

THE BIO-ENVIRONMENT AND THE THREATS OF LOCAL CONFLICTS

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Humankind is entering the third millennium facing considerable challenges in the field of security and stability. The threats to the bio-environment from global cataclysms in the twentieth century have been aggravated by not-less-dangerous local conflicts. The threat of a global conflict has been considerably minimised after the end of the Cold War; however, regional conflicts, especially in some states and some regions, have gained a tendency to their intensification.

The international community has not yet achieved a secure mechanism for such kinds of conflict resolution. Current international law, including the UN Charter, does not give an answer on the legitimacy of interference into domestic conflicts. How to avoid humanitarian disasters, especially concerning the aggravation of the problem of refugees and displaced persons? What should be the approaches to national problem resolution? How to protect human rights and freedoms, the violation of which may cause a crisis situation? How to achieve a political resolution of the above mentioned situations and the powerful measures capable of maintaining this resolution? How, in practice, to promote the realisation of the right of nations to self-determination and at the same time not to violate another right; a nation's right to territorial integrity, to borders that cannot be violated.

In the next century, humanity will not give proper answers to these and similar questions on the basis of yesterday's formulas and receipts. The tragedy of Kosovo, for example, is the result of a lack of answers on the part of interested nations to the above mentioned problems.

While founding the UN, the international community tried to save itself from inter-state conflict and external aggression which could provoke global catastrophe. Such a threat is not excluded at the moment, but over the last fifteen years cardinal changes have occurred in the world. The threat of a big global war was substantially reduced, but due to the disbandment of the world order, new threats and risks have appeared.

First of all, there are conflicts within a single country, which threaten peace and stability, thus causing serious international consequences. Annually, twenty-five to thirty such conflicts take place at any time, but only two of them at that moment are regarded as being international in character. These are the problems in the Middle East and Kashmir. All the rest are of a domestic character. This proves that humankind faces a new extremely dangerous situation: some kind of political and legal vacuum has occurred.

The basic question is whether international organisations are capable of interfering in a domestic conflict, how to combine this with fundamental international law and non-interference in the internal affairs of a single state, and, at the same time, not to allow the transformation of a domestic crisis into an international one.

When discussing current Balkan affairs, including Kosovo, we cannot avoid saying that neither the UN nor the OSCE have performed perfectly. That is why, in 1992, NATO was involved in peacekeeping operations in Bosnia. At that time, NATO performed peacekeeping in Bosnia under the auspices of the UN Security Council and, in general, it did well. In 1993, only NATO was able to realise monitoring to control illegal weapon traffic in Bosnia. Unfortunately, the UN and OSCE were not able to stabilise the situation in Kosovo and stop the inter-ethnic conflict. Again, NATO was involved but, unfortunately, at that time, in a contrary manner to 1992. It neglected international consensus and the image of NATO was seriously damaged.

Only several months after the bombing, NATO came to the logical scheme, and international forces started to operate under the UN auspices. It is extremely important to work out clear criteria for the UN, NATO and other international bodies' interference in such conflicts. Naturally, the presence of world organisations in an internal conflict is a very delicate matter, but it becomes more complicated when its presence demands the use of force.

The world community should learn a lot from the Balkan crisis, because the third millennium is expected to bring the process of global consensus. Internal socio-economic and national liberation processes will not approach their goals while ignoring the context of common safety, stability and co-operation, as well as the value of peace enforcement operations. At least, success in this field will be doubtful if it is being realised at the expense of the bio-environment.

One of the substantial tasks of bio-diplomacy is to widely and openly state that the national idea, however attractive it is, cannot be juxtaposed with international interests and the bio-environment.

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I would like to share some thoughts with you on the serious challenge and.....

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