

FRAMEWORKS OF SUB-REGIONAL COOPERATION IN SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

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- ♦ *Sub-regional cooperation in the region has a spectral geopolitical significance.*
- ♦ *The Black Sea region is one that harbors a multitude of actual or potential tensions.*
- ♦ *The deteriorating situation in Kosovo has shown that stability in the region is far from being achieved.*

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The South-Eastern European area shares with the Central European one the difficulty of defining its borders, due to the fact that, as in the Central Europe's case, several other non-geographic criteria apply or, to put it alternatively, because *political geography* gets the upper hand in its defining. Whereas nowadays referred to at times as a connotation-free substitute for the more compromised term „the Balkans”, more often than not, the term „South-Eastern Europe” is viewed as interchangeable with the former. Even when the advantage of opting for the „South-Eastern” variant, as to include countries that are defining themselves beyond the Balkan area or at its farthest limit such as Croatia and Romania is recognized in theory, in practice they are used indistinctly. The trend is running against the inter-war period tradition, when the concept of South-Eastern Europe used to designate a broader geographical area, both south *and* north as to Danube.

Sub-regional cooperation in the region has a special geopolitical significance. First, South-Eastern Europe is one of those sensitive zones, where not only the Heartland meets the Rimland¹, but also the Western-Catholic, Oriental-Orthodox, and Islamic civilizations, forged by the empires that dominated the area, intermingle. Second, history provides enough proof for stating that

Balkan crisis are, generally speaking, three-layered processes. They involve the conflicting parts (the local layer), the surrounding neighbors (the sub-regional or regional layer), and international actors (big individual powers and/or collective ones). Consequently, sooner or later, turmoil in the area has an in-built propensity to acquire a global character, either directly, i.e. in the form of full-fledged war (WWI), or indirectly, i.e. in the form of conflict resolution, crisis management, peacekeeping and peace-enforcement operations (post-Cold War crisis and war in the former Yugoslavia). Third, since the end of the Cold War the area has undergone fundamental reshaping both in „real thing" terms and their perception by outsiders. The Gulf war has led to a re-evaluation of the strategic significance of the area for monitoring the developments in the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, Eastern Europe and, to a certain extent, in the Near East. In its turn, and ironically enough, the war in ex-Yugoslavia has restored the area's significance in Europe and has ensured international involvement in the region. Fourth, it is in this area that European security risks are greatest and it is through involvement in South-Eastern Europe that NATO and EU are asserting their credibility and redefining their future roles and, to some extent, their enlargement policies. Fifth, the renewed interest in the area was re-enforced by the closing over of the debate regarding Central Europe, largely due to the decisions reached in the capital city of Spain in July 1997, and in Luxembourg in December 1997, by the help of which, the up till now narrowly understood Central Europe will become a part of nowadays Western Europe². More importantly, NATO and EU enlargement have raised the issue of how to foster a flexible enough new European political and security architecture as to include simultaneous membership in interlocking institutions and a „differentiated variable-geometry integration"³.

Be that as it may, the fact that this area of multiethnic and religious-diverse communities has been for quite a long time, and still is, the

1. Black Sea Economic Cooperation

The Black Sea region is one that harbors a multitude of actual or potential tensions. There are political tensions related to nationalist

stage of combat for contradictory interests, a hotbed of ethnic conflict and civil strife, historical and current bilateral disputes remains a sheer reality. What is more, from being said to be Europe's „powder keg", in light of recent developments, the Balkan region has ended up of being associated with the idea of never-ending conflict.

Leading the Balkans out of instability is clearly a collective Euro-Atlantic endeavor, but the primary responsibility falls upon the countries belonging to the region. Whereas NATO remains the principal crisis and conflict management instrument for the Balkans, due to its having those coercive means which could make credible the political decisions⁴, for the re-establishment of a durable peace and democracy's getting solid roots in the region, the sub-regional arrangements could contribute significantly. The fact that this area of seldom net security importers was not included in the first round of NATO and EU enlargements, has given way to the feeling that a re-enforcement of sub-regional arrangements could help balance its current unstable situation and economic backwardness⁵. However, given the enormous challenges of reform facing most South-Eastern European states, the dissimilar levels of their national economic development, their lack of economic resources, the rather stagnating if not deteriorating political situation in the former Yugoslavia, and the fact that regional cooperation in the region is predominantly a conscious, political „top-down" process, rapid advances in region-building should not be expected. What is more, due to the rather widespread hesitancy to engage in more binding cooperative relationships either for fear that such arrangements might be considered a satisfactory substitute or that sub-regional association (especially with non-EU associates) might impede the candidacy of individual states to NATO and EU, sub-regional cooperation in the area is bound to keep a basically low-institutionalized profile.

