

GENEVA CENTRE FOR THE DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF  
ARMED FORCES (DCAF)

**Study on the Assessment of Regional Security Threats and  
Challenges in the Western Balkans**

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PART I  
INTRODUCTION

# Study on the Assessment of Regional Security Threats and Challenges in the Western Balkans

*István Gyarmati*<sup>1</sup>

*The international conference on “Finding solutions to food shortages in the rest of the World” failed, because the Balkan representatives did not know, what “finding solutions” meant, the Western European participants didn’t know, what “food shortages” meant and the American participants didn’t know, what “the rest of the world” meant (Hungarian joke)*

The last two decades brought about revolutionary changes in Europe – all to the better. At the same time, the Western Balkans is the only region in Europe where the balance sheet is much more dubious. It is the only region where the changes were accompanied by bloody wars, in which more than a hundred thousand people perished, and millions were displaced. It is the only place in post-communist Europe where massive ethnic cleansing took place. And this is the only region which is still knocking on the doors of Europe and which is not sure whether or when they will open. Europe itself is not sure whether it wants to open its doors, although the promise to do so was made several years ago. This is the region of Europe where history is the most alive and where aggressive nationalism is still strong and present, even in some Governments and governmental institutions.

Yet, we have also witnessed many positive developments. All countries in the Western Balkans are now ruled by freely and fairly elected democratic Governments. The wars ended almost a decade ago. Millions of refugees are returning to their homes. And European integration is happening, albeit slowly, despite the doubts and hesitations of some in the rest of Europe and in parts of the local populations.

Given its recent history of wars, the presence of unresolved conflicts and continued ethnic hatred and nationalism, security plays an especially important and prominent role in this region. Countries there, while still dealing with the challenges that others in Europe dealt with in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, are not spared from having to tackle the security challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, as these states and their Governments are in the midst of sweeping transition processes, especially in the security sector, they are not able to handle these problems in the most effective way.

The studies commissioned by the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, with the funding of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, were aimed at finding out how security problems in the Western Balkans are reflected in the National Security or Military Strategies of the countries of the region, and to what extent these documents reflect and shape realities on the ground.

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The relevant national security documents show a remarkable resemblance. They all emphasize Euro-Atlantic integration – with the exception of Serbia, where NATO membership is still highly disputed and thus not reflected as a goal in national security strategies. In the field of security all countries except Serbia give much more credit to NATO than to the European Union, while – interestingly – they all foresee joining the European Union not only as a more general goal, but as one which will have much more profound effects on their respective countries.

The documents are also similar insofar as they effectively discard the possibility of a direct attack by a neighbouring country, the threat of a new conflict or the renewal of old internal wars and armed conflicts. Again, the Serbian formulation is a little more vague, but still holds to the general trend<sup>2</sup>. All documents echo the Western perception of security that pays much more attention to new threats than to traditional ones.

Current (regional) security threats in the Western Balkans referred to in the constitutions or national security/defence strategies show remarkable similarity. Despite some differences in the terms used, perceptions of the main security threats are strikingly similar in all countries, and include:

- organized crime
- economic instability
- corruption
- state failures
- natural disasters

Although these threats are also considered the most important security issues by the rest of Europe, they are viewed somewhat differently in the Balkans in terms of their potential danger and/or imminence. It is our assumption that corruption is THE most important threat not only to security, but also to the democratic transition processes and economic progress in the region. In most countries of the region corruption is endemic, systematic and well organized, and has taken root in and in some cases rules state institutions of power, including the judiciary, police and secret services. This is why it is so dangerous and this also explains why the fight against corruption is so difficult in this region.

On the other hand, certain forms of corruption or nepotism are used as a kind of replacement for the lack of viable social welfare systems, and are therefore considered by many to be a socially acceptable choice in, for example, helping out family members in need. Nevertheless, while it would be a great mistake to just accept this reality, one has to be very careful not to destroy the very fabric of society. This is another reason why the fight against corruption is so complex.

Corruption is closely tied to organized crime. This link creates an even bigger problem for states to address, especially when both find inroads into state structures. If left unaddressed, corruption and organized crime are likely to lead to state failure, as we have

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<sup>2</sup> It must be noted here that the Serbian document is somewhat outdated and one could ask whether the commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration is as strong today as it was when the document was drafted, and whether the perceived danger of armed conflict would be as strongly rejected today as it was at that time.

already witnessed in the Balkans. The ensuing chaos creates an ever more fertile ground for their further entrenchment.

The national security documents do not, of course, go into such detail. They rather stay on the surface at the level of declaratory policies. This unavoidably creates the impression that real action undertaken in the fight against corruption and organized crime does not necessarily match the strong commitments made in these documents.

Terrorism is not an imminent danger in the Western Balkans. This is also reflected in the relevant national strategic documents we have studied. They all mention the remote possibility of the terrorist threat – again, with the Serbs being a bit more outspoken, hinting at Albanian terrorism – but they all conclude that the threat is more theoretical and more a consequence of Western presence than aimed at the states of the region. I tend to agree with this general assessment, with the slight caveat that there have been indications of attempts by various terrorist organizations to establish a foothold in the region. Their efforts do not seem to have been successful so far. At the same time, Moslem male youths with no perspective for their future cannot be ignored as potential targets of terrorist recruitment.

It is beyond doubt that these threats must be considered realistic and that the documents in question correctly reflect the dangers. However, the question is to what extent traditional threats of inter- and/or intra-state conflicts are present. This is an especially important question today, when emotions around the status of Kosovo are running high, when Bosnia and Herzegovina also seems to be in a new, less positive phase of its development, and when Serbia – not independently from these events – is steering a much less pro-European path. This is not reflected in the documents in question, since at the time of their adoption these issues were in different phases of evolution. It is nevertheless relevant and necessary to analyze them in the light of the documents and the conclusions drawn from them and from the interviews that were conducted during and after the study of the documents, as well from information about the security sector, in particular the armed forces, gathered during the same periods.

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The Dayton/Paris Accords closed the war chapter in Bosnia and Herzegovina while NATO intervention in Serbia/Kosovo ended Serbian rule in Kosovo. Both achieved their primary objective, namely the cessation of hostilities, bloodshed and ethnic cleansing, but they did not solve the underlying basic problems. Arguably, this was not their objective – and, thus, they could not create the necessary circumstances for a “final” solution.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina the current administrative division of the country is proving unsustainable. This is not only because the Bosniaks never accepted it as a final structure for the state, but also because the Serbs have never been fully satisfied. At the same time, the desire of the Croats to secure their own entity, which was muted for a long time, resurfaced again several months ago. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Dayton structure proved unworkable for the economy of the country. In the first years of intervention, the international community paid too little attention to economic reforms

and the overhauling of the security sector. In my opinion the elections were called too hurriedly, producing time and again the old guard – keeping the same parties and structures of nationalism on all sides. It was certainly not helpful either that two neighbouring countries, Serbia and Croatia, for a long time provided assistance to these forces – a trend which seems to continue to this day, although to a much lesser extent.

In recent years the efforts of the international community, especially through the High Representative, were aimed at filling these initial gaps and promoting reforms and changes that would lead to a more unified country by creating a much better atmosphere for economic development, and also by addressing the crucial issues of security sector reform. These efforts were producing undeniable results, but the Kosovo status process, or rather the mishandling of the process by the international community (see below), led to much more rigid positions and the emergence of old controversies, such as the creation of a third, Croat entity now being proposed, not surprisingly, by the Republika Srpska Prime Minister Milorad Dodik.

The prospects for Bosnia and Herzegovina looked quite good two or three years ago. The international community started to consider the closing of the Office of the High Representative by mid-2007 and replacing the “Bonn powers” by the “Brussels powers” – i.e. moving from an international protectorate towards pre-accession assistance to eventually bring the country into the European Union. The deadline for this change had to be modified under the pressure of events and was postponed to 2008, but it is already becoming clear that there will be further deferrals and that the High Representative’s office with Bonn powers will have to remain in Bosnia and Herzegovina for even longer.

The status of Kosovo has been an open question ever since its autonomy was abolished by Milosevic – contrary to the common belief that it only emerged at the end of the 1990s, when the Albanian resistance began in a very different form, replacing or rather complementing civil disobedience with the use of force. 1999 was a turning point not only because of NATO intervention, but because this was the moment when Kosovo *de facto* became independent. It must have been clear to anybody without political prejudices that the status issue would have to be resolved and that the solution would not be the restoration of the *status quo ante*. However, the international community missed this opportunity to go for a clear and final solution. It thus created a situation, which was doomed to lead to a new crisis, whereby the status issue was again put on the agenda.

The short sighted desire of the international community was to try to delay discussion about the final status as long as possible. In the meantime, the international protectorate over Kosovo proved to be as counterproductive as in Bosnia, or even more so, especially when the discussion about “standards before status” was launched. This was a blatant attempt to delay the real discussion by setting up criteria, which were impossible to meet in the current generation’s lifetime. Predictably, this situation was untenable. Albanians became increasingly frustrated, international rule in Kosovo became more and more ineffective, and the problems of a *de facto* ungoverned province became unsustainable, forcing the international community to address the issue some two years ago.

This, however, was not enough to force a decision. Again, playing for time was the name of the game. A “negotiation” process was launched that was from the very first moment

doomed to failure, since it has always been impossible to reconcile water with fire: Albanians wanted nothing less than independence, while Serbia was ready to accept almost everything but independence. Anybody who thought that it was possible to find a compromise was wrong from the very beginning. The delaying tactics, however, produced some unwanted and very negative results. The Kosovo issue mobilized the Serbian public. While the status of Kosovo was very low on the agenda of the Serbian public before the “negotiations” started, today it is the number one issue. The Serbian Government’s position created and then reflected this notion. While Serbian politicians two years ago urged the international community to “impose” a solution – i.e. the independence of Kosovo – and then move forward with the country’s European integration, today they talk about – and some of them envisage – actions that might lead to a serious destabilization of the whole region. Serbia’s support for the Republika Srpska also started to grow and by now it has again reached a very significant level. It is difficult not to recognize this as being partly behind the resurgence of the Republika Srpska’s opposition to any further strengthening of state structures in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as its “surprising” initiative to suggest the creation of a Croat entity.

The international climate has also changed dramatically. While two years ago Russian opposition to Kosovo's independence appeared to be far less strong than it is now and the successful passage of a Security Council resolution to this effect was highly plausible, today it seems to be close to impossible, which will further complicate the process leading to the final status of Kosovo.

Overall, all these delays have significantly worsened the situation and today we must face the possibility that Kosovo’s independence will be declared unilaterally, while a UN Security Council resolution will prove impossible. It will put the European Union in a very difficult situation. Many, although perhaps not all EU members, will probably recognize Kosovo's independence, but there will be a need for unanimous approval to deploy the long-planned EU mission to Kosovo. And it might be impossible to maintain the OSCE Mission in Kosovo due to Serbian and Russian opposition.

I do not think this will lead to outright war. But the possibility of insurgency and terrorism is very real. Northern Mitrovica will secede from newly independent Kosovo and the international community, while heavily opposing the partition of Kosovo, will have to accept it as a matter of fact and then, after a few years, also recognize it as a reality. Bosnia and Herzegovina will face new tensions. Serbia will go through yet another nationalistic wave and crisis, whose outcome is rather unpredictable. And Russia will not only use this as a precedent to suit its policies in contexts such as Ossetia and Abkhazia, but will also be able to establish a firm foothold in Serbia, thus not only posing a serious problem to European security, but also showing an alternative to the European way that until now did not exist .

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The other issue that needs to be addressed is regional cooperation between and among Western Balkan countries. On the surface it seems that there is a serious network of different forms and institutions of cooperation at the regional level. This impression is further strengthened when one observes the signed agreements and the wording in

national security documents, especially those concerning high-level and high-visibility activities. However, closer scrutiny of their content and outcomes raises serious doubts. In conversations it becomes clear that opinion leaders are indeed apprehensive about what they perceive as the negative consequences that would stem from stronger regional cooperation. The first such concern relates to the past. Many see regional cooperation as an attempt to revive some kind of Yugoslav space. And this is the last thing the regional states want – again, possibly with the exception of Serbia. Secondly, they see regional cooperation, especially when the West pushes it hard, as an attempt to postpone, or even replace, their EU integration. This second worry is not without precedent: the Visegrad countries experienced this in the early 90s and reacted to it similarly – until they concluded that imposed regional cooperation could be transformed into a special pressure group that could be used for accelerating their accession to NATO and the EU. Thirdly, the West made a serious mistake in promising significant assistance if these countries cooperated with each other and then failing to match expectations raised by the promises. One can, of course, dispute the extent to which these expectations were based on the pledges themselves or the interpretation of the beneficiaries. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the countries of the region do not yet clearly see the benefits of strengthening regional cooperation.

In my view, the net result is that while many institutional forms of regional cooperation do exist, several of which produce certain results, the majority of Balkan leaders praise and engage in regional cooperation mainly because this is what they believe the West expects them to do. Most of these initiatives and institutions, although useful in promoting dialogue, remain empty shells in terms of substantive outcomes.

My conclusion from all this is that, while the Western Balkans has been on the right track for quite some time now, progress has significantly slowed down in the past year or so. This is to some extent an understandable and unavoidable trend, when generational changes are occurring against a backdrop of changes in overall international relations. It is, however, mostly the result of the reluctance of local leaders to rise to the task of leading their people into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And last, but by no means least, blame for the slowdown of progress in the Western Balkans can also be attributed to the failure of the international community to find the right formulae in terms of protection, assistance and advice to reverse this trend.

Consequently, we will have to face the challenges of an explosive Balkans for quite a few more years to come. The European Union will be the major player, assisted by NATO, alongside several other organizations, most prominently the OSCE. Failure is not an option for Europe. The utmost must be done to mobilize resources and help these countries in stepping over the threshold dividing democracy and state failure, development and poverty.

**PART II**

**COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE WESTERN BALKANS**



# Assessment of the Security of the Western Balkans and a Comparative Analysis of the Threat Perception in the Countries of the Region

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The present study paper focusing on the security situation and security perception of the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia) consists of three major parts. The first part analyses the security policy processes of the region with a focus on regional level threats, potential threats, or risks posed to the societies concerned. The second part compares the security perception of the six states as represented in their strategic documents. Finally, the third part, based on interviews conducted in the six countries, analyses the relation between the security perception reflected in the aforementioned documents and that of the relevant authorities responsible for security policy.

## I. FRAMEWORK OF ASSESSMENT OF THE SECURITY SITUATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

In the present study, security is given a wide interpretation; the lack of security under this broad definition is considered a situation requiring emergency measures by a government and/or the international community. Factors representing a threat to security are labelled as threats, potential threats, or risks on the basis of their intensity and probability. At the regional level any factor is regarded as a threat if it endangers the existence or normal operation of the majority of the countries in a region.

### I.1. Conceptualization of Security Trends

Security policy changes in the Central and Eastern European region can be defined most appropriately in the framework of *Europeanization*<sup>4</sup> and *re-nationalization*.<sup>5</sup> These two simultaneous processes have had an impact on every country of the region. After the collapse of the bipolar world order, in the hope of emerging from economic and social

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<sup>4</sup> The notion of Europeanization is used by many scholars, in different meanings. See Robert Ladrech: Europeanization of Democratic Politics and Institutions: the Case of France. *Journal of Common Market Studies* 32/1 (1994), p. 69-88; Michael E. Smith: The Europeanization of European Political Cooperation: Trust, Transgovernmental Relations, and the Power of Informal Norms. *Political Relations and Institutions Research Group Working Paper* 2.44 November 1996 <http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/smm01/>; Thomas Risse - Maria Green Cowles - James Caporaso (eds.): *Europeanization of Domestic Change*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 2001; Johan P. Olsen: The Many Face of Europeanization. *ARENA Working Papers* 01/02 [http://www.arena.uio.no/publications/working-papers2002/papers/wp02\\_2.htm](http://www.arena.uio.no/publications/working-papers2002/papers/wp02_2.htm); Claudio M. Radaelli: The Europeanization of Public Policy. In: Kevin Featherstone - Claudio M. Radaelli (eds.): *The Politics of Europeanization*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003. p. 27-56; Gergana Noutcheva et al: Europeanization and Secessionist Conflicts: Concepts and Theories. In: Bruno Coppieters et al (eds.): *Europeanization and Conflict Resolution: Cases from the European Periphery*. Academia Press, Gent, 2004. p. 1-35. <http://www.ecmi.de/jemie/download/1-2004Chapter1.pdf>; Claudia Major - Karolina Pomorska: Europeanization: Framework or Fashion? *CFSP Forum* 3/5 (September 2005), p. 1-4. [www.fornet.info/CFSPforumpastissues.html](http://www.fornet.info/CFSPforumpastissues.html)

<sup>5</sup> On the re-nationalisation of security policies in the region in the early 1990s see: Pál Dunay: *Adversaries All Around? (Re)Nationalization of Security and Defence Policies in Central and Eastern Europe*. The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Clingendael, 1994. p. 7-11 and 29-35; Pál Dunay: Whence the threat to peace in Europe? In: Pál Dunay et al: A lasting peace in Central Europe? *Chaillot Paper* 20. October 1995. p. 40-60.

crises and attaining rapid modernization, nearly every Central and Eastern European state set itself the goals of building a democratic state based on the rule of law, a free market economy, and joining European and Euro-Atlantic organisations. At the same time, once they were no longer bound by the limited sovereignty forced upon them by decades of bloc-politics, these states rearticulated their national interests, as well as their independent foreign and security policies. Essentially, these states returned to the process of national development which they were forced to abandon either before or after World War II.

It should be noted, however, that these two processes were and still are developing at varying degrees of magnitude and intensity in these countries. This is linked to the differences in their respective legal systems, society structures, as well as the quality of their democratic political traditions, cultural traditions, and the openness and development of their economies. For instance, for states that were already independent, the re-nationalization process involved “only” the establishment of the rule of law, conversion to a free market economy system, and the development of truly national foreign and security policies. On the other hand, for countries gaining independence following the disintegration of a federative state system to which they had belonged, it entailed a full-scale re-establishment of independent statehood, including all of its social, political and institutional aspects. While in the first case the dominant influence was either the “external integration” of a nation-state or the Europeanization process, the key issue for the latter states was “internal integration”, or the reinforcement of the nation-state, involving changes in the social system in which the most important integrative role was played by revitalized nationalism. With a certain simplification it can be stated that in some Central and Eastern European countries the “external integration” of society should be preceded by an “internal integration” even if their extreme reactions may seem anachronistic at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Due to re-nationalization over the past 17 years, the Central and Eastern European region largely changed and disintegrated. As a result of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the bloody collapse of Yugoslavia, and of the separation of Czechoslovakia into two new states, geopolitical relations in the region were significantly altered.

The disintegration of Yugoslavia was triggered by the historical collapse of the bipolar world order in 1989-90.<sup>6</sup> During its more than 70 years of existence, Yugoslavia was founded on a double consensus. Firstly, on the consensus among Southern Slavic nations and ethnic groups that they wished to live in a multinational but joint state. This internal consensus was attributable partly to their common linguistic and cultural identity and various forms of "Yugoslavism", and partly to the fact that the threat of Italian and German, and later Soviet imperialism, united the Southern Slavic peoples in a single community of interests. Secondly, there was an international dimension to this consensus concerning the Yugoslav federation, namely that of the victorious great powers of WWI and WWII to support and encourage the establishment of Yugoslavia in the framework of the world order of Versailles and Yalta, a state which they regarded as an organic part of the balance of power in Europe. Parallel to this, the consensus tried to repress the separatist nationalism of the Southern Slavic nations. The components of this double consensus had been eliminated by the 1990s.

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<sup>6</sup> On the causes of the Yugoslav crisis see József Juhász: *Volt egyszer egy Jugoszlávia*. (Once upon a Yugoslavia) Aula Kiadó Kft., Budapest, 1999. pp. 374; József Juhász- István Magyar- Péter Tólas- László Valki: *Kosovó. Egy válság anatómiája* (Kosovo - The Anatomy of the Crisis). Osiris Kiadó, Budapest, 2000. pp. 392; József Juhász- László Márkus- Péter Tólas- László Valki: *Kinek a békéje? Háború és béke a volt Jugoszláviában*. Zrínyi Kiadó, Budapest, 2003. pp. 328.

From the perspective of re-nationalization and Europeanization, Yugoslavia had a special position in the Central and Eastern European region. This was not because re-nationalization had become clearly dominant there (by then it was typical for the entire region, apart from the Baltic and the Visegrád countries), or because of the federative nature of the states such as the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. It was primarily because, as a result of the ethnic, linguistic, economic, and religious-historical differences within Yugoslavia, the two processes took place at different levels of intensity in each of its republics, sometimes even within the republics themselves. Despite various official statements to the contrary, the Europeanization process that started with the structured dialogue established with the European Community in May 1988, provided a realistic perspective only for the most suitable states – primarily Slovenia and Croatia – within the Yugoslav federal state. Furthermore, the initial euphoria generated by the joint experience of regime change was quickly replaced by competition among the Central and Eastern European states to integrate Europe. This competition became all the more apparent when it turned out that the accession of the region to economic and security integration in Europe could only be achieved on a country-by-country basis, as signalled by the measures taken by the European Community in 1989-1990 solely aimed at the Visegrád countries (PHARE programme, association agreements). This increased concern among political leaders in the most developed CEE countries – including those of Croatia and Slovenia – that, as hostages of the region (or in the case of Yugoslavia, the Federation), they could miss out on integration and get trapped on the wrong side of the borderline between a developed centre and its semi-periphery. Such concerns strengthened the efforts of the northern republics to gain a high degree of decentralization within the federation. The Croats and Slovenes therefore formulated their plans for decentralisation and a confederative solution, and articulated their intention to live in their respective sovereign nation states and to maintain Yugoslavia as a loose union. Similar concerns were also evoked among the southern republics – especially the two smaller ones, Macedonia and Montenegro – whose prospects for modernization were limited (in the event of the disintegration of the federation) by the possibility of marginalization (i.e. falling behind the Central European region) and the threat of a small state existence. Therefore, they – unlike Croatia and Slovenia – initially tried to maintain the federation. However, the Slovenian and Croatian plans contrasted with the (entirely legitimate) cohesive efforts of the Serbs, who lived dispersed on the territories of four republics, since the main advantage of Yugoslavia for the Serbs was to ensure the state unity of the Serbian nation. That is why the Serbs still envisaged Yugoslavia as a commonwealth of states. This conflict situation was one of the reasons for the outbreak of the Yugoslav wars and the disintegration of the Yugoslav federation.

Another reason why this challenge of integration reinforced the efforts of the leading nations of Yugoslavia – Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia – was to dismantle the Federation. As the Yugoslav state was established in 1918 by nations that were in a relatively early stage of their national development, the individual countries had not grown into sovereign nation-states, resulting in “Yugoslavism.” Thus, at the end of the eighties neither Belgrade nor Zagreb nor Ljubljana could imagine joining the European institutions without existence as a sovereign nation-state that would have enabled them to face the challenges of supranational integration as national entities.<sup>7</sup> Such an

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<sup>7</sup> See Iván Berend T.- György Ránki: *Gazdasági elmaradottság, kiutak és kudarcok a XIX. századi Európában*. Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1979. pp 508; Alexander Gerschenkron: *Gazdasági elmaradottság - történelmi távlatból*

explanation could, of course, be qualified as a populist approach to integration. However, this problem was typical in the Central and Eastern European region. It affected not only the southern Slavic nations as – among other factors – similar reasons led to the disintegration of Czechoslovakia and the independence of the Baltic states. Still, it was in Yugoslavia where this problem was the most obvious because of the historical absence of a nation state. As “Yugoslavism” was eroded by the above mentioned problems, the new political elites of the member states of the federation thought that they had to dissolve the common state, create their own nation states and reinforce the national identity of their societies before joining the supranational European institutions. This view and the challenges of integration were confirmed by the already mentioned wave of re-nationalization that led to a renaissance of national movements all over Central Eastern Europe.

It should be noted here that although the post-Yugoslav region and the Western Balkans are regarded as a single region in international security studies, this is not as obvious as it might seem at first sight. For the Yugoslav crisis was quite varied in the past one and a half decades in terms of geographic extension. Part of the crises in the course of the post-Yugoslav drama was of a local nature (the Slovenian war – 1991, the Croatian war – 1991-95, the Bosnian wars – 1992-1995, the Albanian crisis – 1997, the Kosovo crisis – 1999, and the Macedonian ethnic conflict – 2001). Another part, however, reflected a pan-Yugoslav character (the constitutional debate – 1989-1991). Lastly, some of the crisis phenomenon also had European dimensions (e. g. the problem of a massive refugee influx into Europe). Furthermore, while some of the above-mentioned local crises featured as part of the Balkan and post-Yugoslav problem scenario for a very short time period (Slovenia in 1991), some others emerged independently and autonomously and related to the post-Yugoslav question only in certain periods (Albania – 1997). Finally, it should be repeatedly stressed that there are significant differences between the societies and political elites in the Western Balkan countries with regard to nationalization and Europeanization, which generate serious consequences for security perception as well as the practice of security policy.

Naturally, the authors of this study would prefer to see the Western Balkans as a genuinely unified security-policy sub-region. We believe that one of the preconditions for this is that societies and political elites of the region should interpret fundamental notions of security in a similar manner – albeit with different content. As will be shown in the second part of this study, achieving this is a long way down the road. It seems that the societies and political elites concerned – even though they use basic notions of modern security policy – are not able to define, structure, or prioritise these notions. They do not, therefore, think of security as a more general structure involving the entire region.

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(Economic backwardness in historical perspective). Gondolat Kiadó, Budapest, 1984. pp. 552; András Balogh - Zsolt Rostoványi- Gábor Búr- Ádám Anderle: *Nemzet és nacionalizmus.*(Nation and nationalism) Korona Kiadó, Budapest, 2002. pp. 544.

## I.2. Milestones of Security in the Western Balkans - General Improvement with Temporary Regressions

Twelve years after the end of the Yugoslav wars, the Western Balkans as a region is in a state of relative consolidation, although great differences exist between the countries. Summarising the milestones of this region on the road towards relative consolidation, it can be stated that progress in this regard (+) was affected by setbacks and standstills (-). The events of security relevance following the Yugoslav wars between 1991–1995 were the following:

- + *The Washington Agreement* (18 March 1994), which put an end to the Bosnian-Croatian war and established the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnian-Croatian Federation).
- + *The General Framework for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (the so-called Dayton Peace Agreement), signed between the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia and the Yugoslav Federal Republic on 21 November 1995, ending the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and establishing the legal framework for the latter.
- + *The Agreement on Sub-Regional Arms Control* between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Yugoslavia, signed by Yugoslavia and Croatia on 14 June 1996, in compliance with the relevant provisions of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Following the model of the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE), the Agreement on Sub-Regional Arms Control set a quantitative limit to five categories of armaments of the Armed Forces of the State Parties to the Agreement (main battle tanks, armoured fighting vehicles, artillery pieces, fighter planes and attack helicopters), as well as to military personnel. Ownership of weapons was distributed in a 5:2:2 proportion between Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia respectively, and in a 2:1 proportion within Bosnia and Herzegovina between the Muslim-Croatian federation and the Bosnian Serb Republic.
- *The Albanian state collapse* in February 1997 and the anarchy that followed, as the result of which an estimated 80% of the light weapons of the country's armed forces – some 750-800,000 small arms – disappeared together with ammunition, and some 2,500 rocket propelled grenades, 800 artillery guns and 3.5 million anti-personnel mines were stolen. The primary destination of these arms was Kosovo (UCK), but a huge quantity was transported to Macedonia.
- *The armed conflict in 1998 between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo*,
- + *The NATO air campaign against Yugoslavia* launched to put an end to the Albanian–Serbian conflict in Kosovo (21 March – 10 June 1999).
- + *The Stability Pact* established on 10 June 1999 that – following the CSCE model – started to systematically support the societies in the Balkans in the main areas influencing security – democracy and human rights; economic reconstruction; cooperation and development; and security (security and defence, interior policy, justice). This process led to the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, and EU candidate status for Croatia and Macedonia.

- + *The fall of the Milosevic regime in autumn 2000* that ended the Serbian political course that generated regional wars and conflicts.
- *The Albanian-Macedonian internal armed conflict in Macedonia* that erupted in February 2001, and
- + *The Ohrid Framework Agreement*, which resolved it, according to which the cultural and political rights of ethnic Albanians living in Macedonia were broadened and Albanian was made an official language. NATO was requested to monitor the demobilisation process of the Kosovo Liberation Army and that created the possibility for 170,000 IDPs to return to their homes.
- + *The invitation extended to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia to the Partnership for Peace programme* at the Riga NATO Summit in November 2006, which put an end to the Western Balkans as a black hole in terms of security.
- + *Extension of the Central European Free Trade Agreement*, proposed in 2006, towards the Western Balkans, resulting in membership for all countries concerned from 1 May 2007.

Although the above list of the security-related milestones that marked the recent history of the Western Balkans shows the consolidation of the region, it is still not explained why the consolidation is regarded as relative. This can be explained by two factors:

- On the one hand, by the fact that *the indicators of the region's consolidation are predominantly external*, and are based primarily on the initiatives and pressure of the international community, and *are therefore difficult to internalise by the societies* in the region. However, it has to be emphasised that this is not an exclusively Western Balkans phenomenon since it characterised the entire Central and Eastern European region after the end of the bipolar world order era – though perhaps at different levels of intensity and magnitude. Reforms associated with Europeanization – even in the more fortunate states of the Central and Eastern European region – were motivated by the expectations of the Euro-Atlantic community, and the criteria for NATO and EU membership. Some analysts tend to forget that, as already mentioned, the societies of Western Europe took a very different nation-state development course from those of Central and Eastern Europe. Apart from the well known backwardness of Central and Eastern Europe and the differences in forms of nationalism between the two regions<sup>8</sup>, the fact is that after WWII Central and Eastern Europe missed the organic development of integration which led Western Europe to the establishment of the European Union after the eclipse of the bipolar world order era.<sup>9</sup> In this respect the Western Balkans is not an exception as the majority of nation-states in the region were created as a result of the failure of a quasi-integration experiment by a dictatorship.

<sup>8</sup> On the problems of nation state development in Central Eastern Europe see Jenő Szűcs: *Vázlat Európa három történelmi régiójáról* (The Three Historical Regions of Europe: an Outline). Magvető Kiadó, Budapest, 1983. pp 137; István Bibó: *A kelet-európai kisállamok nyomorúsága* (The Misery of Small States in Eastern Europe). In István Bibó: *Válogatott tanulmányok* II. kötet. Magvető, 1986. p.185-265.

<sup>9</sup> Pál Márer: *A „Szovjet-blokk” mint integrációs modell: gazdasági, politikai és katonai aspektusok*. (The Soviet Bloc as a Model of Intergation: economic, political and military aspects) In. Romsics Ignác (ed.): *Integrációs törekvések Közép- és Kelet-Európában a 19-20. században*. Teleki László Alapítvány, Budapest, 1997. 235-305.

- On the other hand, because Western Balkan states – although to different extents – had, or continue to have to *face deep structural challenges (the problems of failed states and underdevelopment)* which would take decades to overcome, even in countries with a more favourable historical background.

### I.3. Regional Level Threats, Potential Threats, and Risks in the Western Balkans

With regard to the consolidation part of relative consolidation (by this we mean that within the notion of relative consolidation we now elaborate on the arguments supporting consolidation), there is one point that should be emphasised from the outset. This is that – because of the lack of means and intent – *the danger of new wars* threatening the stability of the entire region, similar to those that occurred between 1991 and 1995, is assessed as practically *non-existent*. Nevertheless, this fact does not totally exclude the *risk of internal local armed conflicts*. It is also a fact, that within the framework provided by the international community, *cooperation has been launched among the former enemies*, but its extent and intensity is far from satisfactory. The *most significant structural problem of the Western Balkans is the weakness of state institutions*, the so called *failed state phenomenon* which is linked to nearly all security threats, potential threats and risks in the countries of the region. According to the annual 12-point Failed States Index compiled by the Fund for Peace in 2005 and 2006, all countries in the West Balkans region (in 2007 all except Montenegro) fall into the “warning” category (on a scale of 1-120, whereby the lower and higher numbers indicate the best and worst results respectively). The ratings on this scale for countries in the region ranged between 60 and 90.

The Failed States Index of the Western Balkan states (2005-2007)

	2005	2006	2007
Bosnia and Herzegovina	93,5	88,5	84,5
Serbia	80,0	83,8	81,1
Macedonia	n.a.	75,1	74,1
Albania	n.a.	68,0	70,5
Croatia	85,2	61,9	60,5
Montenegro	n.a.	n.a.	55,6

Source: [www.fundforpeace.org](http://www.fundforpeace.org)

The weakness and functional problems of state institutions are considered key challenges to Western Balkan security because in modern political regimes states are tasked with establishing and guaranteeing frameworks regulating the economic and political activities of society. Besides, the legal and institutional frameworks established by the state in accordance with international standards, including their functioning in compliance with these standards, ensures the accession of individual states to the international economic and political system. If such frameworks fail to function satisfactorily, subsystems of society related, *inter alia*, to the economy, the judiciary and politics – will also become dysfunctional, both internally and externally. This issue is of particular importance in the case of states which are unable or hardly able to modernize without international assistance, such as those in the Western Balkan region.

