

REVIEWING SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN SECURITY CO-OPERATION

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The present study starts from the premise that stabilising SEE is a joint international community and regional endeavour. Neither regional integration single-handedly nor the European integration alone can stabilise the SEE region. Consequently, deciphering which initiatives – international, European, regional, or a combination of them – have been effective in improving the security climate and on what level is a prerequisite for a robust security

strategy in the region. A tentative of 'best practices' approach could offer some hints as to how better co-ordinate the European integration process with the regional co-operation one, thus overcoming the current tension between the principles of bilateral conditionality as the essential basis of both European integration and Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP), on the one hand, and regionalism, on the other.

Regional top-down initiatives

The increased involvement of EU, NATO and OSCE in processes revolving around regional co-operation has been a constant feature of the security environment in SEE. The bits and pieces of the recently achieved stability in the Balkans are to be ascribed largely to the externally imposed presence of the international community.

The Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe: A central conviction behind the Stability Pact concept was that many SEE problems are increasingly regional in scope. Among these challenges, the security-related ones are perhaps the most fitted for such an approach. Thus, the Stability Pact has developed a series of security-related initiatives, including the Stability Pact Anti-Corruption Initiative (SPAI), the Stability Pact Initiative against Organised Crime in South-eastern Europe (SPOC), the Asylum and Migration Initiative, the Regional Return Initiative (RRI), the Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings, the Task Force for the Co-

operation and Development of Border Management in SEE, the Working Group on Regional Civilian Police Training, various initiatives in the area of proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW), including a Regional Implementation Plan and the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre (RACVIAC) near Zagreb, Croatia.

As far as SPAI is concerned, it has made some progress in the past year and a half, due to the remarkably work of the OECD and the Council of Europe. It has produced an action plan that lists priority actions for participating states, it has established a peer review mechanism and it has set up an Operative Secretariat. Out of seven priority actions, three could be considered to be more substantial: reviewing national legislation related to transparency in government procurement; inviting experts to review the effectiveness of various ways to fight corruption related to foreign

development assistance; and announcing plans to provide significant public access to sensitive information in order to expose corruption. However, overall, SPAI lacks effective mechanisms and sufficient resources to move from strategy to implementation.

The implementation of anti-corruption actions has not been very successful also due to the fact that it has been entirely dependent on the local anti-corruption programmes already underway, which, in some cases, have been launched more on paper than in reality.

In its turn, a year and a half after its launching in Sofia on 5 October 2000, SPOC has not fulfilled the expectations put in it. National policies and strategies against organised crime, inter-agency co-operation and the setting up of multi-disciplinary national co-ordination mechanisms and specialised unit to deal with this increasingly worrying phenomenon are in their infant stage; the legislation to fight organised crime, money laundering and corruption has still major loopholes; and there is no clear-cut relationship between major existing initiatives in the field, such as 'Octopus II' programme jointly run by the Council of Europe and the European Commission, aimed at helping states in transition fight corruption and organised crime or the EU initiative launched by British Prime Minister Tony Blair in Spring 2001 to help countries fight trafficking through seconding multinational teams of EU experts. It goes without saying that the said circumstances impede upon one of SPOC's major declared aims, namely a strengthened regional and international co-operation. It is expected that the incoming setting up of a SPOC executive secretariat at the SECI Regional Centre for Combating Trans-border Crime in Bucharest, aimed to strengthen co-operation between the regional crime centre, Europol and Interpol and to assess the legal, institutional and technical conditions for the exchange of information, will partially fix this problem. What SPOC really needs is a thorough Assessment Phase, similar to that of SPAI, along the lines of the already agreed upon 'Country reviews and priorities for reform document'. Such a review process should

focus on three intertwined areas: exchange of information; national legislation; and judicial co-operation.

