADE: STRATEGIC STABILITY AND REGIONAL CRISES

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The aim of this lecture is to introduce a discussion on some features of the era opened by the end of the Cold War. I shall argue that in the near future we shall see at work two opposite trends: the first one towards strategic stability and political integration and a second one towards political crises and instabilities. The Yugoslav conflict is particularly important from this point of view, and it represents a dramatic challenge for the international community which, if not properly solved, would affect the course of the international relations in Europe for years ahead; therefore I shall devote large part of this lecture to it, discussing in some detail its historical roots and the lessons that should be learned.

Let me first summarize the positive trends in the international relations. No doubt the danger of a major nuclear war is less relevant today than a few years ago. This follows both from the new climate between Russia and Western countries and from the arms control agreements that have been reached already or are likely to be signed in the next future. One should barely mention the START treaty and the recent agreements between the Bush administration and president Eltsin for deep cuts in strategic nuclear weapons.

Beyond that, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union has eliminated the danger of a major war in Europe, whereas the agreements reached in Vienna and Paris, following the negotiations on Conventional Forces in Europe, have reduced already and will deeply cut in the future the military presence in Central Europe. As a consequence, in several European countries military budgets will be strongly reduced in the next few years.

Another potentially important step forward has been realized in the field of human rights, by the establishment of political regimes in Central and Eastern Europe that base their legitimacy on democratic elections and call themselves democratic. But a word of caution is needed, as far as consequences on the maintenance of peace is concerned.

Certainly democracies have more reasons to preserve peace than dictatorships. Indeed, generally speaking, democratic regimes are less militaristic and prefer to solve international issues peacefully. It would be erroneous however to draw general conclusions from these remarks. In particular we cannot accept common wisdom which claims that democracies never go to war against each other and always prefer to solve their disputes by pacific means.

This opinion was first expressed by Immanuel Kant - clearly in a different historical context and actually in a different form than above- and has got some empirical supports.

However the historical evidence is very limited. During the last century democracies were so few and so far apart from each other (for example United States and United Kingdom) that no general conclusion can be safely drawn. In this century a larger number of democracies has been established, but still the thesis is hard to prove. Indeed it could be argued that, after the First World War, democracies did not fight against each other simply because they faced a common enemy, the Hitler's Germany, and after the Second World War they did not go to war against each other because they were united by the common threat of Soviet Union.

If these remarks are sound we can draw a first conclusion. The end of the Cold War does not imply the end of the possibility of a general war among the major powers, even though they possess democratic institutions and parliamentary regimes. In particular nobody can exclude that, in the future, democratic countries having economic rivalries, such as Germany, Japan or USA settle their disputes by a war. This remark is also based on the observed similarity between the present international situation and that at the end of the last century. Also one hundred years ago, in the age of imperialism, a few powers dominated the world: UK, France, USA and Germany. Also then a cosmopolitan european bourgeoisie that used travel all over Europe, knew languages, had similar tastes and a common culture seemed to be a unifying factor, able to avert war from the Old Continent. Last century these states dominated distant continents by gunpowers; now, it could be argued, the major powers achieve this objective by economic international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Another analogy is that one century ago two old empires were at the eve of their collapse (the Ottoman and the Habsburg empires) and now we are witnessing the dissolution of the Russian empire of tzarist tradition, inherited by the Soviet leaders after the 1917 revolution.

These analogies have to be taken *cum grano salis*, of course. In fact strong stabilizing factors are at work and should be considered as well. First of all there is a tighter economic integration among the great powers. For example, whereas it is true that US and Japan have economic rivalries, it must be also remembered that their economies are largely integrated. This is not a factor that would forbid war under any circumstance, but it clearly plays in favour of pacific settlements of the disputes.

Another factor of stability is the presence of international or regional institutions (U.N., E.E.C., C.S.C.E. and so on) that can provide, when needed, a forum to settle peacefully divergences.

Let us now turn to a more accurate discussion of the situation in Central Europe. Here things look different, because some factors of stability have disappeared (for example the Warsaw Pact or a central authority in the territories of the former

Soviet Union) and the new regimes are weak, they face dangerous economic situations and are often pushed to get an ideological justification for their rule by exploiting nationalism and chauvinism.

