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BULGARIA AND SECURITY IN THE BALKANS

BY

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USAWC CLASS OF 2002

U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE, CARLISLE BARRACKS, PA 17013-5050

20020806 199

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Neyko Nenov

TITLE: Bulgaria and security in the Balkans

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 09 April 2002 PAGES: 26 CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

The subject matter of this paper is one of the most discussed ones at the end of the 20th century. The Balkans has been shaped by a unique history. Like no other part of the continent, southeastern Europe was ruled for two millennia by a series of multinational empires. The region straddles the dividing line between Western and Eastern Christianity, and it is at a crossroad where Christianity meets Islam and where the great trading routes from the Middle East and Africa enter Europe. Over time, these multiethnic empires ruled by Constantinople or Vienna produced a mosaic of peoples, cultures, and languages that could not be found in any other part of Europe.

Consequently, it is very difficult for any individual to encompass the whole scope of the problems concerning Balkan Security and their final solution in a single and limited work. In this paper I have made a try to express my personal attitude on the definition and main problems of the term "security," depict the existing roots of insecurity and instability, the possible opportunities for stability in the Balkans, and explain the Bulgarian approach to these issues.

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THE PROBLEM OF SECURITY

There is no clear explanation of the term "security" and often it is defined in a broad and diffuse manner. "Taking the Latin origin"[1] of the term "sine cura" in the sense of "without anxiety," we can arrive at a very subjective interpretation. Daniel Frei argues that if security is understood as the absence of threats against values, the meaning of security is dependant on what our values are.[2] Values are not every where and at all times equal and do not have the same intensity. Conflicting values can cause uncertainty. In this sense, security can mean certainly concerning the expected behavior of others. Therefore, security policy has to consider all aspects related to uncertainty. Lippert and Wachtler[3] refer to three dimensions of security: "First, the need to have certainty with regards to one's own behavior and the behavior of others. Second, having access to a wide range of approved behavior within society. And third, trust in the appropriateness of political and societal procedures to license, control and stabilize patterns of behavior."[4]

The end of the Cold War is often regarded as marking the beginning of a fundamentally different political environment both in a real and in a theoretical sense. "This has been especially pronounced within the field of Security Studies, as pressure to redefine what we mean by security has become a preoccupation for the past decade."[5] Numerous academics have reconsidered what is, and what should be included within this concept and whether a broader definition constitutes a more accurate depiction of reality.

Traditionalists favor the maintenance of the Cold War conception of security, defined in military and state centric terms.[6] As they state, "security may be defined as the study of the threat, use and control of military force. It explores the conditions that make the use of force more likely, the ways that the use of force affects individuals, states and societies, and the specific policies that states adopt in order to prepare for, prevent, or engage in war."[7]

Non-traditionalists have attempted to broaden and deepen the definition.[8] They argue that other issues, such as economic, environmental, and social threats endanger the lives of individuals rather than strictly the survival of states. What is under attack is not the territory of the state but its fabric, the nature of its society, the functioning of its institutions, and the well-being of its citizens. These threats, which include corruption, organized crime and terrorism, are more difficult to define than purely military ones, and therefore more difficult to counter.

These issues are particularly relevant in the European case. After the Warsaw Treaty Organization was dissolved and bloc opposition was overcome, there was a tendency to promote confidence and co-operation. The issue of creating a new European security architecture gained greater importance. However, since 1989 economic and social differences on the continent have deepened along with the emergence of new insecurities and new risks. Conflicts of an ethnic, religious and social nature have come into being.

The contradictory transition in the states of Central and Eastern Europe represents a major challenge to their democratic institutions and to European structures. On the continent there is no fully effective system for security and stability. Conflicts in former Yugoslavia have shown the inadequacy of attempts to implement peace agreements through existing European structures. Today, a real threat to the fragile democracies in Central and Eastern Europe as well as to economic development in the entire continent is posed not only by adversary armies, but also by illegal criminal groupings specialized in organized violence, goods-smuggling, and trafficking of people, drugs and arms.