Similarly to SPOC, for about a year after its setting up in Vienna in September 2000, the Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings, headed by the OSCE's Office of Democratic Initiatives and Human Rights (ODIHR), was rather loosely connected with relevant countries and organisations involved in training activities aimed at countering human trafficking. This was particularly strange due to the fact that all co-ordinators of the seven priority areas initially considered for urgent action were outside institutions: UNICEF for awareness raising, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development for training and exchange programmes, the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative for law enforcement co-operation, the International Catholic Migration Committee for victim protection programmes, the Council of Europe for legislative reform, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for preventing social and economic causes of trafficking. The turning point came only on the occasion of a new meeting in Vienna on 20 September 2001, targeted precisely towards avoiding possible duplication of effort and facilitating possible co-operation between different agencies active in the field. However, there is still little co-ordination between the Stability Pact Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings and the Regional Centre for the Fight Against Illegal Trafficking set up in Vlorë, Albania, and managed jointly by Albania, Germany, Greece and Italy. This is again rather strange taking into consideration the fact that Albania offers a well-established east-west transit route for traffic in human beings and drugs, and the Regional Centre in Vlorë could provide the kind of fast and complete information exchange with countries in the region and international agencies badly needed to efficiently counter this phenomenon.

The Asylum and Migration Initiative of the Stability Pact, targeting either the return of a country's own nationals or future asylum-seekers or migrants from abroad, is about to establish national action plans and

has created five Country Teams to assist in building up the legal framework and the capacities to deal with these issues. A permanent Support Unit/Secretariat has been established in Vienna.

As far as the Stability Pact Task Force for the Co-operation and Development of Border Management in SEE, it has completed the preparatory phase of setting up principles, norms and standards, but it has not passed yet the decisive test of practical co-operation. Thus, the border guard authorities of the five countries involved in the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) have compiled wide-ranging descriptions of their border management systems and pointed out reform plans and preliminary needs assessments. Additionally, on the basis of the principle of regional ownership, special national focal points/task forces were set up in order to develop national strategies in the field, monitor all relevant bilateral and multilateral assistance and training activities in the country, and assist the Support Unit in Vienna in keeping and overview of ongoing activities with regard to border management. However, there is an in-built policy inconsistency between the need for enhanced border security and the need for improved regional co-operation and border permeability in the region. Yet, regional co-operation among various countries in the region and different initiatives dealing with border-related issues remains crucial. From the latter viewpoint, taking into consideration the fact that till now the Border Guard Initiative and the Support Unit of the Asylum and Migration Initiative have been rather loosely connected, a closer co-operation and co-ordination between the two processes is urgently needed. In addition, the Working Group on Regional Civilian Police Training in SEE should be geared pre-eminently towards establishing short-term, mid-term and long-term training courses for border guards, which could be carried out in co-operation with the Association of European Police Colleges (AEPC), the Central European Police Academy and the Nordic Baltic Police Academy.

The problem of the destabilising accumulation and uncontrolled diffusion of

small arms and light weapons (SALW) has gained prominence on the security agenda of the Stability Pact only after the fall of the Milosevic regime. While several SEE countries had already begun to take some steps to tackle this phenomenon, until that moment there had been no window of opportunity to make progress in the country which has been among the most severely affected by it: F.R. of Yugoslavia. In November 2000 a process of informal consultation among experts and representatives from most of the countries participating in the Stability Pact was launched in Szeged, Hungary, which later on was to be known as the Szeged Small Arms Process, in recognition of the achievements of the Szeged Process in building support for the democratic forces in Yugoslavia. The initiative stresses the need to intensify efforts to seize illicit transfers of SALW, destroy weapons seized by interdiction of illegal traffic or that exceed justifiable defence needs and take all appropriate measures to secure SALW stockpiles necessary for defence. Underlining that many of the problems associated with SALW diffusion are increasingly regional in scope, from the onset the participants in the process, representing governmental and civil society institutions as well as international organizations, put forward the idea of the necessity of a comprehensive and refined regional plan. At a second meeting in Szeged in September 2001, the participants benefited from the expertise provided in the form of a Consultation Document by Saferworld, a well-known and experienced British think tank active in the field, and discussed a Regional Implementation Plan prepared by the Office of the Special Co-ordinator, which was subsequently approved at the Working Table III plenary meeting in Budapest last November. In order that this plan should be successfully implemented in the southern Balkans, priority must be given by the Regional Steering Group and the National Focal Points from each of the Stability Pact beneficiary countries to a reas such as the human security dimension, strengthening of national controls, augmented co-operation and information sharing between states and improved

stockpile management, procedures and international assistance for collection and destruction of surplus weapons. For developing and implementing projects aimed to reduce the excess supply and illicit trafficking of SALW, a Regional Clearinghouse was recently set up in Belgrade under UNDP auspices.

