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**THE NEW ALLIANCE IN CENTRAL EUROPE:
THE CHALLENGE OF REGIONAL CONFLICTS**

Remarks, as delivered, by:

**Victor Jackovich
Ambassador (ret.)
President, Jackovich International, LLC
Vice President, Ervin Technical Associates – ETA**

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Introduction

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Center for Strategic and International Studies and to Janusz Bugajski for organizing this conference and for inviting me to participate in it.

I would also like to thank the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Corporation for its role in co-sponsoring this conference. This is all the more significant because of the importance of communicating about these events to the peoples of our respective countries. We can gather the best experts and hold the best seminars imaginable, but if we do not communicate with the people about our discussions, we will not gain their understanding, and eventually their support, for the issues under discussion.

I was asked to speak on the topic of “regional conflicts.” Let me provide here some perspectives on how Romania might assist in the resolution of some of these conflicts, especially within the context of its current membership in Euro-Atlantic associations, such as the NATO Alliance.

Three Challenges for New Alliance

In considering these regional conflicts, it is useful first to consider the developing political-security environment in which these conflicts will now be confronted.

Integration

Following their recent eastward enlargements, the European Union (EU) now has 25 members and 450 million inhabitants, while NATO has 19 members. And, further enlargements of both of these associations are expected by 2007 or so.

The attendant difficulties of integration are clear. The states of Central Europe are faced with carrying out internal transformations. As they do so, one of the results will be the establishment of strict border regimes and a de facto moving of the historic East-West division in Europe further to the east. This in itself will bring still more challenges.

There is the question of the projection of the Alliance beyond this division. There are two aspects to this project. One involves new prospective membership, even where issues of qualification might still exist (like Turkey with the EU, or Ukraine with both EU and NATO). Another aspect involves defending principles in areas clearly beyond the boundary of the new Alliance (like Afghanistan and Iraq).

Dealing with Growing Divergence between U.S. and Europe

The enlargement of Euro-Atlantic associations to embrace new states in Central Europe will mean that the character of NATO and the EU will change. This could mean that the growing divergence between the U.S. and Europe might, to a certain extent, be diluted. While this may be true in the longer term, there will still be challenges in the immediate term.

Over the short term, these states will be confronted with tough decisions. As a result, the states of Central Europe more and more will have to formulate clearly their own national interests and to manage or balance relations with both the U.S. and Europe. With NATO, they will be confronted with the question of how to contribute both to NATO and to a future European rapid deployment force. With the EU, they will be faced with the question of how to commit to the “acquis communautaire” and a reduction of inter-European trade barriers without de facto discriminating against trade with the U.S.

Managing internal stability

The Central European states will also have to deal with domestic dissatisfaction because of economic disparity between themselves and West. They will have to try to resolve ethnic tensions and social disruptions exacerbated by these transitions. They will have difficulties maintaining the course of continuing political, economic and security reforms and transformations. And, there will be additional concerns about criminality and corruption.

Regional Conflicts

This is the new political-security context in which regional conflicts continue. We need to recognize that, while these conflicts might not be resolved any time soon, there should be ways in which they can be managed. But if we are to do this successfully, we need also to recognize that three things are required: intrusive pro-active conflict management; the development of a coherent security policy towards outlying regions (like the Black Sea, the Mediterranean, the Caucasus, Central Asia, etc.); and, defining our relationship with Russia.

For the purposes of this discussion, I have identified the principal regional conflicts as the following: Moldova, the Albanian national question, Yugoslav dissolution (Montenegro), Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Belarus and Kaliningrad.

Moldova

On the issue of Moldova and its enclave of Trans-Nistru, OSCE-led talks have resulted in some 10 years of sterile negotiations. This has largely served to freeze this conflict in place, thus hardening the splinter administration in Trans-Nistru and emboldening Russian hegemonistic aims in Moldova and in other areas of the former Soviet Union. Russia has even failed to honor its own promises (at 1999 Istanbul OSCE conference) to withdraw armed forces from Moldova.

We need a new and bolder engagement by the international community and we need the active, even pro-active, participation of Romania. We can respect Romania's caution and diplomacy on this issue, but, in the end, no lasting, durable agreement on Moldova is possible without the active participation of Romania. We also need greater cooperation from Ukraine. This might be accomplished through the institution of stronger border and customs regimes along the line demarcating the Trans-Nistru enclave.

Russian interests here are minimal. They basically consist of how to absorb troops of 14th Army returning to Russia. This can be dealt with through any number of programs and arrangements, including perhaps support from the U.S. or the international community.

In any case, Moldovan territorial integrity is essential for the successful functioning of Moldova as a state, which is now bordering the NATO Alliance and, soon, the EU as well. While it is no doubt important to Moldovans that Moldova function successfully as a state, the Alliances must also determine how important this is to them. In fact, a new structure for negotiating about the Moldova issue has been presented by something called the Moldova Foundation, whose executive director is a talented former Moldovan diplomat, Vlad Spanu. The Moldova Foundation has developed a very dynamic strategy, and one that could achieve more progress on this issue than we have witnessed to date.

Albanian national question

Another regional conflict revolves around the Albanian national question. This is not only Albania. This is also Kosovo and the sizeable Albanian national minorities in other neighboring states (Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro).