THE DYNAMIC OF BALKAN SECURITY

European states are integrated into global and continental military-political and commercial unions to differing degrees. On the continent, there is also a "gray" zone consisting of countries that are partially or totally excluded from the integration processes. This zone is characterized by social insecurity and declining living standards. "There is something paradoxical in the attitude of Europe towards the Balkans. On one hand, the situation in the region is evaluated as complicated, and policies are being crafted which will increase its political and military isolation. On the other hand, however, when the issue becomes stopping an invasion of forces and influences from outside the Continent, the Balkan nations are considered as an integral part of the European family."[9]

The Balkans traditionally has been a source of instability and political turmoil. "What is really specific in the Balkans is that the peninsula is the center of three civilizations – Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim. For this reason, wars in the region often had civilization characteristics. This has to be understood and remembered by all who try to 'make history' in Europe."[10] The Balkans is composed of several different nations and nationalities, and it is one of the most complex regions in the world as far as ethnic, religious, and language issues are concerned. It has been one of the regions where problems have persisted for a long time. In search of a national identity, the Balkan nations have become prisoners of territorial, ethical, and religious

issues. These issues have long been in the agenda of the emerging Balkan nations and they still await some kind of resolution.

"In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the breakup of the Ottoman Empire prompted a proliferation of ethnic disputes and the growth of dangerous nationalism. This combustible combination led to two Balkan wars and eventually set off the spark that ignited World War I."[11] The Cold War tended to dampen many of these conflicts, and during the communist era there were very few serious confrontations among the countries in the area. After Yugoslavia's withdrawal from the Soviet camp in 1948, the Balkans remained divided along bloc lines, and Yugoslavia served as a neutral buffer zone.[12] However, with the end of the Cold War, the Balkans has reemerged as a major source of international concern. The collapse of communism has unfrozen long-hidden ethnic conflicts, and given new impetus to national forces throughout the region. "What was initially viewed as a local conflict of little strategic importance has become a major international crisis which has had enormous political consequences"[13] for Balkan, European, and global stability and security.

The economies of the region, many of which were poor before the wars, have suffered greatly from years of armed conflict. There has also been limited progress on making market reforms. The destruction of infrastructure during the wars in Bosnia, Croatia, and Yugoslavia, as well as months of civil unrest in Albania, has led to economic turmoil in each of these locations and put stress on neighboring economies that depend on them as trade routes. United States (U.S.), European Union (E.U.), and United Nations (U.N.) sanctions against Yugoslavia, and Serbia's economic war against its neighbors, have caused economic decline in Serbia and trade losses for the rest of region, since Serbia represents a large market for many of the region's countries. Balkan countries generally have been unable to implement the free market reforms necessary to attract foreign investment, due to constant political instability or lack of political will on the part of their leaders.

Throughout the Balkans, many of the region's major ethnic groups continue to dispute the definition of what geographic territory and ethnic groups constitute their states. Along with the emergence of new states there has been a push by numerous ethnic groups toward independence. Many groups have become preoccupied with their own national agendas, and insensitive to the larger regional environment. This sharply increases threats to security in the region as a whole. The delayed pace of democratic transformation in the region has led to historically accumulated problems.

There is no question that the conflict in the former Yugoslavia is the most acute conflict in the Balkans. Unfortunately, it is not the only one. There are numerous actual and potential

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conflicts in the region that can become sources of major instability. "Hungary and Romania are at odds over the rights of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania."[14] The Greek - Turkish dispute has deep historical roots. It survived despite the fact that both countries found themselves on the same side of the Iron Curtain after 1945. It has acquired a bigger and more dangerous dimension since the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 and the continued Turkish occupation of a large part of the island. The unresolved status of Kosovo is part of a larger Albanian question with major regional implications. Recently, the events in Macedonia have become volatile and unpredictable.