Regional centres in the field of SEE security have started to become fashionable in recent years. RACVIAC is just one of them, dealing with the sensitive area of arms control. Officially inaugurated on 2 November 2000 near Zagreb, Croatia, as a project under Working Table 3 of the Stability Pact, RACVIAC is meant to provide a forum for regular dialogue and co-operation in SEE in order to facilitate the full and accurate implementation by the region's states of existing arms control agreements, allowing common standards to be identified and leading to improvements in implementation. In addition, it is supposed to provide an international forum for training the verification personnel involved in the implementation of arms control. It should be emphasized that RACVIAC itself has no verification tasks. Tentatively, its major assets are its eighteen countries membership, gathering together SEE and Western European countries (Austria, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, FYROM, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, The Netherlands, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Turkey, UK and USA), its multinational adviser group as well as its sponsorship by a major European actor, namely Germany. However, up till now, other than organising some 20 courses, no significant programme was launched and implemented under the Centre's aegis.

On the whole, the regional initiatives under Table 3 on security, like the Stability Pact altogether, have so far managed to only partially live up to expectations. There are at least four reasons for that. The first one refers to the fact that the Special Co-ordinator's Office has acted as a mere intermediary, without having operative means of its own and without being able to recruit and hire people with relevant experience in the region and to get secondments from organisations with

expertise in the security areas of concentration. The second one is that being basically inter-governmental and inter-organisational arrangements with no legal status, without significant resources, much planning or implementation capacity of their own, their impact has relied on the varying resources, authority, dynamism and seriousness of the designated national representatives. The third reason is related to the fact more often than not, the action plans launched under their aegis have been too general, not taking into consideration other existing national or international initiatives in the area or the specifics of local circumstances, which led to lack of efficiency, duplication and no clear-cut division of competences. The fourth reason is that some of the most significant international endeavours in the field have continued to bypass the Stability Pact. For the Stability Pact to play a more effective role in improving the security environment and building regional co-operation in SEE it will need to set up its priorities more clearly, to focus its efforts better, to promote networking and co-ordination with other international and regional co-operative frameworks and determine where it offers a comparative advantage. Furthermore, fostering the regional ownership of the Stability Pact is deemed to be 'the main recipe for success' of this comprehensive top-down co-operative regional arrangement. Consequently, as envisaged by the special co-ordinator Erhard Busek, the Stability Pact, which has until now primarily served as a clearinghouse for mainly EU projects in the Balkans, is going to transfer more of its functions to the region and to bring the SEE governments closer to the decision-making process.

NATO's South East Europe Initiative (SEEI): NATO's military presence in the region is well known and through NATO-led peacekeeping operations, the Alliance and its Partners promote stability. NATO's military muscle made peace possible on the ground in Bosnia and Kosovo, and has been essential in keeping Macedonia from descending into wider conflict.

NATO's long-term effort to partner with militaries in the region is also a vital part of

regional stability. Efforts to help shape smaller, more professional and civilian controlled militaries throughout SEE has been of great utility, and the efforts should continue and intensify to rid the region of the paramilitary forces that have been a source of so much destruction and violence over the past eleven years or so. Through Partnership for Peace (PfP) and the enlargement process, NATO continues to guide the integration of SEE countries into the Euro-Atlantic space and through co-operative schemes such as the EAPC Regional Open Ended Ad Hoc Group on South East Europe and NATO's South East Europe Initiative (SEEI) further promotes the principle of regional ownership in ensuring regional stability.

SEEI was launched at the 1999 Washington Summit in order to promote regional co-operation and long-term security and stability in the region. A particular focus has been given to the involvement of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the regional co-operation. A Consultative Forum on Security Issues on South Eastern Europe has been established, too, which by its nature and composition is an important tool enabling NATO and Partners in the region to play a key role in the implementation of the security objectives of the Stability Pact.