In the Western Balkans, it should be emphasised that the main criticism with regard to the weakness of institutions relates to the practical operation of institutions and not their lack of existence (the exception is Bosnia and Herzegovina, where only the Border Guard Services, the Armed Forces, and Secret Services have been unified at national level). The most dynamic reforms among the five fundamental state institutions (Leadership, Military, Police, Judiciary, and Civil Service) have taken place in the military sector, while the least probing reforms have been in the leadership and judiciary sectors. The most probable explanation is that the international community, including the USA, which has the biggest influence on and prestige in the region, has focused on reform of the defence sector and the armed forces, and in some cases reform of secret services that play an outstanding role in combating terrorism.

Currently the most important challenge is leadership reform in the political institutions of Western Balkan states. This is a key requisite for Europeanization. Reform processes in most countries of the region require a more dynamic and pragmatic approach based less on ideology and provincial leadership. They should be orchestrated by leaders who are able to think in terms of strategy and regional approaches regarding their countries' security, and who have the political vision to consider the Europeanization of their countries as a long-term political process.

The other structural problem – economic underdevelopment – has a significant influence on the security of the Western Balkans. Apart from Croatia, every country has to face the consequences of this problem: high unemployment and poverty rates, social tensions, a political (ethnic) approach to social conflicts, and the social and political tensions stemming from the above issues.

#### Major economic indicators of Western Balkan states in 2006

	Population (m)	GDP (b €)	GDP/cap PPP (€)	GDP Growth (%)	Inflation (%)	Un-employment (%)	FDI inflow (m €)
Croatia	4,4	34,2	12,200	4,3	3,2	11,1	2,838
Serbia	7,4	25,4	7,230	4,7	11,6	20,9	3,487
Macedonia	2,0	4,9	6,400	4,0	0,5	36,0	279
Bosnia	3,8	10,6	6,240	5,0	7,2	44,2	338
Montenegro	0,6	1,8	6,220	6,0	3,0	30,0	467
Albania	3,1	7,3	4,700	5,5	2,4	13,9	251

Source: The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies

The competitiveness of the economies in the region, which is a key issue for the modernization of Western Balkan states, is also weak, as indicated in the Business Competitiveness Index (BCI) of the countries of the region. (The first number indicates the position of the given country, and the second one shows the number of states involved in the analyses).

## Business Competitiveness Index of the Western Balkan countries (2002-2006)

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Croatia	55/89	60/79	70/100	65/113	56/121
Serbia and Montenegro	-	81/79	83/100	86/113	86/121
Macedonia		82/79	87/100	83/113	87/121
Bosnia and Herzegovina	-	-	91/100	101/113	96/121
Albania	-	-	-	111/113	119/121

Source: World Economic Forum

The weakness of state institutions and underdeveloped economies result in a number of security related problems. *At regional level the threats are as follows:*

- *Corruption*, which is deeply rooted in the region and involves the political elites and state institutions. This phenomenon is regarded as a threat for four reasons: 1. because the reform of political institutions is greatly dependent on anti-corruption measures; 2. because the establishment of a healthy market economy is impossible without curbing corruption; 3. because a formal acceptance of anti-corruption measures without their implementation in practice is not sufficient to qualify countries in the region for the European integration; 4. because without adopting anti-corruption laws in line with European standards it is impossible to adapt to EU regulations. In short: without curbing corruption European integration and modernization of the region will not materialize.

## Corruption Perceptions Index<sup>10</sup> of Western Balkan countries - 2006

	CPI	Ranking
Croatia	3,4	69/163
Serbia	3,0	90/163
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2,9	93/163
Macedonia	2,7	105/163
Albania	2,6	111/163
Montenegro	n/a	n/a

Source: Transparency International

- *Organised crime* that has become a separate notion for scholars, defined as Balkan Organized Crime, and has either direct or indirect impact on most EU and other western European countries (notably Italy, Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the Scandinavian countries. From 2002 it also started to gain a foothold in the United States).<sup>11</sup> In the Western Balkans, it still appears that

<sup>10</sup> Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index is a composite index that draws on multiple expert opinion surveys that poll perceptions of public sector corruption in 163 countries around the world. It scores countries on a scale from zero to ten, with zero indicating high levels of perceived corruption and ten indicating low levels of perceived corruption.

<sup>11</sup> Traditionally it is Turkish criminal gangs that are responsible for the heroin supply of Europe and for the distribution of heroin shipments to Europe in which Balkan criminal groups in transit countries are also involved. It is primarily Albanian criminal organisations that take part in the heroin business, while human trafficking, trade in children and women are run by Romanian and Bulgarian gangs. 70% of heroin arriving in Europe enter the EU through the countries of the Western Balkans. On Balkan Organized Crime see: OCTA EU Organized Crime Threat Assessment 2006. <http://www.europol.europa.eu/publications/OCTA/OCTA2006.pdf>; Dejan Anastasijevic: *Organized Crime in the Western*

organised crime is able to infiltrate the political sphere more than in other European countries, precisely because of the weakness of state institutions, and that this phenomenon effectively hinders institutional reform.

Today, the weakness of state institutions, as well as corruption and organised crime represent the most significant obstacles to the Europeanization of the Western Balkans.

#### I.4. Terrorism, Islamic Radicalism, and Pan-Albanianism: Risks Perceived as Threats

Although the Western Balkans is frequently labelled as a region threatened by terrorism, international statistics do not support these claims. The statistics below, showing the number of incidents linked to terrorism between 1 January 2001 and 31 December 2006, place the Western Balkan region toward the bottom of the global listing in terms of the number of attacks, the number of fatalities, and the attack/fatality ratio. On the basis of international data and in view of the fact that terrorist acts have decreased and become more sporadic in the Western Balkans, terrorism can only be classified as a risk to the security of the region. Nevertheless, other terrorism-related illegal activities in various parts of the region (such as financing terrorist groups, supplying them with weapons and explosive materials, and providing safe havens for terrorists/terrorist groups, etc.) require specific scrutiny.

Number of terrorist attacks and fatalities between January 2001 and December 2006

	Number of attacks	Number of fatalities
Croatia	11	0
Serbia	53	6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	36	0
Macedonia	53	10
Albania	12	2
Montenegro	6	1
Kosovo	57	18
Total	228	37

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*Balkans.* [www.humsec.eu/cms/fileadmin/user\\_upload/humsec/Workin\\_Paper\\_Series/Working\\_Paper\\_Anastasijevic.pdf](http://www.humsec.eu/cms/fileadmin/user_upload/humsec/Workin_Paper_Series/Working_Paper_Anastasijevic.pdf); Bojan Dobovšek: *Transnational Organized Crime in the Western Balkans.* [www.etc.raz.at/cms/fileadmin/user\\_upload/humsec/Workin\\_Paper\\_Series/Working\\_Paper\\_Dobovsek.pdf](http://www.etc.raz.at/cms/fileadmin/user_upload/humsec/Workin_Paper_Series/Working_Paper_Dobovsek.pdf); Selvete Gërzhaliu: *Human Security, Organized Crime and Terrorism. Challenges in Kosovo's Perspective.* [www.humsec.eu/cms/fileadmin/user\\_upload/humsec/Workin\\_Paper\\_Series/Working\\_Paper\\_Gerzhaliu.pdf](http://www.humsec.eu/cms/fileadmin/user_upload/humsec/Workin_Paper_Series/Working_Paper_Gerzhaliu.pdf)

Number of terrorist attacks and attempted attacks, number of fatalities caused by attacks, and number of fatalities per capita by region

Region	January 2001 - December 2006		
	Attacks	Fatalities	Attacks/Fatality
Middle East	10,577	20,475	1,93
South Asia <sup>12</sup>	4,153	5,931	1,42
Western Europe	1,948	309	0,15
Southeast Asia <sup>13</sup>	1,328	1,402	1,05
Latin America	1,246	1,231	0,98
Eastern Europe <sup>14</sup>	922	1,390	1,50
Western Balkans	228	37	0,16
Africa	227	1,208	5,32
North America	96	2,991	31,15
East & Central Asia <sup>15</sup>	76	64	0,84
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,573</b>	<b>35,001</b>	<b>1,70</b>

Region	January 2001 - December 2006		
	Attacks	Fatalities	Attacks/Fatality
Middle East	10,577	20,475	1,93
South Asia	4,153	5,931	1,42
North America	96	2,991	31,15
Southeast Asia	1,328	1,402	1,05
Eastern Europe	922	1,390	1,50
Latin-America	1,246	1,231	0,98
Africa	227	1,208	5,32
Western Europe	1,948	309	0,15
East & Central Asia	76	64	0,84
Western Balkans	228	37	0,16
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,573</b>	<b>35,001</b>	<b>1,70</b>

Region	January 2001 - December 2006		
	Attacks	Fatalities	Attacks/Fatality
North America	96	2,991	31,15
Africa	227	1,208	5,32
Middle East	10,577	20,475	1,93
Eastern Europe	922	1,390	1,50
South Asia	4,153	5,931	1,42
Southeast Asia	1,328	1,402	1,05
Latin America	1,246	1,231	0,98
East & Central Asia	76	64	0,84
Western Balkans	228	37	0,16
Western Europe	1,948	309	0,15
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,949</b>	<b>22,783</b>	<b>1,63</b>

Source: www.tkb.org

<sup>12</sup> Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, India, Kashmir, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand.

<sup>13</sup> Asia and Oceania except for the countries of South Asia and Central & East Asia.

<sup>14</sup> The Central Eastern European region and the post-Soviet states outside Central & East Asia.

<sup>15</sup> China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, Kazakhstan, North Korea, South Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Macao, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.

Similarly, the image of the region as one linked to Islamic radicalism can be regarded as exaggerated. Analyses of this danger are primarily based on the fact that a significant Muslim minority lives in some Western Balkan states, as shown in the table below.

Number and percentage of Muslim population in Europe<sup>16</sup>

Country	Population	Country	Percentage
1. France	4,549,213	1. Albania	70,0
2. Germany	3,049,961	2. BiH	40,0
3. Albania	2,494,178	3. Macedonia	30,0
4. Serbia and Montenegro	2,274,126	4. Serbia and Montenegro	21,0
5. Great Britain	1,631,919	5. Cyprus	18,0
6. BiH	1,610,190	6. Bulgaria	12,2
7. Spain	1,008,532	7. France	7,5
8. Italy	987,751	8. The Netherlands	6,0
9. The Netherlands	984,449	9. Austria	4,7
10. Bulgaria	908,942	10. Switzerland	4,4
11. Macedonia	613,578	11. Sweden	4,0
12. Austria	384,680	12. Germany	3,7
13. Belgium	362,753	13. Belgium	3,5
14. Sweden	360,070	14. Denmark	3,0
15. Switzerland	329,532	15. Great Britain	2,7
16. Ukraine	237,126	16. Spain	2,5
17. Denmark	162,970	17. Slovenia	2,5
18. Cyprus	140,423	18. Luxemburg	2,0
19. Greece	138,688	19. Italy	1,7
20. Norway	73,488	20. Norway	1,6
21. Romania	66,989	21. Greece	1,3
22. Hungary	60,041	22. Croatia	1,3
23. Croatia	58,446	23. Malta	0,8
24. Belarus	51,502	24. Hungary	0,6
25. Slovenia	50,488	25. Lithuania	0,6
26. Portugal	36,981	26. Ukraine	0,5
27. Lithuania	21,579	27. Belarus	0,5
28. Czech Republic	20,482	28. Ireland	0,4
29. Ireland	19,676	29. Estonia	0,4
30. Finland	10,446	30. Portugal	0,35
31. Luxemburg	9,371	31. Romania	0,3
32. Estonia	6,000	32. Czech Republic	0,2
33. Poland	3,090	33. Finland	0,2
34. Malta	3,000	34. Iceland	0,1
35. Slovakia	2,715	35. Slovakia	0,05
36. Latvia	458	36. Latvia	0,02
37. Iceland	321	37. Poland	0,008

<sup>16</sup> Sources: International Religious Freedom Report 2004. (<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/isf/>); CIA World Factbook (<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>); adherents.com ([http://www.adherents.com/Na/Na\\_321.html#2058](http://www.adherents.com/Na/Na_321.html#2058))

A number of experts claim or suggest that there is a growing radicalization of Muslim communities in Europe, and that the only question is *when* a terrorist attack on a scale similar to those in Madrid or London will be committed in a European country with a considerable Muslim community. Others, however, disagree and assert that new terrorism has a very prominent political agenda whereby targets are selected on the basis of political considerations, and that the radicalization of Muslim communities depends on many factors besides their size in proportion to the overall population. One such factor is the composition of a community regarding its origin or legal status and its level of integration into a given country's society. Examining the influence of new terrorism – often called global terrorism – in the Balkans, Western analysts tend to forget the fact that the communities of the post-Yugoslav region were characterized by a very solid re-nationalisation that is a re-articulation of national interests, which even triggered wars in the region. Even if this occasionally included the use of terrorist methods, actions of local terrorist groups and sporadic terrorist acts practically remained at either national or local levels. Consequently, the general re-nationalization typical of Central and Eastern Europe makes communities more resistant towards new global terrorist ideologies, even in the case of the Muslim communities in the Balkans.

The interpretation of terrorism and Islamic radicalism as a threat in the Western Balkans can be explained by two factors: the Atlanticism of the local leadership that wants to meet the expectations of the US, and Serbia's desire to present itself as the leader of counter-terrorist efforts in the Western Balkans.

Finally, one can also regard expressed concerns about pan-Albanianism as exaggerated. While it is an undisputed fact that in certain parts of the region (e. g. southern Serbia and Macedonia) ethnic conflicts can be perceived as potential local level threats, for the Western Balkans as such this danger can be classified only as a risk. Those who consider this phenomenon a threat at regional level disregard the significant differences between the Albanian communities in the Western Balkans.

## **II. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS OF THE WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES**

### **II.1. The State of Affairs Concerning Basic Strategic Documents**

The current security strategies and security documents of Western Balkan countries were all adopted in recent years, but the way and level of adoption and the type of the documents vary greatly. In Albania, the National Security Strategy was adopted in November 2004 by Parliament, followed by a revision of the Military Strategy of 2002, adopted in 2005, and a White Paper on Defence published in 2005. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a Defence Policy document was passed by the Presidency in May 2001, followed by a White Paper on Defence adopted by the Presidency in March 2005, and a Security Policy approved by the same body in February 2006. In Croatia, Parliament adopted a National Security Strategy in March 2002. At the same time, a Defence Strategy was adopted, and a Strategic Defence Review was compiled by the Ministry of Defence in 2005. Macedonia's National Security and Defence Concept was adopted in February 2003, followed by a Macedonian White Paper on Defence (October 2005),

which was based on the Policy Framework for the Strategic Defence Review (October 2003). Shortly after Montenegro established its independence, the government adopted a Strategy of National Security in June 2006. Serbia does not possess any specific security strategy but currently has three related documents: the Defence Strategy of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro adopted by Parliament (2005), a White Paper on Defence of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro compiled by the Ministry of Defence (2005), and a Strategic Defence Review, adopted by the same Ministry (2006).

Taking into consideration the fast changes in the security environment of the Western Balkan countries, as well as progress made in the process of their rapprochement with NATO and the EU, most of the strategic documents of the region – even though they are relatively new – are under revision and new types of documents, not yet included in the assortment of strategic documents published by the various countries so far, are being compiled. Among them, the Albanian Military Strategy of 2005 is currently being revised; the new National Security Strategy and Defence Strategy of Croatia – already under preparation for a quite a while – is expected to be approved in the second half of this year; and in Macedonia, the National Security and Defence Concept is going to be replaced by a National Security Strategy currently being drafted. The young Republic of Montenegro is about to add a Defence Strategy to its Strategy of National Security approved last year; and lastly, Serbia is expected to approve a new Defence Strategy, which has already been finalised in draft form by the Ministry of Defence, and to integrate the existing two drafts of its future National Security Strategy.

The security documents of the six countries of the Western Balkan region show a great deal of similarity and diversity at the same time. Among the similarities, it may be noted that these documents were adopted quite recently within a short period of time, and that most of them reflect the current security situation of the countries concerned. The number of documents also adds to the impression that the countries of the region have basically created a developed system of security documents. All states possess 1-3 security-related documents encompassing different levels. One can find at least – depending on the wording – 3 types of documents of different levels:

- national security strategies;
- military or defence strategies;
- white papers / strategic defence reviews.

#### Current national security documents in force in Western Balkan countries

Albania	BiH	Croatia	Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia
National Security Strategy	Security Policy of BiH	National Security Strategy	National Security and Defence Concept	Strategy of National Security	
Military Strategy	Defence Policy of BiH	Defence Strategy			Defence Strategy of the State Union of SaM
	White Paper on Defence	Strategic Defence Review	White Paper on Defence; Policy Framework of the Strategic Defence Review		White Paper on Defence of the State Union of SaM; Strategic Defence Review

As to the level of adoption, which is an important indicator of longevity and legitimacy, the documents differ markedly, ranging from the parliamentary level through the presidency to the Ministry of Defence.

The abundance of these documents also shows the differences among the countries surveyed. Montenegro is an exception in that it has only one security document. Serbia has no cover document – its series of strategic documents begins immediately with a Defence Strategy. It is also worth noting that the terminology of document titles is somewhat inconsistent. However, since certain documents claim to encompass several levels, their titles may be misleading in some cases.

**II.2. The Structure of Security Strategies**

The various security documents of the countries of the region are hardly comparable, partly because of their different genre and consequently their size and subject matter, and partly because they are structured diversely. A comparison of the content structure of these documents shows the complete lack of any model upon which these strategies were based. A positive interpretation of this situation could be that these new actors of international relations have formulated their strategies in a truly independent manner. However, from possibly a more realistic perspective it could also be considered quite problematic that countries aiming to accede to the same international security organisations have not elaborated more consistent and more similar security documents.

In addition to the chaotic nature of the content structure, it can also be demonstrated that there are important elements missing in the general outlines of certain documents.

**Basic themes in the content structure**

	Albania	BiH	Croatia	Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia
Principles, values and interests, goals						
Security environment situation						
Challenges, risks and threats						
Security policy elements, fields, defence, armed forces						
Security policy implementation						

As to the principles, values and interests, goals, and security environment situation, most states (four out of the six) explicitly deal with these issues, but only half of them dedicate a specific chapter to the most important element of threat perception – i.e. challenges, risks and threats.

### II.3. Interests and Values

The security documents focus on the issue of interests and values at varied levels but these concerns usually represent only a modest proportion of the text. Generally, the documents define national interests and values in a very wide sense, not limiting them to the security context. They include, almost without exception (in certain cases referring to the Constitution), the following: the protection of sovereignty, territorial integrity, the development or protection of the rule of law, democratic institutions, human rights and freedoms, prosperity and economic development.

The documents typically list the interests and values without prioritizing them, although the Macedonian and Croatian documents represent another kind of logic and present these issues in a structured way. The Macedonian document first classifies national interests according to their levels of importance, as follows:

- top fundamental;
- lasting;
- vital;
- important,

while the Croatian document lists the following categories:

- highest values;
- vital national interests;
- other considerations.

Quite interestingly, the Montenegrin Strategy of National Security uses a thematic approach and classifies interests as political interests and objectives, economic interests, defence interests, as well as legal, technological, and environmental interests.

Below the level of abstract and declarative national interest there are a number of issues that are elaborated on in most of the documents upon which there are generally commonly held views. The first among them is the question of *regional stability* as a national interest. On this issue the main message all documents convey is that the countries of the region are committed to contribute actively to preserving and enhancing peace and stability in their neighbourhood and in South Eastern Europe. This is reflected in various pronouncements contained in the relevant security documents of the respective countries, such as “to be a factor of stability”(Albania), “to be seen as a recognised contributor to peace and stability in South-Eastern Europe” (Macedonia) or to make an “active contribution to the preservation of peace and the development of a favourable security environment” (Serbia).

The next common feature has to do with the approach to *international relations*. All documents advocate the preservation of international order, but special emphasis is given to the equality of states (Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia), and to adopting a multilateral approach in resolving security issues (Montenegro). Similarly important is the common view that violent disputes have to be prevented.

The issue of *national identity* occupies an important place among the values that are dealt with in the security documents, as illustrated by wordings such as the “development of national identity” (Albania and Croatia), the “free expression of national belonging and the maintenance and upgrading of national and ethnic identity” (Macedonia), and “preserving multiethnic society” (Montenegro). Furthermore, the Albanian and Croatian documents provide for the “preservation of national identity and well-being” of their nationals living in other countries. With the exception of Albania, all other countries in the region refer in their strategic documents to the importance of protecting the environment in terms of national security, thus showing a modern and comprehensive approach to security.

Naturally, there are a number of issues on which common views are not held, reflecting an expression of specific national approaches. Two documents refer to the issue of the *change of borders*, with Albania rejecting “border change by use of force”, while the Serbian White Paper on Defence cites OSCE documents referring to “maintaining the current state borders”. The Macedonian security document takes up specific issues such as internal integration, equal representation of national communities, local self-government and the building of a multiethnic society based on tolerance.

When comparing two Croatian documents – the National Security Strategy of 2002 and the Strategic Defence Review of 2005 – there seems to be markedly different wording related to the use of force by the army: the first document is very explicit in stating that “Croatia is determined to use all available resources, including the armed forces, if necessary, to protect her vital national interests”, while such statements are completely lacking in the latter document. In the Serbian Strategic Defence Review particular emphasis is placed – at the level of interests and values – on the principle that foreign troops may only be deployed on national territory if they are mandated by the UN for peacekeeping purposes. The Montenegrin document includes another element as a priority national interest, namely that the country is willing to contribute “to stability and peace beyond Montenegro’s borders by... allowing the possibility to use Montenegro’s territory, air and sea to support relevant missions undertaken by the UN, EU, OSCE or NATO”.

#### **II.4. Assessment of the Security Environment**

Using modern terminology, the security documents of the Western Balkan countries generally describe the security environment in a similar way, interpreting post-bipolar era international security as a complex phenomenon (referred to as multidimensional in the Croatian defence strategy document). The security situation is also characterized as changing in a dynamic and often unpredictable way. NATO and the EU are unanimously regarded as basic factors of stability, even if countries are at different stages in their

efforts to join these entities. Emphasis is placed on the commonality of values and objectives of the countries of the region, and on the need and desire for regional cooperation.

The analytical framework of the current security environment also shows similarities. The Albanian National Security Strategy defines historical legacy, geostrategic importance and ethnic fragmentation as key factors in interpreting the current security situation. Most security strategies underline that incomplete transition processes also represent a key potential source of instability. In this regard, the process of reconciliation is described as unfinished business in the Macedonian document, while the relevant Albanian document states that confidence-building measures play a crucial role in furthering reconciliation.

The importance and special security role of the Western Balkan region is defined in a partly similar and partly different way in the relevant documents. The Albanian document refers to the region's "bridge role" as an important factor in this respect. The Bosnian paper describes the country's position as one "connecting the Danube region with the Mid-Adriatic region", while the Macedonian National Security and Defence Concept labels its immediate environment – in a somewhat exaggerated manner – the "crossroad" between Europe, Asia and Africa. The Croatian document identifies the country as occupying a "multidimensional regional position" connected simultaneously to Eastern Europe, South-Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean regions.

Although there are different wordings in the documents as to the current security situation in the Western Balkans, they all characterise the situation in a similar way. The Croatian Security Strategy states that South-Eastern Europe is the "most troubled corner" of the continent. Similarly, the Macedonian National Security and Defence Concept acknowledges that South-Eastern Europe "remains the most unstable region in Europe", while the Serbian Strategic Defence Review describes the region as the "least stable" in Europe, where the possibility of the use of force has not disappeared completely.

Certain documents make specific inputs to the overall security picture. The Albanian security strategy, for example, introduces the "Albanian factor" as an important security element. The Croatian security strategy describes some of its neighbours in terms of security, and refers to the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina as "delicate", and notes that although Yugoslavia has been the "main cause of regional instability over the last 10 years<sup>17</sup>", it is a "potential partner". The Macedonian document is unique in mentioning the "hostile role of foreign security services".

## II.5. Threat Perception

The national security documents devote a relatively small portion of their contents to examining perceived threats, challenges, and risks faced by their countries. In addition to these quantitative problems, there also seems to be a qualitative problem reflected in the markedly diverse way these documents classify – if they do so at all – threats, challenges and risks. Two countries (Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina), and to a certain extent

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<sup>17</sup> The Croatian security strategy refers to the past ten years, which is the reason for mentioning of "Yugoslavia".

Croatia, classify the challenges, threats and risks in a structured way, using three levels of analysis: local, regional, and global. Two other countries (Macedonia and Serbia) resort to another method of classification, using the level of intensity indicator, combined with a chronological approach (short-, mid- and long-term), with an additional military–non military distinction in the Serbian case. The threat assessment section of Montenegro's security strategy – relatively weak even by Western Balkan standards – makes no attempt to classify threats and challenges. The Montenegrin documents also fail to interpret general threats in the Montenegrin context, and the way they are formulated could be applied to any country in the world because they do not contain any specific reference to the Republic of Montenegro.<sup>18</sup> Another aspect of the qualitative problem with regard to these basic security documents is a lack of prioritisation when listing threats and challenges, as well as the failure to differentiate between threats, risks, and challenges. When comparing the threat perception of the documents we will rely on the classification used by the best structured documents, applying the internal-regional-global categorisation to the other documents.

### II.5.1. Internal threats

At the level of internal threats, the following four categories can be identified as common threats and risks: organised crime, terrorism, disasters, and problems of transition. It is worth noting that the first two categories are completely lacking in the Bosnian documents at the internal level. When mentioning *organised crime*, the strategic documents usually refer to different forms of illegal trafficking (drugs and human trafficking, biological and nuclear agents, conventional weapons and WMD, as well as strategic and dual use materials). The Serbian documents also point to the danger of a possible interrelation between organised crime and corruption. Under the heading *disasters*, the documents generally list ecological, technical disasters, and epidemics. In addition to this list, the Croatian National Security document explicitly identifies forest fires as a possible source of danger. The *problems of transition* are dealt with in a quite detailed manner in most documents, especially in the relevant Bosnian document. The latter summarizes the political challenges of transition, including the slow development of the executive, legislative and judicial authorities, as well as the economic aspects of transition, such as the low level of investment, the "grey" economy, the black market, and the slow pace of privatization. The Macedonian National Security and Defence Concept offers a special interpretation of the problems associated with transition by including elements such as urban terrorism, major crime, such as blackmail, racketeering, murders and attacks on civilian property, reflecting a homeland security type of approach.

The various national strategic documents reflect a number of particular characteristics with regard to internal security. In the Albanian case, particular emphasis is placed on demographic problems, such as the illegal migration of Albanian citizens towards other countries and “uncontrolled population movement” within the country. Two additional notions contained in Albanian strategic documents provide a somewhat confused perspective regarding Albanian internal security in their references to “the misinformation of public opinion” and “the inadequate development of education,

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<sup>18</sup> E.g. “Global terrorism and violent extremism: this category of security challenges currently constitutes one of the most important global, regional and national threats due to its transnational character and links to organised crime.”

science and culture”. The legacy of the armed conflict of 1992-1995 is reflected in the Bosnian strategic documents. They refer to the “remnants of political and social animosities” from the conflict, the slow implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement, the insufficient financial resources to implement a sustainable return of displaced persons and refugees, as well as “armaments and ammunition placed in inadequate storage” and the existence of landmines and unexploded ordnance on Bosnian soil. In its listing of internal challenges, the Bosnian security policy document is unique in specifically referring to the protection of borders, the “efforts to carry out the revision of the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina against the will and without the consent of all the three constituent peoples”, as well as to extremist nationalism. The Croatian National Security Strategy document also refers to the consequences of war in the form of mines and explosive devices. Similarly to the Albanian case, it also puts the issue of negative population trends on the list of internal threats. Both the Croatian and Macedonian strategic documents define IT crimes as IT terrorism, and state that the abuse of personal data constitutes a threat to internal security. A particular feature of the Macedonian strategic documents is the reference to the hostile activities of foreign special services “directed toward worsening of the security situation, and thus slowing down democratic and integrative processes”. Among the seven major threats referred to in Montenegro's security strategy, particular mention is made of the rather obscure and vague category of “activities of individuals or groups that violate the laws of Montenegro”, thus blurring the line between internal security as such and individual criminality. Finally, Serbia's security documents list two interrelated issues as particular internal threats, namely “armed rebellion, as a specific form of armed conflict motivated by an unconstitutional and violent attempt at changing state borders”, and the unresolved issue of the future status of Kosovo and Metohija.

### II.5.2. Regional threats

In comparison to the internal level, the strategic documents of the region are more homogenous and show a greater degree of similarity in their assessment of perceived security threats to the region as a whole. The following aspects of threat perception can be identified in the strategic documents of the Western Balkan countries:

- Possibility of armed conflict in the region;
- Legacy of recent conflicts/historical factors;
- Regional instability and crises;
- Problems of transition;
- Extremism and intolerance;
- Organised crime;
- Terrorism.

The assessment of the *threat of conventional armed conflict in the region* differs in the relevant documents. Some regard the possibility of armed conflict as low and reduced with “virtually no risk of external aggression... in the near future” (Bosnia and Herzegovina's White Paper on Defence), or “Military risks in the region are greatly reduced for a longer period of time... The likelihood of an inter-state armed conflict has been minimised”

(Croatia's National Security Strategy). The Albanian Strategy papers do not explicitly express a position in this regard, the National Security Strategy simply states the fact that the use of military force is “a danger for the Albanian Republic” while the Military Strategy states that “the revival of radical ethnic feelings, as well as the tendency to use military force for their solution may also affect the security of the Republic of Albania”. Montenegro's National Security Strategy states that “...a geographical escalation involving Montenegro directly can never be ruled out entirely”. The documents of certain other countries consider the likelihood of such conflicts relatively realistic. For example, the National Security and Defence Concept of Macedonia warns: “The national, religious, greater-state, and territorial confrontation are potential and realistic risks and dangers that can lead to crises and conflicts”, while Serbia's Strategic Defence Review paper stated that “...military intervention against the Republic of Serbia is less likely to happen...” and the Defence Strategy of Serbia and Montenegro stated that “Military challenges, risks and threats... have been reduced but not completely excluded.”.

Except for Montenegro, which – with the elegance of a brand-new state – ignores the problem, all countries consider *the legacy of recent conflicts and historical factors* as important aspects of threat perception. Albania's Military Strategy stresses unresolved problems stemming from a complex history, while Bosnia's Defence Policy paper refers to the “latent danger and huge problems within certain countries and relations between countries in the region”, and to the fact that the “region was the scene of various conflicts that left economic, psychological, social and other consequences”. The Macedonian White Paper on Defence mentions the “decade of hostilities and the unfinished process of reconciliation”. Serbia's White Paper talks about the “negative legacy of the war” while its Strategic Defence Review mentions the fact that “the relations of the former SFRY countries are burdened with the lack of trust, the slow resolution of the refugee return issue... as well as slow confirmation for responsibility for war crimes, (and) unresolved territorial disputes”.

*Regional instability and crises* are generally regarded as a possible source of threat, but the focus of concern in this regard varies between the countries of the region. The Albanian National Security Strategy examines this problem in the context of nationalism and ethnic conflicts. The Defence Policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina is unique in referring to the capacity of “great powers to exert political influence”, while the state's White Paper refers to attempts for “secession, autonomy and independence by certain ethnic groups, which, in conjunction with the relatively high concentration of military capacities, makes the overall situation more complex”. Croatia's National Security Strategy draws attention to a number of factors that it considers could result in regional crises, such as “potential conflicts of interests to gain control over the transit routes of natural resources”, transitional problems, border issues and refugee crises. As to *the problems of transition*, all the countries concerned regard the different economic, political and social difficulties involved as potential sources of regional instability.

The next factor influencing regional instability has to do with *extremism and intolerance*. Practically all of the strategic documents refer to these phenomena in a nationalist, ethnic and religious context. The Croatian National Security Strategy warns against any “unilateral solution” of the minority question. In addition to perceiving them as internal security concerns, all states also regard *organised crime and terrorism* as regional threats,

although only two countries elaborate on these issues in a relatively detailed manner. Albania's National Security Strategy states that, owing to the geostrategic location of Albania, the country is used as a “logistics and communication route”. In a similar vein, the Bosnian White Paper on Defence regards the region in terms of transit routes for terrorist groups and materials for terrorist activities. Furthermore, the Bosnian Security Policy paper identifies terrorism as one of the biggest threats to the stability of the state and the region. It asserts that the “tendencies of some terrorist groups to gain ground in countries where they have not been present before, to connect there with like-minded persons and find strongholds and disguise their activities are becoming increasingly explicit.”