movements, ethnic upheavals, and territorial claims, economic ones due to differences in overall development and clashing interests as far

as the extraction and transport of natural resources (basically oil and gas) are concerned, social ones connected to forced and illegal immigration, as well as destabilizing „new threats" such as illegal trading and trafficking of arms, nuclear material and drugs, terrorism, and organized crime. Is no wonder, thus, that the area has witnessed throughout the last decade so many conflicts, including the ones pertaining to the status of Crimea and of the Black Sea fleet, or to the ethnically-mixed regions of Trans-Dniester, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Chechnya, and Nagorno-Karabakh⁶. Starting as a process in 1990⁷, but officially established with the signing up of the Istanbul Declaration on 25 June 1992, at a time when the Balkans and the Caucasus were witnessing great turmoil, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) took shape on the basis of the principles laid down in the Helsinki Final Act (1975), the Charter of Paris for a New Europe (1990) and other CSCE documents. Built upon „shared values such as democracy based on human rights and fundamental freedoms, prosperity through economic liberty and social justice, and equal security for all" member states, BSEC grew out of the idea that the Black Sea should become a sea of peace, stability and well-being⁸. Promoted as a basically Turkish initiative, it currently comprises, besides Turkey, ten other countries, including Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Greece and Moldova, that is countries from the Black Sea area properly speaking, the Balkans and the Caucasus. Seven states, including Austria, the Arab Republic of Egypt, Israel, Italy, Poland, Slovak Republic and Tunisia are currently enjoying observatory status. Furthermore, ten other countries have expressed their desire to become either full members, including the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Iran and Uzbekistan, or observers, including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Cyprus, Jordan and Kazahstan.

Its current and prospective membership is proof to the fact that it has generated a great deal of interest, managing to involve in its doings

even countries located far from the Black Sea region, and with different geographic size, economic and military potentials, cultural and social traditions, and official statuses vis-à-vis NATO and EU. However, the advantage provided by the fact that the bulk of the countries it comprises are emerging markets is, at the same time, its main liability: with the partial exceptions of Greece and Turkey there are no major „sponsor" states and coagulant powers of this forum and, among the two, only Greece is both a EU and NATO member. That is why, the BSEC projects depend heavily on international money that was not always readily available. Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, whereas being at different stages of development, share a close relationship with the EU, the first two through Europe Agreements and the last through the customs union. As applicants for EU membership, their economies are currently in a process of adapting themselves to meet the EU criteria. The Russian Federation and Ukraine have both ties with the EU by way of partnership agreements. Rich in natural resources, with a strong industrial infrastructure and currently undergoing reform targeting a free market economy, they are expected to be important partners of the EU-led economic development on the continental level. As for Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Moldova, political instability and indeterminate economic direction not only impedes development, but magnifies investment risks associated with the area as a whole, generating, at the same time, dependence on international aid⁹.

As the most diverse sub-regional arrangement in East Central Europe, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation aims at accelerating the economic, social and technological development of the member countries and encouraging free enterprise and good neighborly relations in the Black Sea area through bilateral and multilateral cooperation. From an organizational point of view, initially the initiative was wholly financed, hosted and provided with secretariat work by Turkey and the implementation of concrete projects was rather scarce. Since 1994-95, a Permanent

International Secretariat (PERMIS), headed by Ambassador E. Kutovoy, was established, a second summit, that paved the way for implementing concrete projects took place (Bucharest, June 1995), and more and more countries have started to host working group meetings and to contribute to its budget¹⁰. As a key element and a driving force behind the BSEC projects, the private sector from the BSEC participating states established in December 1992 its own mechanism, namely the BSEC Council. The first BSEC business forum, meant to stimulate a more active involvement of the private sector in the BSEC projects as to guarantee their fulfillment, took place in Bucharest on 25-28 April 1996¹¹. The establishing of the Parliamentary Assembly of the BSEC (PABSEC) in February 1993¹² has added a new dimension to the framework and enhanced its effectiveness: now the national parliaments were able to pass legislation needed for the implementation of decisions reached under the BSEC aegis. Other important BSEC *institutional* achievements include the setting up of an Association of Trade and Industry Chambers, of a Black Sea Trade and Development Bank in Thessaloniki, Greece, of a Balkan and Black Sea Center for Cooperation between Small and Medium-Size Enterprises in Bucharest, Romania, of a Black Sea University in Constanța, Romania and of an International Center for Black Sea Studies in Athens, Greece.