A prime contribution of the initiative to help bring about lasting peace, stability, freedom and prosperity in SEE is the South East Europe Common Assessment Paper on Regional Security Challenges and Opportunities (SEECAP). Materialising a Romanian initiative within EAPC and SEEI, SEECAP was endorsed on the margins of the EAPC Ministerial in Budapest on 29 May 2001. With the aim of evaluating security challenges in SEE and to identify some opportunities for international co-operation, SEECAP is designed as a general, flexible index for the regional priorities, promoting the principle of regional ownership. Its significance resides in the fact that SEECAP is the first comprehensive common document on perceptions and priorities of the countries of the region in order to bring peace and stability in SEE. SEECAP is based on the idea that common perceptions

of the security challenges facing the region would promote common action to address these challenges and ultimately lead to security strategies and defence planning based on these agreed upon common perceptions. Confirming the essential contribution of and requirement for international engagement in the area, SEECAP is conceived to support and complement the objectives of the Stability Pact for South East Europe and other regional co-operation processes, such as the South East Europe Co-operation Process (SEECOP) and Southeast Europe Defence Ministers Process (SEDM), as a concrete contribution to building a secure, stable and indivisible Euro-Atlantic area.

A second major contribution of SEEI to the stability of the region is the South East Europe Security Co-operation Group (SEEGROUP), an advisory forum on security issues developed in the SEEI framework, which benefits from the NATO International Secretariat expertise. Comprised of representatives of Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYROM, Greece, Great Britain, Italy, Serbia and Montenegro, and Switzerland, SEEGROUP aims to contribute to the support of NATO mechanism of clearing house type, to identify the existent shortcomings within the assistance in the field of regional security, to promote expert co-operation and to harmonise and co-ordinate the relevant regional projects. This is done by SEEGROUP's functioning on three complementary levels: biannual meetings of the national representatives; contacts between chiefs of the NATO missions in Brussels; and ad hoc groups constituted on projects on progress. SEEGROUP's setting up has appended an extra added value to the initiative as it had improved the connectivity between SEEI and other regional co-operative arrangements, among which the SEDM should be mentioned in particular.

SEEGROUP has closely followed the drafting and adoption of SEECAP and it is involved in the process of periodically screening and implementation of it. SEECAP follow-ups are meant to coherently enlarge the issue areas addressed by its members,

as to cover a large spectrum of military and non-military threats, including terrorism. One of the priorities of the current Romanian presidency of SEEGROUP is to draft, with the support of the NATO International Secretariat, a document concerning the ways for implementation and revision of SEECAP. In addition, the current SEEGROUP presidency is concerned with the follow-up processes of reform of the security sector, promoting a package of measures for the struggle against asymmetric threats in SEE, stimulating the exchange of expertise in defence matters between the countries in the region, exploring possibilities for electronic interconnectedness, and co-ordinating those activities with other initiatives in SEE. Last but not least, some ambitious proposals are currently under consideration. One of them concerns a study aiming to analyse the strategies/documents of national security in SEE, as to provide a unitary picture of different approaches to security in SEE and to make recommendations regarding risks factors, defence planning, civil emergencies, and the process of drafting the strategies of security (SEESTUDY). Another proposal regards the creation of a Balkan Defence College in the form of a virtual framework, using either the PFP Consortium of Defence Academies and Security Studies Institutes web, already existent, or a regional IT network, currently in construction. All these testify for the seriousness of the implementation of the regional ownership principle by the SEEI.

The Southeast European Co-operative Initiative (SECI) Regional Centre for Combating Trans-border Crime: The SECI Centre is the only international law enforcement organisation that brings together police and customs representatives. Operational since the 1st of November 2000, in its annual report, drafted at the end of its first year of existence, the SECI Centre in Bucharest, Romania, was able to report advances in its efforts to prevent, detect, investigate, prosecute and repress trans-border crime in SEE. From an operational viewpoint, out of the twenty-two needed police and customs liaison officers – one police and one customs representative from each eleven participating states (Albania,

