The Challenges of the Central- Eastern European and the Mediterranean Regions for Creating a New European Security Order

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Introduction

The end of the cold war in Europe did not bring desirable peace, stability and security. The expectation that there would be no need to resort to force In order to achieve national objectives has proved too optimistic. Nevertheless the newly emerging situation in Europe, following the end of the cold war has strengthened the awareness that modern national and international security can be effectively ensured on the hand only if the concept of security is considered in all its complexity (embracing various dimensions of social life- economic, political, humanitarian, ecological, military, etc.) while on the other it has become internationalized and based on interdisciplinary. This awareness is perhaps one of the most significant positive results deriving from the end of the bipolar division of Europe which can contribute to the creation of a new, stable, common and comprehensive European security order.

The foundation for a new regime in Europe today represents the following three main premises:

a) The conflict of interest among the major European states is now less perceived than in the past when the logic of ideological and geopolitical globalism of two antagonistic super power prevailed. When the conflicts occur, they should not escalate into violence, but be challenged toward peaceful solutions. The resolution of old conflicts has signaled an opportunity to redefine the approach to security questions in European order on the basis of confidence instead of deterrence, and to avoid hostile competition among states[1].

b) The all- European security order should include the following three levels: national- each state will provide its own security through national security system; multinational functioning as a web of bilaretal and multilaretal security arrangements and agreements and international- consisting of security organizations (such as EU, NATO, WEU, OSCE) whose operation will be ensured by a cooperative and comprehensive security system[2].

These organizations should be able to assure military and non- military dimensions of security in Europe providing that:

First, this multilayerd system is not tantamount to a division of Europe into different levels of security;

Second, a comprehensive cooperation and security partnership with Russia will be included in the all- European cooperative regime;

Third, active US involvement is an integral part of Europe's security system;

Fourth, the common system values and the code of conduct valid within the OSCE, play significant role in building the designed cooperative security regime[3].

c) The main sources of instability and insecurity in Europe stem from its two vital regions: Central- Eastern European and the Mediterranean. For this reason, the priority in shaping a multilateral security system is, above all, the inclusion of these two regions into the strategy of interlocking Western security institutions.

The purpose of this paper is to outline the significance of these two European regions for creating a new, stable European security order. The emphasis will be on the analyses of the main security challenges which these two regions are facing today, making them the most critical points for all- European stability and security.

Definitions of terms: Central- Eastern Europe and Mediterranean region

1.1 Central- Eastern Europe (C-EE)

Since the end of the cold war Europe is no longer politically divided into two openly antagonistic parts. This gave way to the normally tripartite division of the continent: Western, Central and Eastern Europe. There is no consensus on their delimitation.

Generally speaking the term Central- Eastern Europe contains various dimensions, such as: geographical, historical, socio- political, cultural, ideological, military, etc.

From the geographical point of view the Central- Eastern Europe constitutes the territory located between the Rhine River valley in the West, Ural mountain in the East, between the Baltic Sea in the North and the Alps in the South[4].

Today most authors using term Central- Eastern Europe, emphasize the transitional situation of the countries in this region. In the context of the

recent past which has witnessed many important changes in international community, and especially in Europe (among the most significant perhaps are: the fall of the Soviet empire, the dissolution of Soviet Union and the reunification of Germany) the term Central- Eastern Europe expresses the region which encompasses the countries basically defined by its attempts to transform their state and social structures, politics along democratic lines and to shift national economies towards a market system. This includes the following countries: Poland, Hungary, Czech and Slovac Republics, Belorussia, Ukraine, Moldova and European part of Russia.

1.2 The Mediterranean Region

There is also no consensus among the authors on the exact and wholesome definition of Mediterranean region. In spite of that the Mediterranean region can be generally defined as the territory located around the Mediterranean Sea. Geographically it encompasses Southern Europe (the Pyrenee, Apennine and the Balkans Peninsulas), one part of South- Western Asia (mostly the countries of Near East and some others) and North Africa.

The countries that border Mediterranean Sea are: Marocco, Algeria, Republic of Croatia, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Israel, Syria, Turkey, Greece, Albania, Republic of Croatia, Republic of Slovenia, Italy, Monaco, France and Spain. Besides, there are two island countries- Malta and Cyprus. The Mediterranean Sea is linked to the Atlantic Ocean by the Strait of Gibraltar, to the Black Sea by the Turkish Straits (Dardanelles and Bosporus), and to the Red Sea by the Suez Canal[5].