In addition to the aforementioned aspects of regional security, certain other issues are evoked by some countries. Croatia's Defence Strategy paper is unique in addressing the ecological domain at a regional level and refers to “potential environment bombs” (such as nuclear power plants and outdated industrial installations). It also underlines that the “adjustment of the armed forces to the current defence trends is another challenge as it requires radical and dramatic reforms”. This may be a reference to specific problems related to security sector reform (especially demobilization and reintegration). The Bosnian White Paper on Defence draws a similar conclusion when referring to the “relatively high concentration of military capacities” in the region. In addition, the Bosnian Security Policy paper surprisingly points to the former members of the Warsaw Pact as a possible source of danger, arguing that “their nuclear potential is no longer under strict control”. The Macedonian White Paper on Defence adds the aspect of the “remaining stockpiles of weapons” to the list of regional security concerns, and could not resist the temptation to include the “hostile activities of foreign special services” among perceived regional level threats.

### II.5.3. Global threats

At the global level of threat perception the following aspects figure as common characteristics:

- Terrorism;
- Organised crime;
- Proliferation of conventional weapons and/or WMD;
- Environmental challenges, including the problem of natural resources;
- Extremism.

However, the security documents do not define these perceived threats in any order of priority.

All national security documents refer to *terrorism* as a global threat, although none of them elaborate in detail on this important topic. Similarly, organised crime is not dealt with in a detailed manner in the documents, which generally simply link this issue to the various forms of illegal trafficking. All documents address the issue of the *proliferation of WMD*, but only in certain cases place it in a specific context. The Croatian Defence Strategy paper links the proliferation of WMD to terrorist activities, while its Serbian equivalent

regards the proliferation of conventional weapons and WMD as of equal importance. The relevant Bosnian strategic document approaches these issues in a wider context, and refers to “the uncontrolled production and trade of armaments”. When dealing with *environmental challenges*, three main areas of concern are distinguished: environmental pollution, degradation and climate change; resulting disasters, including man-made disasters; and problems related to the *depletion of and access to strategic natural resources*. As to the latter, the Albanian National Security Strategy highlights “water resource reduction” as a particular challenge, while the Macedonian National Security and Defence Concept paper raises the spectre of a possible “clash of interests for the use of sources and routes of strategic energy materials, as well as obstructing and blocking their importation to Macedonia”. With the exception of those in Albania, all strategic documents address the problem of *extremism* by generally referring to ethnic, religious, racial and political intolerance, the impact of extreme ideologies, and violent extremism. However, the Croatian Defence Strategy paper approaches this issue from a different angle, underlining the problems in democratization processes, human rights, and minority rights, thereby echoing the reference to problems of discrimination mentioned in the Bosnian Security Policy paper.

There are a number of other issues that are only mentioned in some documents. Migration is referred to as “forced migration caused by extreme situations” in the Bosnian Defence Policy paper. Croatia's Defence Strategy paper mentions “demographic expansion and migration”, Macedonia's National Security and Defence Concept talks about “illegal migration”, and Serbia's White Paper on Defence refers to “uncontrolled and mass migrations”. Furthermore, in the context of the negative consequences of globalization, the Bosnian Security Policy document refers to “growing differences in economic and social progress between the rich and the poor part of the world”, whereas the Croatian Defence Strategy mentions the asymmetric economic development of different parts of the world as a security challenge. The Croatian Strategic Defence Review specifically singles out communications and computer technologies as sources of global security concern, while the Serbian White Paper refers to the “abuse of new technologies and scientific achievements in the sphere of informatics, genetic engineering, medicine and meteorology”. The Serbian security documents are unique in considering the possibility of a global armed conflict.

A comparison of the threat assessment in the strategic documents of the Western Balkan countries<sup>19</sup>

		Albania	BiH	Croatia	Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia
Internal	Military	Light weapons in the hands of the population	Armaments and ammunition - inadequate storage  Landmines, unexploded ordinance	Mines, explosive devices	Possession of large quantities of illegal weapons		Armed rebellion
	Political	Misinforming the public Political instability	Remnants of political and social animosities, Propagation of various forms of nationalistic extremism  Slow implementation of the Dayton PA  Problems of political transition		Transitional problems (underdeveloped institutions of the democratic system, problems in the functioning of the judiciary)  Activities of foreign special services	Corruption, abuse of power, weak institutions and lack of accountability  Political difficulties/process of transition	The issues of the future status of Kosovo and Metohija
	Economic	Insufficient economic development	Insufficient financial resources for sustainable return of displaced persons and refugees  Problems of transition to market economy		Transitional problems (economic crime, tax evasion)	Economic difficulties/process of transition	
	Social	Uncontrolled migration  Illegal emigration of Albanian citizens  Demographic problems  Inadequate development of education, science and culture	Unemployment	Negative population trends	Transitional problems (social problems and unemployment)	Social difficulties / process of transition	

<sup>19</sup> In order to make a comparison of the threat assessment of the respective countries' strategic documents easier, we distinguished - within the internal, regional, and global levels - a number of dimensions of security that, again, contain the different aspects treated by the documents. The columns show a threat assessment derived from the strategic documents currently in force in each of the countries examined.

	<b>Environmental</b>	Natural and environmental disasters	Ecological challenges	Disasters (esp. forest fires) Potential technological disasters Contagious diseases and epidemics	Natural and other disasters Technical-technological catastrophes Contagious diseases (in humans and animals)	Natural, ecological, disasters Technical and technological disasters, man-made accidents Epidemics	Natural disasters Industrial and other accidents Epidemics
	<b>Organised crime</b>	Illegal trafficking of human beings, weapons and drugs		Aggravated forms of organised crime	Transitional problems (corruption, serious crime, including blackmail, racketeering, murders and attacks on civilian property)		Organised crime and corruption, notably illegal drugs and human trafficking, proliferation of both conventional weapons and WMD
	<b>Terrorism</b>	Terrorism		Terrorism	Urban terrorism	Terrorism	Terrorism
	<b>Information technology</b>			IT system	IT terrorism, piracy, abuse of IT, especially regarding the personal data of citizens, business, service and state secrets		
	<b>Law enforcement</b>		Protection of borders			Activities of individuals or groups that violate the laws of Montenegro	
<b>Regional</b>	<b>Military</b>	The use of military force is a danger Tendency to use military force to handle situations created by radical ethnic feelings	Virtually no risk of external aggression in the near future Relatively high concentration of military capacities in the region	Military risks in the region are greatly reduced Capability of successful offensive against the others is small Adjustment of the armed forces	National, religious, greater-state, and territorial confrontation can lead to crises and conflicts Remaining stockpiles of weapons	Conventional military threats decreased (geographical escalation cannot be ruled out)	Military intervention on the RS is less likely; military challenges, risks and threats have been reduced but are not completely excluded Possibility of disputes involving the use of armed forces as a result of terrorism, border and territorial disputes, and violent suspension of democratic processes in SEE countries

	<p><b>Political</b></p>	<p>Unresolved problems (complex history)</p> <p>Fragile government institutions</p> <p>Regional destabilisation (nationalism, ethnic conflicts)</p>	<p>Recent wars in the region;</p> <p>Various conflicts of the last decade with economic, psychological, social and other consequences</p> <p>Extremely important geo-strategic position of the region and the desire of great powers to exert political influence</p> <p>Problems of transition</p> <p>Latent danger and major problems within certain countries, and in relations between countries in the region</p> <p>Moves to secede or gain autonomy / independence</p>	<p>Problems in the finalisation of formation of new countries</p> <p>Border issues in the SFRY countries</p> <p>Potential conflicts of interests to gain control over the transit routes of natural resources</p> <p>Incomplete democratisation, transitional problems</p> <p>Instability, escalation of national, religious and economic disparities</p> <p>Refugee crises</p> <p>Risk of unilateral solution of minority questions</p>	<p>A decade of hostilities and the unfinished process of reconciliation</p> <p>Transitional problems (weak judicial system, corruption, tax evasion)</p> <p>Hostile activities of foreign special services</p>	<p>Corruption, abuse of power, weak institutions and lack of accountability</p> <p>Political difficulties/process of transition</p> <p>Risks of crises in the region, destabilization and regional insecurity</p>	<p>Negative legacy of the war</p> <p>Lack of trust among former SFRY countries, slow resolution of the refugee return issue, slow confirmation of responsibility for war crimes</p> <p>Unresolved territorial disputes (former SFRY)</p> <p>Transitional processes (insufficiently democratic and competent state institutions, internal political / social instability)</p>
	<p><b>Economic</b></p>	<p>Inadequate economic development</p>	<p>Instability resulting from the transition to market economies (and stagnation)</p>	<p>Threat of economic collapse</p> <p>Stagnation in transition, unemployment</p>		<p>Economic difficulties / process of transition</p>	<p>Transitional processes - economic problems</p>
	<p><b>Social</b></p>	<p>Revival of radical ethnic feelings</p>	<p>Different religious heritages in SEE states (may be abused)</p> <p>Humanitarian and social problems (as a consequence of wars)</p>	<p>Insufficient implementation of human and minority rights</p> <p>Decreasing economic status of the population</p>	<p>Ethnic and religious extremism and intolerance</p>	<p>Social difficulties / process of transition</p>	<p>Nationalist and religious extremism</p> <p>Transitional processes - social problems</p>
	<p><b>Environmental</b></p>			<p>Potential 'environment bombs' (nuclear power plants, outdated industrial installations)</p>			

	Organised crime	Organised crime, illegal trafficking	Illegal trafficking of weapons, narcotics, white slavery	Organised crime Increased use of territory for drugs, weapons and human trafficking	Organised crime and illegal migration	Organised crime	Organised crime
	Terrorism	Regional terrorism; Albania as a logistics and communications route	The region is a transit route for terrorist groups and materials for terrorist activities  Efforts of some terrorist groups to gain a foothold and establish strongholds in countries where they have not been present before	International terrorism	International terrorism	Global terrorism	Terrorism
Global	Military	WMD and nuclear proliferation	Uncontrolled production and trade in armaments (particularly WMD)	WMD proliferation (for terrorist purposes)	Illegal trafficking in strategic and dual use materials, use of WMD	Smuggling and proliferation of WMD	Proliferation of both conventional weapons and WMD  Global armed conflicts
	Political		Political instability within states	Problems in democratisation processes			
	Economic		Growing differences in development, between rich and poor part of the world	Asymmetrical economic development  Disadvantages of globalisation	Negative consequences of globalisation		
	Social		Discrepancies in social development  Overall poverty  Forced migrations caused by extreme situations  Ethnic, religious, racial and political intolerance  The impact of extreme ideologies	Demographic expansion and migration  Problems in human rights, rights of minorities	Illegal migration  Extreme nationalism, racial and religious intolerance	Violent extremism	Uncontrolled and mass migrations  National and religious extremism

	<b>Environmental</b>	Environment pollution, diseases Climate and atmospheric change Water resource reduction	Natural and technological disasters Spread of various incurable diseases	Environment damage, climate change, disruption of global natural balance, disasters Depletion of natural resources	Degradation and destruction of the environment Natural and other disasters, technical-technological catastrophes, contagious diseases (in humans and animals) Clash of interests for the use of sources and routes of strategic energy materials, obstructing and blocking their importation to Macedonia	Natural, ecological, technical and technological disasters, man-made accidents, epidemics	Natural disasters, industrial and other accidents and epidemics Lack of strategic energy sources
	<b>Organised crime</b>	Organised crime Illegal trafficking of all kinds	Various forms of organised crime Smuggling of narcotics	Organised crime Illegal trafficking of drugs, weapons and human beings (as a source of terrorist financing)	Organised crime Illegal trafficking of drugs, weapons, people	All forms of organised crime (illegal trafficking in narcotics, biological and nuclear-radiological agents, human beings, contraband and proliferation of WMD)	Organised crime and corruption (interrelation between illegal drugs and human trafficking, proliferation of both conventional weapons and WMD)
	<b>Terrorism</b>	International terrorism	International terrorism	International terrorism	International terrorism	Global terrorism	Terrorism
	<b>IT/ Technological</b>			Communication and computer technologies	IT terrorism		Abuse of new technologies and scientific achievements

## II.6. Regional Security Cooperation

The security strategy documents devote varying levels of attention to the issue of regional security cooperation.

In Albania, the so-called “Albanian national issue” is a high priority on the list of security strategy objectives, and the relevant Albanian document suggests that “the Albanian national issue will be achieved through European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the countries of the region”. Other than this, Albania's national security strategy papers do not deal with regional security cooperation.

Likewise, Bosnia does not elaborate specifically on regional cooperation in its strategic documents. Only one paragraph and minor references shed some light on its regional cooperation approach. In the section of the document dealing with defence policy it is stated that the country is “committed to promote its role and importance in regional cooperation”, especially regarding implementation of the Agreement on Regional Arms Control. In another section dealing with the principles of defence policy, one finds reference to the “balance of forces and capabilities in... South East Europe”.

By contrast, Croatia's national security strategy devotes appropriate attention to and explains the goals of security policy at regional level. The regional level is first mentioned among its national security principles in the context of security threats originating from that level. In the sub-chapter dealing with neighbourly and regional relations, Croatia's relevant strategic document then states that regional cooperation “is an important component of Croatian foreign policy”. Here, once again, emphasis is placed on Croatia's self-perceived “multiregional identity”. After enumerating the ongoing regional initiatives, the document expresses interest in “deepening all forms of cooperation” in the region. With regard to international peacekeeping missions, it should be noted that Croatia's readiness to “participate in common military units” is referred to exclusively with regard to the “Northern tier” of its self-proclaimed multiregional identity, namely the Central European states, thus apparently excluding the potential for a joint Balkan effort.

The Macedonian National Security and Defence Concept is rather vague on regional cooperation (on other issues as well). It refers to this issue in a declarative manner, expressing interest in “deepening and finding new forms of cooperation”. One section is more specific, and stresses the need to “care for the protection and the permanent improvement of the freedoms and rights of the Macedonian minority living in the neighbouring countries”.

The Montenegrin Strategy of National Security gives the impression that this country is more directly a part of the world than of its immediate neighbourhood. In this short document, the regional level is mentioned twice in the context of possible threats generated by transition processes. Other than this, it makes no attempt whatsoever to elaborate on regional cooperation.

The Serbian Strategic Defence Review devotes two paragraphs to the issue, stating that the “country takes (an) active part in regional initiatives and programmes”. The document also expresses the view that “joint crisis management and the establishment of regional mechanisms for the risks and threat prevention are significant prerequisites for security consolidation”.

## **II.7. Relations with International Security Organisations and Approaches to the International Order**

Although the security documents depict the UN, the OSCE, NATO, and the EU as the most important actors of international security for the Western Balkans region, and describe the basic characteristic features and changes of the post-bipolar world order, they do not elaborate on the ongoing changes in the aforementioned security institutions. Furthermore, they do not identify their specific attitude towards them, or specify the desired evolution of the international order in comparison to the way these issues are dealt with in the security strategies of the Central European countries or the European Security Strategy. None of the documents mention a key notion of the EU’s security concept, namely “effective multilateralism”.

The EU is generally perceived as a security organisation closer to the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) in Europe than to NATO, and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) is dealt with only marginally. As to the NATO–ESDP link, most documents limit themselves to stating the complementary nature of the EU’s efforts in the defence field, thus avoiding discussion of problems related to NATO–EU relations.

The Serbian and Croatian strategic documents are exceptions in this general picture, since they elaborate more specifically on international security institutions and their vision of the desired international order. Although all their documents mention international law, the Serbian documents place particular emphasis on this issue, and refer in detail to basic principles, standards and documents of international law. Further, according to the Serbian documents, the respective roles of the UN, OSCE and EU organizations should be reinforced. The Serbian documents even recommend “revitalization” of the UN, indicating Serbia's acknowledgement of the importance of that institution.

The relevant Croatian documents describe the world order as unipolar, but foresee the possibility that “future international relations develop from a unipolar to (a) multipolar world.” When deciding on participation in international peacekeeping missions, three aspects are taken into consideration, including the “valid ground for the mandate in terms of international law”.

## II.8. Conclusion

Over the past half decade the Western Balkan countries have elaborated and developed an impressive number of security strategy documents. In most cases, these documents constitute a multi-level system of strategic approaches reflecting the three standard levels of such papers, namely national security strategies, military/defence strategies and white papers/defence reviews. Furthermore, these documents have constantly been revised and updated.

The comparison of the types of documents, the content structure, the topics dealt with, and the level of adoption leaves you with the overall impression that dissimilarity and variety prevails over similarity. More importantly, it reveals that these documents did not follow any unified model.

When assessing the security environment the national documents typically make two points that underline the strategic importance of the Western Balkan region. First, there is – at least in the eyes of an outside observer – a somewhat exaggerated self-perception that the region is an extremely important “crossroad” between continents, and plays a “bridge role”, giving the impression that the “region in transition” is in reality a “region of transit”. Second, and more realistically, the documents state unanimously that the Western Balkans constitute the most problematic and unstable region in Europe.

As to the core issue, i.e. threat perception, and in spite of the modern terminology and the great length of the texts that characterize certain documents, their level of elaboration on this issue is somewhat limited. The main problems in this respect are:

- lack of differentiation between challenges, threats and risks;
- lack of classification of the challenges, threats and risks;
- lack of prioritization of the threats;
- lack of distinction between internal, regional and global threat levels;
- lack of interpretation of new threats such as terrorism in the local context;
- mixing up basic notions - e.g. collective security vs. collective defence.

When one compares the respective documents of the six countries of the region and their analysis of internal, regional, and global security threats, a progressively greater convergence of view on threat perception appears to emerge as one moves towards the broader scenario. In other words, we find the most diverse picture at the internal level, which becomes more homogenous at the regional level, and almost identical at the global level. If we compare the threat perception of these countries from a “sectoral” perspective, the basic conclusion is that military threats occupy a marginal position at all levels of analysis, and that political problems are viewed as central to security. Security problems of a military kind are considered relatively more important at the regional level.

### III. LOCAL ASSESSMENT OF SECURITY IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

In May 2007, within the framework of this project, a series of interviews was conducted in the countries of the Western Balkans. Our interviewees were representatives of official, academic, and NGO circles. We followed the principle of anonymity in order to obtain maximum available information.

#### III.1. National Interests and Objectives

Two main common features came to the fore with regard to the issues of national interests and objectives: territorial integrity and EU/NATO membership. While there was general agreement that territorial integrity was central to preserving independent statehood, a more nuanced approach has been adopted by certain countries with regard to EU and NATO membership. The political elite and the population wholeheartedly favour accession in some countries, whereas in others no such consensus exists. In yet another group of countries a distinction is made between NATO and the EU in terms of the desirability of joining these organisations.

In four of the six countries of the region, a wide consensus prevails among political leaders and the population in favour of Euro-Atlantic integration. In the other two countries – Montenegro and Serbia – such consensus is lacking, although at different levels. In Montenegro, a small opposition party opposes NATO membership because it runs counter to its environmental policy, while in Serbia – as one analyst put it – there are two main camps with differing foreign policy philosophies: one camp is conservative, traditionalist and isolationist, while the other is pro-European, open-minded and progressive. Bosnia and Herzegovina is an example of a country where the division is more about the different levels of public support for joining NATO and EU. NATO and EU membership is favoured by 57% and 85% of the population respectively. The constituent ethnic groups in this country hold differing views on the conditions of EU membership related, for example, to the organising principles of the federation and the handling of the Srebrenica massacre by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

The clearest case of the consensual nature of integration efforts is Albania. As our partners there put it, there has not even been any debate on this foreign policy issue, and integration has been supported right from the beginning. This may be attributed to three factors: Albania's long isolation in the past, the small country factor, and the 1999 NATO air campaign. In Croatia, debate on the membership issue – besides the reference to the values represented by the EU and NATO – is influenced by the fact that the country regards itself as distinct from the rest of the Western Balkans insofar as it sees itself as “part of Europe in the neighbourhood of which instability begins”. Debate on foreign policy focuses on the lack of public support for Croatian membership of the EU and NATO. Support for joining NATO is especially low (around 40%), although, as one interviewee

pointed out, it has risen lately partly because of government campaigning and partly because of recent political developments in Serbia, where a Radical Party member has been elected speaker of Parliament. Public opinion is slightly more favourable towards EU membership (around 50%). Certain rightwing political groups in Croatia emphasise what they perceive as potential negative aspects of joining NATO, such as the obligation to contribute armed forces for overseas missions as part of NATO's Reaction Force.

The specificity of the Macedonian case has to do with the "maintenance of internal cohesion" in the country, which relates to the problem described in the first part of this study on internal vs. international or "external" integration. According to the impression left by interviewees, Macedonia also regards itself as somewhat of a model, and, in terms of integration, as one person put it: "The road to Brussels leads through Ohrid".

Serbia is by far the most outstanding example among Western Balkan countries that are divided over Euro-Atlantic integration. In addition to the lack of consensus on accession to NATO, there seems to be an emerging problem with regard to the EU as well. From a Serbian perspective, EU conditions for entry could backfire if they are too demanding from a domestic political standpoint. Moreover, "if Kosovo becomes independent, the rhetoric of the (Serbian) political parties may turn against accession". Conservative, traditionalist and isolationist forces in Serbia already accuse pro-European parties of betraying national interests. In Montenegro, the specificity of national interests defined by our interviewees was related to the country's newly gained independence and the associated tasks of building and strengthening new institutions and creating a new defence sector.

### **III.2. Security Situation**

The security situation in each country was described as continuing to improve and, according to most opinions, this trend has reached a point of no return, which minimizes the risk of traditional armed conflicts. As one source put it: "In comparison to the nineties it is heaven".

In Montenegro and Serbia, it was stressed that their separation in 2006 occurred peacefully. After "losing" Montenegro, Serbia is searching for a new role, and, according to one analyst, Belgrade has to come to terms with new realities and has to "accept to be small". In Albania, one opinion held that the country had an "idealistic view of security", and that although it had "no clear vision" in the nineties, it now understood that the new security situation is characterized "by frequent changes, lack of traditional, classic threats and the presence of asymmetric threats... Ten years ago territorial defence and the borders were the main issues; today this is no more the case". Although they cannot be regarded as representative, some Bosnian interlocutors expressed the view that, although the improved security in their country owed much to the foreign military presence

there, they regarded this presence as having more and more to do with keeping reserve forces on standby in the event of a crisis in Kosovo. In Macedonia, our interlocutors emphasised the importance of defence reforms in the region that left South-East European countries without the capability to launch attacks on other states. Nevertheless, the interviewees expressed certain security concerns in the neighbourhood linked to the potential consequences of the unresolved Kosovo issue and the unstable situation in Serbia.

### III.3. Threat Perception

The three main threats that were identified by all interviewed partners are organised crime, corruption, and terrorism. Ironically, most interviewees noted that, over the past one and a half decades, organized crime has been the most successful regional cooperation – even during the Balkan wars of the 1990s. In addition to the traditional forms of organised crime such as illegal trafficking of human beings, drugs and weapons, it was noted that there are now new sophisticated techniques such as embezzlement, money laundering, murky deals in the privatization process, and electronic crimes related to bank card fraud.

In Albania, organised crime figures as the most acute "soft" internal security threat. Albanian organised crime has become a kind of trademark in the region, and, according to one opinion, it is intertwined with politics. Organised crime groups are opportunistic, and do not rely on one particular political force. One interviewee said: "Where they smell money there they go". The solution would be a change in political culture, because now the "right people are weak and wrong people are strong", as one source put it. Distinction was made between Albanian and Kosovar organised crime. "They are totally different – the latter started earlier", the source pointed out.

A typical problem associated with Bosnia is illegal trafficking. Though the state border service has been substantially developed, interviewees maintained that trafficking will continue as long as there is demand for the different goods in the West. An interesting distinction was made between corruption and organised crime by one source who stated that corruption is a real concern, but that organised crime is a less important risk, and could be linked mainly to Croatian and Serbian groups that use the territory of Bosnia as a transit route.

In Croatia, the transit character of the country and insufficient border control in the region were identified as concerns that lead to illegal arms trafficking and migration, the latter especially towards Italy (and the EU in general). This is not an exclusively Croatian problem, but also affects Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Kosovo and would require a regional solution based on regional cooperation and exchange of information. An interviewee hoped for accession to the Schengen system as a means of solving these problems.

Organised crime is also described as a main security concern in Macedonia where it is linked to border control problems in neighbouring countries. The border with Kosovo was mentioned as particularly problematic (it was used for arms trafficking after the 1997 crisis in Albania). Controls on the Albanian and Bulgarian sides (the latter especially in connection with tobacco trafficking) of the borders with Macedonia were also depicted as unsatisfactory. Other concerns relates to the perceived threat of an increase in organised crime resulting from failure to settle the Kosovo status issue, and the possibility of terrorists establishing links to organised crime groups in the region.

In Montenegro, talking about the situation of organized crime, local interlocutors claimed that it was primarily an external, transborder problem, and that internally it was limited only to tobacco smuggling.

As to traditional forms of organised crime in Serbia, it was noted that, according to a Ministry of Interior estimate in 2000, the unregistered small arms ratio in Belgrade was 1 per capita, and that Serbia is increasingly becoming a consumer of narcotic drugs as opposed to being simply a transit route for the drug trade. Even more importantly, a Macedonian source expressed the opinion that Serbian state institutions are deeply penetrated by organised crime elements, allegedly making Serbia the most corrupt country in the region. Others claimed that the political elite in Serbia is involved in organised crime, noting that courts are generally disinclined to investigate alleged political links to organised crime cases.

When asked about *terrorism* a definite atmosphere of confusion could be detected in most cases. A commonly held view, and a paradox, was that participation in missions in Iraq and Afghanistan and the perspective of membership in NATO could make the countries concerned more vulnerable to terrorist threats and attacks.

In Albania, one source stated that “we are absolutely not concerned” by the threat of terrorism, and, in order to avoid misunderstandings, added “However, we strongly oppose it”. Others affirmed that the problem of terrorism is an international rather than an internal issue. Up until now there have not been any terrorist acts in the country (although in 1995 there were bomb explosions related to clashes between rival gangs). Nonetheless, according to our interlocutors, Albania could become a target because of its presence in Iraq.

Croatia was not seen as a target for terrorism, but as a country affected by security concerns linked to terrorism, although one expert stated that terrorism had become a real threat since Croatia had joined the alliance fighting it. One source noted that in the case of Bosnia, the threat of terrorism is sometimes exaggerated by the Serbian side so that it can present itself as the protector of the Serbian population in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, there have been similar attempts to portray Bosnia as a "fertile ground for terrorism" also by Croatian intelligence circles.

The Macedonian interviewees saw no immediate threat posed by international terrorism and consider their country not interesting enough to become a target. They nevertheless see a risk because of Macedonia's involvement in the global fight against terrorism, its military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan and its possible future membership in NATO, even though Macedonia has never been explicitly threatened by terrorist organisations. However, some interviewees saw a possibility for global terrorism to find a base in the region. In Macedonia, it was suggested that this could conceivably be achieved by exploiting political and social discontent, as well as the multiethnic, multiconfessional and socially heterogeneous nature of the country's society to influence Muslim communities. Kosovo was also seen by some as a potential target for terrorists seeking to gain a foothold in the region.

In Montenegro our interlocutors regarded terrorism as a low risk, noting that up to now there has been only one case in which a group of people was arrested for allegedly planning a terrorist act. Nonetheless, it was suggested by some sources that Montenegro's rapprochement with NATO could result in terrorist acts targeting tourist facilities.

In Belgrade, initial attempts by interviewees to address the issue of terrorism were rather confused. Global terrorism was seen as a phenomenon that did not affect Serbia's security directly, and Serbia was not considered by our interlocutors as an interesting target for terrorists. However, several sources claimed that global terrorist groups could conceivably exert substantial ideological influence on local groups that could lead to the emergence in Serbia of radical interpretations of Islam, such as Wahhabism. Consequently, global terrorism would then be able to use Serbian territory as a training base or safe haven. The issue was further elaborated on at the regional and local/internal level. Regionally, Bosnia and Herzegovina was unanimously named as a potential source of terrorist activities in view of the fact that a considerable number of mujaheddins remained in the country after the war, and because the country was considered to be highly exposed to radical Islamic influence. Moreover, it was suggested that extremist Islamic elements could penetrate Sandjak (southern Serbia) from Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the internal level, according to the interviewees, terrorism was associated with Kosovo, Sandjak and the Presevo valley. However, no strong opinion was formed with regard to possible direct terrorist acts originating from these areas in the short term. On the other hand, it was assumed by many that the problem of terrorism could be used for political purposes in order to create cohesion in the country vis-à-vis an external threat. One source even claimed that in Serbia the threat of terrorism is "intentionally overestimated". Referring to a recent case in Sandjak, a Macedonian interviewee speculated that it was the Serbian secret services that planted a weapons arsenal there in order to portray a group of local Muslims as potential terrorists.

Apart from in Croatia, *the issue of Kosovo* was one of the main security concerns identified by almost all of our interlocutors.

When inquiring about Kosovo, we received mixed signals in Tirana. One source emphasized that “Albania has been one of the main promoters of the independence of Kosovo”, and that Tirana seeks nothing more or less. But another source said: “We call upon the Albanian minority living in Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo to help build their own states, this is not a moderate, but a natural position”. At the same time, the interviewees reaffirmed that there is no plan to create a Greater Albania, and that they had never even heard of the term Pan-Albanianism.

All Macedonian interviewees stressed the necessity to quickly resolve the issue of Kosovo's status. The current situation in Kosovo, with its weak institutions, uncontrolled territory and poorly managed borders could, according to one interviewee, result in the territory becoming a launch pad for all kinds of asymmetrical threats. Another concern voiced in connection with the Kosovo issue is the possibility of a partition or division of the territory; some experts expressed the concern that granting de facto independence to Serbian enclaves within Kosovo could serve as an incentive for Albanian groups in Macedonia to change the Ohrid Framework Agreement. Kosovo independence could also result in the Republika Srpska rethinking its status within Bosnia and Herzegovina, and lead to a similar reaction in the Presevo valley. It is noteworthy that the Bosnian interlocutors unanimously ruled out a possible secession of Republika Srpska, asserting that its leaders had no interest in abandoning their power positions by becoming part of the Serbian state.

In Montenegro, the issue of Kosovo was broached from two perspectives. First, local interlocutors stated that any attempt to achieve independence for Kosovo by violent means would be a major security threat for tiny Montenegro. Second, they expressed concern that if Kosovo gained independence, certain radical Albanian groups in Montenegro might feel inclined to link the issue of Kosovo's independence to their own secessionist aspirations.

Kosovo was identified as the primary imminent security problem by all interviewed partners in Serbia. Independence for Kosovo was seen as a major threat that challenged the will of a democratic country, international law and legitimate territorial integrity. It was acknowledged that the unresolved Kosovo issue could result in armed rebellion or insurrection in Kosovo, or in Sandjak. The interviews revealed a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards the Kosovo issue. There is a sense that it is democratic Serbia which is being punished after seven years of building democracy. If the status of Kosovo is perceived as having been determined by an imposed solution the credibility of Euro-Atlantic integration efforts by the political elite could be undermined. It could also lead to long-term instability by creating fertile ground for counter-reaction by nationalist forces, as well as a surge in anti-Western sentiment. Part of the elite believed that joining the Partnership for Peace programme would constitute a guarantee that Serbia would not lose Kosovo. However, as one source sharply put it: “We are ready to be part of Euro-Atlantic processes but do not want to pay for that with Kosovo”.

When analysing the threat perception, the problem of radical Islamism and Wahhabism was touched upon in most interviews. Generally, this issue was not regarded as a direct security concern. However, according to the experts, there is evidence that the teaching of radical Islamic views is becoming more widespread, and that certain foreign-based Islamic charity organisations are attempting to link the dissemination of radical and fundamentalist Islamic views with their humanitarian activities. Some experts believe that these trends, combined with the potential exploitation by Islamist extremists of structural preconditions such as economic and social problems based on poverty and low economic performance, could result in Wahhabism becoming a real security threat in the medium term.

In Bosnia, the problem of Wahhabism is regarded as a limited risk. According to one interviewee, most Bosnians have a Yugoslav mindset, and religion is not perceived as an element of political identity. Moreover, most people regard Wahhabis with mistrust. It was also claimed that the issue is exploited for internal political reasons. Nonetheless, although “conservative Muslims” are now regarded as a marginal minority, some sources felt that this could change within 10 years if, owing to poverty and the lack of effective state measures, the Wahhabis begin to substitute the government by establishing infrastructures such as hospitals. It should be noted, however, that the Islamic community in Bosnia, after years of silence, has started to make public statements condemning the activities of so-called Wahhabis. It was nevertheless acknowledged that, over the past two years, certain elements of radical Islamic groups have appeared in Bosnia, and that Saudi Arabians in particular have invested heavily and provided humanitarian aid there. According to a Croatian interlocutor, this presence of Mujaheddins in Bosnia and Herzegovina might indeed be a source of threat. Some interviewees claim that these organisations are influencing religious education and trying to create an ideology represented by an aggressive minority.