"So, what we are witnessing in the Balkans today is not the 'end of history' but the return of history."[15] Obviously, the issues in the Balkans are conditioned by history, and cannot be solved on the fly and easily.

"The roots of Balkan insecurity and instability"[16] can be connected to the next interrelated issues:

- psychological factors
- minority nationalism
- nation-building and state-building challenges and
- economic development

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS: BALKAN VERSUS SOUTHEAST EUROPEAN

Jeffrey Simon notes that "two fundamentally different and contradictory modes of thinking remain evident in the region. The predominant mode of thinking emphasizes the pursuit of narrow national interests even at the expense of one's neighbors. This mode could be labeled 'Balkan,' using the term in the pejorative sense of the Balkan 'powder keg' or Balkan 'ghosts.' It employs history to justify the need to correct past political or social injustice."[17]

He continues that "a very different mode of thinking, which remains hidden in the region, stresses cooperation. This mode could be labeled as 'Southeast European.' It requires shedding historical blinders and transcending legacies by stressing the need for cooperative activities and institutions, such as the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SEECI), the Southeast European Defense Ministerial, or the Multinational Peace Force for Southeastern Europe (MPFSEE)."[18]

Historically, a good example for such cooperation is the successful reconciliation of the former adversaries Germany and France in Western Europe. Thus, it could be appropriate for this model to be implemented in the southeastern corner of Europe. At the same time, though, it has to be taken into account that the "German-French project required attention to cooperative

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institution building as well as a commitment of substantial resources over a 50 year period. An enormous amount of time and effort will be required to erode and eradicate the predominant psychological Balkan attitude."[19]

MINORITY NATIONALISM

All sources of national identity in the Balkan nations were and often still are rooted far back in history. There are several conditions for the development and spread of a minority nationalism - based conflict. One is the notion of "nationhood" obsessing a certain group that is separated on an ethnic or other basis. The second one is the element of oppression. In this sense the Balkan region has a vast potential for such conflicts, in terms of aggressive new nations that are at the same time split between different states.

Minorities, and especially nationalism have traditionally been viewed as a destabilizing element, and therefore a source of the insecurity which is always present in the region. This strategic insecurity, which resulted partly from the fact that the independent Balkan nation-states had only been in existence for a short time, was further aggravated by the great powers' constant intervention in the internal affairs of these states, be it in the form of the Berlin congress or the Yalta agreement. During the pre - World War II period decisive steps were taken toward "national uniformity" in the Balkans, but the result was negative. All of the countries host ethnic or national minorities on their territory, and all still perceive them as a security threat, jeopardizing the integrity of the state.

As history shows all of the local wars in the Balkans in the 20th century were fought in the name of reuniting nations with their minorities, reuniting territories, or at least, they all involved an extremely "nationalistic component." Most likely the same emotions also motivated the Balkan country choice of sides in both World Wars. The same emotion provided the driving force for the latest conflict in former Yugoslavia.

NATION-BUILDING AND STATE-BUILDING CHALLENGES

The way the Balkan nations emerged resulted in the overlapping of two processes, namely, nation-building and state-building. First, this overlap made the new nationalist identities more suspicious and aggressive. Second, as was the case in Bulgaria, the rebirth of independent states often preceded the accumulation of administrative experience by a significant part of the nation's elite. As a consequence, those engaged in policy-making were often incompetent and state bureaucracies were extremely corrupt.

"The post-Communist legacy presents a region-wide imperative to develop political and social institutions to meet the needs of each state's citizens. This is the challenge of state-building at the most basic level."[20]

While Germany and France were being slowly brought into NATO and the European Community, communist regimes uniformly suppressed historic differences in Central and Southeastern Europe.[21] Complicating the challenge is the fact that the post-Communist legacy is not uniform within the varied states of the region. "In all cases, though, the major challenge at present is to develop state-building that meets the needs of all citizens. State-building must accommodate the participation of ethnic minorities, and tolerate contacts between these minorities and their ethnic brethren abroad."[22]

Successful political stabilization also requires the consolidation of stable and authoritative democratic institutions. The organs of government need to have public confidence, and all major political players must be committed to their viability. Extremist parties advocating authoritarianism must be exposed and combated so that they do not undermine the body politic.