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, FYROM, Moldova, Romania, Slovenia and Turkey) – fifteen liaison officers (seven from police and eight from customs) from nine countries were already in place. Moreover, four task forces have been set up: a Task Force (TF) on Drugs Trafficking, led by Bulgaria, a TF on Trafficking in Human Beings led by Romania, a Commercial Fraud Task Force led by Croatia and a Customs Valuation Fraud TF led by Albania. In 2002 other four task forces are to become operational: a TF on Financial and Computer Crime headed by FYROM, a TF on Trafficking in Small Arms led by Albania, a TF on Stolen Vehicles led by Hungary and a TF on Trafficking in Strategic Materials led by Romania. In addition, after the 11th of September 2001 terrorist attacks on the US, a Resolution of the Centre, expressing its great dismay for the tragic events, established a special working group to assist the US in investigating terrorist activity, to provide appropriate information regarding the flow of refugees for the SECI member states and Western European countries, and to provide assistance for the SECI member states in their activity of preventing and combating terrorism.

Some of its various task forces were more active than other. For instance, in 2001, within its specialised TF on Trafficking in Human Beings, more than 250 pieces of information were exchanged, four regional operations were conducted, a project for witness protection has been initiated and an active co-operation with FBI, USAINS, Austria, and Stability Pact for trafficking in human beings was established. Similarly, during the same period of time, some 236 pieces of information were exchanged on drug trafficking cases and other 251 on commercial fraud ones. In addition, the Centre has managed to establish good co-operative relations with nine countries enjoying observer status (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Russian Federation, USA, UK and Ukraine), as well as with INTERPOL, EUROPOL, World Customs Organization (WCO), and various initiatives on the area of

combating organised crime developed under the aegis of Stability Pact, OSCE and UN. Furthermore, special agreements were signed with the European Union Law Enforcement Co-operation (EULEC), the International Organization for Migration and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development. All these point to the conclusion of a promising start as far the institutional "division of labour" and co-ordination between the SECI Centre and major international organisations and law enforcement agencies are concerned.

Regional bottom-up initiatives

A lot of attention has been devoted lately to SEE countries' experience of and prospects for regional and sub-regional co-operation. In addressing this booming phenomenon, both arrangements of a military and non-military nature have been accounted for. It goes without saying that whereas the former have – in actual fact or as a potential – a direct impact on security, belonging to the 'hard' security sphere, the latter have only an indirect impact on it, being attributable to the 'soft' security one.

The main still unsolved inconsistencies related to the regional and sub-regional integration processes stems from a series of inter-related realities: first, there is a certain contrast between the EU conditional accession criteria and the need for enhanced regional and sub-regional co-operation. Second, the current historic drive for state formation in the region hampers the regional integration imperative. Third, putting aside the subjective issue of some countries' rejection of their belonging to SEE, either on grounds that the term Balkans is something else than the larger South East Europe one

Regional security structures

Establishing effective regional political consultation, conflict prevention and crisis management capabilities and mechanisms are required to complement broader international arrangements. The organising idea that shapes the regional response to

Impressive as it is, this record does not say much, though, about the overall efficiency of the Centre. The truth of the matter is that the bulk of the SECI Centre task forces are still in the preparatory phase and it is still to be seen if the ambitious legal, operational, administrative and information technology (IT) plans of the Centre, as well as the plethora of proposals put forward by the member states in connection to its activity in the future are going to be materialised. What's more, the Centre still lacks a task force in combating small and light weapons diffusion.

(Romania) or because of their self-declared Central European orientation (Croatia, Slovenia), more difficulties on the way of regional co-operation arise from the fact that the so-called SEE region is hardly a region at all, with the Eastern Balkans generating stability and having a record of integration and region-building activities and the Western Balkans characterised mainly by wars, disintegration, various conflicts, hatreds and instabilities. Further divisions arise from the fact that different SEE countries are enjoying various statuses vis-à-vis NATO and EU and are on different stages of European and Euro-Atlantic integration processes, encompass different economic, demographic, and military potentials, are different in their ethnic and religious outlook, have different historical experiences and political traditions and perceive differently the regional co-operation. However, precisely because it acts as a bridge over this multi-faceted diversity, improving inter-state relations and opening communication channels, regional co-operation is so valuable.

this challenge is the multinational framework of co-operation in the area.

