

A Northern View on Southern Security

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Influenced by numerous political miracles around 1989, the idea came up to start from a zero point and to draw up a new "architecture of Europe". Both politicians and political scientists were guilty of a great deal of *hybris*, thinking that political emotions, aspirations and hatred would stand still, waiting for the new design to come from the drawing boards. In practice, it nearly always happens that events unfold in unexpected ways, and the role of governments consist in reacting to them.

The collapse of the old regimes in Eastern Europe of their military and economic organizations and the emergence of democratic forces came as surprises to most of even the best informed minds. Instead of drawing up a new architecture on clean pages, one had to react to the quickly unfolding events in Central and Eastern Europe.

The reactions were reasonably quick. In a short period after the fall of the Berlin wall, NATO declared to the countries in the area, that "we are no longer adversaries". From this new point of departure, NATO established the North Atlantic Consultative Council (NACC) and then - in January 1994 - opened up for new members and established Partnership for Peace (PfP). Especially the latter soon became an operative reality and now has more than 40 participants.

In parallel with this came the eruption of hostilities within the old Yugoslavia, a country which normally would have been a welcome member of these new instruments. These hostilities came as a surprises to most people and forced NATO to concentrate a great deal of its attention

on this new crisis, which we gradually realized was becoming the main security challenge in the whole of Europe.

This painful process has led to a number of *faits accomplis* and has taught us a number of lessons. It has changed the relationship between the UN and the regional organizations. It has forced NATO to concentrate a lot of both attention and material resources on the south-east of Europe. To what degree is this to the detriment of the North of Europe? Are the conflicts in former Yugoslavia only local phenomena, or is peace in Europe indivisible? I will try to analyze these and related questions in the following pages. But first a quick look at the present security situation in the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden).

SECURITY COOPERATION IN THE NORTH

Denmark, Iceland and Norway are, as before, members of NATO. Denmark has been a member of the EU since 1972, now joined by Finland and Sweden. These maintain a certain degree of neutrality, but in the present circumstances this idea has little significance. In both countries there are protagonists for NATO membership.

Incongruent as this group may be from a security policy perspective, it continues to stick together as a close group. They have started to cooperate in new ways with neighbouring countries, especially the former members of the Warsaw Pact. They participate with all the eleven countries surrounding the Baltic Sea in a number of ways, culminat-

ing in a prime ministers meeting in Visby, Sweden, in May 1996. This circle includes Russia and is therefore seen as an important East-West link.

Within this circle, the Nordic Council and its members have developed very close relations with, and assistance programs for, the three Baltic countries. This cooperation no doubt has security policy overtones, and even includes some support for the emerging Baltic military forces.

For Norway especially, the relationship with Russia along a 200 km long land border and huge sea borders is essential. The cold war relationship has been replaced by lively economic relations and extensive programs of cooperation, especially in the Barents Sea region. Several other countries are involved in this program. It requires considerable resources to build up a program which can help create a lasting good neighbourly relationship with our superpower neighbour.

Norway and Denmark are maintaining their old policy of having no foreign bases and no atomic weapons on their territories. Self-imposed Norwegian limitations on allied military exercises in the areas bordering on Russia have recently been somewhat relaxed. This very limited step met with a disproportionately unfriendly response from the Russian side, giving support to the fear that Russian military leaders still see us as enemies and want to have a buffer zone along their frontiers.

This brief review will hopefully illustrate the many preoccupations that the Nordic countries have at home, and from which they approach the emergencies in the South-East of Europe.

THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE BALKAN CRISIS

A lot of serious criticisms of the "international community" have come both from within the former Yugoslavia and from other quarters for its attitude towards the war of wars in this area. Some have even maintained that other countries have betrayed the groups involved, and contrasts have been made to the efficient international reaction to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Needless to say, there is no comparison between a clear aggression across an international border and an internal conflict between ethnic groups.

It must be realized that there was no international machinery to deal with such crises. I think it must be stated, as a point of departure, "that" the responsibility for starting the war lies on the shoulders of one or several of the groups in the area. The rest of Europe was willing to help overcome the conflict, but did not, at first, know what to do, and did not expect the developments to become so drastic.

But when they had considered and agreed on what should be done, both the European organizations and the UN did a great deal, both quantitatively and qualitatively, to help end the war and overcome human suffering. The humanitarian aid effort and the escorting of aid convoys was an impressive effort by the world. It also cost the lives of hundreds of young men from peaceful European countries.