Regarding Macedonia, one source noted that sermons in mosques in Skopje are now more radical compared to 5-10 years ago. Another interlocutor did not see any “structures of political Islam” or penetration of Islamic groups associated with Wahhabism in Macedonia, but identified the possibility of terrorist groups recruiting among radicalized Muslims in the region as a possible future threat.

In Serbia, several sources saw a possibility of the emergence of radical interpretations of Islam such as Wahhabism among local groups, fuelled by the ideological influence of global terrorist organisations. Some sources pointed to the fact that a sizeable number of mujaheddins remained in the country after the war, and that Sandjak is directly exposed to radical Islamic influence from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### III.4. Neighbourly Relations

As far as neighbourly relations are concerned, the basic impression the foreign observer was left with was that these relations are best characterized by the “no threat, no confidence” formula. While our interlocutors described interstate relations as positive and relaxed, they acknowledged that there was an obvious lack of trust among the Western Balkan countries.

Historically, Albanians could regard Serbia and Greece as problematic neighbours. Today, however, “Greece is an ally, and Serbia, even if not an ally, is no threat anymore”. Others noted that they do not feel threatened, and that relations are “better than ever”.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, cooperation with neighbouring countries was qualified as constantly improving at judiciary, police and defence levels, the drawback being that this was due to personal ties and less to institutional efforts. It was also noted in a critical manner that during election campaigns, negative statements are sometimes made in Croatia and Serbia about Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In Croatia, relations with Hungary were described by local interviewees as good. A number of unresolved problems from the past continued to affect relations between Croatia and Slovenia, including the dispute over the maritime border. One Croatian interlocutor stated in an apologetic manner that although a resolution of disputes with neighbouring countries is a precondition to joining EU and NATO, Slovenia had obviously been admitted without fulfilling these criteria. Croatia's relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia were identified as the most important. Relations with the former were viewed as crucial because of the Croatian population living there and the Croatian public's high level of concern for that population's problems. Both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia were described as unpredictable in terms of their internal development. Some experts felt that this might be an argument for Croatia's membership in NATO, and, paradoxically, could help its political elite to raise public support for accession. One official observed that cooperation with Serbia at a lower level is good, as illustrated by the exchange of information regarding Serbia's rapprochement with NATO, and more especially Serbia's preparations to join the Partnership for Peace programme. Although Bosnia and Herzegovina may be characterised as “pacified” (e.g. having joint armed forces), serious concerns were raised about its poor economic condition after the war, the presence of religious extremists in the country, and the porosity of the Bosnian-Croatian border.

Macedonian interviewees named three countries in a critical manner: Greece because of the problem of the state's name; Serbia because of unresolved border issues and the security risk originating from Presevo valley; and Bulgaria because of its poorly controlled state border that allows for tobacco trafficking through Macedonia. Albania and Montenegro figure as positive examples of bilateral relations. A sympathy factor stemming from the fact that both Macedonia and

Montenegro are small states placed Podgorica high on the list of Skopje's efforts to develop positive bilateral relations with neighbouring countries.

Though relations with Croatia were characterised as "best" in Podgorica, the border problem regarding the Prevlaka peninsula was settled only by a temporary agreement. It was also noted that in spite of the peaceful and successful divorce of the two countries, Serbia still does not have an embassy in Podgorica, although it provides consular protection to Montenegrin citizens in countries where there is no Montenegrin embassy.

Most Serbian interviewees identified an improvement in bilateral relations in the region and the absence of any potential threat from neighbouring countries. However, border problems had still not been resolved with Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia. Furthermore, negative prejudices, stereotypes and a lack of confidence still influenced interstate relations.

### **III.5. Views on Regional Co-operation**

Views expressed on regional cooperation can be summarised as showing a great deal of enthusiasm that is undermined by the overwhelming emphasis placed on the EU integration context, which links regional initiatives to the parallel concern of trying to please Brussels. As a consequence of this duality, regional cooperation is sometimes regarded as a form "homework" set by the Euro-Atlantic community rather than internally driven. Criticism of these initiatives focuses on what is perceived as their unnecessary proliferation and their relative ineffectiveness. However, some sources drew attention to the success of initiatives that concentrate on specific fields of cooperation and involve officials on a lower level.

Albanian interlocutors interpreted the problem of regional cooperation exclusively in the context of integration. As one source said bluntly: "If you cooperate, you can move faster toward integration".

In Zagreb, cooperation in the framework of the Adriatic Charter was primarily emphasised and characterised as close. An important objective of Croatian foreign policy was for Croatia to be a factor of regional stability, especially by sharing experiences gained in creating democracy, a market economy, the rule of law, and in the field of defence. Further, our interlocutors said that Croatia intends to share its experiences with the countries of the region on its rapprochement with the EU and NATO. One interviewee conveyed an impression of superiority while talking about this intent, which seemed to vindicate claims by experts in other countries that Croatia does not feel that it belongs to the region.

Regional cooperation initiatives were usually described as useful by the interviewees in Skopje. They pointed out that the idea of regional cooperation was originally rejected by the countries concerned because they perceived it as somewhat of a threat to their independence, and as an attempt to re-establish the

former Yugoslavia. Consequently, they preferred co-operation on a bilateral basis. Still, regional cooperation is necessary since current challenges and threats have a regional rather than a bilateral dimension. Moreover, according to one view, owing to the continuing lack of trust among Western Balkan countries, there could not be too many regional initiatives. Such initiatives are considered as most effective if they involve joint work in a specific field of action at a relatively low level. Some interviewees mentioned the possibility of sharing Macedonia's experience gained in the course of the reform of its defence system as a possible contribution to regional cooperation.

The Montenegrin interviews left us with the impression that there is a general aspiration to be present in all possible regional fora, and to join all related organisations. As one source put it: "Doors to Brussels are to be opened in the region."

One Serbian interlocutor was critical of the extensive proliferation of regional cooperation initiatives, which were said to be based on "false motivation (and were) rather nominal". This source explicitly recalled that there are nine different regional initiatives dealing with the problem of organised crime, without tangible results. Another source described regional cooperation as "not marginal, not essential". Serbian partners put forward the idea of a regional military training centre in the country for the Western Balkans. The Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre (RACVIAC) was regarded as the best tangible regional cooperation initiative.

### **III.6. Country Specific Issues**

In Albania, defence issues occupy a very high ranking – fourth place – among national priorities after transport, education, and social affairs. If we add that Albania pledged to increase its defence budget up to 2% of GDP by 2008, and that 10% of the defence budget is spent to finance the Iraqi mission, one can conclude that the defence sector is kept artificially high on the agenda. Albania's efforts to even increase its international military activities were explained by one interlocutor with a particular logic: "If not, this would lead to isolation." Further, when asked about possible debates on sending troops abroad, we were told that there are no discussions on the issue and that "this is what makes Albania different from other European countries where this issue is sensitive".

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, weak institutions represent a particular security concern. According to the Dayton Peace Agreement, competencies are divided among the central power and the entities, and this is also true for the security sector. Because of the absence of a centralised police force, the Ministry of Security does not possess any real power over the police forces, which are controlled by the Ministries of Interior of the entities. Defence is the best organised sector: there is one single armed force with a clear hierarchy, existing only at state level and with a single Ministry of Defence. In addition to the

problem of competencies, the lack of coordination among the different state institutions is also a concern.

In harmony with national strategic documents, one Macedonian interviewee referred to the problem of the “influence of foreign security services”. This source explicitly mentioned the presence of many intelligence services (e.g. from Serbia, France and the United Kingdom), and referred to the Serbian intelligence service – the successor of the former Yugoslav services – as being very effective and having connections to its Macedonian counterpart.

In the case of Montenegro, a very specific security concern was expressed in the form of an alleged increasing share of “dirty” Russian capital in strategic sectors of the economy such as tourism, the aluminium industry, and electricity production.

Finally, it is in Serbia that a major discrepancy in the prioritization of threats can be identified between that stated in the official strategic documents and the evaluation of most experts interviewed. The strategic documents give high priority to armed rebellion, armed aggression and separatism (according to an official source these threats still feature as top security concerns in the draft of the new defence strategy under preparation). Conversely, most interviewees named organised crime and corruption as the main security threats.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

This study has analysed the current security situation and security perception in the Western Balkans from three perspectives: a) by conceptualizing security trends, defining the main structural problems and providing data on specific security issues, b) by comparing national security documents, c) by conducting interviews with local policy-makers and experts. All three perspectives provided specific and complementary approaches to the understanding of the overall problem of security in the Western Balkans, generally leading to mutually reinforcing results, although revealing marked differences on certain issues. Below, we summarize the major findings of the study comparing the three perspectives of analysis.

The main conclusion drawn from the first analytical part is that nearly all security threats of the region derive from two structural problems of the Western Balkans, namely the weakness of state institutions (the so-called failed state phenomenon), and underdeveloped economies. Based on these two structural problems, the study identified corruption and organised crime as the main security threats at regional level. The national security documents generally support this thesis and they interpret the structural problems in the context of transition, and elaborate on them in a detailed manner. At the same time, the individual documents offer a much longer list of commonly perceived threats at regional level (possibility of armed conflict in the region; legacy of recent conflicts/historical factors; regional

instability and crises; problems of transition; extremism and intolerance; organised crime; and terrorism).

On the issue of corruption major discrepancies are revealed between the first analytical part and the interviews on the one hand, and the national security documents on the other hand. Generally, corruption does not figure as a threat category in its own right in the documents. The strategies of only three countries refer to this problem, and when mentioned, corruption appears as a sub-category of organised crime or problems of transition. Unlike the documents, the locally conducted interviews put much more emphasis on this phenomenon, pointing out its possible links with the political elite.

As opposed to corruption, organised crime features as a threat on its own, and all documents refer to it without exception. However, most documents routinely put organized crime on the list of threats without interpreting it in the local context. The interviews unanimously presented organised crime as a major security concern. Some pointed to the close links between organised crime and the political elite. Almost all expert opinions seemed to absolve national responsibility for organised crime by referring to their own country only as a transit route, or emphasizing the insufficient border controls of other states, or blaming the West as a consumer of the illegally trafficked goods.

The problem of terrorism proved to be the most controversial issue among the security challenges. The first analytical part argues that on the basis of international data, especially the declining number of terrorist acts, terrorism can only be classified – on the threat/potential threat/risk scale – as a *risque* to the security of the Western Balkans. This is diametrically opposite to the approach of the national security documents that place the issue of terrorism high on the list of security challenges, qualifying it as a real threat. However, there is a serious internal contradiction in the documents as they simply list the issue of terrorism without proper interpretation of this phenomenon in the local or regional context. Only two countries make a modest attempt to explain terrorism, presenting it as a phenomenon that concerns them only as a transit route problem.

This self-contradictory approach to terrorism perfectly fits a trend that is so typical in Central and Eastern Europe – i.e. the presentation of terrorism as a major threat in order to meet external expectations by “doing the homework” set by others, or to align with a perceived “Western” prioritization of threats. The controversial character of this issue was further reinforced by the interviews. When asked about terrorism a definite atmosphere of confusion could be felt in most cases. This seemed to point to the lack of an objective analytical framework for discussing and interpreting the phenomenon of terrorism at local and regional level in the Western Balkans. The study also revealed another contradictory – and paradoxical – finding: while initially the experts unanimously stated that their respective countries were not a target of terrorism, they warned that it is their participation in the fight against terrorism and the close perspective of NATO membership that could make them a target.

The lack of objective assessment and analysis results in the fact that the issue of terrorism can be exploited for domestic political purposes, and can be used for setting artificial foreign policy goals. As a consequence of the latter, the countries of the region engage in international missions that overstretch their financial capacities, instead of allocating resources to address real national and regional security problems. The pursuit of foreign policy goals that are not entirely realistic can also be explained by the obvious lack of a wider public debate on security issues.

All three aspects of the analysis shared the opinion that Islamic radicalism cannot be regarded as an immediate security concern. The first analytical part rejected the idea of radicalization of Muslim communities, arguing that the strong re-nationalization trend limits the scope of Islamic radicalism as a means of formulating political aspirations. In turn, the documents do not deal with Islamic radicalism as a specific autonomous security threat, but as an issue that is linked to the problem of national and ethnic extremism. This supports the conclusion of the first part that regards Islamic radicalism as a complementary element of ethnic conflicts. All interviewees considered Islamic radicalism as a security concern in its own right, although a limited one that can become a real threat only in the medium term. In addition, most experts dealt with Islamic radicalism primarily in the context of social problems, emphasizing that it is protracted and serious social tensions that can activate radicalization processes. Only a minority of experts (Macedonian and Serbian) discussed the issue of Islamic radicalism in terms of terrorism. They also stated that Islamic fundamentalist organisations can exert considerable influence on local groups, although not on a massive scale, and that the region could serve as a source of recruitment and as a safe haven for global terrorist groups.

At first sight, the issue of regional cooperation seems to be discussed in a very different way in the documents and in the interviews. The national strategies dedicate marginal attention to this issue, generally simply listing it as a priority in a rather declarative manner lacking conceptual elaboration. On the other hand, while emphasizing the importance of the issue, the experts were critical and sceptical in this regard. However, closer examination suggests that the lack of a regional cooperation concept in the papers and the sceptical tone in the interviews lead to the same conclusion. Namely that regional relations demonstrate a “no threat, no confidence” pattern reminiscent of peaceful coexistence in the bipolar era.

This lack of confidence is a serious obstacle for deeper regional cooperation as the countries of the region prefer bilateral cooperation to regional initiatives, or seek to develop cooperation selectively only with certain states. A small number of relatively successful regional initiatives involved cooperation with well-defined specific aims at lower level.

Another major obstacle – which could be the consequence of the lack of trust mentioned previously – is the absence of a region-wide threat assessment capacity.

Consequently, the national strategic documents and the interviews reflect an artificial set of threat priorities. The current security situation in the Western Balkans can therefore best be characterized as “virtual security”. This “virtual security” is constituted by an artificial threat perception and non-realistic foreign policy actions; the downsizing of armed forces under external influence while maintaining distrust; the abundance of regional initiatives of limited substance; the lack of transparency both within and among states; and the elaboration and application of national security documents without public debate. All this points to the fact that security in the Western Balkans is predominantly determined by an external security agenda.



**PART III**  
**LOCAL STUDIES**



# View from Albania - Study on the Assessment of Regional Security Threats and Challenges in the Western Balkans

*Sotiraq Hroni and Gen.Lt (ret) Pellumb Qazimi*<sup>20</sup>

## I. Background

Albania is situated in the Western Balkans, bordering Montenegro and Kosovo/UNMIK in the north, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the east and Greece in the south. To the west, the Adriatic and Ionian seas separate Albania from Italy. Its population of about 3.5 million<sup>21</sup> is comprised of 95% ethnic Albanians, with the remaining 5% composed of Greeks, Vlachs, Roma, Serbs, Macedonians, and Bulgarians.<sup>22</sup> A large number of ethnic Albanians reside outside the country, particularly in Kosovo, where 90% of the population is Kosovar Albanian. Ethnic Albanians can be found in Montenegro, Greece, and especially Macedonia, where they make up 25% of the population. Over the past two decades a substantial number of Albanians have emigrated to various European countries, particularly to Italy, where many young people have gone in search of employment.

In the late 1990s, Albania began to emerge from its history of isolation by embarking on a process of political, economic, and defence reforms. The context of Albania's transition from a central economy and an authoritarian communist one-party political system, and from a strategic defence paradigm geared to repel any large-scale invasion by enemy forces, explains the challenges Albania has encountered in the past decade. The collapse of financial pyramid schemes in 1997 plunged the country into chaos as rioters looted military installations, ammunition depots, and police stations. Parliamentary elections, held in 2005, were deemed by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to have “complied only partially with OSCE commitments, Council of Europe commitments, and other international standards for democratic elections”.<sup>23</sup> They were, however, the most free and fair elections in Albania's history and were won by the Democratic Party. Shortly after being elected, the Prime Minister in September 2005 reiterated his intention to focus on fighting corruption and organized crime, reducing unemployment, and improving economic conditions.

The table below indicates the Albanian perception of various security risks, based on a public survey<sup>24</sup> carried out by the Institute for Democracy and Mediation in April-May 2007, supported by the NATO Diplomacy Division on “public perceptions on security threats and NATO integration”. Question No 8 asked: To

<sup>20</sup> The Authors are currently leading the Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM), Tirana, Albania.

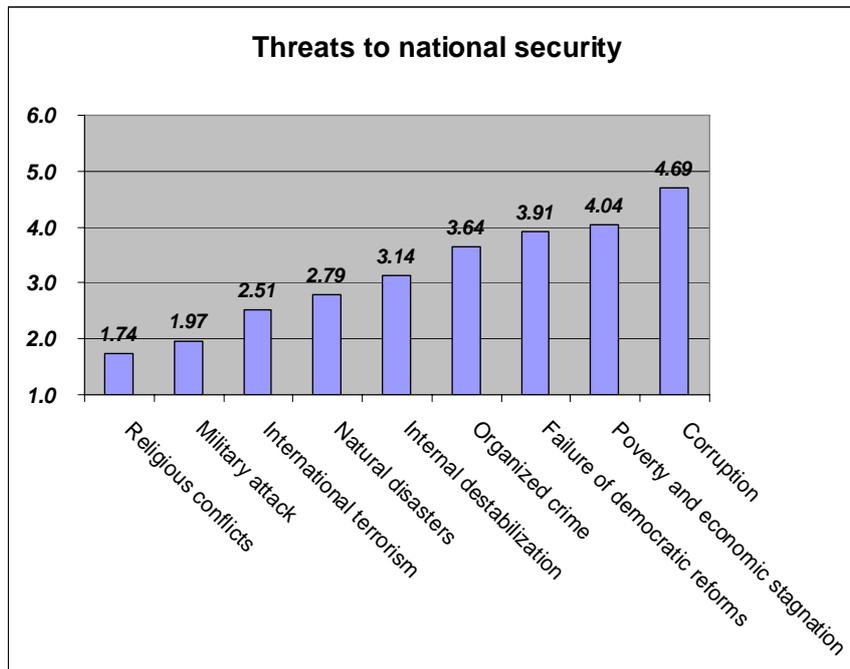
<sup>21</sup> 3.1 million according to the 2001 estimate of the Institute of Statistics of the Republic of Albania (INSTAT) and 3.6 million according to CIA World Factbook.

<sup>22</sup> CIA World Factbook estimate of 1989.

<sup>23</sup> OSCE International Election Observation Mission, “Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions,” 4 July 2005. [http://www.osce.org/documents/odhr/2005/07/15541\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/documents/odhr/2005/07/15541_en.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> [www.idmalbania.org](http://www.idmalbania.org)

what extend do you think the national security of Albania is threatened by the following risks? (Estimates of the degrees of risk range from 1 to 6, with the higher number indicating the most serious risk, and vice versa.



Interestingly, the four most perilous factors that could threaten national security identified by survey respondents were the same as those perceived by public opinion (and largely debated by the political actors) as the most important overall concerns faced by the country – i.e. corruption (4.69), poverty and economic stagnation (4.04), failure of democratic reforms (3.91) and organized crime (3.64). Accordingly, respondents perceive internal factors (corruption, economic stagnation, and organized crime) as the most important threats to national security, rather than external ones such as international terrorism or military attack from a neighbouring country. Furthermore, the above chart shows that a religious conflict is perceived as quite unlikely to emerge as an important factor jeopardizing national security.

## II. The Approach to National Security

The 2004 National Security Strategy (NSS) and the 2005 Military Strategy of the Republic of Albania (MS) outline concepts, threats, and leadership roles related to security. The creation and publication of such information was a new concept for Albania in the post-Communist era and is indicative of the many significant changes Albania has undergone. The strategy documents describe Albania's perception of its security challenges and the defence establishment and infrastructure required to address them; they constitute the first recognition of the strategic environment and serve as guideposts in the assessment of security institution management.

The NSS emphasizes that the vital interests of Albania that are linked to security are: exercise of sovereignty, protection of independence and territorial integrity, protection of constitutional order, protection of life and property, democratic development and economic prosperity. Processes to integrate the EU and NATO, to develop bilateral relations with neighbouring countries and partners, and to seek solutions to address social and environmental problems are other national interests that help to determine the strategy to safeguard national security.<sup>25</sup> Key principles include the rule of law, dialogue and cooperation, targeted resource allocation, strengthening security institutions, the importance of the armed forces, and an institutional response to organized crime, corruption, and illegal trafficking.

The NSS cites diplomacy, protection of public order and security, economic and financial policy, civil defence, environment and health protection, ensuring transparency towards the public and defence policy as elements of national strength. A key objective of the defence policy is described as: “supporting the government’s foreign policy objectives, especially for [the] country’s integration in the Euro-Atlantic structures and promotion of international peace and security”.<sup>26</sup>

Foreign policy is deemed as one of the methods for advancing the national interests of Albania. While the NSS states that “it is the sublime duty of the political power to define, protect and develop national interests”, a debate, whether public or institutional, has never taken place to decide what the national interests or the national issues are, as perceived by the public. This important document further recognizes that “This duty should be associated by the request and assurance of a wide consensus among the public debate”.

The key foreign policy goal is integration into the Euro-Atlantic structure and organizations, with a primary focus on NATO and EU integration and membership. Albania has been a member of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme since 1994 and participates in the Membership Action Plan (MAP) and the Planning and Review Process (PARP) associated with it.

Intimately involved in the MAP process are the Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Defence (MoD), Finance (MF), Interior (MoI), Justice (MoJ), etc., which coordinate regularly and participate in an inter-agency working group dealing with associated reforms. Parliament is also active in the process through the respective Parliamentary Commissions. The end of May 2007, saw the creation of an ad hoc Parliamentary Commission on NATO Integration, which is co-chaired by majority and opposition representatives.

Membership in the EU, while a more long-term goal, has been encouraged by Albania's participation in the Stabilization and Association Process, which provides financial aid, facilitates economic development, and sets the foundation for an eventual contractual relationship with the EU through the European Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) – a stepping stone to eventual

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<sup>25</sup> *The National Security Strategy of Republic of Albania 2003-2006*, p. 13.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p. 19.

membership. Albania signed the SAA on 12 June, 2006. So far, it has been ratified by 9 EU members.<sup>27</sup>

The Parliamentary Commission for National Security, comprised of 17 members from the governing coalition and the opposition, plays a key role in civilian oversight over the security forces. The Commission covers the activities of the armed forces, state police (including border police) and intelligence services. The Parliament is able constitutionally to act independently to amend security strategies or to reformulate and introduce new ones. However, until now, neither Parliament nor the Parliamentary Commission for National Security has ever put into motion a single initiative without the prior consent of the Government. This is because the political majority controls the Parliamentary Commission. Thus, Parliament is permitted to make amendments only with the consent of the executive powers. Three security experts sit alongside the 17 members of the Commission.<sup>28</sup>

The 2005 Military Strategy (MS) sets a strategy in the context of the regional security environment. Its specified objectives are to: develop the AAF to “guarantee the defence of the country”; increase operational capabilities; transform and modernize; participate in humanitarian and peace operations; and integrate into international security structures. The intent is to make the AAF joint, interoperable, prepared, flexible, sustainable, and capable of supporting civil authorities, international missions, and special operations. It outlines the mandates of the relevant services and supporting commands in times of peace, crisis, war, and in connection with the war on terrorism, and notes areas needing development. The MS also identifies human resources, education and training, infrastructure, and financial support as basic elements of defence.

### III. Threats to Albanian Security

Albania recognizes that it faces no conventional threats to its national security, yet is aware of unconventional threats that endanger its stability and sovereignty. These are described in various official documents of Albanian public institutions<sup>29</sup><sup>30</sup>, and in reports of international organizations<sup>31</sup>, as trafficking, organized crime, regional instability, and natural disasters, amongst others. Islamic extremism<sup>32</sup>, while not an active or imminent threat, has been raised as a concern because of Albania's ineffective border security and poor economic conditions that created an inviting opportunity for such extremists, especially during the 1990s.

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<sup>27</sup> According to website of Ministry of European Integration of Albania: <http://www.mie.gov.al>

<sup>28</sup> For more information on the Parliamentary Commission on National Security see the study of Albanian State Police and Albanian Intelligence Services undertaken by IDM and commissioned by DCAF.

<sup>29</sup> The government programme presented to Parliament on 08.09.2005. See the English version of the document on the website of the Prime Minister: <http://www.keshilliministrave.al/english/programi/default.asp>.

<sup>30</sup> The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Albania 2003-2006, p. 12-13.

<sup>31</sup> LOC, Nations Hospitable to Organized Crime and Terrorism” October 2003, p 34.

<sup>32</sup> State Department Terrorism Report: Europe, Eurasia Overview, 27 April 2005, <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/>

Albanian organized crime groups benefited from the domestic instability and regional conflicts of the 1990s to become a growing criminal presence in Europe. They were hired as drug couriers for Italian smuggling syndicates during the Yugoslav conflicts of 1992-1995. Their knowledge of unpatrolled Balkan routes and their ability to take advantage of embargos imposed on Yugoslavia and Macedonia during this period enabled Albanian criminal groups to be part of a smuggling network in the region. In time, these groups established their own narcotics processing and distribution systems, and eventually expanded their operations to include the illicit trade in arms and human beings, stolen cars, cigarettes, and other contraband. Collusion between organized crime and terrorists represents a particularly significant potential threat in the Balkans. Terrorist groups could ally with organized crime and take advantage of trafficking networks and lax border security to move weapons and other items, particularly in this time of increasingly open borders of the European Union. Although this is not a current threat, the failure to improve border security and curb organized crime in Albania may prove attractive for terrorist and radical groups.

In some international community reports, Albania has developed a reputation as a hub for the trafficking of drugs, human beings, weapons, cars, and other contraband, partly as a result of its geographic location and partly due to lax border security. Albania has 450 miles of land borders and 226 miles of coastline, which are patrolled by approximately 1,500 border police personnel. Many of these staff under the Ministry of Interior require more training, as well as technical capacities. Institutional and procedural constraints further impede their efficiency. For example, border police officers do not have the authority to detain and arrest suspects and must call in the local police to make the arrest.

During the last two years, Albania has achieved considerable success in cutting off established trafficking routes, especially those transiting through the Albanian ports of Durrës, Saranda and Vlora, which may have acted in the not too distant past as gateways to Western Europe through Italy and Central and Eastern European countries. Cooperation among Albanian and KFOR/Kosovo police has improved government control in Northern Albania.

The riots and looting of 1997 resulted in the theft of an estimated 550,000 weapons, 839 million rounds of ammunition, and 16 million explosive devices, believed to have been acquired by private citizens and criminal groups. The Albanian government has developed cross-institutional programmes and measures to curb access to and collect and destroy surplus ammunition, small arms and light weapons, with the support of the international community, namely the EU, NATO and UNDP.

The discovery by the Albanian government of sixteen tons of lethal chemical agents – sulphur mustard and arsenic-based lewisite – stored in a bunker, added concerns about the possible proliferation of weapons of mass destruction<sup>33</sup>. The

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<sup>33</sup> Senators Nunn and Lugar greet the destruction of chemical agents in Albania, July 11.2007  
[http://www.mod.gov.al/eng/lajme/lexo\\_lajm.asp?IDNews=2042](http://www.mod.gov.al/eng/lajme/lexo_lajm.asp?IDNews=2042)

Albanian Government, with the support of the USA, NATO's Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA) and the international community in general, managed to protect the stockpile and is currently completing the destruction of the chemical agents. Albania has also already started destroying its stockpiles of sea mines and aerial bombs.

Corruption is endemic in Albania and substantial efforts are needed to change the current situation. The problem of corruption begins with social culture: personal relationships built on loyalty have trumped professional ties or qualified experience grounded in legitimate rules. Also, illegal activity involving the government, including bribes to influence laws and policies, is common in post-Communist countries. In 2006, Transparency International carried out its Corruption Perception Index survey in Albania to assess the extent to which public and private institutions are considered corrupt, where the public believes corruption's impact is greatest, the public's experience with paying bribes, and their expectations concerning future levels of corruption. Out of 163 countries surveyed, Albania ranked 111<sup>th</sup>.<sup>34</sup>

The new government, however, has been very vocal about its intent to root out corruption and organized crime. In April 2006, it initiated the investigation of the General Prosecutor on charges of corruption and ties to organized crime, and banned speedboats and other small vessels from Albania's coastal waters, which are one of the main means of transport of trafficked goods and people from Albania.

During the period October 2005 - July 2006, the Albanian authorities took determined measures to curb some of the most dangerous criminal groups involved in drug trafficking, the exploitation of women for prostitution, people smuggling and money laundering.

In cooperation with international partners, 19 successful police operations were carried out, and a number of Albanian criminals were arrested and prosecuted. The Anti-Organized Crime Directorate has cooperated with Turkey (2 cases), Italy (5 cases), Germany (1 case), France (2 cases), and at regional level with the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI) Centre (1 case).

Lately, EU, FBI and US Department of Justice agents decided to establish a training unit that will assist Albanian state attorneys in the fight against organized crime, especially economic crime such as money laundering, and corruption. A task force has been formed with experts from the state attorney's office, the police and state intelligence services, and the Ministry of Finance.<sup>35</sup> While this move comes at a time when Albania has declared war on organized crime, the intervention by the international community in the establishment of this unit may

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<sup>34</sup> Transparency International Corruption Perception Index 2006:  
[http://www.transparency.org/policy\\_research/surveys\\_indices/cpi/2006](http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2006)

<sup>35</sup> *Koha Jone*, 23.05.2007. Online version: <http://www.kohajone.com/artikull.php?idm=6534>

be interpreted as a close monitoring of and pressure on Albanian law enforcement structures to attain the declared objectives.

Although Albania refrained from becoming a party to the regional Balkan conflicts of the 1990s, it did not escape their impact. The Kosovo conflict of 1999 resulted in a massive influx of refugees into Albania, equal to thirteen percent of its population.<sup>36</sup> According to Albanian figures, more than half a million people from Kosovo sought refuge in the country. As a result of the crisis, Albania was faced with an increased incidence of fraud, disruption of tax collection, a higher account deficit, and was forced to divert resources previously allocated for other public projects. Other side effects included a decrease in direct foreign investment. A return to violence or instability in the region will significantly strain Albania's resources, slow down economic growth, and impede its continued implementation of domestic reforms.

Albania is a secular country where religion does not play a significant role in the political and private life of the population. However, Albania has, in the past, served as a refuge for foreign Islamic extremists, some of whom obtained Albanian citizenship. Some former government officials were suspected of maintaining ties with these extremists, while several Islamic non-governmental organizations were identified as fronts for Al Qaeda.<sup>37</sup> In response, in 2002, Albania adopted a national plan against terrorism, expelled suspected extremists and terrorists, froze assets of individuals with terror links, and introduced a strong money laundering law that included counter-terrorism provisions matching international standards. No presence of terrorist activity has been reported since then.<sup>38</sup>

Poor economic conditions and a high unemployment rate<sup>39</sup> often result in the recruitment of young people by criminal organizations. According to the Albanian government, in 2003, 42% of criminals in Albania were in the 15-24 age group. Despite Albania's economic growth, legal obstacles, corruption and nepotism continue to impede the development of infrastructure, privatization, and foreign investment. The black market economy – estimated at one third to one half of GDP – hinders the development of a legitimate tax base and stable revenue for the government.

Informality – or non-declared lucrative activities – is identified as a major problem facing not only the economy but society at large, and a major contributing factor behind the high levels of corruption of civil servants. The current government has declared a war without compromise on informality and is taking multifaceted measures to make all businesses enter the formal economy, such as requiring that nearly all payments and transactions be made through banks.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> EC, IMF, World Bank, "The Impact of the Kosovo Conflict on Albania", 26.05.1999, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> CRS Report no. RL33012, p.7.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p. 6-7.

<sup>39</sup> According to CIA World Factbook the official rate of unemployment is 13.8%, but it may exceed 30% due to the preponderance of near-subsistence farming (September 2006 EST.).

<sup>40</sup> Declaration by the Minister of Economy and Energy, Genc Ruli, "Informaliteti në ekonomi është e keqja më e madhe" [Informality in Economy is the Greatest Evil], *Rilindja Demokratike*, 16.05.2007.

Although they are being addressed, natural disasters and environmental issues threaten public health and economic development. Albania is subject to frequent floods and heavy snow, which damage agricultural production, resulting in loss of livestock. Roads and railroads are often impassable due to heavy flooding, causing significant economic disruption. Natural disasters have also caused problems in communication, energy distribution, and water flows throughout the country.<sup>41</sup>

#### **IV. The Economic Situation and Security**

With the exception of 1997, when the state faced collapse, Albania's annual GDP growth has been positive since the demise of communism in the early 1990s, with an annual growth of between 5-6 %. Albania's economic success is noteworthy especially when compared with its neighbours. But sustainable growth is hampered by the endemic energy crisis. This crisis threatens to dampen future economic forecasts, and any optimistic growth estimate is contingent on improvements in the energy sector.

