

## **U.S. Policy Opportunities in Southeastern Europe**

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Mr. Chairman, the message I bring to you can be boiled down to one sentence: The decade-long, U.S.-led effort to achieve sustainable peace in southeastern Europe is poised for significant further progress, but only if the United States maintains its leadership role and the momentum for change this generates.

It would be presumptuous of me to provide a report card of the Bush administration's efforts in southeastern Europe after only six months in office. So, let's be presumptuous. Pessimists—including some in the administration—critical of the U.S. investment in stabilizing southeastern Europe have been trumped by the success of Serbia's democratic forces, their decisive transfer of Slobodan Milosevic to the Hague tribunal, and the impact that the newly appointed U.S. special envoy has already had on the negotiating process in Macedonia.

A root cause of the administration's hesitancy about the Balkans has been a preoccupation with letting force levels define policy. The military has perceived conflict prevention, peacekeeping and even combat as threats to readiness and budget planning. This negative agenda tends to drive policymaking.

The administration, however, has begun munching on its own words about disengaging from the Balkans. They are moving incrementally beyond treating the region as an arena for shifting American political-military burdens to the allies.

There are two reasons for the shift in policy. First, they have found to their surprise that engagement can succeed, bringing them political credit and positive media attention, while also making the overall regional mission seem that much more attainable and the burdens and sacrifices of the American people justified. That is what happened when they used congressionally mandated legislation applying assistance conditionalities to leverage the arrest and extradition of Milosevic.

The extradition of Milosevic sharply defines the two competing political visions in Serbia and the most effective Serbian partner for the West. The non-nationalist reformers led by Serbian Republic Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic did all the heavy lifting to arrest and extradite Milosevic. The devoutly nationalist federal Yugoslav President Vojislav Kostunica revealed his lack of political integrity by publicly supporting the passage of an extradition law while privately pressuring the Constitutional Court to block Milosevic's transfer.

The West should begin differentiating more effectively between Kostunica's anti-reformist policies and the efforts of the real reformers. If he judges it to be to his political advantage, and I believe that he does, Djindjic should be invited to Washington soon to meet the president and receive fresh promises of assistance.

Washington should pay careful attention to Djindjic's skepticism about the future of Milosevic-created rump Yugoslavia. He speaks for those Serbs who see the stabilizing effects of letting go of Montenegro in less than a year. The U.S. should respond by adopting a neutral stance on Montenegro's independence and the future of the FRY. The State Department should also stop withholding and delaying U.S. assistance to undermine President Djukanovic's independence effort. U.S. aid should be used to leverage reforms, and the Serbs and Montenegrins allowed to decide on their own whether to stay together or part company.

The crisis in Macedonia has compelled the administration to accelerate reconsideration of its Balkan policies. The crisis caught the administration—and myself—by surprise. As a testing ground for European leadership, moreover, four months of non-stop, European-led diplomacy found the National Liberation Army (NLA) of Macedonian Albanian insurgents at the gates of the capital and Macedonia's national unity government near collapse. A full-fledged civil war that might draw in neighboring states against their own better judgment and our regional interests seemed imminent.

What a difference an American special envoy can make. Within a week of dispatching Ambassador James Pardew to Macedonia, a NATO-brokered ceasefire was signed by the NLA and Macedonian army and a U.S.-EU comprehensive framework plan was presented to Macedonian Slav and Albanian political leaders. NATO also announced support for deploying a force into Macedonia for a limited period to collect the weapons of the NLA if a political agreement is reached.

We should not underestimate the difficulty of the task before Pardew and his EU counterpart, Francois Leotard. They must find a formula that preserves the integrity of the Macedonian state and the rights of its Macedonian Slav majority while ending constitutional, legal, economic and cultural discrimination against the ethnic Albanian minority, who constitute about one-third of the population. Each side is convinced that the other wants to partition the country or create a federation of two ethnic entities. The Albanians believe that only Western diplomatic intervention can salvage an agreement, placing their trust in the Americans while privately disparaging the EU as anti-Albanian. Macedonian Slavs barely tolerate the diplomats and criticize the whole concept of a diplomatically brokered agreement.

I am convinced that the ethnic Albanians, publicly perceived as seeking partition and union with Kosovo, are in fact more strongly committed to the concept of a joint state than many Macedonian Slav leaders. The Albanians, however, should drop their demand for an ethnic veto. More challenging than reaching an agreement may be the task of overcoming reluctance by the Macedonian Slavs to implement an agreed settlement. If that happens, the NLA will return and conflict will ensue.

Pardew thus requires assistance from senior political levels of the administration, in particular the involvement of Secretary Powell and a commitment by the administration to participate in a NATO peacekeeping force that would remain in Macedonia for an

unspecified duration of time beyond the 30-day disarming period now foreseen. U.S. troops should operate beyond the logistics and support role that Secretary Rumsfeld outlined Monday.

A peace settlement would establish a precedent in the region—success at preventing conflict and preserving moderate options, rather than spending years to resuscitate the moderate political center after a war. Every administration talks about conflict prevention; it would be a breakthrough if the Bush administration could achieve it.

Regarding Kosovo, after the November 17 parliamentary elections Washington should:

- Help the new Kosovo leaders to expand their self-governing authority;
- Announce that the U.S. will not support the return of Belgrade's authority to Kosovo; and
- Seek international support for conditional self-determination that links independence to establishment of democracy, minority rights, and acceptance of the current border with Macedonia. Assuming that Kosovo makes progress toward meeting these conditions, the Kosovars should be able to exercise their self-determination within three-to-five more years, which would effectively mean independence.

Bosnia presents different challenges. With non-nationalists in the ascendancy in Serbia and Milosevic in The Hague, the West should clear the way to move beyond the Dayton peace accords by:

- Apprehending indicted Bosnian Serb war criminals Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic;
- Insisting that Bosnia be treated by its inhabitants and neighbors as one country;
- Removing ethnic vetoes while granting the Bosnian Serbs and Croats considerable autonomy and not impeding their cultural and commercial contacts with Serbia and Croatia;
- Ending the farce of a tripartite and dysfunctional presidency by electing one president; and
- Providing security for all refugees to return to their homes.

Momentum is building for major progress toward stabilizing southeastern Europe, if the Bush administration uses active engagement to prevent further conflict and lock in democratic change. The administration should:

- Accept that Europe lacks the political, military and diplomatic capacity to resolve serious Balkan crises;
- Stop defining policy goals in Bosnia or Kosovo as the transfer of political, military and diplomatic responsibilities to Europe, and commit to establishing a peacekeeping force in Macedonia with U.S. troops;
- Prepare to help manage the possible independence of Serbia and Montenegro; and
- Harness the two great engines of potential Balkan stability and conflict—Serbian and Albanian nationalism—to democratization and economic recovery through a massive economic assistance program for Serbia, a commitment to conditional independence for Kosovo, and greater U.S. responsibility for brokering a Macedonian settlement

that balances survival of the Macedonian state with full citizenship and economic participation for its ethnic Albanian minority.