Balkan states confront many security risks arising from the expropriation of ethnic minorities from state institutions. This expropriation can and has led to violence, bloodshed, and the displacement of families, communities, and minority groupings with the resulting danger of conflict spilling across state borders. Each Balkan country must develop a more effective alternative media and a range of citizens' interest groups, including business associations and consumers' organizations. These constituencies will significantly increase the processes of democratization. The question of minority rights must be comprehensively addressed because the protection of minority rights has become a legitimate component of international human rights conventions and each Balkan state must pursue policies that comply with international obligations.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

General economic deprivation tends to make the region's ethnic tensions worse. Unfortunately, economic sanctions on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia due to the Yugoslav crises have contributed to further economic dislocation in the region. Many in the region still do not understand why they must bear the costs of sanctions without reimbursement, and view them not as a security cost, but as a burden unfairly imposed by foreign states.

"Most citizens in the region define the risks to their security mainly in domestic terms."[23] Their major concerns are drug and people trafficking, terrorism, organized crime, and state corruption. State interior ministries, which are responsible for domestic security, tend to be

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ineffective. Since the EU is the institution that is not only responsible for, but also most capable of dealing with, these internal security issues and concerns, it should assume a more active regional role.

"Many in the region correctly see that economic stability is critical to their security. But many incorrectly continue to see EU membership as a magic solution to all of the problems that the weak regional states are unable to solve themselves. To the degree that this perception exists, and that the EU remains distant and disengaged, the feeling of isolation and abandonment will persist."[24]

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SECURITY

"A broad range of bilateral relations can be developed in the Balkans that will prevent the most negative scenarios."[25] Although these may not eliminate all sources of conflict, they will ensure a steady improvement in the region's overall security. There are several initiatives through which interstate relations could be enhanced. In addition to formal interstate agreements, political relations can be strengthened through a range of institutions, including parliaments, political parties, local government organs, and the Non – Government Organization (NGO) sector.

"More emphasis can be placed on building economic networks that encourage the reform process. Joint programs could be pursued to promote trans-border partnership and investment and to benefit from resources made available through the South East Europe Stability Pact."[26] Bilateral programs can be pursued in areas such as cultural exchanges, educational and informational programs, interregional initiatives in infrastructure and environment, NGO and media cooperation, and cooperation between cities. Such initiatives would reinforce cooperation across the region.

The Balkan countries can take a more active role in promoting regional stability and assisting their neighbors in furthering their own security agenda. Recently, several Balkan neighbors signed an agreement to establish a Multinational Peace Force for Southeastern Europe. Such a force should be developed and eventually structured to be interoperable with NATO in a range of cooperative missions.

Balkan states can also pursue military cooperation beyond their borders. This could include participation in peacekeeping and humanitarian missions, offering bases and other facilities to NATO forces, deepening involvement in the Partnership for Peace programs, as well as various regional confidence-building measures. The Balkan states must also pursue bilateral ties with the three new Alliance members (the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland) and seek

to benefit from their experiences in the process of NATO integration. Each state could actively support regional initiatives that enhance security and cooperation outside the Alliance framework. Instead of waiting for NATO leadership, support, or protection, ambitious states would aim to construct a framework for security in various arenas.

Enlargement of the EU and NATO is considered critical by many leaders and politicians for improving stability and security in the region.[27] The main role of NATO has historically been to guarantee the defense of its members.[28] This role is valid today and will remain valid in the future. In all likelihood NATO will remain deeply engaged in Southeastern Europe (SEE) through the Membership Action Plan and the Partnership for Peace and most likely will have primary responsibility for ensuring the security of the Balkans for a long time to come.[29] On the other hand, in the view of the Western nations, primary responsibility for regional progress and prosperity remains with the states of the Balkans. Assistance from outside through NATO or the Stability Pact can help, or even be essential, but it cannot and should not replace the countries' own efforts.