Today, it may appear that the limited and more action oriented organizations of Europe should have taken over from the beginning. This is, if I may say so, an "unhistorical" way of thinking. At that time, when we thought of peace-keeping operations, we thought automatically of the United Nations. From a Nordic point of view, neutral Finland and Sweden could not imagine to take part in any operations except under the UN umbrella. Even the Scandinavian NATO members were reserved in this respect, and had a cautious view of any NATO role "out of the area". Again, it was the force of events that made us change our views, gradually realizing that a change from the UN to NATO was a necessity. It was a view that had to mature, and it did so over a historically very brief time span.

The new role "out of area" which was cast upon NATO came in parallel with new efforts and experiences under NACC and Partnership for Peace, as well as with the important process of deciding on accepting new members. To what degree has the peace implementation in the former Yugoslavia affected these three processes? And, in particular to what degree have they affected the security position of the Northern members of NATO? In general, NATO has managed admirably well to carry on all these tasks in parallel. But the need for attention to the northernmost member, Norway, the only member having a common border with the potential European superpower, is still great. Exercise activities in the north have been concentrated more than ever on Central and South-Eastern Europe. Is this happening at our expense? In certain situations, this would be so. But, fortunately the NATO commitment to the North is unchanged and we now have good and cooperative neighbourhood relations with all our neighbours.

This brings us to the questions whether peace is indivisible, whether there can be real peace in one part of Europe while there is war in another. We see peace on the Eurasian continent as indivisible and find it in our enlightened self-interest to contribute to eliminate threats to peace anywhere in Europe. Thus, we have found it quite natural to do our share in the UNPROFOR and

IFOR operations. We do so in a way which promotes cooperation in the north. In IFOR we do it in a way which even promotes a wider northern cooperation. We have started cooperating also with Poland, forming a Scandinavian-Polish Brigade. In addition, contingents from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have been included in the Brigade, thus also initiating military cooperation among the Baltic countries.

PROSPECTS AND SOLUTIONS

Whatever the effects of the wars in the former Yugoslavia, we have to look at the future and ask: What will be and what do we want to be the consequences of the present efforts for peace in the area?

There is no hesitation in the Nordic countries in doing their best, with their extensive aid and peace-keeping experience, to secure peace and stability in the South-East of our common continent. The Nordic defence ministers have discussed a prolongation of their troops in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the present international force and have agreed to take part in such a continued effort, on a smaller scale than now.

I think this attitude is also reflected concretely in the number of well known Nordic personalities having taken up important positions in the peacemaking process. Some examples: Former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt is leading the huge aid and reconstruction effort of the European Union. Former Finnish Defence Minister, Ms. Elizabeth Rehn, has been given the task of monitoring respect for human rights in the area. Norwegian Foreign Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg completed his task as a UN mediator with forging the agreement of a peace arrangement in Eastern Slavonia, while his military advisor, former Supreme Commander of the Norwegian Army and Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, General Vigleik Eide, was leading the disarmament negotiations under the mandate of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Of course, in the main, it is up to the authorities; the military and the peoples of the area to shape their future. Will blind hatred prevail as before? Will the decisive forces in the area be able to find a way of enlightened self-interest, which means compromise and reconciliation, or will the desire to destroy neighbours of other ethnic origins prevail? These questions are not for me to answer.

What is certain, is that the retreat of the UN and the taking over of full responsibilities by NATO and the European organizations will have

a profound and lasting effect on the European security scene. If the task of peace implementation really leads to peace, it will be good for the former war-torn areas as well as for a future peace cooperation in Europe, indeed, for the realization of the concept and the reality of "common security" in Europe.

From a northern perspective, it will be of overriding importance to avoid a new east-west confrontation in the south of Europe. The much feared scenario of an unholy Russian-Serbian alliance seems to me to be a rather far-fetched one. Russia is now a partner in the peacekeeping operation and in the wider strategic context. But, of course, a sustained and conscious effort must be made to prevent such a scenario from coming true.

The peacekeeping and reconstruction operation will have an impact both for each of the organizations involved, and for the relationships between them. Let us look at each of the main organizations and their tasks in turn.

THE EUROPEAN UNION

While debating its common foreign policy and its role in defence and security, the European Union has had to take stands and actions in the Balkan crisis in ways which to a large extent have set decisive precedents for the conclusions of the debate. In this debate, the Nordic NATO countries have had their reservations as to the security and defence role of the EU.