Relying on advantages provided by geographic proximity, economic complementarity, similar reform processes and structural adjustments targeting the market economy, and a potential market of about 322 million consumers¹³, the member countries of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation have developed a large spectrum of cooperative ties. These include joint projects on transportation (including a ring road around the Black Sea basin), energy (including a „Black Sea energy ring“)¹⁴, telecommunications, science and technology, informatics, industry, agriculture, trade, banking and finance, statistical data, tourism, environment, health, education and culture. Among them, some have been backed by important European and international

organizations, such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and the International Finance Corporation (IFC). Yet, the joint outcome of the generally scarce financial resources, absence of mutually accepted legal obligations, economic problems facing most BSEC states, and tensions in bilateral relations, has been a „lack of progress in implementing“ projects agreed upon¹⁵.

Having as its decision-making body the biannual meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the member countries, getting institutionalized at different levels, including the heads of state and government, the ministerial, the high officials, the experts, the parliamentary, the private sector, the local administration, the NGOS, and the academic levels, and obtaining its juridical status as a genuine regional organization¹⁶, now under scrutiny is an agreement on principles of investment cooperation¹⁷ and the prospective setting up of a customs union and a free-trade area¹⁸. To this latter end, „a mechanism for close cooperation on the western model, aiming to promote free movement of persons, capital, goods and services between the various member states, to simplify customs formalities“ was set up¹⁹.

Certainly, a major problem in the Black Sea area is pollution²⁰. Among the ecological risks that endanger the region's ecosystem, one could point to industrial waste discharge, urban expanse and population growth, shipping and oil transport disasters, limitless fishing. Most of the pollution's negative consequences can have an indirect impact on security, as a deterioration in people's living conditions and economic problems associated with pollution can negatively influence political stability and provoke inter-state disputes over shared fishing resources or the origins of various types of pollution. Since the BSEC was set up, a growing ecological awareness manifested itself within the participating states. On 10-12 July 1996, the first interparliamentary conference on environmental protection in the Black Sea area was co-organized by the PABSEC and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of

Europe in the capital city of Turkey. On this occasion a five-point declaration, launching a set of provisions addressed both to the Black Sea coastal and Mediterranean states, and asking for 1998 to be declared a preservation year for the Black Sea and Mediterranean ecosystems, was adopted. Thus, appropriate legislative measures, actively implementing the 1992 Bucharest Convention on Protecting the Black Sea Against Pollution (which came into force on 15 January 1994), are expected to evolve²¹. In addition, a seminar on computerized modeling of the Black Sea ecosystem was organized on 16 September 1996 in Istanbul by NATO under its Science for Stability program²².

As a soft security provider in the area, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation starts from the premise that economic cooperation is one of the best confidence-building measures²³. Truly, the fact that the Black Sea Economic Cooperation has managed to bring together even the area's warring parties around pragmatic economic aims, is proof enough of its contribution in fostering peace and stability. Whereas not being entrusted with a disarmament-oriented, peacemaking or peacekeeping mechanisms and, thus, not having a direct security function²⁴, BSEC has a more subtle, indirect security role to play. It promotes tolerance and peaceful coexistence, it fights racism, xenophobia and discrimination, it fosters cooperation in cases of natural and man made catastrophes and it creates an environment which is more propitious to diminishing migratory pressures.

In the last couple of years, the fight against terrorism and organized crime has got a prominent place on the grouping's security agenda. This is proved by the signing, on 25 October 1996, of the Moscow Declaration, that binds the participating states to adopt concrete measures for opposing organized crime, violence, terrorism, illegal drugs,

weapons and radioactive materials trafficking and illicit immigration, as well as by the fact that two meetings of the BSEC ministers of internal affairs devoted to these issues took place on October 1996 and October 1997, respectively²⁵. Currently, BSEC develops cooperation with other international, regional and sub-regional institutions such as the EU, the OSCE, the UN Economic Commission for Europe, the Council of Europe, the Arab League, the Economic Cooperation Organization, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the CEI and the Euro-Mediterranean Initiative²⁶.