Albania's Government revenues largely depend on contributions from international organizations. The second largest source of income stems from individual remittances sent home to their families by Albanians living abroad.. Improved tax administration and collection functions would increase the budget, allow the Government to expand its social services and domestic investment, and also enable it to tackle the large reforms currently projected.

Several threats to the country's long-term stability remain embedded in its economy and require more attention than they have received in the past: human capital remains largely under-utilized, the character of trade is a potential vulnerability, and barriers to foreign investment impede stronger growth. First, public investment in human capital is necessary to sustain economic growth and lower the real security threats posed by unemployment, poverty, and limited economic opportunities. Emigration has caused an imbalance in social and economic development. Second, Albania's heavy dependence on trade with the EU is worrisome because Albania's economic growth relies largely on the strength of its exports, and any major shock affecting EU import demand, or sharp depreciation of the Euro that would strengthen the LEK (national currency), could have a significant impact on the Albanian economy. Italy receives 74% of all Albanian exports, while Greece and Germany receive less than 10%.<sup>42</sup> Third, daunting barriers currently exist to increases in foreign investment. Although the Government is trying to improve the situation, three interrelated negative factors still exist: organized crime, an inhospitable business climate, and corruption. Organized crime is becoming increasingly more sophisticated as links strengthen between closely-knit Albanian diaspora networks and the wider criminal world. With no legal recourse to the large majority of the problems, potential investors

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<sup>41</sup> UNDP and AHS, "Human Security in Albania", 2004, p. 29.

<sup>42</sup> Economic Intelligence Unit, Albania Country Report, Feb. 2006. See also IMF Country Report No. 06/54, page 58.

must either manoeuvre through the illegal and complicated requirements for uncertain rewards or exit the market completely. The Albanian business climate remains problematic, although the current government is trying to develop policies to make it more attractive. Thus, the business registration model has been reviewed with the objective of reducing the registration time by introducing on-line registration. The Government has already prepared a review of its investment policies. It covers policies relating to investment promotion, tax reform, anti-corruption measures, competition, trade, regulatory reform, and human capital. These policies have led to a reduction in business registration delays from 30 to 8 days, an improvement of application procedures, measures to avoid duplication of information related to repeated requirements by different institutions, and equal tariffs for foreign and local businesses regarding business registration and notary procedures.

Difficulties in property ownership are also a major impediment to increasing levels of foreign investment. Although the government legalized private ownership in 1991, improper registration of property now leads to competing claims for the same piece of land or buildings.

In addition to these real challenges confronting Albania's economic future, the problem of the negative international perception of Albania in terms of instability, corruption and organized crime remains a major disincentive, and investors are therefore still largely unaware of the opportunities that exist. These opportunities include Albania's location on the Adriatic Coast, its proximity to key European markets, its existing export industries, its cheap pool of labour, and the language skills of the population.<sup>43</sup> Europe still views Albania as impoverished and crime-ridden, despite the fact that Albanian leaders are working to improve that perception.

## V. Regional Security

Albania has established a reputation as a reliable regional partner. When the Balkans became engulfed in conflict, Albania did not directly engage in the hostilities and has refrained from interfering in the domestic affairs of its neighbours with regard to ethnic Albanian minorities. Government leaders have maintained their support for the resolution of the status of Kosovo in the framework of the UN and the European community, and focused their policies on human rights and maintaining existing political borders in the region.

Relations with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have continued to develop. Albania has constantly supported full implementation of the Ohrid Agreement as a key process to ensure that country's stability, but also to garner support for its own aspirations to join the EU. Relations with newly-independent Montenegro have assumed a special significance in the framework of relations with neighbouring countries, not least because of the Albanian minority living

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<sup>43</sup> Report from EC-UNDP Trade Liberalization and Promotion Project 2004, <http://www.undp.org.al>

there, which actively participates in the political life of that country. Albania was among the first countries to officially recognize Montenegro as an independent and sovereign state. Albania is in favour of a normal development of relations with the Republic of Serbia. Caution has been shown in the political dialogue with the Belgrade authorities to ensure that the Kosovo issue does not become an impediment to the development of bilateral relations, regardless of the different positions of the two countries regarding the future status of Kosovo.

Relations with Greece have also witnessed positive developments, and Greece supports Albania's aspirations to join the EU and NATO. This bilateral relationship is also having a positive impact on regional cooperation.

The establishment of a regional Free Trade Agreement (FTA) allowed Albania to develop formal relationships with many of its regional neighbours, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia. In particular, this agreement has facilitated the development of a solid working relationship with Serbia.

The current government that came to power after Parliamentary elections in 2005 has noted that “Albania does not have any unresolved issues with any of these countries; the relations are regulated by a complete framework of agreements with each of these countries, signed and ratified by Parliament; it is necessary to realize the benefits of these agreements through concrete actions for their implementation. The coming four years will bring a higher level of relations and collaboration with Macedonia, Kosovo, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and other countries of the Balkans. We share with all these countries a common aim which is integration in the European Union and NATO, and for this reason, all the agreements with these countries serve the reciprocal interest and this integration process”.<sup>44</sup> Concerning NATO integration and efforts to foster regional security, the Government programme states: “The Government will intensify efforts for the achievement of this strategic objective by enabling the necessary conditions for the respective structures to meet the Partnership Objectives and by reflecting as best as possible our achievements in the MAP, PARP and IPP documents, and also our work in the framework of the Adriatic Charter, SEDM initiatives, etc”.<sup>45</sup>

Given that two years have elapsed since the Albanian Prime Minister made this statement, one may wonder why regional and bilateral contacts – or cooperation among the various security sector institutions in the region – have not yet come up with any new concrete and locally guided initiatives to address specific regional security issues. Mostly, cooperation and exchanges have been developed under specific regional initiatives sponsored by internationals whose role can be easily evidenced in all initiatives mentioned in this paper.

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<sup>44</sup> The program of government presented to the Parliament on 08.09.2005. See the English of the document at the website of Prime Minister: <http://www.keshilliministrave.al/english/programi/default.asp>.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

Albania and other countries in the region should shift to effective institutionalised cooperative efforts to locally set up and strictly follow priority agendas that reflect regional economic and security challenges, especially in border areas. It would be an exaggeration to say that bilateral and regional relations have fully overcome the mistrust of the past, but institutional motivation or even minimal vision is clearly lacking to commit to joint responsibilities in addressing what is commonly accepted as a regional security agenda of threats and risks. In addition, the border areas of countries in the Western Balkans are poor and the most underdeveloped economically.

On the other hand, Albania actively participates in numerous regional initiatives and frameworks, including the South-East Europe Cooperation Process (SEEC), the Stability Pact, the South East Europe Initiative (SEEI), the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI), and the Border Security Initiative. All of these cooperation agreements emphasize partnership, regional cooperation, conflict resolution, economic ties, and collective security.

Albania places particular emphasis on the Adriatic Charter (A-3) framework, which builds upon the 1998 US-Baltic Charter that facilitated the entry of the Baltic countries into NATO. In the spirit of A-3, Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia have initiated this partnership with the US with an eye toward leveraging US support for NATO expansion. In 2005, the Adriatic Charter countries deployed a 12-person combined medical team to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. Cooperation among the countries in the framework of the Adriatic Charter proves to be an excellent example of how important internationally-sponsored, supported and led initiatives remain for the political elites of the countries in the region.

In addition, Albania actively participates in defence-oriented initiatives, including the Southeast Europe Defence Ministers (SEDM) organization, which promotes regional security through improved capabilities and strong partnerships. SEDM's military arm – the South Eastern Europe Brigade (SEEBRIG) – is a brigade force composed of units contributed by member countries with a headquarters (HQ) that rotates every four years. Albania currently contributes two staff members to the SEEBRIG HQ in Romania and has allocated one infantry company and one engineer company as part of the Engineer Task Force (ETF) to be available for exercises, deployments, and contingency operations. In February 2006, SEEBRIG assumed command of ISAF's Kabul Multinational Brigade IX – a mission to which Albania contributes five officers and four non-commissioned officers. In the period July 2005-2007, Albania has successfully assumed leadership of the SEDM Secretariat.

Concerning border management and regional security, Albania has signed bilateral agreements with its neighbours and has been involved in various regional initiatives to comply with the requirements of the EU's Integrated Border Management organization. Furthermore, it has intensified cooperation to combat

organized crime, including illegal trafficking. As a consequence of agreements with neighbouring countries and of police reforms, border security is undertaken by the border police and not the army. In neighbouring states, Montenegro and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia patrol their respective borders with Albania with forces under civil control. Efforts are also made to improve sea border patrol, although much still remains to be done to meet EU standards.<sup>46</sup> The Albanian State Police (ASP) has benefited from assistance provided under international programmes such as PAMECA or ICITAP. But with the recent reforms in ASP, “almost 50% of the trained Border Management Personnel of mid and basic level staff were transferred or removed from service under the ASP downsizing programme. It is a cause of concern that many of the personnel changes involved positions that required specialized training”.<sup>47</sup>

During the last couple of years, Albania has intensified and tried to develop and institutionalize cooperation with UNMIK-led institutions. According to the Director for International Cooperation of the Albanian State Police, cooperation is based on a broad agreement signed in 2003 between the relevant UNMIK authorities and the Albanian State Police to develop cooperation and information exchanges in the fight against criminal activity.

In regard to the question of Kosovo, Albania has followed a prudent course in diplomacy. While strongly disproving calls for a “Greater Albania”, or any other territorial demands in the region, it has been supportive of efforts made by the international community to find a peaceful solution to the Kosovo issue. Albania has declared its support for the Martii Ahtisaari plan proposed to the UN Security Council, as stressed by Prime Minister Berisha in an interview with CNN on 15 June 2007.<sup>48</sup>

## VI. Conclusion

NATO and EU integration, which stand high on the agenda of Albania’s political elites, would provide a unique push for reform of security sector institutions. However, this reform is mostly focused on a rapprochement of legislation. Political leadership of security sector institutions needs to change and invest in improving institutional culture for enhancing effectiveness and developing local ownership of reforms. It is quite common that political reform initiatives, including in the security sector, either reflect an international agenda in terms of expectations from local institutions, or constitute political moves to meet certain political party objectives. Important public policies in the security sector are being randomly developed based on locally perceived and articulated needs, either by public institutions or civil society actors.

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<sup>46</sup> Joachim Tasso Villalonga, Coordinator of Internal Issues and Justice at Delegation of EU Commission in Tirana, “Hapat drejt sigurise kufitare te Shqiperise sipas sandarteve europiane” [Steps towards border security of Albania, according to European Standards], in the conference Axbende Shqiptare per Sigurine Rajonale/An Albanian Agenda to Regional Security”, organized by the Institute for Democracy and Mediation, Tirana, 7-8 March 2006.

<sup>47</sup> PAMECA Report March 2007.

<sup>48</sup> Website of Council of Ministers of Albania, <http://www.keshilliministrave.al/shqip/lajm.asp?id=7605>

National Security Strategy is embodied in a formal document that largely reflects an international agenda, rather than locally-driven initiatives that guide reform of the security sector. During the conduct of this study, leaders and senior experts of the security sector accepted the need for an open and more comprehensive process in redrafting the National Security Strategy. Furthermore, it was stressed that there should be a leading institution responsible for its implementation and monitoring.

Albania does not have a central authority and a leading team of experts responsible for guidance and reform of public policies for the security sector. The National Security Council, as a consultative constitutional institution under the President of the Republic, as well as certain specific similar structures at governmental level, simply represent formal institutions that are mainly guided and activated in emergency situations. This results in the lack of an overall vision for effective reform and a decision-making national institution for prioritizing the needs for reform, as well as a deficit in internal cooperation between Albania's security sector institutions. Internal cooperation among security sector institutions has been and continues to be driven and sponsored by international institutions and foreign missions. Abrupt changes in institutional leadership following political reshuffles often cause personnel instability in the security sector that affects efficiency, regional contacts, and confidence building, as well as cooperation between security sector institutions, both internally and at regional level.

Parliament should develop a regulated system of hearings on and oversight of the various security sector institutions. It should also approve mandatory regulations regarding intelligence agencies and specialized sub-commissions, and develop its activities in this regard through bi-partisan approaches. Parliamentary Commissions for National Security should compensate for the obvious lack of technical capacities to effectively and democratically perform their important role to improve governance of the sector through better cooperation and more involvement of experts from the non-governmental sector. This would also lead to a more grounded, professional and less partisan discussion in the Parliamentary Commissions.

The progress so far made in regional cooperation is a good and promising start, but remains insufficient and very formal insofar as it passively follows certain paths dictated by the NATO and EU integration agenda. Hence, existing initiatives are largely linked with international sponsorship, and not to a bilateral or regionally owned process to overcome and address common risks and threats to security and cooperation. Countries of the region should develop official joint agendas to address threats and challenges on a bilateral or multilateral basis that would lead to cooperation of all security sector institutions. Regional initiatives should not only be provoked by circumstances – they should become institutionalized as effective forms of cooperation.

Taking note of past and current experiences, both at the national and regional level, one should recognize the still important role of internationals in providing

support for the development and monitoring of reform of the security sector, and for encouraging cooperation. International strategy in the countries of the region should shift to fostering more cooperation and interaction within and between existing local capacities. Empowerment of local actors in all these processes is crucial for the effectiveness and sustainability of security initiatives and reforms.

# View from Bosnia and Herzegovina - Study on the Assessment of Regional Security Threats and Challenges in the Western Balkans

*Olga Palinkasev*<sup>49</sup>

## I. Introduction

The Western Balkans have changed considerably since the wars of the 1990s ended. The states of the region have turned towards democracy and are grappling with the challenges of transition to free market economies and ensuring adequate living standards for their citizens. Security and stability, once a prized rarity in the region, are now increasingly being taken for granted by its citizens. Although this is indeed a sign of the changing social and political climate in the Western Balkans, the events of the 1990s nonetheless showed that security and stability in the region should on no account be taken for granted. With difficult socio-economic conditions prevalent throughout the region, the unresolved issue of Kosovo still lingering and security challenges being presented as part of globalisation's growing hold on the region, security is something that will require considerable attention by Western Balkan states.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, previously synonymous with bloodshed and conflict, is no exception in terms of the progress made by Western Balkan countries since the early 2000s. Foreign direct investments have been increasing and the country's economic growth rates have been consistently high by Southeast European standards for a number of years. However, just as Bosnia and Herzegovina is no exception in the aforementioned context, so too is it no exception regarding the security challenges faced by countries in the region. The country has sought to tackle the changing security environment in parallel with substantive security and defence sector reforms. The result has been a fascinating evolution of policy from internally focused deconstructionism in the early 2000s to an outward-looking focus on collective security.

This study will look at the way Bosnia and Herzegovina views the regional security environment and the key threats to its security. It will then analyse the government's key responses to its perceived security threats. The analysis will reveal attitudes within the country towards Western Balkan neighbours, as reflected by Bosnia's national security policy and the effect they have had on security sector reform in the country.

In examining the above issues, the paper will also consider the key national interests, objectives and approaches of Bosnia and Herzegovina with regard to regional security co-operation. Before concluding with a reflection on the opportunities for the integration of Kosovo into the system of regional security,

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the paper will briefly consider the preconditions for more vigorous and locally owned security cooperation in the Western Balkans.

## II. Regional Security Environment

Bosnia and Herzegovina's national security policy assesses that: "in previous years considerable advancement was made in improving the security environment in the Balkans".<sup>50</sup> The assessment is based on the premise that countries of the region have democratically elected governments and are clearly committed to European and Euro-Atlantic integration processes. All the countries of the Balkans furthermore participate in the work of various regional associations and are mutually developing and enhancing multilateral and bilateral cooperation.

The progress made by the countries of the region in their democratization processes are viewed as factors enhancing Bosnia and Herzegovina's security. The national security policy makes the point that the advancement of democratic governance generates improved stability and mutual understanding, thus decreasing the potential for an escalation of security risks. Although such a proposition may indeed be valid from a long term perspective, it can be argued that from a short term perspective it is too simplistic for the Western Balkans. For it fails to take into account that Southeast Europe's experience of societal and political change accompanying democratic processes has brought to the fore a wave of nationalist rhetoric that has served to destabilise the region through the creation of ethnic tensions. Indeed, today, with large vulnerable returnee populations, such rhetoric could easily evolve into security challenges for the country.

Notwithstanding, Bosnia's national security policy reflects a favourable perception of the current regional security environment. The democratization of the region, as well as its drive towards common Euro-Atlantic structures and increasing levels of bilateral and multi-lateral cooperation among the states of the region, underpin such an assessment. Bosnia and Herzegovina's national security policy makes a clear statement that: "the possibility for Bosnia and Herzegovina to experience aggression from abroad in the foreseeable future is almost non-existent".<sup>51</sup> In case of radical changes in that security assessment, Bosnia and Herzegovina would revert to measures focused on the defence of its sovereignty based on a system of "collective defence" in full cooperation with friendly and allied states. It is clear that if adversarial attitudes towards Bosnia's neighbours are felt within the country at grassroots level, they are certainly not seen as a security threat in the country's national security policy. Local level fears may exist among Bosniacs and Bosnian Croats regarding the possibility of renewed hostilities launched by Serbia, in which Bosnian Serbs may exhibit allegiance with the latter. Similarly, fears may also exist among Bosnian Serbs regarding the possibility of renewed hostilities with Croatia,

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<sup>50</sup> Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 'Security Policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina', February 2006, Document number 01-011-142-35-1/06, p. 6.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

in which the Bosnian Croats and possibly Bosniacs may side with Croatia. The degree to which such fears are currently prevalent in society is unclear since no studies have been undertaken in the country focusing on that specific issue. The survey which comes closest to examining this issue is UNDP's Early Warning System which shows that society perceives the possibility of renewed conflict as being very low. The favourable regional security assessment by Bosnia's national security policy is also to a very large degree a reflection of the internal processes at play in the design of any formal act, legislation or policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Institutional reliance on ethnic consensus in the formulation of official documents means that any national security policy will necessarily be minimalist since it must satisfy the interests of Bosniacs, Croats and Serbs. This is particularly the case in terms of perceptions of threats vis-à-vis neighbouring states, which is a sensitive political issue as a result of the 1992-1995 war.

The assessment of regional threats expressed in the national security policy probably also reflects a reliance on the presence of international armed forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region. Hence, the possible risk of armed conflict in the region is seen as being low. International forces are currently present in both Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Other factors that could underpin such an assessment include the recent democratic changes in Serbia and the ever-present weariness of violence brought about by the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### **III. Key Threats**

The key security risks and challenges confronting Bosnia and Herzegovina can be categorized in three groups; global threats; regional threats and internal challenges.

#### **III.1. Global Threats**

The global threats confronting Bosnia and Herzegovina are considered within the context of overall global developments in international relations. Globalisation has led to very rapid social and economic development in almost all countries of the world. The dynamism of this process and increasing levels of interdependency often present security challenges and threats to peace and stability and the rights of groups and individuals. Against this backdrop, Bosnia and Herzegovina's national security policy highlights as particular threats to its security: international terrorism; the proliferation of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons; the illegal trade in various technologies; trafficking in humans and narcotics<sup>52</sup>; and increased migratory trends resulting from armed conflict and discrimination. These threats are seen as particularly relevant for Bosnia and Herzegovina in light of its geographical proximity to Western Europe and its weak institutional and border controls, which make it particularly vulnerable to such threats. Global challenges

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<sup>52</sup> Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 'Security Policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina', February 2006, Document number 01-011-142-35-1/06, p. 3.

are also linked with organised crime, which fuels social and political instability in certain countries of the region. It also entrenches societies in poverty and generates the spread of disease which threatens entire populations. Failure to counter these threats, besides potentially directly jeopardising the safety and security of citizens, will also lead to the accumulation of challenges and thus increase threat levels.

### III.2. Regional Threats

Regional threats to Bosnia and Herzegovina's security are considered by its national security policy as having their roots in the transition processes currently underway in countries of the region. Challenges experienced in its transition from centrally planned to free market economies have seen the region fall behind the developed world in terms of economic performance. Geo-strategically, Southeast Europe is significant in that it lies on routes linking Europe and Asia that are important for trade. However, these routes are also used for the illegal trade in weapons, narcotics and humans, and potentially could be used for the illegal transit of terrorist groups and materials to perpetrate terrorist attacks. Economic hardship associated with the transition to free market economy systems makes the region particularly vulnerable to organised criminal groups. The situation is compounded by the fact that the region is considered to be fragmented, as a result of the economic, psychological, social and other divisions associated with the conflicts of the 1990s, which makes it particularly easy for criminal groups to operate in. Another factor that contributes to making the region favourable for organised criminal groups is the general weakness of state institutions, although this is not mentioned in the national security policy. This makes it very difficult to monitor and apply the rule of law, thus making it harder to tackle the issue of organised crime.

Nationalist, religious, cultural and other revivals in various parts of the world often carry with them extremist traits which can easily transform into local and regional security challenges. Bosnia and Herzegovina's national security policy notes that the country and its neighbours experienced such developments in their recent past, which resulted in significant loss of life and capital, the consequences of which can be felt to this very day. As a result, it notes, the Western Balkans region is the most vulnerable part of Europe. Hence, whilst the country does not explicitly identify ethno-nationalist tendencies within its borders and in the region as a threat to its security and stability, it does so in a generalised manner. The poignancy of the threat is all the greater when one considers the "efforts towards secession, autonomy and independence of different groups", as mentioned in the national security policy. Both ethno-nationalist extremism and calls for autonomy/independence represent a distinct threat in the region, particularly since either can spark the other, thereby leading to escalating levels of instability. Yet, there is surprisingly little analysis in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the effect these factors may have on the country's security. Surges in ethno-nationalist extremism in the region could affect though not destabilise ethnic relations in Bosnia and

Herzegovina, which are premised on overriding consensus between the three dominant ethnic groups. Independence for Kosovo, for example, could also lead to calls for secession by Bosnian Serbs from Bosnia and Herzegovina as nationalist fervour increases in Serbia over the loss of their “sacred land”. These effects could potentially be both direct in terms of spurring ethnic extremism within Bosnia’s borders and indirect, through, for example, refugee flows triggered by instability elsewhere arising from attempts to achieve secession/independence.

### III.3. Internal Challenges

Bosnia and Herzegovina’s internal challenges are associated with different political factors within the country which present considerable challenges in terms of the country’s stability in political, social and other sectors. These challenges are rooted in the legacy of the country’s 1992-1995 war, the incomplete implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement, the country’s inability to secure a sustainable refugee return process, and problems associated with its economic and political transition processes. Other factors underpinning the country’s internal security challenges relate to its poor border management system, which makes the fight against organised crime difficult, high unemployment rates, the large prevalence of weapons and ammunition, mine contamination and environmental challenges<sup>53</sup>.

A considerable threat to the state’s security is identified by its national security policy as being associated with the return process for refugees and internally displaced persons. Areas ravaged by war, both in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in other countries, are considered very unstable since life in them has not yet been normalised. Indeed, underdevelopment and economic hardship breeds resentment and extremism as people tend to view their predicaments as being the result of exclusion rather than lost development opportunities. The slow pace of refugee return from neighbouring states is considered an additional challenge. There are significant numbers of Bosnian refugees in Croatia and Croatian Serb refugees living in Bosnia and Serbia. Denial of the right to return to pre-war homes is a related source of tensions, whose resolution is being secured all too slowly. Bosnia and Herzegovina still has over 150,000 registered internally displaced persons and, whilst political impediments to the return of those persons to their pre-war homes may have disappeared, socio-economic impediments still prevail. Without access to basic utilities, infrastructure and means of livelihood, the realisation of the right to return by the internally displaced is difficult. Recent mass protests by Bosniac returnees on the slow progress made by the Bosnian authorities to improve their basic living conditions highlight the problems faced by such groups.

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* p. 8.

## IV. Responding to Security Challenges

### IV.1. Global and Regional Challenges

On March 26 2003, the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted *General Guidelines and Priorities for Foreign Policy* as an active element of the country's efforts to improve security. The directives therein lay out Bosnia and Herzegovina's foreign policy aims as:

*“promoting and preserving lasting peace, security and stable democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the country's development. In other words, its accession into contemporary European, political, economic and security integration processes”.*

The key priorities identified for Bosnia and Herzegovina's foreign policy include:

- *the “preservation and protection of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina within its internationally recognized borders;*
- *the full and consistent implementation of the General Peace Agreement;*
- *Bosnia and Herzegovina's inclusion in European integration processes;*
- *the participation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in multilateral activities, in particular, as part of the system of the United Nations (UN), the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), etc., and;*
- *the promotion of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a partner in international economic relations, and the promotion of activities aiming at the admission of Bosnia and Herzegovina into the World Trade Organization.”<sup>54</sup>*

In order to meet the objectives of Bosnia and Herzegovina's security policy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established a Department for Peace and Security as a part of its Division for Multilateral Affairs. The Department is one of the rare entities in the Ministry that is fully staffed. As the Department's name suggests, its tasks and duties are widely defined as: “...keeping contacts with representatives of international organisations and the most important states of interest for peace and stability”.

The Department for Peace and Security conducts all activities relevant to the work and initiatives of international organisations. It is therefore responsible for Bosnia and Herzegovina's international obligations towards the United Nations and UN agencies whose mandates cover security aspects (e.g. CTBTO, IAEA), as well as towards the OSCE, and EU rules and regulations regarding weapons control, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, problems related to small and light weapons, and other security issues. Amongst its other tasks, the Department for Peace and Security assures the active participation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in

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<sup>54</sup> Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina: 'General Directions and Priorities for Implementation of Foreign Policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina', Sarajevo, March 26, 2003.

the international Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) and NATO plans to combat terrorism.<sup>55</sup>

As part of its overall endeavour to minimize the risks of the global challenges faced by the country, Bosnia and Herzegovina has engaged in various activities, including participation in international peacekeeping missions. Bosnia and Herzegovina has sent troops to UN peacekeeping missions in Congo, East Timor, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Liberia and Sierra Leone. In addition, explosive ordnance disposal teams from the country's armed forces have been deployed in Iraq alongside the coalition forces there. Other activities targeted towards minimising global threats include the provision of support for international war crimes courts, adoption and promulgation of instruments for the protection of human rights, and the adoption of the EU Code of Conduct for the trade in weapons.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's national security policy states that "through the intensive cooperation and the development of confidence and security building measures, Bosnia and Herzegovina will seek to advance relations with other states and thereby contribute to international and regional security"<sup>56</sup>. Although perhaps well-intentioned, the statement leaves very little defined, and there is no clear vision of how that objective will be achieved, or any indication of the areas in which cooperation should be established. The result has been an array of activities, with few tangible results thus far. Bosnia and Herzegovina has, for example, established cooperation within the framework of the South East Europe Cooperation Process, which has led to an intensification of cooperation among the countries of the region in recent years, specifically in the fields of the judiciary and home affairs. Regular meetings are organized within the region, the most recent at ministerial level in Zagreb in April this year.<sup>57</sup> The Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina has also established a Secretariat for the Council for Regional Cooperation, which should further strengthen the modern concept of collective security in the region.<sup>58</sup>

In parallel, the Ministry of Defence has established partnership relations with the Ministries of Defence of Croatia and the former State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, resulting in the development of annual plans for cooperation between the ministries. So far these plans have focused on exchange visits and conferences, but scope exists for future expansion of cooperation into more substantive areas. Nonetheless, the plans elaborated thus far have been implemented smoothly and have proven to be useful.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Interview with Mr. Nijaz Cardaklija, First Secretary, Department for Peace and Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

<sup>56</sup> Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 'Security Policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina', February 2006, Document number 01-011-142-35-1/06, p.10-11

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.mpr.gov.ba/ba/?ID=256>

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.mvp.gov.ba/>

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Mr. Ahmed H. Omerovic, Acting Head of the Sector for Policy and Planning, Ministry of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## IV.2. Internal Challenges

Responses by Bosnia and Herzegovina to internal security challenges highlighted by the national security policy have not been forceful. Indeed, the policy provides very little in terms of guidance for the country's institutions on the type of interventions that could be undertaken to offset risks associated with the challenges it identifies. Part of the challenge in responding to internal security challenges is underscored by the fact that jurisdiction for different issues lies with different levels of government. Hence, for example, responsibility for combating environmental degradation lies with four different layers of government, which often have differing views and priorities as to how the problem should be approached. A similar problem exists with regard to reducing unemployment. To meaningfully address this problem, governments need to adjust and synchronise their fiscal, investment promotion, education, taxation, labour and industrial policies (to name but a few) in order to achieve the desired outcome. In the most centralized states, addressing this challenge entails considerable trial and error. In Bosnia and Herzegovina the problem is all the more challenging because the responsibilities for each of the aforementioned issues is shared at different government levels. For example, fiscal policy and investment promotion is handled by the state government; taxation and industrial policy by the entity governments; labour policy by cantonal governments; and local taxes by municipal authorities. It is therefore not surprising that government efforts to address internal challenges such as unemployment or the environment result in a wide array of measures that are not always complementary and hence produce differing success rates.

In other areas, such as border controls and weapons and mines, where the division of responsibilities is more straightforward, the results have been significant. Bosnia and Herzegovina has devoted considerable attention to relations with neighbouring states as part of its efforts to improve its border management system. Cooperation has in particular focused on border monitoring and control. The aim has been to combat cross-border crime, terrorism, organised crime and illegal migration.<sup>60</sup> The increased cooperation between Bosnia and Herzegovina and its neighbours has been primarily linked to the application of standards prescribed by the Schengen Agreement. However, it has also produced significant results in terms of the efficiency and effectiveness of border monitoring and control. Unfortunately, this is one of the rare areas where cooperation with neighbouring states is taking place on security issues.

Even higher levels of success have been registered with regard to eliminating the problems posed by mines, weapons and ammunition. Currently, 3.6% of Bosnia and Herzegovina is affected by mines. In 1998, UNDP launched a programme to develop a Mine Action Centre for the country to coordinate mine action activities. Then, in 2002, UNDP provided assistance in developing a National Mine Action Strategy for Bosnia and Herzegovina aligned with the objectives of the Ottawa Convention and geared towards making the country free of mines by 2009. The

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* p. 11.

strategy has been crucial in setting targets for both the mine action donor community, the Bosnian authorities and the national Mine Action Centre in terms of what needs to be done. At present, around 13 million BAM (convertible Marks) is allocated per year by different levels of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina for mine action, and the allocations have been increasing each year<sup>61</sup>. Although still one of the most mine affected countries in the world, Bosnia and Herzegovina is well on its way to achieving its strategy objectives.

Similar success has been registered in efforts to reduce stockpiles of weapons and ammunition. In 2004, the Ministry of Defence signed an \$11.5 million project with UNDP for assistance to dispose of surplus weapons and ammunition stockpiles. At that time, Bosnia and Herzegovina had an estimated 380,000 surplus weapons and over 30,000 tons of surplus ammunition. Weapons reduction has proceeded smoothly and progress is now also being made to eliminate ammunition stockpiles.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, in Southeast Europe, Bosnia and Herzegovina has led the way on this issue, which is a common problem in all countries of the region. In 2005-6 alone, the country destroyed over 90,000 pieces of SALW and commenced with the disposal of its ammunition stockpiles. To date, some 6,000 tons of surplus ammunition have been destroyed, or are in the process of being destroyed.

Progress that may have been made in efforts to combat terrorism, trafficking and organised crime is often muted with very little reporting provided on the issue. This may in part be due to the covert nature of operations required to tackle these types of threats. Nonetheless, terrorism is considered by Bosnia's national security policy as one of the highest threats for the stability of both the region and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia and Herzegovina is distinct in this respect since most other countries in the region do not place this issue at the top of the list of security threats. The fact that the threat of terrorism is regarded as such a high priority concern by Bosnia and Herzegovina may be a reflection of the fear that Islamic terrorists may seek to secure support among Bosniacs, fellow brethren in faith, to stage or launch operations either in Bosnia (targeting the high international presence there), or in Western Europe. The degree to which such a threat is plausible is arguable since tolerance towards religious militancy among Bosniacs has been virtually non-existent. Bringing the security services in Bosnia and Herzegovina closer together, including border security services is considered a priority, together with increased cooperation with Interpol and the security services of neighbouring and other states.

As part of its national security policy related to the fight against terrorism, the government has also increased efforts to eradicate activities seemingly not directly connected to terrorist activities. These include financial crime (money laundering, corruption), human, drug and weapons trafficking, which are effectively often connected to terrorism. Hence, all security institutions, including the police and

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<sup>61</sup> Interview with Seid Turkovic, Portfolio Manager/Country Portfolio Coordinator, Human Security Portfolio, United Nations Development Programme, May 21, 2007.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Seid Turkovic, Portfolio Manager/Country Portfolio Coordinator, Human Security Portfolio, United Nations Development Programme, May 21, 2007.

intelligence services, are called on to provide vigilant attention to combating these threats.