In relation to former Yugoslavia, the EU took on an important political role under the pressure of events. In the middle of the debate on the relationship of the EU to the Western European Union, the WEU took up operative tasks for the first time in supervising the embargo imposed by the UN, by participating in the Adriatic Sea blockade, and on the Danube, with patrol boats, to control the blockade against Serbia there.

In the present phase, the EU has taken upon itself the leadership in the assistance for reconstruction of the devastated areas. This may be a decisive factor in recreating peace. If peace can be seen to lead to welfare and material progress, through own efforts and foreign assistance, one should think, as an outsider, that the necessary will for peace will be strengthened. By setting political conditions for the delivery of aid (especially to Serbia) the EU also exercises a more specific political influence.

As we see it, it will be a condition for success to combine physical reconstruction with the construction or reconstruction of democratic institutions. We are aware that the old Yugoslavia had developed traditions of workers self-manage-

ment and municipal self-government. The new republics which have gained independence have built democratic structures, while in Bosnia-Herzegovina war and other factors have prevented such a development. If there is a wish for it, assistance will be given also for the democratic construction. But on the other hand, tendencies in other directions will be watched closely. It is a reality of today's international politics that internal matters of countries are being scrutinized closely by others. Democracy is a decisive criterion for admission to European organizations and for state-to-state cooperation programs.

The EU role in the south-east can also be seen in the light of the discussion of the relative emphasis of the Union on the North of the South. There is a competition for resources between many areas and programs.

In the framework of the Baltic cooperation, ambitious programs are being worked out and need financing. But, at the same time, the EU will continue to pursue its programmes for the candidate members of Central Europe and for the Mediterranean countries, of which the former Yugoslav republics are parts. There will be a continued need for resources from Brussels for this area, in competition with the resources sought from the northern countries, especially for the Baltic Sea States program.

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

NATO sees the crisis in former Yugoslavia as the main security threat of today and has mobilized unprecedented resource there. What contribution to peace can the Organization make beyond the present peace-keeping phase? The mandate for the present phase runs out in December. Discussion are going on about the continuation. Provided the first phase is successful, a lot of creativity will be needed to plan for the next. One of the main concerns will and should be how to continue the all-European character of the effort, how to keep Russia as a partner.

At the same time, the countries of the South of Europe should gradually become partners of NATO by participation in the NACC and the PfP. The PfP includes joint exercises in such tasks as how to overcome natural as well as man-made disasters. It includes methods for establishing civilian control over the military, a subject presumably pertinent to the situation in the Balkan area.

It is, in my opinion, too early to start discussing the question of membership for the countries of former Yugoslavia, with the exception of Slovenia. Each candidate for membership must fulfil strict conditions concerning their democratic

qualities. But not only that. NATO will not want to adopt members which bring with them conflicts with their neighbours.

The foundations for solving such conflicts have been laid down in the Stability Pact, which was signed by most European countries in 1995. It requires that all partners to the Pact enter into agreements with their neighbours to settle their differences. This will, in practice, be a requirement for membership in NATO. Hungary, for example, has concluded such a treaty with Slovakia, and is envisaging entering into similar treaty with Belgrade, mainly about the treatment of Hungarian minorities.

When will the countries of former Yugoslavia be in a position to sign such treaties with each other? The point here is that one country can block the way for its neighbours. Even if one country qualifies for membership as far as democratic criteria are concerned, and even if it has the best of intentions to settle conflicts with its neighbour, it cannot do so without a minimum of goodwill from that neighbour. Thus, one country can exercise what is in practice a veto over the membership of others. But this is for the future.

ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE)

This organization has a good name in the North of Europe. We support fully its role in preventing conflicts before they have broken out. In Bosnia and Herzegovina it is fulfilling an essential task - that of preparing and carrying out democratic elections.

Some countries, especially Russia, want to strengthen this organization radically - even to make it the main security organization in Europe, perhaps even replacing NATO. Such thoughts find little approval among the Northern countries. The NATO members want to keep NATO as an anchor of peace.

The desire to have a specifically European organization will be met to a large extent by the present plans within NATO. These plans have the aim to establish a military force, which may be used both by NATO and by the West European Union. And it may be used also in joint operations with countries not members of the Alliance. These developments again show, as I see it, an admirable adaptability on the part of the North Atlantic Alliance - an adaptability which may also become of great benefit to the countries in former Yugoslavia in overcoming the effects of the tragic war. ■