To sum up, set up as a „top-down" initiative, the BSEC has gradually transformed itself in a more „bottom-up" one, securing a prodigality of contacts at all levels, including national governments and parliaments, local authorities, the private sector and academia²⁷. Originally a loose framework for discussion common problems among the coastal states, the BSEC has evolved in time as a fairly large and an important sub-regional organization to the degree that its aims and its concrete achievements in economic, infrastructure, cultural and environmental areas are concerned. Yet, the international business community's involvement in the BSEC projects is still inadequate and badly needed. An enlarged BSEC is considered able to enforce the Black Sea basin's function as of a bridge towards Central Europe (through the Main-Rhine-Danube channel), the Caspian Sea, Central Asia, South-Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East regions. What is more, since in the years to come is to be expected that more BSEC participating states would be integrated into the EU, whereas others would remain parts of the CIS, the BSEC would represent, then, a meeting point between two important, albeit hardly comparable, integrative systems.

2. Multilateral Balkan/South-Eastern European Cooperation

The foreign affairs ministers' conference of the Balkan states or the Multilateral Balkan Cooperation is an initiative that goes back, as far as its roots are concerned, to a February 1988 meeting

in Belgrade. At that time it was considered, perhaps rightly so, a success bringing simultaneously an EC and NATO country (Greece), a NATO state (Turkey), three CMEA

and WTO participating states (Bulgaria, Romania and Albania), and a non-aligned country (Yugoslavia). When they met in Belgrade, the foreign affairs ministers of the then six Balkan countries thought that despite the diverse social, political and economic systems of their respective countries, a new approach to security, based on the principles laid down in the Helsinki Final Act (1975), could be envisaged²⁸. In spite of the fact that some follow-up meetings at governmental, ministerial and expert levels were organized in the next two and half years²⁹, due to constrain imposed by the still in place at that moment bipolar order, the outcomes were not up to the expectations. A combination of favorable premises provided by the post-Cold War environment and typical wishful thinking, has nurtured the idea that a genuine Balkan Forum for security and cooperation could evolve. The idea was put forward by Romania on the occasion of the second meeting of foreign affairs ministers of the Balkan countries, which took place in Tirana on 24-25 October 1990³⁰. This rather naïve expectation was severely contradicted by the break up of the war in the former Yugoslavia. These developments have prevented not only the fostering of a security and cooperation forum, but the establishment of a stable environment in the region, too. What is more, the area has witnessed a „re-Balkanization“, which has considerably delayed its drive towards Euro-Atlantic integration. New hopes for a somehow revived Balkan cooperation were raised only with the conclusion of the Dayton Peace Accords, which have created a workable³¹ framework both for peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina and wider stabilization in the area³².

In effect, the re-launching of the Multilateral Balkan Cooperation took place in Sofia on 6-7 July 1996. Recognizing that cooperation in the area has already its history and traditions, the ministers pledged themselves to promote good neighborly relations and to transform it into a region of stability, security, and cooperation. This aim was reconfirmed by the Salonika (Thessaloniki) meeting on 9-10 June 1997, which, in addition to this, put a special emphasis on trade liberalization and infrastructure projects³³. A real turning point

occurred on the occasion of the Crete summit on 3-4 November 1997.