Kosovo will be independent within the next few years. This is something we all need to prepare wisely for. The issue is not the viability of two Albanian states in the region. Rather, the issue is the demonstration of democracy by Kosovo and the satisfaction of Albanian national interests with this overall resolution. In other words, the satisfaction of Albanian national interests cannot be permitted to threaten the security and viability of Macedonia and other states in region.

The Continuing Saga of the Dissolution of Yugoslavia

Long after the name of Yugoslavia itself has disappeared from the geo-political scene, its painful, continuing dissolution continues to present challenges to European security. We should recognize that Montenegro will also be independent, probably within the next few years. The people and government of Montenegro have already demonstrated all necessary prerequisites for sovereignty.

The EU and NATO need to move now, pro-actively, to consolidate democracy and stability there based on this eventuality. The current EU stance seems to interpret that the lack of outright hostilities alone equates to a resolution. It does not. In the final analysis, closure is needed. The citizens of this region need to know the basics of life: what state they are living in today, and a reasonable expectation of what state they will be living in five years from now. Without this, there will continue uncertainty, lack of confidence, lack of security, with all that that entails. Montenegrin independence will contribute to security and stability, not only within Montenegro but in the entire region. Conversely, the continuing failure to come to closure on the dissolution of Yugoslavia will contribute to insecurity and instability.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Dayton accords of 1995 created a partitioned, dysfunctional state. Today, we need to recognize that the purpose of those accords was to end armed hostilities, but the accords failed to create the basis for a successfully functioning state. Today, we need to move vigorously toward stitching together a cohesive state with state-wide institutions and an administration that works. Central authorities should be given priority over so-called "entity" ones.

After this, we should disengage and leave the governing of Bosnia to citizens of Bosnia. Under current circumstances, there is the real danger of Bosnian over-reliance on the international community. Once again, the fallacy is to determine that the lack of outright hostilities alone equates to a resolution.

Before we go, can we at least apprehend Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic? Rather than placing pressure on Bosnian authorities to do this, should we not recognize reality? These renegades were catapulted onto the world stage through the international community's dealing with them and elevating their political status. Their eventual apprehension is the responsibility of the international community much more than of the Bosnian authorities.

Macedonia

Macedonia was always perhaps the most underestimated of these regional conflicts. For years, the lack of outright warfare deluded many in the West into thinking all was peaceful, though tensions were always simmering just below the surface.

There is a similar situation today after the signing of the Framework Agreement. A referendum in Macedonia on November 7 could bring about a new stage in the crisis, as Macedonians are expected to voice dissatisfaction with some elements of this Agreement. The basic problem is how to resolve ethnic tensions without territorialization. Unfortunately, territorializing the conflict is what was done in Bosnia, and it's what a former U.S. Administration proposed doing also in Croatia, but without success. Instead, we should manage this issue through assisting the Macedonian state to build strong, representative institutions, and through developing education programs aimed at democratizing the population.

Belarus

A referendum scheduled to be held these days in Belarus could put Lukashenko theoretically into that state's Presidential position for life. But, sooner or later, the same movement of reform and liberalization is bound to sweep over Belarus as well, whether peacefully or violently. This eventuality will pose real challenges for Polish-Russian and for Baltic-Russian relations. In advance of this, there will be a need for a clearly defined relationship between NATO and Russia and between the EU and Russia. Otherwise, there is the danger that Belarus could become yet another full-blown crisis in the heart of Europe.

Kaliningrad

The Russians will not grant this province autonomy; nor will the EU agree to preferential trade, customs and border regimes for this area. Again, with a clearly defined relationship between Russia and Euro-Atlantic associations, especially the EU, Kaliningrad could become a bridge for consolidating good relations between Europe and Russia, rather than an impediment.

Romania's Contributions and Conclusion

Romania has already demonstrated that it has a pro-active foreign and security policy. This has helped it not only to enter NATO (and, in time, the EU), but it has enabled Romania to become one of the leading participants in the coalition Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and coalition operations in Iraq.

In July 12 remarks to the European Policy Center in Brussels, NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer called Afghanistan "NATO's No. 1 priority." If so, then Romania has already distinguished itself there.

(I can say from personal experience and observation while I was posted in Afghanistan that the Romanian contribution there is real and genuine. It is not cosmetic or rhetorical. Romanian troops were in dangerous situations but their special forces conducted themselves with the highest degree of military preparedness and professionalism. The Romanian Ministry of Defense has obviously done a tremendous job in training and equipping these forces.)

In the future, Romania might contemplate establishing training programs for Iraqis, Afghans and others in Romania. This would enable Romania to make a significant contribution to efforts there without exposing more of its citizens to danger.

But the potential for Romania's contributions goes far beyond this. It would include the entire range of already existing regional initiatives (SEDM, SECI, Stability Pact, SEEBRIG, etc.). And, it could include NATO's Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, aimed at offering practical cooperation to interested countries in the broader Middle East region; NATO's Black Sea initiative; NATO's Mediterranean initiative; and, other international efforts aimed at stabilizing areas eastward following recent enlargements of both NATO and the EU.

Especially for conflicts in the immediate region of Southeast Europe, the world will look to Romania – as an active partner and ally and as a neighboring state to the conflicts – for some special sense about how to achieve resolutions.

Romanian contributions have demonstrated proven value – both military and diplomatic – and will be very welcomed in OSCE and other appropriate fora. Based on past experience, these contributions can be considerable indeed.

Thank you.

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