

ALLIES, SUPPORTERS, AND CRITICS: East European Responses to the New Global War Janusz Bugajski

The reactions in Eastern Europe to the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington have been overwhelmingly ones of solidarity and support for the United States. That said, three differing positions have crystallized in the region since September 11, as evident in both the words and deeds emanating from the region's capitals. Indeed, the region can be usefully divided into allies, supporters, and critics.

Allies: Eastern Europe's new NATO members responded immediately to the attacks and solidly backed the invocation of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty for a "common defense" of the Alliance. Poland's president Aleksander Kwasniewski described the carnage in the United States as a "crime of genocide." The government in Warsaw promptly pledged support for any U.S. action by asserting, "This barbaric act cannot remain unanswered. We are ready to implement our obligations as an ally."

Czech president Václav Havel called the terrorist attacks an assault on human freedom and democracy, adding that the tragedy was a "big warning to civilization that forces us to fully mobilize our responsibility for this world." Senior politicians from across the Czech political spectrum condemned the attacks. Prime Minister Miloš Zeman asserted that the country would open its airspace to U.S. planes and provide refueling facilities at Czech airports.

Although the new NATO allies have limited military means at their disposal to assist Washington, they seemed willing to contribute to the global campaign against terrorism. Hungary, for example, declared its readiness to offer diplomatic, political, informational, and economic aid. Its parliament quickly approved a U.S. request to make Hungarian airspace and ground services available to aircraft taking part in military operations in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Supporters: All the leading NATO contenders also responded in a resolute fashion, clearly seeking to demonstrate their credibility as future alliance members. The Slovak government rapidly gave a green light to U.S. military transport overflights and landings on Slovak territory. Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda declared that Bratislava was acting "as if we already were a NATO member." Slovenian authorities issued similar statements.

Responding to a U.S. request, the Lithuanian government agreed to allow the United States overflight rights and the use of the country's airports. Vilnius declared that this demonstrated Lithuania's political will as a loyal U.S. ally. Meanwhile, Croatian president Stjepan Mesić asserted that the attacks were a "declaration of war against the United States and all civilization." Prime Minister Ivica Račan added, "Croatia is willing to make its contribution to the international struggle against terrorism." Similar sentiments were echoed in Bulgaria and Romania where the governments promptly opened up their airspace to U.S. planes. Both capitals stated that they were determined to act as NATO allies.

Albanian prime minister Ilir Meta claimed that the terrorist outrages were directed not only against the United States but "against peace, security, and human and democratic values, worldwide." Thousands of mourners took part in a silent march in Tirana while mosques and churches held special services for the victims. Ambassador John Menzies, Washington's chief representative in Kosova, formally thanked the population for their outpouring of support: "Just as we stood by you during your darkest hour, so you are standing by us now during this time of our great national tragedy."

Montenegrin president Milo Djukanović and his Macedonian and Bosnian counterparts condemned the terrorist attacks and pledged to assist Washington in its struggle against the culprits. However, the Macedonian authorities similarly to the Serbian government also sought to portray the attacks in the United States as somehow equivalent to their own experiences with "Albanian terrorists."

Critics: Despite the overall positive East European response, some dissenting voices were heard from government circles in Yugoslavia and Belarus. Although Yugoslav federal president Vojislav Koštunica called the attacks “senseless and terrorist,” he also claimed that Washington’s attempts to “suppress differences between the world’s civilizations, religions, cultures, and customs” caused the growth of terrorism. This was clearly an illusion to the perception of nationalists, whether in or out of power, as U.S.-directed globalization and an attempt to portray Serbia as the front line against “antifundamentalism.”

Belarusian president Alyaksandr Lukashenka abruptly canceled a planned visit to the U.S. Embassy in Minsk where he was due to offer his condolences for the terrorist attacks, because of embassy regulations prohibiting filming on the embassy’s premises. The incident illustrated how the authoritarian and internationally ostracized Belarusian leader is seeking any opportunity to promote his legitimacy.

Implications: Most of the East European states seem eager to demonstrate their commitment to the U.S.-led campaign against international terrorism, but they are looking for leadership and guidance. Washington is therefore faced with a valuable opportunity to enlist both allies and supporters in the prolonged struggle against terrorism. An assessment of the strengths and potential contributions of each state therefore needs to be conducted. The states’ efforts could involve intelligence cooperation, the deployment of specialized military units, or regional initiatives that will help undercut the connections between political radicalism, organized crime, and transnational terrorist networks. The untapped resources of our willing partners in Eastern Europe could prove beneficial for all sides in combating terrorism on a global scale.

SLOVENIA IN THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM

By Borut Grgič

As the United States solidifies the global coalition against terrorism, the role of small states like Slovenia is still unclear. Given the multidimensionality of the war on terrorism, Slovenia no doubt is expected to play a role.

Due to its limited projection capability, it is highly unlikely that Slovenia will be called to participate in a military campaign: its Alpine forces may be an exception. However, in order for its role to be prominent, Slovenia must focus the bulk of its efforts on preventative engagement aimed at increasing domestic, as well as regional, security.