Meeting for the first time in this Greek island – recalling a by-gone flourishing civilization, the Heads of State and Government of Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), and Bosnia-Herzegovina (as observer) committed themselves to bring the cooperation of their respective countries to a new start. Several moves are indicative for the seriousness of this commitment. First, the fact that the initiative has been transformed from a „Balkan“ cooperation into a „South-Eastern“ one. It is logical to assume that by changing the official geographic designation of the area, the participating states wanted to alleviate disagreeable connotations which presumably have precluded countries belonging to the area such as Croatia and Slovenia (currently CEI members) to go into the framework³⁴. Second, the summit's *Joint Statement* clearly laid down the premises of South-Eastern cooperation, including the principles of pursuing cooperation „on a mutual and equal basis“ and of promoting the state of law, the protection of human rights, individual freedoms and a market economy; the commitment to the UN Charter, the Paris Charter for a new Europe and the Helsinki Final Act; the „European orientation“ of the countries concerned as a common goal³⁵ and „an integral part of their political, economic and social development“; and their „cultural and religious diversity“ as „a powerful source of inspiration, creativity and dynamism“³⁶. Third, the domains of cooperation were better circumscribed. These include the economy in general and investments in particular, infrastructure, transport, energy, and the fight against organized crime, terrorism, and illegal practices such as drugs smuggling, arms trafficking, and illicit immigration. Fourth, on account of the regular political consultations convened upon (once a year at the level of Ministers of Foreign Affairs³⁷ and every three months at the level of Political Directions), as well as of the intended joint Secretariat, a prospective institutionalization was envisaged.

What is more, by the help of the firm support committed to „already existing regional initiatives such as the Royaumont, SECI, BSEC, CEI", a positive interaction with other sub-regional arrangements involving different country members was established³⁸.

Yet, it is still to be seen if these generous premises would be fulfilled. The deteriorating situation in Kosovo has shown that stability in the region is far from being achieved. From this viewpoint, the next ministerial meetings and summits, which are going to be hosted by Turkey (1998) and Romania (1999), should

3. *Royaumont Process*

The Process of Stability and Good-neighborliness in Southeast Europe or the Royaumont Process is an offspring of the post-Dayton security environment. Its inception is tightly connected to the Peace Conference on Bosnia-Herzegovina that took place in the capital city of France on 14-15 December 1995. Meeting in Royaumont prior to the conference (13 December), the participants to it conceived the process that later on was to be known by the name of the city where it was launched, as an extension of the European Stability Pact. It was to be tested whether the ideas promoted by the Pact reached under the OSCE aegis could be applied in South-Eastern Europe⁴¹. Transformed later on into an EU initiative for promoting good-neighborly relations among the countries in the area by jointly-undertaken projects, the Royaumont process comprises now all South-Eastern European states - the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia included - as well as two leading international actors, namely the United States and the Russian Federation. It offers a framework for harmonizing international and

further deepen the practical sides of the initiative, including by exploring the possibility and feasibility of developing confidence and security building measures (CSBMs) with a sub-regional scope. Conceived mainly as constituting parts of a culture of ethnic conflict diffusion, appropriate CSBMs (e.g., naval ones) would, thus, complement those which could be reached under the proposed North Atlantic Council „Balkan dialogue" framework³⁹ or President Clinton's recently launched Southeast Europe Action Plan⁴⁰.

sub-regional approaches in the area, for a coordinated action in dealing with South-Eastern European affairs, in order to reach stability and security in the Balkans as part of a united Europe. The envisaged projects are supervised by a Coordinator who acts, at the same time, as contact person with other cooperation arrangements. Currently, the Royaumont Process is focusing on trans-border cooperation projects (financed by PHARE funds), as well as on projects meant to contribute to the flourishing of the civil society in the region (sponsored by the EU, different countries interested in, international organizations, and NGOs).

There are good grounds for considering the late positive development of Romania's relationships with its neighbors (Hungary, Ukraine), as a possible example and an inspirational source to be followed by other South-Eastern European states in their efforts for settling together their border and minority disputes in the framework of the Royaumont process⁴².

4. *Southeast European Cooperation Initiative*

Officially launched on 6 December 1996 in Geneva⁴³ by Ambassador Richard Schifter, Special Adviser to the U.S. President, the U.S.-sponsored Southeast European Cooperation Initiative (SECI) is the last but no least sub-regional cooperation initiative being developed in the region. Coordinated by former Vice-Chancellor of Austria, Dr. Erhard Busek, and using primarily economic means, SECI aims at

promoting a long-term security and stability climate in Southeastern Europe. One of its distinctive feature is its membership that comprise countries from both Balkans and Central Europe, including Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, FYROM, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Romania, Moldova and Hungary. That amounts to the fact that, *up till now*, letting aside the notable but