The Western community has been repeating the necessity for the Balkan countries to cooperate with each other and adopt strategies for regional economic integration which will set the conditions for stepping up security and stability in the region. Such measures will increase the possibility of a future integration with the structure of the EU. Current opportunities will have to be exploited as a means to change the paradigm of the past and eventually make possible a true integration of the Balkan region, or at least some Balkan countries, with the rest of Europe.

U.S POLICY IN THE BALKANS

The United States defines its "vital interests"[30] as those interests of broad, overriding importance to the survival, safety, and vitality of the nation. Most important among them are the physical security and territorial integrity of the nation and those of its allies, and the protection of its critical infrastructures from paralyzing attack. In Europe these vital interests are manifested in and defended by the NATO Alliance and the web of relationships and partnerships that have come to define the architecture of European security in the 21st century. The United States seeks to shape a stable security environment that brings enduring peace to all of Europe. As President William Clinton stated:

> America stands with Europe. Today, no less than 50 years ago our destinies are joined. If Europe prospers, America does as well. We . . . move to a logic of mutually beneficial interdependence, where each nation can grow stronger and more prosperous because of the success of its neighbors and friends. . .We seek a transatlantic partnership that is broad and open in scope, where the benefits

and burdens are shared, where we seek a stable and peaceful future not only for ourselves, but for all the world.[31]

American engagement is seen within the region as one of the major pillars to the development of Balkan security. American policy involvement in the Balkans was largely a function of the Cold War. Prior to the end of World War II, the U.S. had few interests in the Balkans. However, Stalin's attempt to extend Soviet influence into the Balkans after World II and the withdrawal of British power from the Mediterranean served to focus U.S. policy attention on the Balkans, and led to the emergence of a more assertive U.S. policy in the region.

Through the Cold War era the United States' strategic attention in Europe was focused primarily on the interaction between NATO and the Warsaw Pact in the center of the continent. The Balkans was considered to be of secondary importance. Now that the Cold War does not exist any more, the character and focus of U.S. strategic concerns has changed. Today, the major challenges in Europe, and to U.S. strategic interests in Europe, lie increasingly in the South, especially in the Balkans. As former Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke has noted:

> The Southern Balkans and Aegean are becoming increasingly important to Western and US interest since the end the Cold War. Conflict or instability in these regions can impact directly on the stability of Central Europe, and tensions between Greece and Turkey can weaken the ability of NATO to provide a foundation for the expansion of European Institutions.[32]

The Balkans has emerged as one of the major U.S. security concerns. Bosnia and Kosovo have been and will remain major U.S. preoccupations. Presently, Macedonia is a hot spot and an ongoing crisis in this fragile nation has the potential to spill over into the southern Balkans, drawing in Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey. Although U.S. military forces have been successfully deployed to the region and have put a stop to ethnic cleansing, longer-term success will require greater effort to complement military power through the application of more robust economic and political mechanisms.

BULGARIAN NATIONAL SECURITY AND POLICY TOWARD THE PROMOTION OF STABILITY IN THE REGION

Contemporary Bulgaria has experienced two main periods in national-security strategy development. During the first period, between 1945-1990, security policy was based on the so-called Communist paradigm, which conceived the world as divided into antagonistic classes. The country's constitutions, in force from 1948 to 1971 and from 1971 to 1991 respectively, stipulated that the fundamental political principles were popular sovereignty, unity of power, democratic centralism, legality, and socialist internationalism.

