



Carl Bildt: A European Option for Peace

Talare

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Datum

22 januari 1999

Plats

Aten, Grekland

Omständigheter

Talet hölls på konferensen "Recent Developments in the Kosovo Region: Strategies and Options for a Peaceful Solution".

A European Option for Peace

We meet here today in Athens as the international community the Contact Group is meeting in London to discuss measures in order to ensure the full respect by all the parties to the conflict in and around Kosovo of the provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 1199.

By its actions over the past few days, the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have seriously provoked the international community. It is imperative that they agree to respect in full the provisions of the Security Council as well as the obligations it has itself undertaken.

The meeting of the Contact Group in London today follows a pattern that has become much too familiar during large parts of the 1990's.

Much too often, developments in South-eastern Europe have taken the outside world with surprise. Policy has often more been driven by the need to manage the one crisis after the other than by a long-term vision for how the different problems of the region can be solved.

It must not be our task here today to second-guess what the Contact Group will do in London, or the other measures which might be needed to secure full respect for UNSCR 1199 and other international obligations.

Our task is to discuss the wider and more long-term issues of a political settlement of Kosovo within a wider regional and European setting and framework.

It has to be understood that there simply is no military solution to the problem of Kosovo. At the end of the day, everyone will have to sit down and settle for a political arrangement that will provide security and stability for all, Albanians and Serbs alike, for the years ahead.

And the sooner this is done the better for all the peoples in the region.

We have much to learn from what happened in Bosnia. Nearly four years of war. Hundreds of thousands of dead. Half of the population displaced. The worst refugee situation of Europe since 1945.

And yet, the political solution agreed in Dayton in November 1995 in its outlines did not differ in any fundamental way from what had been provisionally agreed in Lisbon in February 1992, before the start of open hostilities.

How many lives were not lost in Bosnia due to the inability of political leaders to face the facts and agree on a political deal which did not meet the maximum demands of anyone, but did in fact meet the minimum demands of everyone.

But also the international community was to blame for the fact that the war in Bosnia went on for as long as it did. And I am thinking less of the lack of an adequate military response at key moments of the conflict than about the manifest inability of the international community to agree on a sufficiently clear and consistent plan for how to stop the war and build a peace.

It was futile to ask the parties to the conflict on the ground to agree to a political plan as long as the actors of the international diplomatic game were unable to do so. But when they did, and when they demonstrated that they were serious in their intent to get it accepted, the parties to the conflict finally agreed on what they should have agreed a long time ago.

In Kosovo today, the immediate objective must be to prevent the conflict from going from bad to worse. The threat of wide-scale civil and military violence in the months to come is a very real one. This must be prevented. It must be the task primarily of NATO to exert such pressure on all of the parties that this does not happen.

But the prevention of a deterioration of the conflict crucial as this is - is only a way to prepare the way for the political talk. They must be ready to go into the immediate issues, but they must also be held within a framework where it starts to be possible to consider more long-term solutions. There must be immediate steps and interim agreements, but there must also be a readiness to think about long-term solutions.

The conflict over the future of Kosovo can not be seen in isolation from the rest of the region in much the same way as previous conflicts in Croatia and in Bosnia could not. They have wider origins and they demand wider solutions.

In fact, we are dealing with the future of all of the states and the entities of the region. Of Croatia. Of Bosnia. Of Serbia and Montenegro. Of Albania. Of FYROM.

A solution in one case will have consequences in another case. No solution can be sought in isolation. We have to seek solutions within the framework of all of the challenges facing us in the area to the South of Slovenia and to the North of Greece.

We are thus faced with nothing less than the structures of national rights and European integration in this wider area.

Let's be frank: It is increasingly unlikely that there will be a long-term solution for the question of Kosovo within the framework of the present constitutional structure of Serbia. And I believe that those Serb leaders who are ready to think about the long-term options for their nation will be ready to accept the same conclusion. A Kosovo within Serbia will over time result in a Serbia in which the Serbs are in minority.

But equally important, I do not believe that the setting up of further independent states would further stability in the area. I fear the contrary would be the case. The problems of internal stability and economic development in Albania itself are already sufficiently challenging.

It is my belief that we must seek the solution to the political problem of Kosovo within the framework of a reformed and democratic Federal Republic of

Yugoslavia.

But it is also my belief that this will only be possible if this reformed Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, along with the other states of this region are part of a firm framework for security, co-operation and integration in the region and between the region and the European Union.

This should open up better prospects for the future for all the peoples and nations of the region. It is not a return to the rivalries of the past, but rather the opening up of the prospect of participation in co-operation and integration with the rest of Europe, which can offer a solution also to the domestic challenges of the states and nations of the region.

There will most certainly have to be numerous steps of an interim or more permanent nature along the road towards this goal. The internal situation of both Serbia and Albania the need for democracy and stability - obviously comes into the picture. So does the future of Montenegro.

I warmly welcome the initiative of the Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy to convene this important meeting here today. Hardly could they have known that the topic would be as topical as it has turned out to be.

And I am convinced that our discussions here today will stimulate the wider discussion that is necessary on the long-term political solutions for the area.

There is indeed a need for the important international and European institutions to start to consider the long-term wider solutions to the challenges of the area. It can no longer be a question of crisis management. It must not be discussions dominated by the need for exit strategies.

We must focus on entry strategies for the region into the wider structures of stability and integration in Europe. We must be ready to recognise that this area will be the true new Central Front of NATO in Europe when it comes to deterring war and guaranteeing peace in the years to come. We must be ready to see the challenges here as among the most important ones when it comes not only to the development of a true Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, including a military capability. And we must start to build on the so-called "Regional Approach" of the European Union in order to devise

the firm and broad structures of co-operation, integration and guarantees without which I fear that we will continue to see the one conflict and crisis in the area after the other.

As we are entering the 21st century, it is not disintegration, but rather integration, which represents the long-term road to both stability and development.

It is not the building of new barriers, but the dismantling of old barriers, which opens the gateways to a better future.

Kosovo is not only a crisis to handle in the hours and days ahead. Kosovo forces us to rethink the way our international structures are able to deal with challenges like this. And Kosovo forces us to rethink and reconsider our strategies for the wider area of which it is a part.

Only then we will be able to find a solution which brings peace to all the peoples of Kosovo and the other parts of the region.

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1990-tal, 1999, Man, Moderaterna, Politiska tal

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