Prior to the September 11 attacks, Slovenia was on a fast track toward full EU membership, and a favorite for NATO’s second round of enlargement next fall. However, in light of the recent events, any decision to expand is likely to come later rather than sooner. States wishing to become members will have to take additional steps to prove themselves as stable and constructive contributors to the growth and stability of the international community.

In order to prove that Slovenia is a responsible contributor to the greater goals of the EU and NATO, Slovenian diplomacy will have to take the initiative in devising a substantial, strategic, and protracted response to the emerging global instability. The simple exchange of letters and obedient nodding at directives from Brussels and Washington is unlikely to improve Slovenia’s membership bids.

As a starting point, an accurate assessment of immediate, intermediary, and long-term needs within Europe and the larger North Atlantic setting is crucial. Allow me to emphasize what should come across as obvious: stability, stability, and stability! Be it in the domestic, regional, or global setting, this vital component is currently lacking from various security equations, and nations around the world, including the EU member states, are striving desperately to restore it.

In light of the recent attacks on America, measures adopted by the Slovenian parliament must exemplify a profound understanding of the security threats facing Europe. Acting as a ‘buffer zone’ between Europe and the Balkans, Slovenian policymakers needs to demonstrate that they have internalized the importance of Slovenia’s geostrategic location.

On the domestic front, Slovenia must make a concerted effort at improving its record of dealing with corruption and organized crime in its own territory. Currently classified under Tier 2 in the State Department’s report on trafficking in persons along side Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Hungary, Slovenia must embrace a series of legislative changes in order to deal with this problem effectively.

Border security is crucial for domestic stability and additional measures must be taken to secure the Slovenian-Croatian border. This means restricting immigration requirements, improving intelligence information-gathering systems, and increasing police powers. In order to do so, the government must adopt legislation that will devote substantial resources toward the development and improvement of existing infrastructure for combating domestic and transnational criminality.

In addition, economic reforms, primarily the redistribution of public economic spending, will have to be carried out if Slovenia is to tackle the problem of domestic organized crime effectively. Regional economic imbalances in Slovenia are a stimulus for domestic criminal networks.

On the international front, Slovenia has already signed bilateral agreements with both Albania and Macedonia on cooperation in the fight against terrorism, illicit drug trafficking, and organized crime. Acting as a third party, Slovenia could provide the initiative for trilateral cooperation between Albania, Macedonia, and Slovenia in formulating measures for managing what is seen as a shared problem—organized crime. Through regular consultations, the three countries could address issues of transborder criminality, border security, and regional economic and legal developments.

Further, Slovenia should cooperate with NATO to draft and oversee a more effective method for state control of small arms and light weapons in the region of lower-southeast Europe. In a broader context, Slovenia must take the initiative to improve the

existing mechanism for intelligence information-gathering, processing, and sharing within the region of Southeast Europe.

If unaltered, Slovenia's puzzling preference for diplomatic passivity toward stability in lower-Southeast Europe will significantly stall its integration into the European Union and NATO. The memory of the 1997 Madrid Summit, where Slovenia was dealt a harsh blow to by NATO members critical of its paltry involvement in the Southeast European region, is all too painful and embarrassing. Hopefully, Slovenian decisionmakers will apply the lessons learned and devise a purposeful role for Slovenia in the months to come.

MONITORING FREEDOM?

By Ilona Teleki

Since the September 11 attacks on the United States, the attention of the media and the world has been diverted to the horrific and despicable acts of terrorism committed on U.S. soil. This diversion of attention has drawn the accustomed level of international attentiveness away from the Central and East European region with potentially negative consequences. With domestic security now heightened, the perception of governments and societies, regarding what constitutes a serious internal threat, has been altered, resulting in discrimination against those who are perceived to threaten it.

Fears have been vocalized that the war on terrorism will lend an excuse to political parties and governments to more closely monitor the activities of its citizens, potentially infringing on minority rights. Representatives of the international community, in fact, have warned that the war on terrorism could be utilized in Macedonia and Serbia as an excuse to crack down on the Albanian minority. The war on terrorism provides an excuse to exert pressure on members of minority populations.

Many groups within the region are coming under surveillance. Following the attacks, the Albanian public order minister instructed police to check and investigate the identities of all Arabs living in the country. The Hungarian government also defended the need to monitor Muslims in its country. Borders have been tightened and certain ethnic and religious groups, mainly Muslims, are being watched.

In addition to surveillance, Yugoslavia announced plans to provide Macedonia with arms, evidently to help Macedonia resolve problems with its Albanian minority. Sporadic violence has broken out in Kosovo and free movement in the province has been severely limited due to fears for safety. This antiterrorist fervor has led to a vocalization of extremist groups in different parts of the region, including Vojvodina and Slovakia where graffiti has called for the expulsion of certain minority groups. In a Transylvanian town racist leaflets were disseminated condemning the Roma minority, as well as all others who are not ethnic Romanians.