The second stage, from 1991 to the present, is more conventionally oriented and declares loyalty to universal human values of liberty, peace, humanity, equality, justice, and tolerance. Accordingly, the Bulgarian political elite is searching for new institutional and legal frameworks for security, such as integration into effective collective security and economic development systems. Politically, Bulgaria is a new democracy with a still forming political system based on a balance of power, political pluralism, democratic elections, and guarantees of civil liberties to all citizens both in political participation and their daily lives.

FACTORS FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

The present strategic environment, both globally and locally, is considered to be favorable to Bulgarian national security prospects. The ambition of NATO, Russia, and the U.S. to develop a new formula for strategic partnership in the security sphere creates new opportunities for Bulgaria to collaborate with both sides. Bulgaria's close links with NATO, its participation in UN and NATO sponsored missions in the former Yugoslavia, as well as historical relations with Russia are promising precedents in this sense.

Although the integration process will be prolonged, Bulgaria considers the eventual change in its status from associated and partner country to full membership in NATO as an additional security guarantee, especially in the context of European security policy. NATO transformation and adaptation and possible further enlargement to include new members from the Balkan region opens prospects for a new Bulgarian role as a local player. Bulgaria's moderate position and attitude toward crises in the former Yugoslavia and its good relations with all neighbors gives the country the assets to function as a security provider in the region.

On the other hand, there are numerous counterproductive factors, which could negatively influence Bulgaria's national security status. The Kosovo events and the NATO operation in Yugoslavia showed that relations between the Alliance and Russia are far from ideal. If a confrontational atmosphere were re-established, Bulgaria could be relegated to a buffer zone and be isolated from the European integration process for a long time.

The extreme openness of Bulgaria after 1989 led to unlimited intrusion by religious sects and groups distant from, and in some cases hostile to, local religious and cultural traditions. The country's geography makes Bulgaria vulnerable to international organized crime, drug trafficking, illicit immigration, and money laundering.

Continuous conflicts near Bulgaria's borders have created additional risks to national security. These include massive arms transfers, extreme nationalism, and ethnic intolerance, terrorism, and refugee flows. Besides, military imbalances in the region are growing, thus

making it politically tempting to use force under some conditions against less powerful neighbors.

SECURITY POLICY

Bulgaria seeks to realize its national-security strategy based on and in accordance with UN statutes, international, bilateral, and multilateral treaties and conventions. The main goal expressed in Bulgaria's national security policy is the maintenance and strengthening of peace in a situation of internal stability and international security. Bulgaria has no territorial claims and rejects any such claims upon itself. It unconditionally renounces the use of military force in international relations and seeks no military superiority over any other country.[33]

The geographic location of Bulgaria is conducive to the goal of integration. The country is situated in the center of the Balkan Peninsula and borders on almost all Southeastern Europe countries. In compliance with the Bulgarian government's "Program 2001," the country's policy in Southeastern Europe aims to secure the best regional environment for guaranteeing and promoting democracy in Bulgaria, in order to finalize the transition to a market economy and build prosperity. Taking into consideration the region's specifics, concrete Bulgarian goals relate to strengthening security both at the political and economic level.

In addition, the full integration of the country into European and Atlantic structures is considered a condition for obtaining needed external guarantees for national security. This concept is based on the understanding that the security and prosperity of the continent is indivisible, and that all European countries including Bulgaria should fulfill their obligations.

Bulgaria's foreign policy rests on three objectives - integration with the West, security and border defense, and cooperation with Balkan countries. It is aimed at securing favorable international conditions for changing Bulgaria into a country with a modern market economy and developed democracy. In practice it means integration into the EU and NATO, and Bulgaria has applied for full membership in both organizations. These goals are clearly stated in the program of the government:

> Our strategic goal is for Bulgaria to join the European Union and NATO. Full membership in the European Union and NATO is a sovereign and explicit choice, based on a broad public consensus, and it is not an expression of a political situation or a result of outside pressure.