2. The main challenges to security of the Central- Eastern European Region (CEER)

Regarding the level of integration with the former Soviet Union, one can differentiate the following two groups of countries which constitute the C-EE region: in the first group are Poland, Hungary, the Czech and Slovac Republics. While the second group is formed by the three and a half successor states of former Soviet Union- Belorussia, Ukraine, Moldova and partly Russia.

While the countries in the first group have been after 1945 under the political-ideological, territorial and socio- economical domination of Soviet Union through formally sovereign subjects in the international system, have the countries of the second group in this region been in this period of constitual part of the Soviet Union. With the Velvet Revolutions of 1989 and with the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991 the countries of both groups became independed international subjects. In Belarus, in the beginning of its independence (December 1991) national and reform movements proved relatively weak and the country moved increasingly close to Russia. Ukraine remained, at the beginning of reaching its independence, divided between Western Oriented formers and Eastern oriented conservatives, while the

worsening economic conditions raised fears of social collapse or civil wars. Tensions with Russia over nuclear weapons, control of the Black Sea Fleet, and the Russian dominated provenance of Crimea raised fears of possible Russo- Ukrainian conflict[6].

Belorussia, Ukraine and Russia concluded an agreement in Minsk on 8 December 1991 establishing a Commonwealth of Independed States (CIS). The CIS is not a sta5te but a community of independed states which has proclaimed itself the successor to the Soviet Union. It would provide for unitary control over strategic armed forces including nuclear arms, a single currency and a single "economic space". The CIS agreement was jointed later by 8 other countries on the territory of former Soviet Union and Moldova was among them. Although Ukraine and Moldova maintain some connections with Russia they also develop political and economic ties with the West. This is not the case with Belorussia which tries to keep very close socio- political and defence ties with Russia.

By the mid- 1990s the integration with the West (EU, NATO) became the central objective of the foreign and security policies in Poland, the Czech and Slovak Republics and Hungary. One can conclude that in the last three year period these four countries accomplished some essential changes important for a successful transition from an authoritarian into a democratic socio-political system and market economy. Despite political divisions and the hardships imposed by economic reforms, large scale social disorder has not broken out. In spite of ethnic tensions, potential border conflicts, the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the unstable situation in the former Soviet Union, violent conflict has not broken out in these countries[7].

In terms of security all four mentioned countries have chosen cooperation with each other as well as with their Eastern and Southern neighbors as an important mean of problem solving. The success can be noted also in a significant defensive restructuring of these countries militaries (establishing civilian, democratic control over their armed forces, reducing defence spendings and force numbers, etc.). All in all Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republics have made significant progress in terms of integrating themselves with the West, especially with the EU (they all have association agreements) and NATO (they all are active partners in NACC and Partnership for Peace Program). Nevertheless it should be expected that liberal transition in the region will be necessity paths along road, accompanied by times at tensions, conflicts and even occasional setbacks. All the difficulties and also uncertainties of the C- EE countries make the whole region more unstable., unpredictable and more vulnerable. This certainly posies challenges to European security. Besides the internal factors of unstability and insecurity these countries have to face there are also important external factors influencing their security, deriving from new rapidly changing European security environment. Within this environment the emergence of a complex and evolving multi- institutional European security architecture raises both new opportunities and new uncertainties for the E- EE region[8].

Therefore the challenges to security in C- EE region are generally twofold:

A) The escalating complexity of socio- economic, national- ethnic and other problems of internal development of the post- socialist countries in C- EE region, and

B) The uncertainties and threats deriving from the new European security environment.

   A) The internal development in the C- EE countries is faced mostly due to the long term of high level economic and political dependence of the former Soviet Union, with a whole range of problems, such as:

   - the outdated industrial and technological base;
   - deficient infrastructure in most respects (communications, etc.);
   - environmental problems;
   - relatively weak democratic institutions and deep- rooted democratic mechanisms and procedures;
   - the restructuring their armed forces and military industry which causes great financial problems as well as decrease of moral within the military, etc.