Tensions have increased between Hungary and Romania since September 11. In addition to the continuing dispute over Hungary's Status Law, the press has reported several discriminatory statements made by government officials. For example, the Romanian prime minister complained of the Hungarian media "cartel" that must be broken due to its efforts to indoctrinate the Hungarian population. The prime minister has also made statements that Hungarian-language textbooks used in Hungarian schools must be printed in Romania in order to prevent other world visions from being taught to students. He later agreed that textbooks could be printed in Hungary provided they received the approval of Romanian authorities. Complaints were also filed regarding a Hungarian music compilation that the Romanian government deemed as revisionist. All of these events herald restrictions on free speech and mirror President Ion Iliescu's stated fears of spreading ideas of "federalization."

Iliescu has called for the maintenance of "national cohesion and national solidarity" and has alluded numerous times to the need to strengthen or restore the security and solidarity of the Romanian state. He has warned that the national unity of the Romanian state should not be undermined.

In the name of domestic security, any pressure exerted by minority groups, even pressures for governmental reform, may be viewed as threats towards domestic or state security. Already, the war on terrorism is beginning to negatively impact the plight of ethnic minorities in Central and Eastern Europe, even those who pursue their claims using peaceful methods. Minority groups within states that have historically had an obsessive desire for maintaining internal security are particularly at risk.

One questions whether discrimination would be present had terrorists not attacked the United States. With the international community's attention diverted to combating terrorism, have governments become less careful in their rhetoric or do they truly believe that internal threats are present and that homelands must be increasingly protected?

The countries of the region cannot lose sight of European integration and must strive to overcome obstacles and tensions by working within international frameworks. Too much progress has taken place during the past 10 years to begin making backward steps. The Central and East European states must be cognizant of the fact that their rightful and natural place in the global community is in Europe; the goal of joining the Euro-Atlantic community cannot be forgotten.

The Euro-Atlantic community also must not ignore, even in these trying times, that a united European front would be strengthened by the membership of the Central and East European states. It is precisely in such times of need that a fully integrated and whole Europe would have the greatest positive impact.

DON'T NEGLECT MACEDONIA

By Borut Grgič

Since the September attacks on the United States, many have speculated and even proposed a change to the character of international engagement in Macedonia. According to Timothy Garton Ash, a senior fellow at the Hoover Institute, “the United States has other priorities now, and the task of restoring peace in a country like Macedonia does not fit easily under the rubric of a war against terrorism.” This is a dangerous proposition. Remaining committed in Macedonia is of relevance, particularly for the Europeans.

The instability factor is pervasive in Macedonia. A failure to ensure compliance with the provisions outlined in the Ohrid Peace Accords—the Accords ended a seven-month long conflict between the Albanian guerillas and the Macedonian government forces—will not only crush the very fragile stability in lower-Southeast Europe, potentially destabilizing the larger Balkan area, but will also deal a harsh blow to the international antiterror coalition.

In light of recent events, and under apprehensive supervision by the international community, Macedonian president Boris Trajkovski has come under considerable domestic pressure to renege on his commitments as stated in the Ohrid Peace Accords. In his latest visit to Moscow, Trajkovski stated that the antiterror coalition should not only concentrate on Afghanistan but also on Macedonia. In other words, his comment was a polite invitation to the international community to reconsider the status of the Albanian guerillas, for as Trajkovski says, Macedonia too would like to benefit from this new coalition.

So far, the Macedonian parliamentary representatives have shown little desire to implement the accords—up to this point, only preliminary hearings have been held. In truth, many would like to follow the Bush example—no room for negotiation—in dealing with the Albanian guerillas in Macedonia. Recent claims by hard-line parliament speaker Stojan Andov and others over the alleged massacre of 12 Macedonians by Albanians in July seem to be a maneuver to reduce Western pressure.

If external pressure is withdrawn, this current half-commitment will almost certainly pass into upfront rejection of the peace process. Likewise, the slow efforts at reforms have notably increased dissatisfaction within the Albanian community where continued gunfire has been reported. The threat of violence spreading is real.

With a reemergence of fighting in Macedonia, violence could spill across borders. The ample Albanian minority throughout the lower-Southeast European region has frequently uttered the desire

for freedom and unity with Albania. Moreover, due to their fragile civil societies, the prospect for stability in places like Kosovo, Albania, and Bosnia is unclear if conflict restarts in Macedonia. Equally important is the crippling effect that any new violence may have on the functioning of the current global anti-terror coalition.

In the event of a return to violence in Macedonia, Russia, China, and in all likelihood the United States, would most certainly object to international efforts aimed at restricting the level and the type of government response. Consequently, the Muslim participants in the coalition fearing unbearable domestic pressure would most certainly stand up in protest.

Only protracted, continuous diplomatic engagement in Macedonia can ensure a stable grand coalition against terrorism. Having the ability to condition economic aid and European membership, the Europeans possess the means with which to coerce the Macedonian government into ratifying the Ohrid Accords. With the limited projection capabilities of many European states, stability in Macedonia would certainly be a major European contribution in the current struggle to restore international security.

If history is telling, an underestimation of the Balkan relevance to the new war on terrorism would be a foolish mistake. Europe has an indispensable role to play in Macedonia and any failure to live up to its role could significantly compromise stability in lower-Southeast Europe, and indeed, signal the beginning of the end of this new coalition against terrorism.

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