> We will be working for stronger integration in the Euro-Atlantic structures, which has to lead Bulgaria to full membership in NATO. We will be implementing and constantly updating the National Program of the Republic of Bulgaria for Preparation and Membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. [34]

Bulgaria is also rely on maintaining sound relations with neighboring countries as a means of preventing Balkan conflict from escalating, as well as on helping to dampen long-standing animosity between the NATO members Greece and Turkey. Bulgaria has demonstrated its intentions by signing numerous bilateral and multilateral agreements with all her neighbors. Many of them are purely economic by their nature, but promote regional stability by making relationships closer and interdependence higher.

Bulgaria takes an active part in trilateral cooperation in two directions—among Bulgaria, Greece, and Romania on one hand, and among Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey on the other. Regular meetings are held between presidents, foreign and interior ministers. An important aspects of this cooperation is counteraction against so-called "new threats" to security such as organized crime, large-scale drug smuggling, and trading in components of weapons of mass destruction. Bulgaria shares the opinion that the isolated actions of individual countries are ineffective. That is why the country promotes and initiates the signing of various instruments with Turkey, Greece, and Romania. These regional initiatives contribute to maintaining an intensive dialogue within the Southeastern Europe, and increase security in the region as a whole.

Another important point in this regard is international military cooperation. The crises and the conflicts of the last decade provoked a review of national security priorities in the regional context, and encouraged a search for new approaches for their achievement. The experience of Kosovo and Bosnia shows that such problems go beyond the national scope, and that they must be addressed using all the means available both to the international community and the countries of the region.

The policy of military security of Bulgaria in Southeastern Europe is an integral part of its entire European and Euro-Atlantic orientation, defined by the major foreign policy priorities of the country for integration in NATO and the EU. Bulgaria's policy is directed to strengthening confidence and stability, and consolidating European standards in relations among the countries of the region. A good example in this regard is Bulgarian participation in the Multinational Peace Forces in Southeastern Europe. Practically, it is a logical expression of a new regional policy where priority is given to cooperation, mutual respect, and equal participation in all forms of international interaction. The successful start of the headquarters of the Multinational Peace Forces in Southeastern Europe, which is currently located in Bulgaria, is a huge step in the effort to create a new image of the region from military-political point of view.

RELATIONS WITH TURKEY

Turkey has always been a neighbor of vital importance for Bulgaria, not only because the bulk of the minority in Bulgaria consists of the Turkish minority, but also, because of the history between these two countries. That is why their relations and interactions need special attention. During the Cold War relations between Bulgaria and Turkey - the first a member of the Warsaw Pact and the latter a member of NATO - were a reflection of the suspicions between the West and the East as a whole. But they became particularly strained in the mid - 1980s after the communist regime in Sofia started a brutal campaign to get Muslims to change their names to mainstream Bulgarian names. Targets were the ethnic Turks, who live in the northern and southern regions of the country, as well as a minority living along the western and eastern slopes of the Radopa mountains, on the Bulgarian side of the border with Greece, who converted to the Islamic faith during the Middle Ages.

As a result of this campaign, between 1985 and 1990 more than 300,000 people emigrated from Bulgaria to Turkey. Families were forced to sell their homes and land at token prices, and many parents left their children behind. This campaign was later called "one of the most shameful pages in Bulgaria's history"[35] by the former President Petar Stoianov when he went to Ankara and offered a formal apology.

"Relations with Turkey began to improve immediately after the fall of Zhivkov's regime" [36] and took a completely new approach. The newly formed government openly declared the mistakes which had been made and restored the rights and properties of its countrymen of Turkish ethnicity. As a consequence, the Movement for Rights and Freedom has emerged and started playing a significant role in the new democratic society. To prove that the relationships between the two countries are sound, in 1992 Bulgarian Prime Minister Filip Dimitrov and his counterpart Suleyman Demirel signed a Treaty for Friendship and Good-Neighborly Relations, Cooperation, and Security in Ankara.[37]

In addition, a series of head-of-state visits began and set the conditions for a new stage of bilateral relations which have definitely entered a new era.[38] Successive Turkish governments have worked to overcome Bulgaria's preference for ties with Greece and to encourage improvement in the treatment of Bulgaria's ethnic Turks. At the same time the issue of Bulgarian Turks illegally residing in Turkey was resolved and they were allowed to remain in Turkey legally. Bulgaria has been active in establishing economic ties with Turkey and in confidence-building measures to reduce tensions. The latter include a January 1996 agreement on 35 joint military activities, including cooperative efforts in military training, incident prevention, and technical research.