The Southeast Europe Defence Ministerial (SEDM) Process: This is a forum for political dialogue and military co-operation, which has reached a certain level

of maturity, due to its already six years of existence. However, only in the past one and a half year it has started to bring tangible results and its programmes have started to present themselves as an effective whole rather than disconnected parts. SEDM's strengths rely on membership, covering most of SEE region (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Italy, the Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Turkey), plus the US, Slovenia and Croatia with observer status, on its being a high level mechanism of harmonisation of the various SEE viewpoints on security and defence matters as well as its current focus on crisis management-related issues. From the latter point of view, lately some ambitious projects have started to be developed under the SEDM process auspices. Among them, one could enumerate:

- Establishing a Civil-Military Emergency Programme entrusted with the co-ordination of disaster response and humanitarian relief in crisis situations in the region;
- Setting up a viable, cost effective and interoperable Communication Information Network (CIN/CIS) for crisis management and CIMIC relation improvement in crisis situations;
- Fostering an Engineer Task Force (ETF) for civil assistance, humanitarian crisis and disaster relief which will ensure a speedy and well-co-ordinated response to disasters and emergencies; the engineer forces of each SEDM country are going to be deployed on their own national territory, and in case of intervention, the command and control are going to be implemented inside SEEBRIG, parallel with it or independently, at the level of each country; ETF is deemed to become a significant regional asset for mutual support in times of crisis, natural disaster and humanitarian need;
- Putting together a network for interconnecting the military hospitals (and, possibly, the civil ones as well) of the SEDM countries (SIMIHO) in order to use information systems for lending medical assistance.

The Multinational Peace Force South Eastern Europe (MPFSEE): Despite being launched under the SEDM process aegis in October 1997 and comprising the same membership, the MPFSEE has too long been a 'sleeping beauty' in the region. The MFSEE Agreement has been signed on 26 September 1998, a year after its launching. Its Political-Military Steering Committee (PMSC), as the decision-making body of the MPFSEE, has been rather a loose framework of consultation, and its main operational 'arm', a mechanised brigade under the name of SEEBRIG, has been declared fully operational only starting the 1st of May 2001. However, meant to materialise the UN Stand By Arrangements and available for possible deployment in UN or OSCE-mandated NATO or EU-led peace support operations, as stipulated by Security Council resolutions, under UN Charter, the MPFSEE has at the very least a promising potential to be employed in regional crises management. To be sure, there are challenges to be met in order to fulfil this mission, including issues of interoperability, varying levels of engagement, differing capabilities, strained resources and possibilities for full connectivity and complementarity with broader arrangements, as well as problems of a political nature.

Romania took over the Presidency of both MPFSEE Political-Military Steering Committee (SEDM/PMSC) and SEDM Co-ordination Committee (SEDM-CC), on 1 September 2001 for two years. There are usually seven priority goals of the current chairmanship. They include: improving SEDM contribution to security and stability in SEE; maintaining the transparent and open character of the initiative as to admitting new members in SEDM; enhancing the co-operation framework in order to address non-conventional and non-military threats to regional security; creating appropriate diplomatic and military conditions for an increased involvement of partner countries in crisis management; developing and implementing SEDM co-operation programmes; improving military training including by making use of PfP training centres available in the region; and ensuring an efficient transfer of

MPFSEE headquarters from Plovdiv, Bulgaria, to Constanta, Romania.

The Black Sea Naval Co-operation Task Group (BLACKSEAFOR): This is an example of a sub-regional military grouping which remains for now more like a promise rather an accomplishment. The idea of establishing a multinational force in the Black Sea, following the example of the Baltic Sea countries' military co-operation, was officially materialised in Istanbul, in April 2001, only two years after its launching, at a meeting of the Military Navy Chiefs from the Black Sea riparian countries (Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine). The EU has been up to the present moment rather weary of this military arrangement, not the least because Turkey launched it, in its post-Cold War effort to regain some influence in Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet space, particularly in the

Black Sea area. However, its significance is not to be underrated. BLACKSEAFOR remains the only military structure after the breakdown of the USSR in which the Russian Federation takes part. Furthermore, it is the only naval one that has been set up in SEE and Black Sea area in post-Cold War era for search and rescue, humanitarian assistance, de-mining and environment protection operations. In view of the Black Sea harbours' location along the Eurasian energy transportation corridor, at the crossroads of two key geopolitical axes, namely the Baltic Sea-Black Sea and the Black Sea-Caspian Sea, and their possible use as launch pads for the tentative war against Iraq in order to bypass traditional routes which might ignite the Arab countries' anger, BLACKSEAFOR's security contribution might increase in future.