All the above mentioned difficulties of the C- EE have led to numerous social problems (in less existent only in the Czech Republic), such as unemployment, high inflation rate, cuts in social welfare programs, the impoverishment of the lower classes, etc.[9]

In this situation serious political and economic stability is in jeopardy, offering an excellent basis for nationalist, chauvinistic and authoritarian tendencies.

The partly contrasting trends in societal value changes combined with the still considerable economic and technological gaps are likely to favour the preservation of the Central- Eastern Europeans' distinctness and thus the invisible line, separating this region from Western Europe.

   B) The challenges to C- EE security stem from the new European security environment.

With the end of the cold war, the C- EE countries found themselves on the boundary between the Western Security institutions and the zone of instability to their East and South[10]. Although these countries openly express their wishes and expectations (especially Poland, Hungary and the Czech and Slovac Republics) to join the EU and NATO they are not yet part of these Western Organisations nor they have their formal security guarantees. The C- EE countries are faced today with a diverse and amorphous range of risks and uncertainties which derive mostly from the Eastern and Southern part of Europe.

The East European risks encompass a wide scale of existing and potential conflicts within the territory of former Soviet Union. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union many countries have been established on each territory which all have made its first steps on the long path towards establishing a democratic political system, free market economy, the rule of law, etc. Russia, as the largest and most powerful successor state of the former Soviet Union, has in this process an extra harsh position. For a number of reasons a fundamental threat to Russia's security is placed within the country itself (stagflation, an enormous budgetary deficit, increasing indebtedness abroad, criminalization of society, the disintegrational tendencies of the federal state, etc.) this made Russia a very instable country with very unpredictable future developments.

It may be stated that between two halves of Europe there are at least 20 crisis regions out of which four are still active (Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan)[11].

To a certain extend there are tensions among some member countries of the former Warsaw Treaty, such as: Hungary and Romania with respect to the Hungarian minority in Transylvania; Hungary and the Slovac Republic where the minority problems are solved very slowly; Romania and Bulgaria regarding Dobrudja; Romania and Ukraine in the region of the Dniester river.

To the South, the C- EE countries are faced by the largest military conflict in Europe since 1945. Apart form the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina several inter- related crisis regions in which a conflict can erupt simultaneously, can be identified in Central- Eastern Europe (Sandjak, Kosovo, Greece- Albania and Turkey- Greece tensions, etc.).

In shorth, the C- EE countries are faced by a highly uncertain and rapidly changing security environment within which they can either significantly contribute to the solution of many problems or remain a significant part of these problems. In solving these problems close cooperation among countries of Central and Eastern Europe is indispensable. In any case, it should not be forgotten that the instability and the unpredictability of the C- EE region is a great challenge to European and world security as a whole.

3. The main challenges to security of the Mediterranean region

Since the Mediterranean region links three continents (Europe, Asia and Africa) and represent a very important land, see and air crossroad, it has been strategically important for European and world security from the ancient past up to the present.

The diversity countries in this region regarding differences in their political structures, the level of development, historical traditions and political culture, status of international system (great power, middle and small countries),

military power, religion, etc. increase the complexity of the security position of the whole region.

The security of the Mediterranean region can be view from three different but complementary approaches:

    a) the Mediterranean region as a constituent part of the European security environment – this approach prevailed during the whole period of the cold war when this region played in NATO defense plans the role of "strategic linkage between the Western European allied forces and Greece and Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean[12].

    b) The Mediterranean region as a part of both European and Middle Eastern security environment.
    This is a recent American approach which considers the Mediterranean as an extremely important region representing the beginning of the Persian Golf due to its rich oil stock the geo- economic juncture of interests of all economic very dynamic parts of the world.

    c) The Mediterranean region as an autonomous security environment- which is the traditional South- Eastern European approach (France, Italy and Spain) deriving from the fact that the Mediterranean region is both a dividing line as well as the bridge between European and non- European countries[13]. This approach has significant influence on the creating of the so- called Mediterranean policy of EU.

The challenge to security of the Mediterranean region can be, above all, defined by the following three sets of factors:

    1. The economical- demographic threats deriving primarily from the Southern and Eastern parts of the Mediterranean region.
    According to data of the World Bank Maghreb countries (Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Marocco and Mauritania) have faced from the mid. 70ies constantly both the increase of birth rate and the decrease of the standard of living. These two negative processes in these countries caused a relatively high impoverishment of the population which further stimulates mass migration to the developed countries as well as the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. Besides, many other countries of this region are facing today serious economic problems (such as Syria, etc.).