Significant progress was made in the country's ability to address the issues of terrorism, trafficking and organised crime through the reform of the country's intelligence services in 2004. Prior to 2004, responsibility for intelligence services lay with Bosnia and Herzegovina's separate entities. In July 2004, after considerable political haggling, Bosnia's two intelligence agencies were merged into one body – the State Intelligence Security Agency (OSA) – and placed under parliamentary control.

OSA's mandate is to gather intelligence regarding threats to the security of Bosnia and Herzegovina, both within and beyond its borders. It analyses, elaborates and provides intelligence information to state officials and bodies. Whenever necessary, it also provides assistance to authorized officials, as defined in the criminal procedure codes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to relevant bodies in Bosnia and Herzegovina to counter threats to the country's security. This is another area, in addition to border control and monitoring, where Bosnia and Herzegovina cooperates with other Western Balkan states. However, such cooperation is limited to information exchanges between intelligence agencies.

“Threats to the security of Bosnia and Herzegovina” are defined by the law on intelligence services as meaning threats to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, constitutional order, and fundamental economic stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the threats to global security – all of which are detrimental to Bosnia and Herzegovina. They are as follows:

- a) terrorism, including international terrorism;
- b) espionage directed against Bosnia and Herzegovina, or which is otherwise detrimental to the security of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- c) sabotage directed against the vital national infrastructure of Bosnia and Herzegovina, or which is otherwise directed against Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- d) organized crime directed against Bosnia and Herzegovina, or which is otherwise detrimental to the security of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- e) drugs, arms and human trafficking directed against Bosnia and Herzegovina, or which is otherwise detrimental to the security of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- f) illegal international proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the components thereof, as well as materials and tools required for their production;
- g) illegal trafficking of internationally controlled products and technologies;
- h) acts punishable under international humanitarian law; and
- i) organized acts of violence or intimidation against ethnic or religious groups within Bosnia and Herzegovina.

An analysis of the list of “threats to the security of Bosnia and Herzegovina” shows considerable consistency between the types of threats which OSA has been mandated to tackle and the priorities of Bosnia’s national security policy.

Other targets considered as essential by Bosnia and Herzegovina’s national security policy in responding to threats to national security have not been met. Although they are considered vital, police and judicial reform are two areas that have not been addressed. Bureaucratic inefficiency and political blockages threaten to jeopardise reforms in these two sectors that are so important for both the rule of law and security in the country.

## V. Defence Policy

Bosnia and Herzegovina’s defence policy defines the main elements of Bosnia’s defence system and the ways in which it functions, including the armed forces as the most important element of that system. The defence policy is based on the following principles:

1. democratic, civil control of the armed forces with parliamentary oversight;
2. activities to ensure transparency in the defence sector, including defence planning and budgeting;
3. balance of forces and capacities within Bosnia and Herzegovina, the sub-region and Southeast Europe;
4. modernisation of the forces, including the development of interoperability of the Bosnian armed forces with NATO;
5. integration into Euro-Atlantic collective security structures;
6. cooperation on issues of weapons control and confidence and security building measures, including participation in security structures and protocols in Southeast Europe;
7. development of a defence system based on the above principles, through which Bosnia and Herzegovina will realise the aims of its defence reforms on its path from individual to collective security.

The necessary prerequisites for Bosnia and Herzegovina to achieve its political and security interests via the defence sector are in place. Reforms in the defence sector have seen the establishment of democratic control of the armed forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina in line with best practice. The civil command of the armed forces is placed under the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina as the elected body. In turn, the Presidency, with the consensus of all parties concerned, is responsible for the command and control of the armed forces. Parliamentary control is assured by parliament, which has established committees for that purpose. Reforms undertaken in 2004 and 2005 have also led to a professionalisation of the country’s armed forces and significant reductions in their overall size. The total number of troops has been slashed from 60,000 to 10,000. The fact that the reforms are of a unilateral nature indicate the absence of

lingering adversarial attitudes within the country towards neighbouring states that could have any meaningful impact on security plans or policy.

The new position of Bosnia and Herzegovina following its accession to NATO's Partnership for Peace programme, and the introduction of the Law on Defence, requires a new defence policy for the country. The policy is indeed being revised and is expected to be presented to the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the near future.<sup>63</sup> The new Defence Policy will take into consideration the new position of Bosnia and Herzegovina vis-à-vis its relations with NATO and the planning activities that are required of it by the Alliance.

## VI. Approach to Regional Security Cooperation

Bosnia and Herzegovina's defence strategy encapsulates the overall objective and approach of the government regarding security cooperation, as reflected in both the Presidency Guidelines on Foreign Policy and the national security policy. As an overriding priority, it underlines a reliance on collective security as the "basis for its long-term military strategy"<sup>64</sup>. The key element of attaining that collective military security "is becoming a member of NATO because in such an instance the country's national sovereignty and territorial integrity is also guaranteed by the Alliance"<sup>65</sup>. Although NATO's Partnership for Peace programme does not guarantee collective security, as does full NATO membership, it does represent the first step in that direction.

In working towards securing a system of collective security, very little cooperation exists between Bosnia and Herzegovina and its neighbours. Areas where it does exist are those where such cooperation is of primordial importance (border controls, intelligence gathering), as we have seen above. Ironically, however, in striving for "collective security" through NATO, there is recognition "that stability and security in the Euro-Atlantic region can only be attained through cooperation and joint efforts. The protection and promotion of basic human rights, the protection of liberties, justice and peace through democracy are common values of the PfP programme, which Bosnia and Herzegovina shares"<sup>66</sup>.

Nonetheless, scope for an expansion of cooperation does exist. The defence strategy places emphasis on regional cooperation as a means of improving Bosnia and Herzegovina's security:

"...Bosnia and Herzegovina is committed to the establishment and advancement of bilateral and multilateral relations in the area of defence with all interested countries. Bosnia and Herzegovina is committed to advance its role and

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<sup>63</sup> Interview with Mr. Ahmed H. Omerovic, Acting Head of the Sector for Policy and Planning, Ministry of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

<sup>64</sup> Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 'Security Policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina', February 2006, Document number 01-011-142-35-1/06, p. 14.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

significance in regional cooperation on the following bases: development of intensive and comprehensive bilateral relations with all countries of the region, particularly neighbouring countries; initiating the implementation of agreements on regional arms control; strengthening of confidence and security building measures at a regional level; and implementation of the Agreement on Sub-regional Arms Control”.

Similarly, there are no constraints or limiting factors on cooperation contained in the Presidency's Guidelines on Foreign Policy or in national security policy. On the contrary, regional cooperation stands only to advance the security and interests of all states in the region, particularly at a time when all are seeking convergence with EU and NATO standards.

## **VII. Prompting Security Cooperation in the Western Balkans Region**

The prospects of EU and NATO membership may very well serve as an “anchor” to foster greater levels of cooperation on security between the states of the region. An external anchor (entry or candidacy in the EU) is crucially important and possibilities for increased leveraging in this regard should be examined. Comparisons here could be made with the performance of East European states in introducing economic reforms. Just as the prospects of an improved economy were insufficient to persuade East European states to make the necessary relevant reforms, so may the prospects of improved security be insufficient to prompt greater levels of cooperation between Western Balkan states. This may particularly be the case in the Western Balkans where lingering adversarial attitudes in different states may play a role in forming public opinion regarding the “acceptability” of cooperation for mutual security. Accession to the EU and NATO may provide a credible anchor and a unifying framework for cooperation, particularly if political conditionality is introduced. However, for conditionality to succeed, the EU and NATO will need to provide clear benchmarks for the states of the region. We have already seen some success in this regard in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the abolition of entity Ministries of Defence and the formation of a state army and defence structure as a condition of entry to NATO's Partnership for Peace programme. With the resolution of the status of Kosovo such an approach would be all the more important in terms of bringing Kosovo into a system of regional security, if only to guarantee improved security standards for other states of the Western Balkans. As globalisation has shown, security threats and challenges in one state clearly affect other states. Cooperation is therefore essential for the mitigation of challenges and risks.

Beyond providing an anchor for regional security cooperation by applying conditionality, incentives can also be used. Here, the EU can exercise considerable leverage due to its size and the range of incentives it can offer to the countries of the region to further foster regional security cooperation. A softening of EU visa requirements for the region is one option that could be used as an incentive. All Western Balkan countries except Croatia have a desire for a more liberal EU visa

policy. The popularity of such a prospect among electorates in the Western Balkans would certainly help ease any potential reservations that may exist concerning regional security cooperation, and prompt ownership of the process. At the same time, improved state security through regional cooperation would no doubt allay security fears in EU states associated with any softening of visa requirements for citizens of West Balkan states.

## **VIII. Conclusion**

Whilst Bosnia and Herzegovina has made considerable strides in improving its security architecture, there is still room for further progress in this regard. The country's current focus on Euro-Atlantic integration has resulted in a corresponding neglect of potential steps to improve regional security cooperation. Whilst the former certainly provides for long term security prospects through a system of collective security, the latter is essential for underwriting Bosnia and Herzegovina's security in the short term. Ironically, political statements do exist, for example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina's defence policy that call for greater regional security cooperation. At the same time, the winding down of negative attitudes by states in the region towards their neighbours should be conducive to greater security cooperation at regional level however, little has been done to seize the opportunities provided in this respect. The potential emergence of an independent Kosovo in the region will only increase the need for greater security cooperation. Criminal activities tend to flourish in weak states with fledgling institutions. Kosovo will almost certainly fit that category of states in the first few years of its independence as it builds up its experience of statehood. Prevention of such occurrences through greater regional security cooperation and the incorporation of Kosovo in the security system will therefore be essential. If Bosnia is to live up to its objectives of proactively addressing global and regional security challenges, this is the time and opportunity to try and do so. Membership of a collective security system is Bosnia and Herzegovina's strategic objective. That entails an appreciation of the fact that such systems are as strong as their weakest link. Whilst aspiring to join NATO, Bosnia and Herzegovina has the opportunity to help develop a greater sense of collective security among its neighbours, thereby strengthening that part of the future system of collective security. Addressing short term security challenges in such a manner will also assist the country in achieving its collective security objectives to prevent the emergence of potential long-term security challenges.

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# View from Croatia - Study on the Assessment of Regional Security Threats and Challenges in the Western Balkans

*Mladen Staničić, Ph.D.*<sup>67</sup>

## I. Introduction

Like almost all European countries in transition, Croatia has set full membership in the EU and NATO as the main strategic goal of its foreign policy. In view of globalization processes and the character of modern non-conventional threats, no single country, especially small ones like Croatia or other countries of South-Eastern Europe (Western Balkans) with limited defence, economic and other capabilities, would be able to confront such challenges alone. Therefore, Croatia had to opt for a cooperative model and seek to become part of a global security framework. Being part of such a framework entails certain obligations, as well as certain costs. According to the most recent public statements by Croatian political leaders, the Government is well aware of the necessity to adhere to such a framework, particularly in the context of security development in South-East Europe (Western Balkans), which currently is the most unstable region in Europe, posing a potential security threat to the EU.

This region is beset by numerous corridors through which all kinds of new unconventional threats, such as terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, drugs, human trafficking and other forms of illegal trade, could migrate from East to West towards the EU. Croatia, like other countries in the region, must overcome these challenges, and it can only do so if it is institutionally stable and democratic.

Reaffirmed commitments made at the NATO summit held in Riga last November were generally seen as an important step forward in establishing more security co-operation between the regional actors in South East Europe. By gathering all the respective countries under the umbrella of the Partnership for Peace, and by announcing the possible accession of the three Adriatic Charter countries (Albania, Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia/FYRoM) to the alliance in 2008, NATO created improved conditions for enhanced confidence-building and cooperation among security actors in the region. Further support in this regard, especially in the security sector, can be expected through the transformation of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe from a conflict prevention and confidence building mechanism to a regionally owned Regional Cooperation Council, which should be fully operational by mid-2008. Croatia officially welcomes this initiative and has appointed one of its senior diplomats as a main coordinator in the transformation process.

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## II. Croatia and the Regional Security Environment

Current international relations have become increasingly complex and every sovereign country, regardless of whether it is a formal member of an international structure or not, must make a contribution to building collective security. Since the world has become aware that current non-conventional threats represent the greatest danger to global security, every country, regardless of its size, must contribute to global security. Considering that today's international relations have become so interdependent, a country cannot enjoy security without helping to preserve it. At this point in time, Croatia is aspiring to become capable of slowly growing from a mere «consumer» into a «producer» of collective security in the region. It is only in this way that a country can, in the long term, overcome a situation in which it may be a passive observer in matters of security, with the status of an object, rather than an active player in international relations. This, of course, should be within the given limits for a country such as Croatia, and would mostly apply to its role in South-East Europe. As the most highly-developed and most stable country of the region, which was unanimously confirmed at the recent summit of member countries of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) in Zagreb, Croatia is expected to play the leading role in establishing regional security, in order to help counteract the various threats confronting this very sensitive region, which only ten years ago was ravaged by war. It would naturally be assumed that Croatia could play such a role, in view of its strategic position and physical scope and size, and also because of its links to the international community, certain members of which sympathized with its cause in the past, and still do so. However, in view of the fact that the Croatian public is, according to some opinion polls, showing increased scepticism towards accession to Euro-Atlantic structures (NATO and the EU), communicating to the Croatian general public precise information on the benefits of full-fledged membership of the latter has become a priority concern of the Government.

At the formal level the Croatian authorities strive to present the country as a regional factor of stability, sensitive to any political or other moves which might jeopardise regional cooperation, provoke regional instability, or undermine support for the accession of countries in the region to the Euro-Atlantic structures, which ultimately will have positive implications for Croatia as well.

Croatia sees intensive and well developed relations with South-East European countries (Western Balkans) as one of the priorities of its foreign policy. That is why Croatia is active in several regional initiatives, such as the South-East European Cooperation Process, the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, the Central European Initiative, and the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative. Croatia is also active in establishing constructive bilateral relations with all respective countries in the region. For example, in August 2005, the Presidents of Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina signed a Joint Declaration on the development of partnership cooperation in the European context and on the rapid settlement of outstanding issues between them. Croatia supports solutions for the constitutional framework of Bosnia and Herzegovina which would facilitate the country's EU integration

process and lead to a sustainable solution for all three peoples, including the protection of the vital interests of Bosnian Croats. Although currently on hold, Croatia expects that the ratification of the "Agreement on the State Borders between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina" will be completed shortly and that the negotiations on property relations will be concluded in the near future. Croatia stated that it supports Serbia's aspiration to EU accession, provided that Serbia complies with all the pre-established criteria and fulfils its commitments, including full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. A number of open issues between the two countries, such as the return of refugees, border disputes, property relations and missing persons still need to be settled. Croatia has declared that it supports the basic principles and guidelines of the EU policy for Kosovo in line with UN Security Council resolution 1244. Croatia has also stated that its relations with Montenegro were developing well and that outstanding open border issues were expected to be settled soon. Relations with Albania and with the FYRoM are friendly and intensive. Croatia participates in several regional defence cooperation mechanisms such as the US-Adriatic Charter (US with Albania, Croatia and FYRoM), the Central European Nations Cooperation in Peace Support, the Quadrilateral/Multinational Land Force (Croatia, Hungary, Italy, and Slovenia), Project Adrion (Western Balkans, Greece, and Italy) and the South Eastern European Defence Ministerial process grouping NATO and Partnership for Peace countries.<sup>68</sup>

This was an overview of Croatian Official initiatives with respect to the establishment of an effective structure for collective security in the region to confront regional security threats and challenges. In reality Croatia is strongly opposed to accepting initiatives based on institutional cooperation, such as participating in official regional joint bodies. Its regional strategy is more oriented to various kinds of functional, rather than institutional cooperation. That is why Croatia sometimes opposes joining certain concrete regional projects. Furthermore, Croatia is now facing two main problems concerning the assessment of regional security threats. One is internal and might be classified as specific to Croatia and locally originated, and can be successfully addressed primarily at the national level, provided the political will is there to do so. The other problem is external, and its resolution is far more dependent on global and regional factors over which Croatia has no substantial influence than on national initiatives.

The first problem has already been mentioned, namely the disconcerting level of public scepticism in the country regarding EU and NATO membership, which contrasts with public sentiment in all other transition countries in the region, including even Serbia. Many opinion polls elsewhere in Europe indicate similar scepticism and subsequently declining support for accession to Euro-Atlantic structures. This has created concern in both Brussels organisations, which have

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<sup>68</sup> Active bilateral and multilateral regional cooperation is a starting point of Croatian foreign policy. Croatia is recognized as an element of stability in South East Europe and shares the interest of the EU of continuing to forge a politically and economically stable and prosperous neighbourhood in the region, Vladimir Drobniak, Chief Negotiator for the Accession of the Republic of Croatia to the EU at the Conference on "The EU's Foreign and Security Agenda and the WB", Dubrovnik, November 2006.

indicated to the Croatian government that they would be reluctant to grant membership to a country in which the majority of the population opposed accession. Irrespective of the rationale for public opposition to accession, this phenomenon is being perceived as a potential internal threat which could very likely generate regional insecurity. Notwithstanding a number of recent public statements<sup>69</sup> indicating that opinion polls show increasing support for NATO membership, much remains to be done to inform and possibly convince all segments of society in Croatia of the long term benefits of NATO membership for the security of the country, and for overcoming potential regional security threats<sup>70</sup>.

### III. Internal and External Threats

There are some other internal problems which may prevent Croatia from becoming a really credible factor of regional security. First is the problem of Croatia's inefficient judiciary, which is directly connected to the fight against corruption. Numerous public opinion polls show that it is commonly believed in Croatia that the judiciary is an extremely corrupt component of Croatian society<sup>71</sup>. According to the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) published annually by Transparency International<sup>72</sup>, Croatia, which is ranked 64th out of 163 countries in 2007, fares better than other Western Balkan countries, but lags behind all the EU countries, with the exception of Romania. Even if Croatia's CPI ranking is better now than in 2006, corruption remains a significant problem. If one adds to this a problem of ineffective government administration<sup>73</sup>, the internal inability to build a credible state might become one of the main internal security threats, which could spill over beyond Croatian borders. Only a country with a credible judiciary and public administration can be a factor of stability within any region. This is significant, especially since the transit corridors passing through the countries in the region (the so-called Balkan route) bring new unconventional threats from East to West towards the EU.

Weak countries, which are not able to combat corruption and which fail to build effective and credible public administration will not be able to stop this traffic. As stated previously, this can only be achieved if a country is institutionally stable and democratic. Even the international community has singled this out as a problem. Consequently, a large part of the funds of the EU CARDS (Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation) programme was in the past allocated for the reform of the judiciary and government administration.

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<sup>69</sup> According to the London-based Gfk market research company opinion polls from May 2007, support for NATO accession in Croatia increased from 45 to 52 percent.

<sup>70</sup> President Mesic in "Novi list" 20.03.2007: NATO will provide the main security umbrella for Croatia, Prime Minister Sanader in "Business.hr" 10.06.2007: If Croatia were the full-fledged member of NATO 16 years ago, it would never have been attacked by Serbia, or Davor Božinović, Ambassador to NATO at the Civil Alliance 08 meeting, Zagreb, 07.05.2007: Once Croatia becomes a full-fledged member of NATO, it would be completely safe and secure against any kind of armed attack from any country.

<sup>71</sup> See the May Report of Transparency International.

<sup>72</sup> [http://chapterzone.transparency.org/policy\\_research/surveys\\_indices/cpi/2007](http://chapterzone.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2007)

<sup>73</sup> Both problems have been repeatedly pointed out in numerous European Commission reports.

This is a black hole that needs to be closed if Croatia aspires to becoming capable of dealing effectively with regional security threats and challenges.

Furthermore, Croatia needs to continue to address current macroeconomic imbalances (primarily government deficit, current account deficit and external debt) as well as structural challenges, especially to speed up privatisation and enterprise restructuring. There is a need for a shift to private sector-driven growth through rationalisation of the public sector and the establishment of a supportive investment climate and macroeconomic sustainability. Key areas of concern are the growing external current account deficit (that reflects the widening trade deficit), poor fiscal performance, and high public expenditure, particularly in social sectors, infrastructure, subsidies and the public sector wage bill). Although, according to economic indicators, Croatia is far better off than any other country in the region, if these problems are not tackled and resolved, its economy will suffer and Croatia's capacity to address regional security threats might weaken.

As far as the key external regional threats for Croatia are concerned, there is unanimous political consensus in Croatia that no country in the region (including Serbia) is able or has any intention of launching a military attack against Croatia<sup>74</sup>. The main source of security threats and challenges in the region is the ambiguous constitutional status of Croatia's two closest neighbours – Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

#### **IV. Croatia and its Neighbours**

After abandoning former President Franjo Tuđman's possessive policy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina and his paternalistic policy towards this country's Croat community, both post-Tuđman governments recognised Bosnia-Herzegovina as an independent and integral state without any 'buts' and 'ifs'. They also adopted a clear position on the forms of support to Bosnian Croats, without violating Bosnia-Herzegovina's sovereignty. Paradoxically, Bosnian Croats' influence on Croatian internal politics is greater than Croatia's influence on Bosnian Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Croatia's Constitution still provides for a separate ticket for the diaspora, a provision without precedent in Europe or in the world at large. This ticket was invented by the lawyers of the Croatian Democratic Union government in the first decade of Croatia's independence to ensure more votes for the party in power from the fraternal Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Although the ticket was ostensibly meant for the entire Croatian diaspora the world over, it was clear to all that it would be used almost exclusively by Croats from Bosnia-Herzegovina with right-wing and nationalistic propensities. A certain share of responsibility for this should also be borne by the international community for

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<sup>74</sup> Prime minister Ivo Sanader on several occasions during cabinet meetings, President Mesić in several public and many other statements.

permitting Croats from Bosnia-Herzegovina to hold dual citizenship and for not having done enough, despite announcements to this effect, to introduce more transparency on their status. The intention was to pass a law abolishing dual citizenship, so that holders of Bosnian-Herzegovinian citizenship could not vote for the parliament of another state, and would forfeit that citizenship if they did so. This was never put into effect, and in the general election of November 2003, the list for the diaspora brought 5 seats to the current ruling party, which, in view of the close results, played a relatively important role in the subsequent talks between parties on lending support to the minority government. The same, as it seems now, is going to occur in the next elections, at the end of 2007, which means that Bosnian Croats will effectively continue to have a substantial impact on Croatian internal policy.

On the other hand the policy of Republika Srpska, which is generally pro-autonomy-oriented, tends to give an alibi to Bosnian Croats who request the formation of a third entity in the country. The Republika Srpska's pro-autonomy stance was recently again demonstrated by its refusal to approve the integration of police forces at state level in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This again illustrated how these two largely separatist policies are feeding and encouraging each other, representing a permanent threat for the integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and, by extension, a permanent threat to regional security. Formally, the Croatian government does not support the aspirations of Bosnian Croats to form a third Croatian entity alongside the existing Republika Srpska and a Bosniak entity. However, bearing in mind that the most important political parties in both countries (i.e. their HDZ parties) are basically the same, the current ruling party in Croatia is not able to totally neglect the aspirations of its Bosnian Croat sister party, especially during an election year when each vote from the diaspora has enormous relevance. At the same time, this situation may harm the credibility of Croatia's aspiration to be widely recognized as the main regional factor of stability.

As for Croatia's relations with Serbia, both countries are doing their best to strengthen political dialogue and to avoid possible tensions. Although this bilateral relationship does not currently pose a threat to regional security, the unstable political situation and tensions in Serbia are a regional threat per se. For its part, Croatia is resolutely refraining from making any move which could exacerbate the situation in Serbia..

Croatia faces criticism from the international community regarding the way it is handling the Serbian minority, especially returnees, in Croatia. The political party representing Croatian Serbs in Croatia<sup>75</sup> permanently refers to some specific incidents on the ground, particularly concerning so-called tenancy rights. Nonetheless, this party has remained in coalition with the ruling party, holding three seats in Parliament and some important positions in the state administration. In short, current bilateral Croatian-Serbian relations have no potential for

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<sup>75</sup> Independent Democratic Serb Party.

worsening the regional security situation. Croatian political leaders repeatedly state that a democratic Serbia would be in the best interest not only of Croatia but for security in the region as a whole.

As far as the other neighbouring countries are concerned, temporary disputes about borders with Slovenia have no potential to erupt into a conflict which would aggravate regional security. The main point is that these countries have been part of the same constitutional setting for several centuries, which raises, by the very nature of the situation, the problem of precise border demarcation. However these problems are politically marginal, surfacing only in election years, when they have been and continue to be misused for internal political purposes in both countries.

## V. Terrorism and Asymmetric Threats

The general public in Croatia does not feel particularly threatened by terrorism as such. There is a general perception that there is no special target in Croatia of interest to terrorists. On the other hand, Croatia is perceived as a possible transit country due to its geographical location. Various kinds of so-called unconventional threats such as terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, drugs, and the illegal trafficking of people pass through the so called "Balkan routes". If any country along these routes were to become a failed state, making the cooperation on security or sharing of intelligence difficult, such illegal activities would become uncontrollable and would risk spreading to the south wing of the EU, and subsequently to all EU countries and beyond.

For instance, during the two summer months several hundred thousand yachts and other pleasure craft navigate between the eastern and western coasts of the Adriatic Sea, and it is really questionable how this traffic can be effectively controlled. Potentially, these vessels could be vectors of all sorts of unconventional threats, enter the "soft belly" of the EU and significantly threaten its security<sup>76</sup>. If the security services of countries in the region do not collaborate, it will be a lot harder to control the situation. The question is how the security services of countries that until recently were fighting each other, and the people working for them, many of whom may have been on the front lines, could collaborate.

The Croatian military strategy provides some elements for the combat against terrorism through "support in the anti-terrorist fight and (...to overcome...) asymmetric threats as a part of the global activities of suppressing terrorist activities". Within this framework, the Croatian government opened its air space for American aircraft involved in the Iraqi conflict, and also provided some services on the ground. The Strategy of International Relations of Croatia, prepared by independent experts and academicians, has recommended "true and

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<sup>76</sup> Statement of General Kresimir Cosic, Representative of Croatia at NATO General Assembly, at the Annual Convention of World Academy of Art and Science, Zagreb, November 2006.

unambiguous support to the USA in the global antiterrorist coalition, along with the active involvement in it (i.e., unconditional opening of its airspace, exchange of information, intelligence co-operation etc)". In the meantime, the strategy that was prepared by the military, with no involvement of civilian experts, was adopted by the Government. It generally corresponded to the Strategy of International Relations of Croatia, although it failed to mention any concrete details or activities.

As mentioned previously, there are proposals for putting the whole security issue in a more general context of "support in the event of natural, technological and humanitarian emergencies and catastrophes, in de-mining and clearance of unexploded military warheads of all kinds, in the event of nuclear, chemical and biological accidents, search and rescue operations, and participation in peacekeeping and humanitarian activities".

None of the officially approved strategic documents provide the basis for establishing bilateral or multilateral military units of any kind with neighbouring countries. That is why Croatia is only participating in SEEBRIG<sup>77</sup> as an observer. However, international codes and conventions are respected even though Croatia has not formally subscribed to them. Croatia is not a member state of the EU (at the moment it is a candidate country), and as such only has an operational agreement with Europol ratified by Croatia's Parliament. Croatia is a member of Interpol. The Croatian Border Management services cooperate with the Southeast Europe Cooperative Initiative Regional Center for Combating Transborder Crime, Interpol, and Europol. Croatia also has observer status in the Centre for Information, Discussion and Exchange on the Crossing of Frontiers and Immigration. In order to fully participate in these cooperation mechanisms, Croatia will need to change its laws on information sharing.

In order to strengthen international police cooperation, Croatia has signed 26 agreements with all neighbouring countries and with most countries in the region on cooperation in the fight against the international illegal trade in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, international terrorism and organized crime.

On the basis of these agreements, as well as through cooperation via INTERPOL, and in accordance with public statements<sup>78</sup>, the Croatian police maintain intensive operational cooperation with countries of the region, especially with neighbouring countries, as well as with several EU member countries. Effective implementation of these formal agreements largely depends on the readiness of law enforcement bodies in the countries involved to accept a new security doctrine dictated by the necessity to work together in a regional framework to combat transnational security threats. The case of Croatia is highly relevant in this respect.

An appropriate understanding of the distinction between the doctrine of defence and the new doctrine of security has crucial relevance in the setting up of effective

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<sup>77</sup> South Eastern Europe Brigade.

<sup>78</sup> Assistant Minister of Interior Filip Dragović at the conference "Enhancing Security Sector Governance through Security Sector Reform in the WB - The Role of the EU, Zagreb, December 2006.

regional security cooperation to combat terrorism and organized crime at the regional level. The notion of defence implies the defence of territory. In the case of Croatia, given Serbia's past aggression, territorial defence is what the military stands for, and this doctrine was purposely accentuated during the first ten years of the HDZ party's rule, evolving from an irrational awareness of threat to actual defence of Croatian sovereignty as an absolute obligation. Applying this doctrine required a special breed of officers motivated by respect for Croatia's "blood and soil", even in peacetime. A doctrine of this nature completely neglects the new concept of security, which gives quite a new role and function to the military including regional security cooperation. Adapting to this new concept implies, for example, a desire to train for and participate in peacekeeping operations, in regional arms control verification activities, and in de-mining, in cooperation with neighbours, and participation in Partnership for Peace and MAP exercises, especially in the combat against terrorism. A precondition for successful fulfilment of these new roles is full acceptance of democratic criteria, which transforms the security and defence community into a component of democratic and civil society. This is one of the main preconditions for establishing a successful regional security structure, and its application is closely linked to and fosters democracy and security. As such, the new concept of regional security cooperation also promotes democracy building in the countries concerned, including Croatia.

It is very likely that Croatia would make considerable progress in this regard by joining NATO. In the National Defence Strategy enacted in 2002, it was pointed out that "since Croatia is not a member of NATO it has to maintain sufficient independent military capability to ensure its national security". This can be perceived as an explanation of why the notion of territorial defence is still so strong in Croatia. As soon as the relevant sectors in Croatia adapt to NATO standards, this mindset will gradually fade away.

## **VI. The Role of Security Sector Reform**

Emphasis must be placed on understanding the definition of security sector reform. EU standards and criteria in this regard are contained in the provisions for negotiations under chapter 31 of the *acquis communautaire* (the total body of EU law accumulated thus far), entitled "Common foreign, security and defence policy (CFSP)". An important EU criteria entails democratic control of law enforcement sectors (army, police, intelligence, security) as a precondition for appropriate relations between the sectors, and for the transparency and accountability of these sectors, with the possibility of receiving external assistance under certain conditions.

Although security reform also involves other measures, establishing appropriate relations between the civilian and security sectors of society is the main challenge to linking security sector reform with democracy building at the national level. This means that efforts to build up regional security cooperation must also be approached with a view to democratic development, or democracy building.

However, while civilian administrations should be given the right to oversee security sectors, in compliance with the principles of liberal democracy, security sectors should not have the same right in reverse; i.e. they should not be given the possibility to control civilians. In general, that is what reform of the security sector implies. Security should be a part of democratic development in all countries. It should not be given an exclusive position. People working in the security sector – whether civilians or the military – should act as ordinary civil servants. They should not be allowed to interfere in politics or to be members of any political party. On the other hand, they should be qualified to protect values of liberal democracy, which should be their optimal contribution in carrying out their security tasks in a proper manner.

In Croatia, this process is occurring under special circumstances due to the recent armed conflict in the territory. Nevertheless, this should not be an excuse for neglecting the process. Some problems will occur along this path and they should be overcome sensitively, taking into account the specifics of the local environment. Some delays might be tolerated, but the reformers should have a clear vision of placing the security sector within the framework of a community of values compatible with those of the EU and NATO.

Hence, one of the major prerequisites for effective and credible regional security cooperation entails democratically oriented security sector reform in the countries concerned. If these sectors genuinely and honestly agree to be overseen by their respective democratically elected governments, the political framework for the establishment of regional security structure to combat new regional security threats and challenges will materialize. The main question now is whether the political will for creating such a political framework exists. This problem is twofold: first there is still the question of whether domestic political situations provide the appropriate framework for democratically oriented security sector reform and, if so, whether and when the political leaders in these countries are able to reach political agreement among the main segments of society. Such agreements should be genuine, not merely statements of intent, so as to provide the framework for sincere and open multilateral dialogue in order to establish proper regional security cooperation, despite the legacy of the recent violent conflicts that opposed some of the countries concerned.