circumstantial absence of the FRY from its membership, it is the only sub-regional arrangement in East Central Europe that tends to match the genuine inter-war tradition referring to South-Eastern Europe as a region stretching both north and south as to Danube. The fact that Central European-oriented countries such as Hungary, Slovenia and perhaps Croatia are members of the initiative is also proof to the fact that despite at times attempts of instrumentalization of political geography in the area, the USA favors a more scientific, balanced and traditional approach to the concept of South-Eastern Europe. Yet, the strongest weakness of SECI is precisely the FRY's not being a part of the initiative, in spite of an initially addressed invitation to take part in it⁴⁴. This was resented very strongly in Belgrade, who interpreted SECI at times in a malevolent and cynical manner as a new means to keep busy „the U.S. institutions and individuals which will disseminate knowledge on the market economy like well-paid missionaries of the free enterprise ideology"⁴⁵. In fact, by helping the setting up of a business friendly environment in South-Eastern Europe which would be the basis for attracting new private foreign investments, not only the U.S. firms' interests, but primarily those of the region at large would be met. By focusing on a more active implication of the private sector from the participating countries in bi- and multilateral economic development, the SECI projects are expected to remove some of the problem areas that currently impede business development, to attract foreign capital, to accelerate the process of self-reliance and integration into the market economy of the area, and to help bring about confidence, security and stability in the region. As the promoter of the initiative, Ambassador Richard Schifter have put it: „We are willing to contribute for this part of the world to integrate into Europe" by getting „down to specifics, the nitty-gritty"⁴⁶. Basically a program of a self-help nature, SECI enjoys, nonetheless, the backing of the USA, Austria, Switzerland, the Russian Federation, the EU troika, the European Commission, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the World Bank, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Six projects have been approved on the occasion of the first Agenda Committee meeting on 29

January 1997. They pertain to *border crossing* (the project on „Trade facilitation: actions to overcome operational difficulties", coordinated by Greece); *transport and infrastructure* (the project on „Transport infrastructure: identification of bottlenecks along main international corridors in the SECI region and short-term measures to remove them", coordinated by Bulgaria); *investment promotion* (the project on „Financial policies to promote SMEs through microcredit and credit guarantee schemes", coordinated by Romania); *energy* (the projects on „Energy efficiency demonstration zones network in south eastern Europe", coordinated by Hungary, and „Interconnection of natural gas networks, diversification of gas supply and improvement of security of supply in south eastern Europe", coordinated by Bosnia-Herzegovina, respectively); and *environment* (the „Danube Recovery Programme", coordinated by Austria)⁴⁷.

On the occasion of the Salonic meeting (June 1997) a Consultative Council of the business people for SECI, co-presided by Greece and Turkey, was established. Eventually, in early May 1998, a SECI regional center for fighting organized crime was set up in Bucharest, Romania, thus an incipient security dimension being established. Now the priority concern for fluidization of the trans-border traffic, the setting up of a regulatory Advisory Unit for telecommunications in Budapest, the establishing of a banking consortium in the SECI region, and the unlocking of the trans-European transport corridors⁴⁸.

But the new American activism in the South-Eastern Europe has upset many people: not only the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, because it has been left out, but traditional sub-regional key players in the region such as Russia and Greece. On the occasion of the Salonika (Thessaloniki) meeting of the Balkan foreign ministers (9-10 June 1997), the latter launched their own initiative in the area (which includes, among its tentative members, FRY) meant to counter the new assertiveness of American foreign policy in the region. This is proof to the fact that Russia still sees South-Eastern Europe as a region made up of countries located in its traditional zone of responsibility.

Yet, with the exception of its co-promoter, Greece, interested to secure Russia's cooperative

attitude as far as the construction of the Burgas-Alexandroupolis oil pipeline is concerned, the basically Russian move has been met with a cautious response from the targeted countries.

Interestingly enough, besides all Russian apprehensions, the U.S. would like to see SECI developing in near future, besides its primary economic dimension and its incipient security one, a political dimension as well. As pointed out by Ambassador Shifter on the occasion of the Bucharest meeting of the Consultative Council of the businessmen for SECI (September 1997), there are hopes and good premises to envisage SECI becoming, with the decisive contribution of Romania and, later on, Bulgaria, an important tool for reaching out „normalcy" in the relationships between Greece and Turkey. In this prospective development of the new framework, it is considered that the

strategic partnership between the U.S. and Romania could play a key role.