    2. Military threats- based on the following elements:
    a) the Arab- Israeli conflict which arises both the possibility of the outbreak of war and terrorist activities;
    b) the arms races in this region;
    c) the proliferation of conventional and unconventional arms;
    d) the constant possibility of armed conflicts of the territory of former Yugoslavia (unsolved issues among Serbs- Croats; Serbs- Bosnians; Serbs- Albanians on Kosovo; Serbs- Muslims in Sandjak; etc.) ;
    e) the solving of the status of national minorities and territorial claims of some states on the broader area of Balkans and Mediterran based on the

threat of the military intervention (Hungarian national minorities in Vojvodina and Romania; Romanian minority in Bulgaria; Turkey minority in Bulgaria; Russian minority in Moldova; Greek minority in Albania, Lebanon-Syria, etc.).;

f) the exercising of the right to self- determination as well as the secession tendencies (Kurds in Turkey, Iran and Irak; Palestinians in Izrael, Katalonians in Spain, Albanians in Kosovo, muslims in Sandjak, etc.).

3. The terrorist activities for achieving the political goals of the following groups:
- extreme political groups functioning within individual Mediterranean countries,
- extreme groups of national minorities,
- extreme political groups functioning within,
- criminal goups and terroristic activities of some countries.

4. The use of non democratic and protectionist activities of some states (the stimulation of nationalistic and even secessionistic aspirations; a one-sided closing of borders of developed countries, etc.).

All the above mentioned threats are real and made the security of the strategical important Mediterranean region extremely sensitive and fragile.

4. Concluding remarks

Since the end of the cold war Europe has been defining its new identity as well as creating a new, stable, common and comprehensive security order. These endeavors are accompanied by an arc of different that spasm from the Former Soviet Union over a war- torn Balkans and the traditional power kegs of the near and Middle East all the way to the Maghreb[14].

Regarding the prevailing non- military nature of the problems in the C- EE countries, one can assume that the stability and the security of the whole region can be assured in the foreseen future. This assumption is based on the fact that the countries of C- EE wish to play an important role for their own stability and security and that they are in these endevours supported by the Western developed countries and their organizations. While reaching the stability and security of the Mediterranean region is much more complicated. The diversity of interests of the Mediterranean region is much more complicated. The diversity of interests (some of them are even antagonistic) of the countries in this region is one important factor. The other is the strategic significance of Mediterranean region for the prevailing super power- USA. Their permanent military present (6th Fleet) in the region is probably not a stimulating factor to reach mutual trust and support among the Mediterranean countries to create a common European security system.

Therefore, it is for the sake of a stable European security order of utmost importance to include the reforming C- EE countries as well as countries of the Mediterranean region into the strategy of interlocking Western security institutions.

NOTES

[1] Compare: Richard H. Ulman. 1991. Securing Europe, pp.41- 42. Twickhenham: The Twentieth Century Fund, Inc.

[2] Adam Daniel Rotfeld. 1995. Shaping a new international security system: the European perspective. Paper presented at the workshop organized by the International Institute of Peace. Vienna, 23- 24 June.

[3] A.D. Rotfeld, ibid.

[4] See also: The Software Toolworks Multimedia Encyclopedia. 1992 Edition, Version 1.5

[5] See ibid.

[6] Andrew Cotty. 1995. East- Central Europe after the Cold War, p.8. London: MacMillan Press LTD.

[7] A. Cottey, ibid. p.159.

[8] A. Cottey, ibid. p.12.

[9] Radovan Vukadinovic. 1996. Central European Security And Cooperation, p.47, Zagreb: European Movement Croatia.

[10] Andrew Cottey. 1995. East- Central Europe after the Cold War, p.11. London: MacMillan Press

[11] Emil Antusak. European Security and its influence upon the development of Military Art. European Security, vol.4, no.2, (Summer 1995), p. 308

[12] Ian Lesser, p.10, Santa Monica: Rand Publications.

[13] Ian Lesser, ibid.

[14] More on this see: Theodore Winkler. Central Europe and the Post- Cold War European Security Order, p.33. In: Jacob Kipp (ed.). 1993. Central European Security Concerns: Bridge, Buffer or Barrier? London: Frank Cass.