Other regional initiatives with a security component

The South East Europe Co-operation Process (SEECP): Three years and a half after its re-launching, with the signing in February 2000, in Bucharest, of the Charter on Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Co-operation, the first political document to be added to the Stability Pact, the SEECP witnessed its first major achievement in the security area. After post-Milosevic Yugoslavia rejoined the grouping in October 2000, and Bosnia and Herzegovina became a full and equal participant in February 2001, on the occasion of the fourth SEECP summit, a new window of opportunity for fulfilling the SEECP political and security objectives has been opened up. Lately, besides addressing the violent developments in Kosovo and Southern Serbia, the SEECP member countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, FRY, FYROM, Greece, Romania, Turkey, plus Croatia as observer) are committed, as stressed in the SEECP's documents, to give a more prominent profile to their co-operation in fighting terrorism, corruption and illicit trafficking of weapons and drugs. The presence at various SEECP summits of high-level EU representatives

such as the EU foreign policy chief, the EU commissioner for external affairs and the coordinator of the Stability Pact testifies for the interest EU is devoting to the grouping's evolution.

The Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (All): Despite being primarily economic, infrastructure, environmental and cultural-oriented, the four-years old All has included among its priorities, right from its inception, the co-operation in combating all forms of criminal activity. To be sure, till present, the member states (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FRY, Greece, Italy, Slovenia), together with the European Commission as the main All partner, have limited themselves to issue various statements of intention on the topic, the more comprehensive one being the Joint Statement adopted in Split in May 2001. In accordance with the latter document, the strategy of combating illegal activities in the Adriatic-Ionian area rely on three elements: the harmonisation of the visa regimes of the member countries as the first step in the prevention of illegal migration; the operationalisation of the State Contact Points as centres of information exchange

on illegal migrations, organised crime and visa regimes; and EU support through European Commission funding for the organisation and border control performance in non-EU countries. However, important as it is as a premise, the EU support for the projects of the initiative on combating criminal activities is not in itself a guarantee for success. The All should not repeat the Black Sea Economic Co-operation organisation (BSEC) mistake, which tried to

complement its economic co-operation focus by reaching agreements on fighting organised crime and on collaboration on emergency situations, but without any follow-up activities, which left the said agreements basically on paper. In order that the All should really make a difference for the Adriatic-Ionian security environment, pragmatic-oriented projects with clear-cut objectives must be constantly pursued in the region.

Conclusions and Recommendations

For the foreseeable future, regional co-operation in SEE in the security and defence fields is more likely to develop incrementally, bottom-up rather than top-down. There is a widespread dissatisfaction in the region with grander regional organisations such as the Stability Pact, which failed to live up to expectations. Letting aside the fact that the latter were too high, the EU approach of working directly with governments and states has proved to be inefficient when dealing with weak states that are unable to deliver what is expected from them.

The need arise to change the approach to a bottom-up strategy relying on those domestic-initiated regional security initiatives which have proved to be more successful than other. In order that the strategy should be consistent, identifying areas of positive and negative overlapping of various groupings, security concerns and concrete projects must be the first priority.

There is a need to identify ways to overcome the tension between the EU integration and the regional/sub-regional co-operation and to synchronise the two processes in SEE. To that effect, NATO and the EU should make more clear to the countries concerned the fact that a good record of co-operation at the regional and sub-regional levels increases their chances for integration in the wider Europe.

NATO and EU support for regional initiatives in SEE should be prioritised. Variables could include membership diversity, practical achievements, bottom-up approaches, and consistency with the international community's goals in the region.

Devising clear-cut screening criteria and supporting civil society-driven mechanisms of monitoring the implementation of various security initiatives should be put in place and constantly reviewed.