To sum up, the last years have witnessed an impressive multiplication of sub-regional cooperation fora in South-Eastern European area. Having a long and fruitful tradition, rooted mainly in the inter-war period, the sub-regional cooperation in the South-Eastern European region re-emerged later than the Central European one in the post-Cold War era. However, it proved itself to be a more dynamic process. The problem with all these fora is the fact that there is an obvious overlapping as far as their cooperation fields, concrete projects, and responsibilities are concerned. An excessive proliferation of sub-regional cooperation frameworks in the area, and a loose connection between them could have adverse effects. That is why a better coordination between them is highly desirable.

1. For the two geopolitical concepts and the relationship between them see Nicholas Spykman, *The Geography of Peace* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1944), p. 43.

2. For the Madrid NATO summit see *NATO Review*, Vol. 45, No. 4, July-August 1997. For the Luxembourg EU summit see the „Presidency Conclusions" of the Luxembourg European Council, December 12-13, 1997, pp. 1-6.

3. Sophia Clément, „South-Eastern Europe - a differentiated approach?", in the WEU Institute for Security Studies' *Newsletter*, No. 22, February 1998, p. 1. Pointing to as diverse security mechanisms as the EU's Royaumont process, the extension of WEU Associate Partner status, NATO's PfP and EAPC, and OSCE' Stability Pact, the author labels them „indirect" enlargement.

4. See Arthur Paeht, Willem van Eekelen (corapporteurs), *La stabilité dans les Balkans: le rôle des institutions de sécurité européenne*. Project de raport general, Assemblée de l'Atlantique Nord, [AP 198 CC (97) 14], 1er septembre 1997, pp. 27-28.

5. Sophia Clément, „L'Europe du Sud-Est apres les élargissements de L'Union européenne et de l'Otan", in *Relations Internationales et Stratégiques*, no. 28, hiver 1997, pp. 141 et 144.

6. See Dr. Ercan Ozer, *The Black Sea Economic Cooperation and Regional Security*, in *Perceptions*, Vol. 2, No. 3, September-November 1997, pp. 77 and 84-8; also Svante E. Cornell, „The Unruly Caucasus", in *Current History*, October 1997, pp. 341-7 and Uwe Halbach, „The Caucasus as a Region of Conflict", in *Aussenpolitik*, IV/1997, pp. 358-67. In view of their political unsettled situation, Zbigniew Brzezinski considers three states in the Caucasus (Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia), together with Afghanistan and five countries in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) as the „Eurasian Balkans". See Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard, American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives* (Basic Books - Harper Collins Publishers, 1997) pp. 123-4.

7. A meeting of representatives of four coastal countries, i.e. Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, and USSR took place in Ankara on 19-20 December 1990.

8. See „Declaration on Black Sea Economic Cooperation", Istanbul, June 25, 1992, p. 1.

9. See *Parliamentary cooperation in the Black Sea area*. Report submitted on behalf of the Committee for Parliamentary and Public Relations by Sir John Hunt, Rapporteur, with a contribution from Ms Aytaman, associate Rapporteur, Assembly of Western European Union, Forty-Second Session, Document 1544, November 4, 1996, pp. 5-6.

10. By 1996, eight out of eleven states have hosted working group meetings and all BSEC participating states were contributing to its budget. See Ayşe Yener Kolat, „Black Sea Economic Cooperation in Perspective", in *Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3, Fall 1996, p. 24.

11. See a forum's coverage, for instance, in *Curierul Național*, April 26, 1996, p. 4 and April 27, 1996, p. 3.

12. PABSEC has three constructing committees: the Economic, Commercial Technological and Environmental Affairs Committee; the Legal and Political Affairs Committee and the Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee. See Hunt and Aytaman, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

13. See „Lumea Mării Negre în mișcare", in *Curierul Național*, June 28, 1995, p. 5.

14. Cf. *Multi-Layered Integration: The Sub-Regional Dimension*. Summary of an Inter-Governmental Conference; Bucharest, 7-8 October 1996. Prepared by Dr. Andrew Cottey, Project Manager, European Security Programme, with support from other IEWS Staff and research assistance from Thomas Chojnecki, IEWS Warsaw Centre, December 1996, p. 11.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

16. That occurred on the occasion of the Kiev (Kyiv) meeting of the ministers of foreign affairs of the BSEC on 22 October 1997, when the Charter of the BSEC was endorsed. According to it, the BSEC is a Regional Economic Organization with clearly defined areas of cooperation. See *Thesis*, Vol. 1, No. 3, Autumn 1997, p. 53; also „CEMN se schimbă la față după modelul suratelor occidentale”, in *Ziua*, October 23, 1997, p. 4.