There are currently few indications that the political will for such reform exists in these countries. Moreover, it is uncertain whether public opinion in these countries would favour the reform process even if the political will exists. The most relevant question is which institutions or segments of society should oversee the reform process. According to the Constitution in Croatia, which has a parliamentary political system, the main agents for implementing legal and institutional democratic oversight of defence and security are legislative institutions, namely the Parliament, and political and executive institutions, namely the Office of the President and the Government. Although the role of civil society is not specifically mentioned in the Constitution, it is implicit therein that civil society should have a relevant role, proportionate to its ability and capability.

Although Croatia is perceived as the most advanced country in the region in terms of democracy building, it is beset by a number of shortcomings in reaching an appropriate level of effective democratic oversight of the security and military sectors, especially with respect to the role of civil society. One example of the latter relates to the establishment of an independent parliamentary civil committee to oversee these sectors on behalf of civil society. However, once it was established by civilian experts, it met with informal or unspoken disregard, which prompted the committee chairman, a highly respected professor and expert, to resign. The committee went on working without re-electing a chairman under the authority of the Parliamentary committee for National Security, which abolished its democratic independence status. Formally, therefore, democratic oversight exists, but civil society is still left out. Nevertheless, according to several reports by international institutions dealing with security sector reform, Croatia has attained a relatively satisfactory level in the field of security sector reform when compared with other countries in the region, although much remains to be done in this respect.

For this and other reasons, Croatia expects to receive an invitation to become a full-fledged member of NATO at the NATO summit in Bucharest next year, as already publicly announced by NATO leaders and a number of influential world political leaders.

It is very likely that one of NATO's motivations for offering transition countries full membership is that it wants to recruit people for the deployment of rapid reaction forces in potential trouble spots. This does not mean that NATO is seeking «cannon fodder», as certain NATO sceptics claim. It is more to do with getting professional volunteers, who have on many occasions volunteered to take part in such operations. However, Croatia's main contribution towards addressing both regional and global security threats would be made by its credible and effective coast guard in monitoring the Croatian side of the Adriatic Sea.

The significance of setting up a genuine regional security structure gains even more relevance in the light of the protracted efforts to resolve the Kosovo issue. Croatia has officially declared that it supports the basic principles and guidelines of EU policy regarding Kosovo within the framework of UN SR 1244.<sup>79</sup>

In reality, some confusion still revolves around the Kosovo issue. The President of the Republic recently voiced some uncertainty regarding Kosovo's right to independence from the standpoint of international law: Kosovo was part of Serbia when the latter was constitutionally part of the former Yugoslavia, and once the latter ceased to exist, the question arose of how to interpret the constitutional status of the former Yugoslavia's autonomous province<sup>80</sup>. In general, Croatian political leaders support the efforts of the international community to formulate the constitutional status acceptable to both constitutional parties – i.e. Serbian and Albanian ethnic groups. A number of Croatian media articles have warned

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<sup>79</sup> Screening report Croatia-EU, Chapter 31 CFSP, May 2007.

<sup>80</sup> Statement of President Mesic, 26.05.2007.

that the right solution must be found in order to avoid triggering extreme nationalistic feelings in Serbia, which would cause instability in the entire South-Eastern Europe region, and possibly spill over into other parts of Europe.

## VII. Conclusion

New types of conflicts, characterized by the new paradigm of international relations, oppose liberals and fundamentalists, globalists and anti-globalists, and terrorists and anti-terrorists, and affect all civilizations, religions and individual countries. The United States is the main vanguard of the anti-terrorist global coalition. In spite of the potential dangers of such unilateralism, something that international relations analysts have warned of, this leadership is tolerated for the time being by all the other big powers, including Russia and the People's Republic of China, although they have often criticised it. This situation has made it possible for common problems and other areas of potential conflicts to be resolved.

For Croatia, accession to international mechanisms and organizations, which are part of the globalization process, and its close cooperation with the international community, especially in the fight against terrorism, is the best response to the latest challenges. Furthermore, accession is also in the country's national interest. To achieve such cooperation, it is essential that a clear distinction be made between the terrorist act itself, and the occasional, perhaps even legitimate goals in the name of which such acts are perpetrated.

On a regional level, especially after 9/11, it was seen how important it is to have a sub-regional security zone in South-East Europe, which under the new circumstances might become a significant element of an anti-terrorist coalition. It also showed the importance of functional regional cooperation and the exchange of information between the police and the intelligence agencies at a country's internal security level. This would enable the activation of a joint regional effort to combat terrorism as part of the global anti-terrorist campaign. Because of its long border with Bosnia and Herzegovina and its shorter but highly sensitive border with Serbia, Croatia finds itself in a delicate position. What is required to solve this difficult situation is close cooperation in the struggle against terrorism between the neighbouring countries of the region, as well as open and unambiguous support of the international community, EU, NATO and the anti-terrorist coalition. The main message, stemming from lessons learned from recent developments in the region, is that only democratically reformed and properly overseen law enforcement sectors can create a regional security cooperation mechanism that is able to combat new regional security threats and challenges.

The Croatian government considers that there are currently no serious threats of a political confrontation between countries in the region that might trigger violent conflict. However, every Croatian government has been extremely reluctant to accept any kind of integration of law enforcement sectors, and has insisted on cooperation rather than integration in this field. Croatian political leaders wish to

address problems related to international security in an observer capacity rather than as a member of any given joint unit. Although Croatian politicians deny that there is still the fear of being involved in some form of joint structure reminiscent of the former Yugoslavia, it is noticeable that such fear still exists at the subconscious level among certain Croatian political leaders. Full-fledged membership in Euro-Atlantic structures is of crucial importance in this regard because it will contribute to the definitive dismissal of this kind of mindset.

Formally, Croatian political leaders see a national interest in effective regional security cooperation. The general feeling among them is that a democratically oriented and sustainable security environment would be a major plus for Croatia. However, Croatia's key national interests are still linked to its relations with Euro-Atlantic mechanisms, and if and when it becomes a full-fledged member of these organizations (generally regarded as a virtual certainty) Croatia might act more effectively in helping to shape an appropriate form of regional security.

Although relations with neighbouring countries do not have any potential for erupting into violent conflict, much remains to be done to change prevalent and widespread xenophobic and nationalistic attitudes among ordinary people. Although these attitudes are generally not embraced by the political mainstream, there are still very vocal but politically marginal groups which have a negative impact on domestic politics in Croatia. Any Croatian government is compelled to take into account such attitudes and to make certain political concessions which may prevent the authorities from having an effective and honest approach to regional cooperation. Nevertheless, it can be expected that these problems will lose their relevance once the EU and NATO accession process is completed.

# View from Macedonia - Study on the Assessment of Regional Security Threats and Challenges in the Western Balkans

*Aleksandar Matovski*<sup>81</sup>

## I. Threat Perceptions and Macedonia's Response: Legacies of the First Decade of Democratic Transition

“Macedonia was the most fragile of the new states to emerge from the former Yugoslavia, less secure even than Bosnia-Herzegovina,” writes the well-known Balkan expert and author Misha Glenny. This view was never far from the minds of Macedonian political leaders as the country surfaced from one of the most contested independence processes in history. The ethnic Macedonian identity, claimed by 65 percent of the country's population,<sup>82</sup> was hotly disputed by 3 of Macedonia's 4 larger neighbours – Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia – resulting in traditionally uneasy and often hostile relations with these countries. These relationships entered a very sensitive phase after Macedonia's first-time independence in 1992.

Although outraged at Macedonia's declaration of independence from Serb-dominated Yugoslavia, Serbia's dictator Milosevic did not intervene against Macedonia's secession as he did in Croatia and Bosnia. Nonetheless, he purposely left open many potentially destabilizing bilateral issues and maintained significant political, intelligence and criminal positions in Macedonia to be able to manipulate the country's affairs at will. Claiming that its Hellenic identity was threatened by resurgent Macedonian national individuality, Greece tried to pressure its frail neighbour into adopting a more “benign” state identity by imposing an economic embargo on the country. Coupled with the internationally imposed blockade against Milosevic's Serbia, the Greek embargo threatened to totally strangle Macedonia's landlocked economy. Bulgaria, Macedonia's eastern neighbour, was one of the first countries to recognize newly independent Macedonia, and strived to establish close relations with Skopje. However, this was often perceived to be at odds with its assimilating attitude towards the dominant ethnic Macedonians, whose identity – as many among the elite in Sophia maintained – was in fact historically Bulgarian.

Internally, a large Albanian minority, accounting for up to 25 percent of the total population, lived in a compact territory in the north-western part of the country, along the borders with Albania and the volatile Albanian-dominated province of Kosovo in Serbia. Close historic and personal links with their brethren in

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<sup>82</sup> According to the last census in 2002, Macedonia is composed of 64.18 percent ethnic Macedonians, 25.17 percent Albanians, 3.85 percent Turks, 2.66 percent Roma, 1.78 percent Serbs, and the rest composed of other smaller groups. For more details see the Government Statistical Office website at [www.stat.gov.mk](http://www.stat.gov.mk).

Macedonia, instability and rising Albanian nationalist sentiments in these two neighbouring lands – Kosovo in particular – were perceived to have a strong potential to radicalize Macedonian Albanians with separatist ideologies. Combined with the ethnic Albanian birth rate, the highest in Europe, this ethnic Macedonian majority harboured strong fears that the fledgling country might be swallowed by the expansionist Albanian “population bomb”.<sup>83</sup> The growing instability of Kosovo, which threatened to unleash a large exodus of Albanian refugees, gave immediate credibility to this threat. Given the complexities inherent in Macedonia’s political and strategic position, it was widely expected that a conflict between Macedonians and Albanians would immediately involve the political and security interests of all of Macedonia’s neighbours, compelling them to intervene.<sup>84</sup>

The major perceived challenge among the political elite of newly independent Macedonia – and the main driver of the country’s strategic thinking and security policies to this day – was its defencelessness against this enormous destabilization potential and its search for compensatory mechanisms to somehow counter it. Macedonia was the only Yugoslav Republic that broke away from the former Federation peacefully, but with the withdrawal of the Yugoslav Peoples’ Army (JNA), the country was left without an armed force commensurable to the security threats it faced. The emerging Army of the Republic of Macedonia (ARM) was built upon the territorial defence service of the former Socialist Republic of Macedonia, and lacked the military resources to conduct even basic conventional operations. The weak economy and international sanctions preventing the required long-term investments in defence prompted the Macedonian elite to put more emphasis on the police as the primary provider of security – a policy that has been followed by all Macedonian Governments to this day. This policy was partly compensation for the lack of military power. More importantly, it was a reflection of the view that the key security threat to Macedonia remained internal in terms of the potential for inter-ethnic conflict between the Macedonian majority and the ethnic Albanian minority populations.<sup>85</sup>

Since the early days of independence, however, the country’s leadership realized that security measures alone could not offset this danger. Due to the enormity of the threats faced by Macedonia, some degree of political and institutional accommodation of the Albanian minority was always present as a potential alternative security compensation option. This school of thought was promoted

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<sup>83</sup> According to the 1981 Yugoslav census, which is widely considered as one of the historically most reliable, ethnic Albanians constituted 19.7 percent of Macedonia’s population, vis-à-vis the 66 percent ethnic Macedonians. According to the 2002 Macedonian census, the share of ethnic Albanians in Macedonia in the intervening 20 years rose by 5.44 percent, while the share of the ethnic Macedonian majority fell by 1.82 percent.

<sup>84</sup> M. Glenny: *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Power, 1804-1999*. London: Penguin Books, 2001. pp.655; 156-157.

<sup>85</sup> Interestingly, the early Western security assistance to Macedonia at the beginning of the 1990s was also focused on supporting the Macedonian Interior Ministry with intelligence and security “expertise” to prevent internal destabilization - an indication that the view of the centrality of internal security for Macedonia was widely shared by NATO country assessments. This internal security support is claimed by some former members of Western security agencies to have been instrumental in thwarting some of the early threats from ethnic Albanian radicals. See J. Phillips: *Macedonia: Warlords and Rebels in the Balkans*. London and New York: I.B. Taurus, 2004, pp. 66-68.

by the ethnic Macedonian Social Democratic Union, the reformed communists who dominated the Macedonian political scene in the post-independence years, and by the country's elder statesman President Gligorov – a disciple of the Yugoslav communist leader Tito who devised the complex nationality policies of the former federation. The strategy allowed ethnic Albanian parties representation in Parliament, and at least one of them was invited to be a member of Government coalitions at all times.

However, this concept was not liberal because its ultimate aim was to restrain rather than liberalize the expression of minority identity by co-opting the ethnic elites into the present system controlled by the majority. Nonetheless, power-sharing with the minority elite offered ways to meet demands of the ethnic Albanians, as their parties held a share of ministerial posts and consequently had an influence on Government policies. The resulting interdependencies between the two ethnic elites co-opted inter-community tensions at critical junctures. According to Lund, even in times of conflict, when ethnic politicians could gain by playing the “ethnic card,” they held back as they “believed (they)...could gain more – both economically and politically – by supporting peace rather than war.”<sup>86</sup>

Macedonia's third vital security compensatory mechanism was external, provided by international diplomatic and financial support and the international security presence. The UN's historic first preventive peacekeeping deployment (UNPREDEP) was on Macedonia's borders with Albania and Serbia in 1993, in an effort to avert potential conflict spill over. Although this force was only a few hundred strong, it possessed a special deterrent feature – it was the first American deployment in the Balkans,<sup>87</sup> years before US forces were sent to Bosnia. According to some reports, this deployment was made by the Bush senior administration, upon advice from the US intelligence community that the likely conflict in Macedonia would almost certainly involve US allies Greece and Turkey (most likely on opposite sides). The mission was to serve as a “tripwire” force on Macedonia's most problematic borders, which, in the event of an aggression, could bring about a larger international (in all probability US) intervention – a deterrent which did not exist anywhere else in former Yugoslavia before the 1995 NATO intervention in Bosnia.<sup>88</sup> These strategic partnerships and Western security guarantees were pursued vigorously by the majority of Macedonian leaders from 1991 onwards, as they were seen as catalysts for joining NATO and the European Union – alliances that would provide the ultimate external compensatory mechanisms for Macedonia's unmanageable strategic vulnerabilities.

Importantly, this reliance on Western military, diplomatic and financial support to compensate for Macedonia's security deficiencies locked Macedonian political leaders in a web of international conditionality, which provided the international community with a unique leverage to influence their perceptions and behaviour.

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<sup>86</sup> Lund, Michael: Greed and Grievance Diverted: How Macedonia Avoided Civil War, 1990-2001. In: P. Collier/N. Sambanis Nicholas (ed.): *Understanding Civil War*, Volume 2. Washington: The World Bank, 2005. p.235-236.

<sup>87</sup> Apart from the US, Nordic country peacekeepers also participated in UNPREDEP.

<sup>88</sup> Phillips, p. 69.

“The key to obtaining political support was patronage, the key to patronage was international assistance, the key to assistance was international recognition [of the country and its political elite], and the key to recognition was responsiveness to international norms,” writes Michael Lund.<sup>89</sup> Whenever push came to shove in the 1990s, 2001 and beyond, the threat of withdrawing international support had a very salient persuasive influence on all actors on the Macedonian political scene – a factor that would prove critical in preventing an escalation of the 2001 conflict, and the implementation of the Ohrid peace Agreement.

The events of the late 1990s, however, gradually overwhelmed Macedonia’s post-independence makeshift compensatory mechanisms. The decision of the new Macedonian Government that took power in 1998 to recognize Taiwan provoked China to veto the UNPREDEP mission in the UN Security Council,<sup>90</sup> leaving Macedonia without the “tripwire” deterrent on its borders. At the same time, the collapse of the Albanian state and the escalation of the Kosovo crisis dramatically increased the threat of conflict spill over through Macedonia’s northern and western borders. With the gradual improvement of relations with Greece and Milosevic’s Serbia, and the decline of the conventional threat, these Albanian upheavals permanently fixated Macedonia’s internal security dilemma as the pre-eminent security concern. To somehow restrain the gathering storm President Gligorov, the country’s elder statesman, proposed a plan to divert a possible wave of Kosovar refugees towards Albania with a view to preventing their expected long-term settlement in Macedonia. Although in all probability the scheme was implausible on logistical and humanitarian grounds, it nonetheless reflected growing anxiety in Macedonia that the Milosevic regime might perform a massive ethnic cleansing operation should the Kosovo conflict escalate.

Even Gligorov’s worst nightmares, however, were dwarfed by the wave of over 350,000 Kosovar Albanian refugees – victims of a Serb ethnic cleansing of biblical proportions – which flooded over the border. This influx, constituting no less than 18.2 percent of tiny Macedonia’s total population, increased the number of Albanian inhabitants by 76 percent virtually overnight, and threatened to completely overturn the country’s fragile ethnic balance.<sup>91</sup> Only NATO’s quick and decisive victory in Kosovo and the massive return of the refugees enabled Macedonia to avoid this potentially fatal danger. But the crisis significantly contributed to risk factors in other areas. Macedonia’s already dwindling economy, for instance, was estimated to have lost an additional 5 percent of its GDP during the crisis.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Lund, p. 237.

<sup>90</sup> The Chinese veto was provoked by the decision of the new nationalist-centrist Macedonian Government to recognize Taiwan, hoping to attract substantial Taiwanese investments in return.

<sup>91</sup> Lund, p. 239.

<sup>92</sup> The disintegration of Yugoslavia left Macedonia’s economy on the verge of collapse. It left the country without the substantial federal subsidies, and the guaranteed access to the 22 million Yugoslav market on which the small and underdeveloped country, constituting only a minute 6 percent of the Yugoslav economy, depended. Subsequent international sanctions against Yugoslavia led Macedonia to lose 3 billion \$US in revenue between 1992 and 1995, compared to the annual state budget of just 1.2 billion \$US, a situation further worsened by the Greek economic embargo. As a result, between 1990 and 1994, the GDP fell by almost 35 percent, and unemployment levels rose to over 30 percent.<sup>92</sup> According to some estimates, GDP per capita was halved from 800 \$US in 1989 to 400 \$US in 1996,<sup>92</sup> creating a massive potential for social upheaval. See Lund, p. 234, Phillips, p. 62,75 and Glenny, p. 660.

Far from leaving these problems behind, the end of the Kosovo conflict dramatically changed the context in which the threats to Macedonia's security operated. This new security dynamic was driven by the following factors: (1) large groups of experienced guerrilla fighters were still active or recently demobilized in Kosovo, Macedonia and South Serbia, seeking opportunities to continue the Albanian "national liberation" struggle in neighbouring states; (2) the region was saturated with illicit small arms,<sup>93</sup> easily obtainable in sufficient quantities to sustain a protracted insurgency in Macedonia; (3) finances which supplied the Kosovo and Presevo valley conflicts – in the form of substantial diaspora contributions and proceeds from all kinds of smuggling across the region's porous borders – were still available to fund insurgencies in Albanian-dominated regions; (4) poor border control and "grey areas" that multiplied after the removal of Serbia's heavy security presence provided safe heavens and supply routes from which an insurgency in Macedonia could easily be launched and sustained.

When the new risk factors grew into a rebellion at the beginning of 2001, the inadequate state of the Macedonian security apparatus again surfaced as a major problem. Attempts to reform Macedonia's security posture and structures made throughout the 1990s failed as they relied on unrealistic assumptions based on the national defence doctrine and force levels of the former Yugoslav Army. An outwardly and more realistic defence review was attempted in the late 1990s, but it was cut short by the transition of power in 1998 and the Kosovo crisis distraction. Instead of streamlining the security forces to match the available resources and the new security threats, the Government at the time further burdened the army with aged and partly inoperative heavy conventional equipment, received from states that were getting rid of it themselves.

Central to the injudicious attitude to security was the Government's reliance on the Albanian governing coalition party to pacify Albanian-dominated parts of Macedonia. Paradoxically, this arrangement – considered unimaginable under the far more (at least rhetorically) minority-tolerant reformed communists running the previous Government – was forged between the right-wing ethnic Macedonian VMRO-DPMNE<sup>94</sup> party led by the charismatic young nationalist Ljubco Georgievski, and its unlikely Albanian coalition partner, the Democratic Party of the Albanians (DPA), led by the outspoken radical Arben Dzaferi. Representing the extreme nationalisms of the two sides throughout the 1990s, Georgievski and Dzaferi had one thing in common: they both believed in purely ethnic solutions to inter-ethnic problems. When political necessity compelled them to join forces in the 1998 government, this common view became the basis for a new, ethnicity-based informal system of security, whereby each of the ethnic partners in the Government was responsible for maintaining peace in their constituencies. Their newly-found common logic was simple: (1) as only Albanians could control the Albanian population, the responsibility for security in the Albanian majority parts

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<sup>93</sup> A stock of some 500,000 to 1,000,000 illicit small arms looted from Albanian army warehouses in 1997 alone were estimated to be available in the region at the time. For more details see Saferworld: "Macedonia: Guns, Policing and Ethnic Division" Oct. 2003. [www.saferworld.org](http://www.saferworld.org)

<sup>94</sup> VMRO-DPMNE stands for "Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization - Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity."

of Macedonia was delegated to DPA; (2) the VMRO-dominated state security services would not interfere and would instead focus on the ethnic Macedonian areas; (3) this virtual autonomy would co-opt the Albanian elite to cooperate on preserving this status at the state level.

This informal “division of labour” led the state institutions to relinquish even the small security leverage they had in the north and in western parts of Macedonia. Again paradoxically, the perverted radical scheme for maintaining ethnic peace gathered momentum as the risks to Macedonia’s security peaked with the Kosovo crisis. As the threat from Kosovo and South Serbia grew, and the stability of the Macedonian Government declined, DPA was getting more concessions from the central authorities and a free hand to oversee security in Albanian-dominated parts of the country. In response to pressure from DPA in late 2000, for instance, the Government decided to open the communist secret police files, disclosing the police informant network among the Albanian elite built over the previous 50 years, which provided early warning and operational intelligence for reasonably effective police action against Albanian extremists in the early 1990s.

The combination of these policies left the Albanian-dominated areas and the border region with Kosovo in a security vacuum, and the country with very few security instruments capable of coping with the insurgency in 2001. According to Lund, when the conflict started, “Macedonia lacked a coherent security doctrine and even a functioning chain of command. The military effort was carried out with poor intelligence, and virtually no coordination among the police, army, and other branches of the security forces, or between the political and military offensives...the lack of preparedness arose from an implicit doctrine that assumed that Macedonia should rely primarily on its foreign relations and diplomatic means, and that political accommodation of the Albanian political leadership would be sufficient for defending against security threats”.<sup>95</sup> At the beginning, the international community encouraged the Macedonian authorities to react quickly to contain the insurgency. But after two months of bungled operations and escalating combat, it became clear that the Government’s ham-fisted response was doing more harm than good. Lacking trained and well-coordinated counter-insurgency forces to defeat the guerrillas in their mode of warfare, the army resorted to ineffective conventional operations against the major strongholds, which involved extended artillery shelling and gradual armour and mechanised progress to take back control. The resulting devastation only turned the Albanian population against the Macedonian state; the guerrillas would slip out more or less intact only to return later, when the security presence lessened. According to Peter Feith, who later became one of the key architects of the Macedonian peace process, “...the Albanian population was [becoming] completely mobilized in support of the NLA [the Albanian “National Liberation Army” guerrilla movement]. The more you shelled them, the more support [they provided]. At the same time the Macedonian... [strategies] were getting nowhere”.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Lund, p. 243.

<sup>96</sup> Phillips, p. 125.

Faced with this predicament, the Macedonian Government had two possible responses – full mobilization to fight the ethnic insurgency or peace negotiations that would rely on Western political, economic and security guarantees to succeed. In complete reversal of their previous strategy, the hardliner ethnic Macedonian nationalist elite led by Prime Minister Georgievski now favoured a declaration of martial law and a full security crackdown in the Albanian-dominated crisis areas. But the lacklustre performance of the security establishment, and the real prospect that the military option would lead to a full-scale civil war, convinced the decisive majority of the country's political elite, including people previously close to Georgievski,<sup>97</sup> to pursue the negotiations option. Under decisive international pressure, the Macedonian authorities and the Albanian leadership reached a peace agreement which was to grant major new constitutional rights to Albanians in Macedonia and provide general amnesty to the guerrilla fighters and their leadership, in return for reconstruction aid and faster integration in the Euro-Atlantic structures.

The Ohrid Framework Agreement – the document that formalized this settlement – was to initiate a fundamental shift in the way Macedonia perceived and reacted to threats against its security. The Agreement promoted the practice of *institutional* accommodation between the Macedonian and Albanian political elites from a haphazard instrument of political convenience into a constitutional mechanism, central to addressing Macedonia's most ominous menace of inter-ethnic conflict. This represented a triumph of the view that Macedonia can only be preserved if its institutions unify the two major ethnic groups against internal threats to stability, but also to safeguard against external contributing factors, particularly those arising from Kosovo's unresolved status. The four pillars of the Agreement specifically aimed to: (1) remove the suppression of national identity argument for political mobilization of ethnic Albanians against the state by allowing a much greater scope for its expression, including the use of national language and symbols in official communication and in education; (2) keep all inter-ethnic disputes within the state institutions by establishing mechanisms for greater institutional inter-ethnic accommodation that would prevent decisions on certain matters taken by a majority of parliamentary deputies from being confirmed without the agreement of a majority of deputies representing ethnic minorities (through the introduction of the so-called Badinter principle);<sup>98</sup> (3) guarantee that the interests of Albanian and other minorities are represented (and not violated) in the central administration by reforming the state and security bodies into inclusive organizations, where members of ethnic groups are represented in levels proportionate to the size of their communities in the country; (4) address the demands for self-governance without undermining the unitary character of the

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<sup>97</sup> President Trajkovski - formerly a very close associate of Georgievski and his favourite to replace President Gligorov in the 1999 Presidential elections - was especially critical for the success of the peace option because of his role as commander in chief of the army in blocking the heavy-handed security response preferred by Georgievski and his lieutenants.

<sup>98</sup> The French constitutional scholar Robert Badinter was member of the Arbitration Commission of the Peace Conference on Former Yugoslavia (known as the Badinter Arbitration Commission) and consultant during the Ohrid negotiations. According to the Badinter majority principle, the passage of legislation where identity issues and minority interests are concerned requires a "qualified majority of two-thirds, within which there must be a majority of the votes of Representatives claiming to belong to the communities not in the majority in the population of Macedonia." See Article 5, item 1, of the Framework Agreement.

state, by substantially decentralizing administrative power, including fiscal powers, to local authorities.

The critical leverage to sustain Macedonia's stability, however, is not based so much on the mechanisms proscribed by the Ohrid Agreement per se, but on their adaptable and open-ended structure, which enabled far greater administrative flexibility to pursue the Euro-Atlantic integration of the country. In the view of the Ohrid Agreement architects and proponents, the Euro-Atlantic integration perspective was the only device powerful enough to end Macedonia's security predicament – both internally and externally. Unlike the Dayton Accords, that established the principles of administrative separation and consensus of the three ethnic groups as the basis for decision-making in post-conflict Bosnia – an arrangement which led to constant gridlock when critical reforms were to be implemented – the Ohrid Agreement was designed to preserve the functional, unitary character of the state that was capable of relatively quick progress towards NATO and the European Union.<sup>99</sup>

## **II. Threat Perceptions and Macedonia's Post-Ohrid Agreement National Security Transformation**

In 2003, the Macedonian Government initiated a comprehensive and long-term Strategic Defence Review (SDR), the purpose of which was to transform the country's defence and security establishment to better cope with the new security environment and achieve the goals of more inclusive security, as prescribed under the Ohrid Agreement.

The review process began with the publication of a National Security and Defence Concept, later enhanced by the SDR Policy Framework, the key document which set the terms of reference for the security sector reform process. As the document outlines, the main planning reference behind the security review process was the drive to address the deficiencies which surfaced during the 2001 conflict. This process emerged as part of the overall internationally-sponsored effort to stabilize the country and implement the Ohrid Agreement. The second important driver was the new Government coalition composed of the ethnic Macedonian Social Democratic Union, which returned to power to replace the hard-line nationalist Government of Prime Minister Ljubco Georgievski who led the country during the 2001 conflict. Their ethnic Albanian partner was the Democratic Union for Integration, the political wing of the former Albanian guerrilla movement. Given

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<sup>99</sup> The main approach of the Ohrid Agreement, apart from preserving the administrative unity of Macedonia, was to provide a set of flexible principles (such as the Badinter majority) which the Macedonian and Albanian ethnic groups could use to negotiate on contentious issues, instead of imposing rigid consensus-based formulas, characteristic of the Dayton Accords. This arrangement gave a problem-solving orientation to Macedonia's decision-making process and avoided burdening it with the politics of entrenched ethnic interests. This flexible approach is also evident in the physical structure of the settlement - the original text of the Ohrid Agreement consists of only four pages, based on 10 main articles organised in 30 items. Additionally, it has three separate annexes on some 10 extra pages. In contrast, the plan for ending the Bosnian war, negotiated and initialled in Dayton almost six years before, resulted in a far more extensive and detailed document, comprised of some 80 pages, together with 11 annexes, 2 appendices and a map.

NATO's integral role in the stabilization of the country, and the still brittle security situation, the new Government showcased NATO integration as the primary vehicle to build a system of security compatible with the logic of the new inter-ethnic constitutional equilibrium established by the Ohrid Agreement.

Couched in these terms, the launch of the Strategic Defence Review process signalled a definite break (at least at the conceptual level) with the previous security concepts and legacies. The principal disconnect it aimed to address was between the capabilities of the Macedonian security establishment and the new security threats and challenges they were supposed to tackle. According to the Policy Framework of the SDR, “[t]he new global security realities have brought to the fore new challenges and new responses for their resolution, which are also relevant to the region of SEE [Southeast Europe] and the RM [Republic of Macedonia]. The security threats in the region and Europe are today mainly of a non-military nature. Ten years ago, at the end of the Cold War, the national security used to be mainly [the] responsibility of the military. Today, the military is only one of a number of security instruments...one that should only be used as a last resort”.<sup>100</sup>

In this vein, the SDR Policy Framework recognizes that: “ARM [the Army of the Republic of Macedonia] has basically been designed and equipped for defence from conventional attack. Its doctrine is based on formations which mainly rely upon firepower and oversized armoured, heavily mechanized and artillery capabilities. Certainly these capabilities should be possessed but in a volume and capacities that match the new strategic realities...The lessons learned from the 2001 crisis, the experiences of NATO countries in recent operations, the development of technology and the future strategic environment, suggest that armies of the future will have to possess a much broader spectrum of capabilities and greater flexibility. Therefore, the RM believes that through the development of Special Forces and capabilities as the foundation of the ARM structure it will be able to provide a purposeful and valuable contribution on its own, [towards] the regional and European security...”.<sup>101</sup>

The document goes on to strongly emphasize that, given the nature of the security environment and the emerging threats, a small country like Macedonia can only employ these capabilities efficiently as part of the collective security system of NATO. Thereby, Macedonia's desired security system, as proscribed by the SDR Policy Framework, should not be oriented only towards providing internal security, but also to developing capabilities to contribute to the North Atlantic collective security in Europe and globally. “Membership of NATO does not simply provide access to a shared defence and security umbrella” – the document states – “we also need to plan to contribute to the Alliance constructively and efficiently in all its dimensions, including specialized (niche) capacities harmonized with the needs of the Alliance...We need to recognize that the Alliance is

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<sup>100</sup> Government of Macedonia. Strategic Defence Review Policy Framework, October 2003. <http://www.vlada.mk/SOP.htm>. p. 8

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 10-11.

becoming a global security system which now and in the future will undertake tasks beyond the borders or of the Alliance (not only in respect to Art. 5) in the function of global peace and stability. This means that our forces will be involved beyond the borders of the Alliance”.<sup>102</sup>

The principal tool for the realization of these ambitious transformation goals, according to the SDR Policy Framework, is the adoption of a modern and realistic strategic planning and budgeting process, in line with the goal of integration in NATO: “[the Strategic Defence Review] should have the key goal of the provision of cost-effective defence providing value for money for our tax payers. The main objective of the Government of the RM is to provide defence which is [in] accordance with the capabilities, resources and the needs of the RM in the context of the new strategic realities, needs and vision for the integration in the broader security and defence alliances...From the current allocation of the budget funds it can be seen that a disproportionately large part is spent on expenses relating to personnel and maintenance of equipment and infrastructure. With the limited resources of RM this leaves very little room for investments in training, modernisation, readiness, operational capabilities, operating procedures of the Ministry of Defence, improving the standard of living and research and development”.<sup>103</sup>

This strategic shift in the vision for Macedonia’s security, and the security transformation goals, are identified as commensurate with the foreign policy goals and the security threats, risks and dangers, described in the next chapters of the SDR Framework. The document defines security and defence policies as subordinate to foreign policy, employed to fulfil the key interests of the country, including: (1) the protection of the independence, territorial integrity, the state identity and the free expression of the ethnic identity of all Macedonian citizens; (2) the protection of personal security of its citizens; (3) supporting the development of multi-ethnic society; (4) economic development based upon the principles of [a] market economy; (5) protection and improvement of democracy, rule of law and protection of human rights and freedoms; (6) integration in NATO and the EU; (7) enhancing all forms of regional cooperation in SEE; (8) enhancement of internal political stability and provision of equal opportunities for participation on the basis of generally accepted consensus on the interests of the country.<sup>104</sup>

With the national interests so defined, the SDR Framework goes on to classify the threats, risks and dangers to Macedonia’s security, upon which the doctrine and force capabilities, and the instruments of foreign and defence policies are to be based. These are divided into 7 categories (see Table 1), with their anticipated severity (at “very low,” “low,” “medium” and “high” levels of intensity) projected over 3 time periods – current, mid-term (defined as the next 3-5 years) and long-term (5-10 years and beyond).