The best example of this political trend comes from former Yugoslavia. Civil war in this country has not received the attention it deserves from governments and public opinion thus far. It merits more attention from the international community for several reasons. First of all because it is a terrible war, with thousands of dead and millions of refugees. Second because this crisis in the Balkans could trigger a number of other crises in the same area. Finally the capacity of the international institutions to deal with the Yugoslav conflict is a crucial test of their ability to manage a future major crisis in the former Soviet Union, should it occur.

Where the Yugoslav conflict does come from? What are its historical roots? To answer these questions it can be useful to summarize a few historical facts:

1815 Montenegro becomes a small independent kingdom. The border between the Habsburg and Ottoman empires coincides approximately with the present border between Vojvodina and Serbia and between Croatia and Bosnia.

1817-30 Serbia acquires more autonomy within Ottoman empire.

1876-78 Russian-Turk war. It begins with the request of independency from Bulgarian élites, supported by Tzar. The Ottoman repression of the political turmoils was followed by the Russian intervention against the Turks. The Congress of St. Stefan (March 1878) created a Greater Bulgaria to which Macedonia was attributed. The Berlin Congress (July 1878) redrew the borders: Serbia and Montenegro got total independency; the Ottoman empire left Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Novi-Bazar Sandzak (a small corridor between Serbia and Montenegro) to Vienna.

1908 Vienna annexes Bosnia-Herzegovina, giving back Novi-Bazar to Istanbul.

1912-13 Balkan wars. The Ottomans lose Macedonia, obtained by Serbia, and Novi-Bazar, shared between Serbia and Montenegro.

1918 After the First World War the Habsburg empire disappears; Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia (they were part of Austria-Hungary) and Serbia with Montenegro gather to become the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

1929 The Kingdom gets the new name of Yugoslavia (which means country of southern Slavs).

1940-46 During the Second World War Yugoslavia is divided by occupying Germans in several pieces: Croatia becomes independent under the dictatorship of Ante Pavelic, leader of the *Ustashe*, allied to Nazis; Montenegro becomes an Italian protectorate, Macedonia is given to Bulgaria, Istria to Italy with the rest directly administered by Germany.

1946 The Tito's new Yugoslavia is formed, articulated in six republics (Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina) and two autonomous regions within Serbia: Kosovo and Vojvodina.

From this fast historical summary a first conclusion can be drawn: the widely held opinion according to which the internal borders of Yugoslavia were artificial is not well founded. On the contrary, most of the borders were historical. For example the border between Croatia and Slovenia runs along the historical frontier between Austria and Hungary. The western Bosnian border is also historical, since it coincides with the Ottoman border. Republic of Montenegro practically coincides with the old Principate. The only non historical borders are those between Croatia and Vojvodina (both were part of Hungary) and those of Macedonia.

A second point to be stressed is that, in spite of the persistence of historical borders, many of the republics are not homogeneous from an ethnic or religious point of view. The most homogeneous is Slovenia (91% Slovenes). In Croatia there are 75% Croats and 11% Serbs, whereas in Serbia (including autonomous regions) Serbs are 85%. Minorities in Serbia are concentrated in Kosovo (78% Albanians) and Vojvodina (22% Hungarians and 7% Croats, but 56% Serbs). In Montenegro there are 69% native Montenegrinos and 13% Muslims (i.e. Serbs of Muslim religion) and in Macedonia 67% Macedonians and 20% Albanians. Finally in Bosnia - Herzegovina one has the most diluted mixture: 39% Muslims, 32% Serbs and 18% Croats.

It could be useful also to look at the different republics from the economic or social point of view. Assuming average salary as an indicator we see at the top Slovenia, with 600,000 dinars (in 1988), followed by Croatia (450,000) and by the other ones (with Kosovo at bottom with 270,000). A similar picture is obtained assuming unemployment as an indicator (3% in Slovenia, 6% in Croatia, 11% in Serbia, 11% in Vojvodina, 14% in Bosnia, 16% in Macedonia, 18% in Montenegro, 25% in Kosovo) or illiteracy: 1% in Slovenia, 6% in Croatia, 11% in Serbia, 6% in Vojvodina, 15% in Bosnia, 11% in Macedonia, 9% in Montenegro, 18% in Kosovo.