17. *Multi-Layered Integration*, p. 11.

18. Paradoxically enough, a BSEC „insider” argues that the initiative „does not envisage a free area, nor a prospective customs unions”. See Kolat, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-3.

19. Hunt and Aytaman, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

20. Currently, the Black Sea is polluted by all Central European countries, which discharge industrial waste into the Danube, by the six coastal countries and by the rivers of ten riparian countries. *Ibidem*, p. 17.

21. Implementing the Convention is also the aim of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), a regional international project devoted to the environmental management and the protection of the Black Sea. *Ibidem*, p. 18.

22. *Ibidem*, pp. 7-8.

23. Nicolae Micu, „Black Sea Economic Co-operation (BSEC) - As A Confidence-Building Measure”, in *Perceptions*, Vol. I, No. 4, December 1996-February 1997, pp. 68-75.

24. At times, there were unsuccessful attempts to ascribe to the BSEC a higher security profile. See, for instance, the contents of the security remit proposed in June 1994, by the then President of Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk, in Hunt and Aytaman, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

25. Ozer, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-2.

26. Hunt and Aytaman, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

27. Ozer, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

28. Cevikoz, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

29. Nastase, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

30. The rather generalized enthusiasm, at that moment, for the Balkan cooperation is reflected by the fact that some 100 proposals were submitted on this occasion, *Ibid.*, pp. 173-4.

31. For a rather critical view on the Dayton Peace Accords see Jonathan Eyal, „Eastern Europe: A Critique of the Western Perspective”, in *Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States 1997*, third edition (Europa Publications Limited, 1997), pp. 7-8.

32. Cevikoz, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

33. See „Salonika Declaration of Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Co-operation in the Balkans” in *Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 48, June 15, 1997, pp. 3-7.

34. Up to a certain extent, the move is similar to the one pertaining to the broader framework of cooperation in Central Europe, that changed its official denomination in 1993 in order to better underline its reach and openness. In this case, though, there was no unpleasant connotations associated with the previous denomination.

35. Cevikoz, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

36. See „Joint Statement by the Heads of State and Government of Countries of South-Eastern Europe”, Heracleion, Crete, 4 November, 1997, in *Thesis*, Vol. 1, No. 3, Autumn 1997, pp. 48-9.

37. Lately, for a more efficient and coordinated political and economic action of the initiative, it became a practice to convoke concomitantly the foreign affairs ministries' meeting and the member state' businessmen forum.

38. *Ibidem*.

39. Cf. Peacht and Eckelen, p. 31.

40. Cf. Talbot, *op. cit.*, p. 6; also Susan Braden, „U.S. Strategy and Action Plan for South-Eastern Europe”. Paper presented at the PIP seminar *Security in South-Eastern Europe*, Bucharest, April 27-28, 1998.

41. See „Declaration of the Process of Stability and Good Neighbourliness”, Royaumont, Paris, December 13, 1995.

42. Adrian Pop, „The Sub-Regional Cooperation in Central and South-Eastern Europe”. Paper presented at the Balkan colloquium *The Culture of Cultural Cohabitation in the Balkans*, Varna, October 15-17, 1997.

43. The first session of the representatives of the invited countries took place at the U.S. Mission to the UN in Geneva.

44. Due to the fact that FRY was facing domestic political turmoil at that time on the streets of Belgrade, the initial invitation was later on declined.

45. See Ljubisa Adamovic, „Economic Reintegration of Southeastern Europe”, in *Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 48, April, 15, 1997, pp. 3-11.

46. Apud Constantine Buhayer, „Greece/Russia: Russia given free ride into Balkans”, in *Jane's Intelligence Review-Pointer*, Vol. 4, No. 8, August 1, 1997, p. 3.

47. For a complete overview of the six projects see *A Good Start for the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI)*, United Economic Commission for Europe, Press Release, Geneva, January 30, 1997, pp. 1-4.

48. Cf. „*Inițiativa de cooperare în sud-estul Europei (SECI)*”, in MFA Fact Sheet. OSCE, Council of Europe and Sub-regional Cooperation Division (Bucharest: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 1997).