RISK AND THREATS TO NATIONAL SECURITY

The major risk to the security of the Republic of Bulgaria in the near future will be connected to the actions of radical factors on the territory of former Yugoslavia, ethnic and religious controversies, and the disintegrative tendencies in existing states in the western Balkans. The political and economic instability of the countries of the region, the difficulties of the transition to democracy and the market economy, and the violation of human rights will remain real threats to Bulgarian national security.

The processes of globalized drug trafficking and drug consumption affect all European countries and especially the region of the Balkans including Bulgaria. There is a growing danger of the involvement of Bulgarian citizens and criminal structures in the drug trafficking channels based on the country's location. It is well known that the main routes for international drug traffic from the Middle East to Western Europe go through Bulgaria. According to experts, about 80 percent of heroin in Western Europe passes through the Balkan route. Another major factor is international terrorism, which remains a tremendous risk for regional and national security. Its impact is defined by the functioning of international organized groups, conflicts between ethnic groups and the regional communities, and the extremist actions of religious fundamentalists. The existence of national security risks for the Republic of Bulgaria, which are complicated by their nature and dynamic intensity, calls for maintenance of early warning mechanisms and systems, a refined government decision-making process, and optimal response with political, economic, military, and other means.

CONCLUSION

Summarizing, it may be said that after a decade of turbulence and war the search for sustainable security in the Balkans remains a major concern not only for the inhabitants of the region but also for the wider international community. Recently, much attention has been focused on outside intervention and economic reconstruction but most likely these will not be sufficient to ensure long-term security in the region. Less attention has been paid to how the states and peoples of the region perceive their own security needs and whether security policies that are increasingly made at a global level really reflect local concerns.

Nowadays, there is a need for a new approach and fundamental change. Without stability in the Balkans, there will not be stable peace in Europe as a whole. Moreover, stability requires a sufficient level of economic prosperity. Europe will not be able to face the future with confidence as long as the Balkans is a kind of black hole in the middle of the continent. Nor can America be complacent about the stability of Europe, as two world wars have shown. For these

reasons the European nations, with American participation, should take decisive actions and commit themselves in order to help change the Balkans positively.[39]

Domestic instabilities generating regional conflicts are the primary challenge to Balkan stability and integration. The diversity of national, ethnic, and territorial disputes, both within and between states, and the possibility for simultaneous occurrence, escalation, and duplication, presented costly challenges for the Balkan states. The wars in the former Yugoslavia clearly depicted where the dangers come from. They are ethnic strife, mass murder and massive ethnic cleansing, the breakdown of law and order, separatism and territorial competition, refugee outflows, terrorism and sabotage, arms and drug smuggling, weapons proliferation and international organized crime.

The date September 11, 2001 brought about a new arrangement of the world order and social progress. It marks the beginning of a completely new situation where one needs to reassess the very notion of security. International organizations employed in the field of security are supposed to play a decisive role in determining the measures necessary for safeguarding security. In this context NATO seems to be the most effective international organization safeguarding stability in Europe as a whole, and has become in practical terms the core of the global coalition against terrorism.

Bulgaria tries through its policy to promote European patterns of behavior among the countries of the area in order to accelerate incorporation of the area into the EU and NATO. Having in mind all factors which impact upon the issues discussed above, Bulgaria considers incorporation in European institutions the only way to avoid conflicts in this part of Europe and to promote reforms and democratic procedures in the countries in transition.

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ENDNOTES

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