A point which deserves attention is the origin of the ethnic mixtures within the republics. The reason for it lies in the history of Balkans, a region where the Ottoman and Habsburg empires faced each other for centuries. During the the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, due to the Turkish persecutions, thousands of Serbs, christian-orthodox by religion, settled in Croatia, which was at that time part of the Habsburg empire. They were the ancestors of the present day Chetniks.

Subsequently, by successive migrations, a number of Albanians, with the help of the Turks, settled in Kosovo, expelling the native Serbs. This settlement is one of the roots of the present time troubles in Kosovo. Indeed it should be remembered that Kosovo was the heart of the Serbian Kingdom of Stefan Nemanja (at the end of the 12th century). The Greater Serbia of Stefan IV Dusan (14th century) was centered in Kosovo and had got within its boundaries also Albania and Macedonia. This Kingdom was destroyed by the Turks after the Kosovo battle in 1389. For all these reasons Kosovo is considered by the Serbian nationalists as a proper part of Serbia, whose belonging to Serbia cannot be negotiated, even though now the Serbs in Kosovo are only a few percent of the population. This is part of the

program not only of the Milosevic socialist party, but also of his ultranationalist rightist opposer Vuk Draskovic.

Two further historical remarks are in order. The first one is related to the origin of the Yugoslav state. As we have discussed already, it was born by the unification of three different nations: Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia. At first glance this could appear an artificial creation, but this conclusion would be wrong. As a matter of fact the birth of the new state satisfied a need of both Croats and Slovenes, since by this way these people could preserve their ethnic identities endangered by powerful neighbours, such as Germans, Austrians and Hungarians. On the other hand, by the creation of a unique kingdom, Belgrade had the possibility to gather in one country all the Serbs that lived outside Serbia.

Furthermore the creation was not artificial because it was prepared by a long work of cultural unification by the intellectual élites. This work was carried out by cultural movements such as *Illyrism* (we could mention the Praha Congress of this movement in 1848), followed by the *Yugoslavism*, aimed to create a common culture and a common literary language. Among the chief personalities of these movements let us mention here Strossmayer, Gay and Vuk Karadzic.

The last historical remark is on the role of the Communist power in Yugoslavia. Common wisdom asserts that the communists treated the national problems superficially: they repressed nationalisms that however never disappeared really and now they are simply up again.

These opinions have no historical basis and are politically misleading. As for history, Josip Broz Tito won the partisan war in Yugoslavia because his program was rigorously antifascist and frontist, without concessions to nationalism. We could not understand otherwise why the Croatian Tito got Serbian support in the partisan war against the Croatian puppet state of Ante Pavelic. From the political viewpoint, without any nostalgia for the socialist regimes that disappeared in Eastern Europe, I wish to stress that parts of the original communist program could be helpful in the present situation, characterized by a revival of rightist nationalist movements in Eastern Europe. I refer here in particular to the internationalist aspects of this program and its refusal of any concession to nationalism. Actually these aspects were peculiar to the communist movement from the very beginning, i. e. from the years of the First World War, when the majorities of the European socialist parties accepted to support the governments involved in the war, whereas the leftist fractions and in particular Lenin refused any involvement and actually acted to transform the war in a social revolution. As for Tito, he was aware of the problems the Yugoslav state had to face. Indeed all his efforts were devoted to the dilution of the rivalry between Serbia and Croatia; for example this was the reason for the attribution of the status of Republic to regions that were not autonomous in the interwar Kingdom: namely Bosnia, Montenegro and Macedonia.

Coming to the last decade, we can say that the most recent reasons for the civil war should be attributed to two distinct processes. The first one is characterized

by increasing economic differences among the republics, created by the successive economic crises, the inflationary process and the mounting foreign debt. Incidentally it should be mentioned the negative role played the I.M.F. policies toward Yugoslavia, aimed to increase the productivity of the economically *strongest* areas of the country: Croatia and Slovenia, which enhanced the differences. It is clear that the richest republics were reluctant to share their decreasing wealth with the poorest regions and were attracted by the European Community, to which they aimed to belong.

The second process is the fragmentation of the Communist League which in the seventies ceased to act as a unified party and was practically divided into eight regional parties, that were obviously more receptive to the demands of their bases and became more and more nationalistic. The process was accelerated in Serbia by Milosevic, who got the power in 1987 by a nationalistic program aimed to eliminate autonomy for Vojvodina and Kosovo. This triggered and reinforced the other nationalisms with the consequences that we now clearly see.

Whereas it is beyond the scope of this lecture to account for the developments of the Yugoslav civil war, it could be useful to examine the role played by Europe and USA. At the beginning EEC and USA supported Milosevic since they believed that a strong Serbia was necessary to preserve the unity of the Yugoslav federation. The European interest in preserving the *status quo* was clear, since, for example, commercial roads linking Greece to the rest of Europe passed within Yugoslavia. However at the same time the suggestion was conveyed to Croatia and Slovenia that their quest for independency could get some support in Europe. Therefore on one side Serbia received the indirect message that the use of force to preserve the Yugoslav federation could be tolerated and, on the other side, Croatia and Slovenia understood that the European position could eventually change. For these reasons it seems to me that the Yugoslav civil war is a disaster of which Europe carries some responsibility, not only because it has done little to stop the fightings after the beginning of the war, but also because it did the wrong things before the war actually broke out.

Which political lessons can be learned from the Yugoslav conflict? Could the study of the performed errors be of any help to prevent similar crises in the future? I wish to conclude this lecture by four remarks on the future political needs.

First: we need to demilitarize our societies. In contrast to some current ideas on Yugoslavia, this country was overmilitarized. There are of course historical reasons for that, mainly the need to preserve neutrality in the militarized Cold War world, but still the role of Yugoslav armed forces was overwhelming. The People's Army of Yugoslavia (*Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija*=JNA) was organized in two sectors. The first one was a strike force: therefore it was very mobile, well trained and equipped. The second sector was constituted by the *Militia* which was supposed to be able to mobilize in case of war at least 80% of the active population against the enemy. This twofold structure was thought as a guarantee against possible

coups from JNA; however the outcome has been that, when the crisis exploded, huge quantities of weapons and trained personnel were available within the society.

Second: the developed world should change economic policy toward indebted countries. The economic crisis has played a major role in Yugoslavia. All Eastern European countries face now similar difficulties (not to speak of the Third World countries). Developed countries should be less egoistic. Political stability is linked to economic stability; therefore if one really wants to avoid crises and wars in Eastern Europe and Third World, the economic policy of the developed world should change. I am referring here in particular to the role of IMF whose economic policies in the present situation only aggravate economic crises, social injustices and political instabilities.

Third: strengthen the institutions of collective security, such as CSCE. During the Yugoslav conflict CSCE was totally inadequate, but this happened mainly because CSCE was only at the beginning of its life as a fully-fledged institution, able to prevent conflicts and preserve peace. Similarly the role of the United Nations peacekeeping forces should be enhanced.

Fourth: linking economic aid to the respect of human rights. Nationalistic parties in Eastern Europe, when in power, have shown the tendency to act toward their minorities with the same ruthlessness they have experienced before. It would be justified, therefore, to link economic aid to eastern countries to the adoption of programs respectful of the human rights of the minorities, so as to contain and contrast the most dangerous aspects of the nationalistic ideologies. More generally, the danger of nationalism should not be underestimated. There are nationalistic movements or trends everywhere in Europe, from Eastern Europe to countries such as France, UK, Spain, Italy, where regional separatist parties are active and increase their influence. Clearly the respect of the identities of ethnic minorities is a fundamental step to avoid that justified demands of cultural and administrative autonomy become part of unjustifiable nationalistic programs which would further destabilize the Old Continent.

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