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 11, 18.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, p. 27.

<sup>104</sup> For a comprehensive description of the official national foreign and security interests of Macedonia refer to p.14 of the SDR Policy Framework of the SDR.

Table 1: The taxonomy of threats to Macedonia's national security offered by the Policy Framework of the Strategic Defence Review<sup>105</sup>

Threats, Risks and Dangers	Level of Intensity		
	Currently	Mid-term	Long-term
Conventional War - Aggression	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low
Possible manifestations of extreme nationalism, racial and religious intolerance, international terrorism, organised crime, illegal migration, illegal trade of all types, including trade in strategic and dual use materials, insufficiently secure and efficient borders, etc.	High	Medium	Low
Possession of large quantities of illegal weapons, transitional problems such as: corruption, urban terrorism, serious crime, economic crime, tax evasion, etc.	High	Medium	Low
Activities of foreign special services directed toward worsening the security situations, consequences of conflict of interests in using sources and routes of strategic energy materials	Medium	Medium	Low
Natural and other disasters, technical-technological catastrophes, epidemics, etc.	Low	Low	Low
Degradation and destruction of environment	Medium	Medium	Medium
Computer and network related crime and attacks against computer systems	Low	Medium	High

Several important consequences emerged from this categorization of national interests and security challenges and the reforms aimed to address them. First, the view that Macedonia's security concerns are related to unconventional and asymmetric threats, not conventional warfare, enabled a sweeping defence transformation process. The SDR process that emerged from this concept included a significant reduction of force levels and disposal of obsolete and heavy equipment (including large quantities of T55 tanks and Su-25 attack jets); abandonment of conscription, and transformation of the ARM force structure into a lighter, leaner and fully professional force, with a dominant Light Infantry/Special Forces component designed to match the unconventional threats at home; and the availability of Macedonia's "niche" capability for NATO operations abroad.

Second, the Ohrid Agreement principle that only a security system representative of the country's minorities can address Macedonia's threats was integrated in the reform process. The programme for increasing the representation of members of Macedonia's ethnic minorities in the army and the Ministry of Defence, for instance, has managed to raise minority participation from the very low level of only 3 percent in 2002, before the SDR was launched, to over 20 percent today.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>105</sup> Source: Government of Macedonia. Strategic Defence Review Policy Framework, October 2003. <http://www.vlada.mk/SOP.htm>

<sup>106</sup> For the official breakdown of minority representation in the Macedonian Ministry of Defence and army personnel see [www.morm.gov.mk](http://www.morm.gov.mk).

Similar, albeit less extensive progress was achieved with police reforms. These changes not only created an expectation that the security system will protect and represent minority interests in the long run, but also enabled the security services to resolve immediate security problems related to the post-conflict stabilization of Macedonia. Thus, for instance, ethnically mixed police patrolling was considered critical for the gradual restoration of a security presence in the former crisis areas.

Third, the introduction of a threat-based approach to national security, and the recognition of the generally unconventional nature of threats in the documents guiding Macedonia's post-2002 Security Sector Reform, prompted the Government to establish a central Crisis Management Authority, which was to coordinate, both at the political and operational levels, the efforts and resources of the various Government agencies during security crises and civil emergencies. It consisted of a cabinet level crisis executive committee chaired by the Vice Prime Minister, and a supporting Crisis Management Centre – an independent body which was to constantly monitor and assess threats of all kinds, prepare plans to counter and prevent them, and operationally coordinate the various agencies in the event of a crisis. Driven by the requirement to address the grave deficiencies in inter-agency coordination detected during the 2001 crisis, the goal of this new structure was to produce a gradual integration of the security sector to respond to the threats and challenges faced by the country.

Finally, this new strategic thinking led Macedonia to progressively adopt a novel attitude towards the external threats the country faces. Recognizing that most of the “new” threats cannot be defused without cross-border cooperation, the Macedonian Government gradually abandoned its previous policy of “active equidistance” vis-à-vis the country's neighbours,<sup>107</sup> for an active engagement policy aimed at promoting dialogue on points of mutual interest as a means to gradually reduce threats arising from the neighbourhood. This strategy was pursued particularly vigorously in relations with Albania and Kosovo, prompted by the view that keeping these two Albanian-dominated neighbours close would help reinforce the stability of Macedonia's new inter-ethnic order established under the Ohrid Agreement. Experience proved this strategy effective: the relationships established through these rapprochements have on several critical occasions been used to defuse existing or potential security crises in Macedonia.

But despite its success in bringing forward the much needed change in Macedonia's strategic thinking, this threat assessment has some important limitations that must be taken into account. Perhaps the main criticism that could be levelled against this appraisal of the security threats and challenges lies in its incomplete nature. The security evaluation of the SDR Policy Framework,

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<sup>107</sup> The policy of “active equidistance” towards Macedonia's neighbours was enacted by President Gligorov during the early years of independence in the 1990s, when the country's leadership was attempting to secure its independence through the delicate balancing of Serbia's grand nationalist appetites, Greece's aggressive stance on the identity issue, Bulgaria's friendly, but assimilatory attitude, and the danger from Albanian expansionist aspirations in Western Macedonia. It was to achieve, in Gligorov's words, “the best possible relations with each of the neighbours, but in a way that none of them would have a privileged or dominant position, from which it could influence our domestic or foreign policy.” For more details, see K. Gligorov: *Macedonia is All We Have* pp.431-433. Second Edition, Kultura: Skopje, 2002.

produced in October 2003, as well as the analysis in the National Security and Defence Concept that preceded it, were intended to set the initial, approximate vision for security transformation. This vision was to be developed and refined in later documents as the reform process advanced, but this “work in progress” was slow to catch up when most of the capacities of the security establishment were consumed by the actual transformation process. The Defence White Paper published in October 2005 – two full years after the Policy Framework – still relied on the same threat assumptions, as did the PARP Assessments and Annual National Plans for membership in NATO all the way to the last cycle in 2006/2007. It remains to be seen whether the long overdue National Security Strategy, which was at an advanced stage of drafting at the time of writing, will finally provide a fresh review of Macedonia’s security threats and challenges.

The result thus far has been that, similar to the national security documents of the other countries covered in this study,<sup>108</sup> the levels of elaboration of security threats is in a quite early phase, despite the use of modern terms of reference in the assessment. The key problem is that the assessment process is much more retrospective and subjective than forward-looking and empirical, for reasons that are partly methodological, partly political.

The first important weakness on the methodological side is that the threat categories and their properties are by and large elaborated on the basis of past experiences of the country’s political elite in dealing with threats to security in Macedonia and in the region, without much reliance on independent scientific studies that project potential future threats. Reflecting the Generals’ tendency to prepare for the last war, the dominant references used to produce the threat assessment are the “lessons learned” from the 2001 conflict, which, although relevant for the most pressing security transformation goals, cannot offer the full picture of the shape of potential future threats. Combined with the focus on the consequences of the socio-economic transition, this approach in practice limits the scope of the assessment to the immediate post-conflict phase.

A second methodological problem is that the threat assessment projections are largely elaborated arbitrarily, without the use of verifiable metrics to gauge their properties or intensity over time. For example, the fashionable threat under the last rubric, “computer and network related crime and attacks against computer systems,” is predicted to assume “medium” intensity in the 2006-2008 period, unrealistically equal to the threats posed by extreme nationalism, international terrorism and insecure borders. On the other hand, the National Strategy for Information Society Development – a comprehensive official study and projection of the Macedonian IT sector published in April 2005 – completely refutes these forecasts, claiming that only 6-7 percent of the population at the time used the internet, and that virtually no Government information bodies used computer networks. Neither the mid- nor long-term forecasts of the cyber threat seem

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<sup>108</sup> For a detailed overview, see the chapter titled: “Changing Security Perception in Europe’s Hottest Region: Comparative Analysis of the National Security and Defence Strategies of the Countries of the Western Balkans” in this volume.

anywhere close to the real projections of IT vulnerabilities of the country where, according to the strategy “[t]he information systems in the Government and the ministries currently appear to be like isolated islands without a common basis that would link them...There is no computer network that connects the Governmental institutions...There is no...structural electronic data exchange between the Governmental institutions at the central and local level”.<sup>109</sup>

The most problematic issue in regard to the benchmarks used to forecast severity is the threat of terrorism. The threat of international terrorism, for instance, listed in the second category, is expected to decrease to a “medium” level of intensity in the next 3-5 years and to become “low” after 10 years, a proposition which seems completely out of tune with the global security predictions for the periods discussed. Contrary to this judgment, in 2003, when this classification was produced, international security authorities, such as the US and NATO, whose terms of reference Macedonia relies on to define its security policies, pronounced that the war on international terrorism will remain a struggle for at least this generation – not something that will be dealt with within a decade.<sup>110</sup> The combination of the two major methodological faults of the assessment – the retrospective, parochial view of threats, and the lack of empirical benchmarks for their projection – completes the flawed nature of this logic. The threat of international terrorism is in essence equated with other local and regional post-conflict and transitional problems, and is accordingly expected to decrease as they are gradually overcome. Following this narrow judgment, a new age of development will follow, and new (a cynic would say more “fashionable,” than really understood) threats, like cyber crime and cyber warfare (it is also unclear who will employ this strategy against Macedonia), will become the primary concern.

The second type of deficiency in the elaboration of security threats owes much to the interference of political qualifications in the assessment process. Again, the problem is most acute in defining the threat of terrorism. During the 2001 conflict and afterwards – a period immediately preceding the SDR Policy Framework assessment – the ethnic Albanian NLA fighters were dubbed as “terrorists” by the Macedonian authorities and the majority of the population, in an effort to delegitimize them. This rhetoric – like in many other conflicts across the world – intensified after the 9/11 attacks, attempting to link local insurgents (conveniently of Muslim origin) as close as possible to Al Qaeda, in order to gain additional leverage in their international de-legitimization. NATO Secretary General Robertson, on the other hand, described these groups, which in effect employed guerrilla tactics,<sup>111</sup> in some ways more accurately as “thugs”, reflecting the fact that they partly financed their operations from the proceeds of crime.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> For more information see Government of the Republic of Macedonia: “National Strategy for Information Society Development and Action Plan for the Republic of Macedonia,” Skopje, April 2005, <http://www.kit.gov.mk>.

<sup>110</sup> For instance, this view was unequivocally reflected in the US National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, published in February 2003, as well its update in 2006 - documents that serve as key reference points for the global “war on terror.” See <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nsct/2006/>

<sup>111</sup> The tactics of the NLA cannot be described as terrorist in the classic sense, certainly not of the Al Qaeda variety. The NLA's primary targets (and casualties) were the security forces and they did not systematically target the Macedonian civilian population in its majority areas. Although atrocities against the Macedonian population in Albanian-dominated parts of the country were committed, with the intent to ethnically cleanse

As a result of these dissonant and politicized terms of reference, in the SDR Policy Framework typology, “international terrorists” are assigned to the second threat category alongside nationalist and religious radicals, organised crime and cross-border threats. In this setting, the “international terrorism” class of threat is synonymous with both an NLA-type of Albanian ethnic guerrilla and an international terror movement such as Al Qaeda. The confusion surrounding the identity of the terrorists, as well as their goals and the methods they employ to achieve them, also create problematic relationships with other threat categories. Under the third rubric, for instance, the unclear threat of “urban terrorism” (what is the difference between international and “urban” terrorism?) is lumped under the category of “transitional problems,” together with others like corruption, serious crime, economic crime and tax evasion.

Issues connected with political preconceptions also exist in other parts of the SDR Policy Framework taxonomy of threats. In the fourth rubric, for instance, “activities of foreign special services directed toward worsening the security situation” also seems misplaced next to “consequences of conflict of interests in using sources and routes of strategic energy materials”. “Activities of foreign special services....” is an intriguing category which is actually a metamorphosis of the perception of the conventional threat from Macedonia’s neighbours. Influenced by histories of the “hidden hand” intervention of outside powers in Macedonian internal affairs, the very real and menacing interference of the secret services of Milosevic’s Serbia in the 1990s, and traumas like the nearly successful covert operation to assassinate President Gligorov in 1995, most Macedonian statesmen believe that neighbours and even certain great powers will never cease to at least clandestinely pose a threat to the country’s security. They assumed that when they are no longer capable of traditional aggression and pressures, their encroachments will be diverted to attempts to manipulate Macedonia’s affairs through covert action. The language describing this threat is vague to avoid political controversies, but its coded meaning is readily recognizable to most in Macedonia’s political and security establishments.

A Realpolitik analysis of past trends and possible future conflicts of interest might very well point out that this threat – and even the projection of its severity – cannot be dismissed as unrealistic. The problem in the SDR assessment, however, lies in its unjustified association with the next threat category, namely “Consequences of conflict of interests in using sources and routes of strategic energy materials”. This threat projection had more to do with the fashionable subject of competition between several different pipeline projects (and their patron states) for transporting Caspian oil (one pipeline is supposed to cross Macedonia), at the time of the assessment, than to a research-based reason for concern regarding energy security. Obviously uncertain how to articulate energy security, the authors decided to look at the problem through the traditional lens of rivalry with the neighbours, covertly plotting to undermine each other’s energy

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some localized areas, these incidents did not escalate into a massive and centrally-coordinated ethnic terror campaigns as in Bosnia.

<sup>112</sup> Lund, p. 240.

schemes. A detailed analysis of the regional energy situation would have showed that treating the question of energy security as competitive and adversarial is completely short-sighted. The energy problem, which according to recent studies should be growing to “high” in the long-term intensity projection, and the construction of transport corridors, can in fact only be addressed through cooperation. This was proven by energy market integration in the EU, and the cooperation between Albania, Bulgaria and Macedonia in bringing forward the AMBO pipeline project.

### **III. Conclusion**

In conclusion, because of methodological problems and political influences, the taxonomy of threats in the SDR Policy Framework contains numerous inconsistencies and contradictions in defining the categories, their relationships, and in projecting their severity over time, that should be corrected in future revisions. But despite these flaws, partly stemming from the limited post-conflict orientation of the assessment, the SDR process based on these premises was immensely successful in catalyzing security reforms that stabilized Macedonia in a short period of time after the 2001 conflict, and returned the country back on track for NATO and EU integration.

The success of Macedonia’s security sector reform process and post-conflict recovery owed less to fixed terms of reference in national security documents than to the proactive and cooperative spirit, and unique flexibility of the Ohrid Agreement. This new “code of conduct” allowed Macedonia’s leaders to take advantage of strategic opportunities that were not necessarily prescribed by official assessments and strategies. The proactive and cooperative posture in regard to Kosovo, for instance, allowed Macedonia to create interdependencies that prevented numerous threats from across the border from materializing, and gradually replaced the traditional reliance on military measures as principal tools to counter such threats. Although the national security documents do not identify concrete regional cooperation areas as instruments to resolve practical security problems, the leaders of Macedonia’s defence sector have identified opportunities to share the costs of the restrictively expensive Air Sovereignty Operations Centre (ASOC) and rely on air policing coverage from neighbouring states like Albania, Bulgaria and Greece. In many respects, the new post-Ohrid Agreement security “mindset” – more than actual security strategies would suggest – allowed Macedonia to be more advanced in the actual implementation of defence and security reforms than most other countries in the region, and often to act as a leader in regional security cooperation.

# View from Serbia - Study on the Assessment of Regional Security Threats and Challenges in the Western Balkans

Sonja Stojanović<sup>113</sup>

## I. Introduction

Seven years after Serbia's return to the international community and Europe, and at the peak of a diplomatic dispute over the future status of Kosovo, Serbia still lacks domestic consensus on a concept of national security and related priorities for regional security cooperation. This is a consequence of deep divisions within Serbian society reflecting differing interpretations of both Serbia's recent past and the road it should take towards transformation into a consolidated democracy and future membership of the EU. Although free elections and the peaceful resolution of possible disputes or conflicts with neighbouring countries are now established practices, this lack of national consensus on the way forward is eroding public confidence in Serbia's capacity to implement key reforms required to consolidate democracy and reform the security sector.

This paper will first provide an overview of the political context and major institutional changes framing debate on regional security. The author of this contribution found it difficult to identify the official position of the Serbian government on regional security challenges because of the lack of adopted formal strategies or policies in this regard. Most importantly, Serbia lacks a Foreign Policy Strategy and a National Security Strategy (NSS) defining key security priorities at national level<sup>114</sup>. This is a consequence of the differing perceptions of key national values, interests and objectives among Serbian political leaders. Therefore, the analysis of the security environment, security threats and related responses will be presented on the basis of a comparison of the information contained in the two different NSS drafts prepared by separate teams of advisers to Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica and President Boris Tadic in summer 2006. They will be complemented with relevant points from the Prime Minister's *Keynote Address* to the Serbian Parliament in May 2007 in which he presented the policy priorities of the new coalition government comprising parties of the Prime Minister and the President<sup>115</sup>. Following this analysis, the prioritisation of national interests, objectives and appropriate ways of improving regional security cooperation will be presented on the basis of interviews conducted with state officials. Finally,

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<sup>114</sup> The majority of existing policy documents were adopted for the former federation with Montenegro and will soon have to be revised or replaced. This group of strategies includes: *National Strategy of Serbia for Serbia and Montenegro's Accession to the European Union* (2004), *White Paper on Defence of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro* (2005), *Defence Strategy* (2004), *Strategic Defence Review* (2006).

<sup>115</sup> PM Kostunica's party is the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), and President Tadic's party is the Democratic Party (DS). Together with G17 Plus, the former party of independent experts, and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) led by former DS members, these parties form the so-called *democratic block* as opposed to Milosevic's Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) and the Serbian Radical Party (SRS), the strongest opposition party, which are better known as the *nationalist block*.

different scenarios will be discussed evoking the potential impact on Serbian security policy should Kosovo become independent.

## II. Institutional Context

Current discussions on future national security and foreign policy, including regional cooperation, are taking place against a backdrop of internal political volatility and a lack of national consensus on related priorities. A 'window of opportunity' for redefining national security priorities has opened as a result of the following recent changes: first, Serbia's regained independence after the dissolution of the federation with Montenegro; second, the need to demonstrate internal consensus on the future status of Kosovo in response to the position taken by external actors during negotiations initiated in late 2005; third, the parliamentary elections in January 2007, and the prospect of local and presidential elections in 2008; and fourth, the re-opening of negotiations with the EU within the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP).

The dissolution of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro after the success of the pro-independence camp in the Montenegrin referendum held in May 2006 enabled Serbia to involuntarily re-acquire its independence and regain full sovereignty over its foreign and security policies. Until then the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were under federal jurisdiction, while the rest of the security sector (police, intelligence service, customs) were managed by republican governments. This state-(re)building process was symbolically crowned with the adoption of a new Constitution in November 2006<sup>116</sup> which established the foundation for a departure from Slobodan Milosevic's legacy and completion of the first generation of reforms in the security sector (Edmunds, 2003:16). The Law on the Implementation of the Constitution tabled the adoption of new security legislation as a precondition for calling Presidential elections scheduled to be held a year after the adoption of the Constitution. Among the prescribed laws are: the Law on the Military (Article 141/2 of the Constitution), the Law on Intelligence Services, and the Defence Law (Article 3/2 of the Law on the Implementation of the Constitution). This legislation should enable many of the reforms that have already taken place to become law, especially in Serbia's military<sup>117</sup>, and lead to the completion of the basic legal framework required for a functional security system. Together with adoption of the first National Security Strategy, the legislation should also allow for the design of a new national security system overseen by appropriate institutions responsible for the formulation, implementation, coordination and oversight of national security policy.

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<sup>116</sup> The text of the Constitution can be found at: [http://www.parlament.sr.gov.yu/content/eng/akta/ustav/ustav\\_1.asp](http://www.parlament.sr.gov.yu/content/eng/akta/ustav/ustav_1.asp). For an analysis of the position of the security sector in the Constitution see Milosavljevic, B. (2007) 'The Position of the Security Sector and Armed Forces in Serbia after the Adoption of the New Constitution in November 2006', lecture at the Faculty of Political Science (3 February 2007) and Ejodus, F, Popovic Đ. And Savkovic M. (2006) 'For in the hands of brave Madusic Vuk - Security in the proposed Constitution of Serbia', *Western Balkan Security Observer*, No. 2 (Sept-Oct 2006), pp. 41-45.

<sup>117</sup> For example, the new Constitution envisages the possibility of deploying military units abroad in peacekeeping missions after the Parliament's approval.

The second key document that should embody policy priorities for the whole security system over the next few years is the NSS. At the time of its preparation in spring 2007, two drafts of this document had already been prepared separately in summer 2006, one by advisers to the Prime Minister and the other by advisers to the President<sup>118</sup>. The former draft was prepared by a working group composed of representatives of key ministries, including the Ministries of Defence, Interior and Finance and the civilian intelligence service (BIA), and was circulated only internally among a restricted circle of government officials. The President's draft was prepared by his advisors for security and foreign policy in consultation with certain Ministry of Defence staff and presented in a few specialised public fora<sup>119</sup>. Besides the fact that these drafts are the first attempts to provide a holistic perspective of national security in Serbia, they also represent a clear intention to mark the point of departure from the recent past by prioritising the use of peaceful rather than forceful means of conflict resolution. Another key novelty shared by the authors of both drafts is the recognition of the necessity to address current asymmetric security threats, risks and challenges in partnership with other security agents. Their interpretation of these common themes differs, which explains why I focused my analysis of Serbia's position on regional security on a comparison of these two still unofficial NSS drafts. The analysis also took into account the recommendations of other state strategies and official statements prepared during the primacy of one of the two major pro-democratic parties, in order to identify minimal common denominators and key differences in their regional security policies.

Other existing strategic documents, such as the Strategic Defence Review<sup>120</sup>, are being implemented even though they have not been formally adopted. A new Defence Strategy is currently being prepared by the Ministry of Defence which is trying to define the key objectives of the military without specifying whether its forces will be part of NATO. This preparatory work is in line with the Constitution which stipulates that Parliament is responsible for adopting a Defence Strategy, but fails to mention a NSS, possibly because the Constitution framers were not sure whether political leaders would be able to reach consensus on the two existing NSS drafts. A positive sign is that after the establishment of the coalition government, the preparation of a new, third NSS draft has been initiated and is currently being prepared by a joint team of representatives and associates of the Prime Minister and the President from various ministries. However, the deadline for the presentation of the new NSS draft has yet to be specified, reflecting a low level of willingness to resolve differences over key national security priorities. The adoption of a NSS has been postponed until after formal approval of the Law on the Military and the Law on Defence. This is officially justified by the claim that defence reforms have reached their ceiling within the current legal framework and that further progress is possible only after

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<sup>118</sup> For more on preparation of the National Security Strategies see Djurdjevic-Lukic, S. (2006) 'Defence Reform in Serbia: Serbia and Montenegro Hampering Exceptionalism', forthcoming publication by DCAF.

<sup>119</sup> See daily newspapers *Danas*, issues from 22 Sept 2006 and 12 Oct 2006.

<sup>120</sup> The Strategic Defence Review was adopted in June 2006 by the Defence Minister's collegium and presented to the President, parliamentary caucuses and civil society. The official endorsement by parliament was postponed until after the adoption of NSS and the new Constitution. This document provides a detailed projection of military reforms until 2015.

the adoption of new legislation. Once a new NSS is adopted, the new Defence Strategy and the proposed Strategic Defence Review will be aligned with it and only then presented for adoption by Parliament.

The parliamentary elections held in January 2007 immediately after the adoption of the new Constitution represented the third significant factor of change. These elections introduced a measure of normalisation into political life. For the first time since the toppling of Milosevic's authoritarian regime in 2000, economic and welfare issues topped the agenda in the electoral campaigns of all parties ahead of ethnic and national issues<sup>121</sup>. Most democratic block parties also linked their economic and social reform agendas with the goal of EU integration. However, after presentation of the plan for a resolution of Kosovo's status by UN Special Envoy Maarti Ahtisaari, Serbian political followers of then acting Prime Minister Kostunica shifted all public attention to the future status of Kosovo. The need for national consensus in relation to external pressures switched the essence of debate to consideration of ways to resolve the sovereignty issue, leaving little space for the European integration process to shape local policy developments.

The second feature of the three-month long negotiations to form the new government was the fight for control of ministerial posts in the security sector. Most of the political wrangling was over who should be appointed Minister of Interior, in charge of policing, and Head of the civilian intelligence service (BIA). The holding of these posts is perceived as important for influencing (non)cooperation with the ICTY, but more importantly for domestic politics. These are the key 'power ministries' which allow those in charge of them to demonstrate their determination to investigate corruption by government officials or major politically-motivated crimes such as the assassination of late Prime Minister Djindjic. Such issues have a high resonance in public opinion, which was evident during the election campaign when anti-corruption investigations of different types of mafia in government ranks<sup>122</sup> drew extensive media coverage. This explains why the anti-corruption platform was the third priority of all political parties in the elections, only preceded by economic reform/EU integration and official positioning on the future status of Kosovo.

In the process of writing this assessment, two major parties of the so-called democratic block managed to form a coalition government, which declared the preservation of Kosovo as an integral part of Serbia and EU integration as its priorities.<sup>123</sup> Another consequence of the parties' last-minute coalition compromise was to allow President Tadic to chair the National Security Council and to be in charge of coordination of all security forces, including those led by officials from the other party. It is too early to judge whether formal consensus

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<sup>121</sup> For more detailed analysis see Markovic. Z. (2007) 'Security Topics in the Parliamentary Elections Campaign in Serbia', *Western Balkans Security Observer*, No.4 (January-March), pp. 69-77.

<sup>122</sup> The small or large organised groups abusing their posts were named after the institution from which they were coming from e.g. customs mafia, traffic fee mafia, university mafia etc.

<sup>123</sup> See Keynote Address of Serbian Prime Minister Designate Vojislav Kostunica at Serbian Parliament on 15 May 2007. The five crucial programme principles of government policy deal with the issues of Kosovo-Metohija, European integration, cooperation with the Hague tribunal for war crimes, social and economy policies and the fight against crime and corruption. <http://www.srbija.sr.gov.yu/vlada/>

can be reached on key national priorities, since the two major parties hold differing views on how these priorities should be implemented. Prime Minister Kostunica's Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) is sending active signals that it is not willing to compromise on two key national priorities – preserving Kosovo and Metohija within Serbia, on the one hand, and furthering the EU accession process, on the other – regardless of the consequences. President Tadic's party appears to give priority to Serbia's future in Europe above anything else. Against a backdrop of apparent national consensus on preferred strategies for the future resolution of the Kosovo issue, the two ruling parties hold sharply opposing views on NATO membership. First, ministers from the Prime Minister's party accuse NATO of trying to create “the first NATO state in [the] world” on the territory of Kosovo by supporting UN special envoy Maarti Ahtisaari's plan, which foresees supervised independence for Kosovo and no civil oversight of NATO troops stationed there. Developing this argument, they threatened to sever diplomatic relations with any NATO member country that recognises Kosovo as an independent state. Later on, the same ministers, primarily addressing a domestic audience, invited legislators to adopt a resolution stating that Serbia should not join NATO. This initiative was supported only by former parties of the Milosevic regime (SPS and SRS), but was opposed by the President's party, along with the G17, the third coalition party member, and the opposition Liberal Democratic Party. This harsh rhetoric over Serbia's still unforeseeable membership in NATO can be attributed to party repositioning in anticipation of new local and presidential elections expected to be held in 2008. The only thing that is sure is that despite the carrot offered by the EU in the form of a continuation of SAA negotiations and possible candidate status at some point in 2008, the domestic agenda is still more determined by domestic disputes and resolution of statehood issues than by EU integration processes.

### III. The Key Conceptual Differences between the Two NSS Drafts

The analysis of the different security concepts in the two NSS drafts will be presented through examination of three questions: first, security for whom?; second, what is the value of security or what price are policy-makers willing to pay to provide it?; and third, whom shall provide the security in Serbia?.

An analysis of the different “protected values” (Wolfers:1962) inherent in the two national security concepts conveyed in the two drafts can provide useful insight into who are perceived as enemies and friends in the region. It also highlights the deep lines of division within Serbian polity. The two drafts differ in response to the question *security for whom?* Who is the relevant referent object or the value of entity that needs to be protected (Baldwin:1997)? The President's draft proclaims the security of the state and individual in line with the broader concept of human security as equal values within a national security concept. The Prime Minister's draft prescribes national security as a system to protect the state, its citizens and the people. Later on in the definition of specific objectives, the values of ‘the people’ are specified – similarly to those in the new Constitution – in terms of the

ethnic identity of 'Serbs and ethnic minorities' (p. 8). While the Prime Minister's draft NSS recognises the importance of non-discrimination and protection of the rights of all citizens, it singles out Serbian collective identity before listing other values, neglecting the individual level of security. Although both drafts refer to common regional security challenges, the Prime Minister's version identifies 'separatist tensions by Albanians as the direct threat to territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia and source of constant security risk' (p. 6). In this light, this draft also perceives the legacy of recent conflicts, including dissatisfaction over unresolved border demarcation issues with Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, problems related to the return of [Serbian] refugees to Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, and the protection of their rights in these countries as possible non-military risks. In his address to Parliament, Prime Minister Kostunica expanded on this concept further by emphasizing the importance of economic ties with Republika Srpska, 'as well as advancing relations with Bosnia-Herzegovina based on the Dayton Agreement', as key foreign policy priorities in the region. Implementing peace accords with specific countries and maintaining the status quo with regard to existing borders and territorial identity are priorities listed in all previously adopted foreign and defence policy documents<sup>124</sup>.

Both draft NSS documents perceive the unresolved status of Kosovo as the main internal security challenge faced by Serbia and an important factor of destabilisation in the region. For an understanding of the possible differences in approach to this key challenge, it is important to highlight another conceptual difference in the two drafts. The clue is one of Baldwin's seven questions related to security concept specification (1997), namely: *What is the value of security?* The Prime Minister's draft takes a '*prime value approach*' in response to this question, implying that 'security outranks other values for all actors in all situations' (Baldwin, 1997:18). This is evident in the definition of adequate policy responses to the current threats and challenges where security issues are often automatically equated with national interests and absolute security. Although the latter is unrealistic, it is cited as an ultimate goal. This approach automatically prioritises issues proclaimed to be 'security' challenges ahead of other possible interests. This could also be problematic because of the lack of ranking among the numerous security threats, interests<sup>125</sup> and prescribed policies<sup>126</sup> listed in the Prime Minister's draft. A possible alternative explanation is that this could be a consequence of the way it was produced by bureaucrats without much leverage to shape policy directions. Such rhetoric advocating that security is to be achieved at any cost

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<sup>124</sup> *National Strategy of Serbia for Serbia and Montenegro's Accession to the EU (2004), White Paper on Defence (2005), Defence Strategy (2004)*.

<sup>125</sup> In the introduction of the text the following values were listed: 'good relations with the most influential actors in international security, economic development, social stability, functioning and enhancement of the system of human rights and freedoms protection' (p.2). Later in the section on national interests, the following goals were listed: protection of sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity; protection of national historical and cultural identity of Serbs and other ethnic minorities; internal stability, rule of law, development of democratic institutions; integration into the EU and Euro Atlantic structures; protection of lives and property of Serbian citizens; economic development with protection of environment; contribution to the stability, peacefulness of the region; enhancement of internal legal order; enhancement of cultural, economic and other ways of cooperation and relationships with Serbs and other Serbian citizens living and working in the diaspora (pp. 8-9).

<sup>126</sup> National security policies in the PM's draft encompass foreign policy, defence policy, internal security policy, economic policy, welfare policy and 'national security policies for other aspects of life'.

could be dangerous if it is used to justify the allocation of more competencies and resources to the security sector without the provision of adequate controls in the Kosovo context.

On the other hand, the President's draft takes a *'core value approach'* to security which 'allows for other values by asserting that security is one of several important values' (Baldwin, 1997:19). Furthermore, the President's draft distinguishes between *vital* and *important* interests, or interests of primary importance and other important interests. The vital interests are: first, protection of sovereignty, independence, territorial, cultural and historical integrity; second, protection of democratic governance and institutions; and third, protection of peace and stability in Southeast Europe. The important interests are: first, protection of economic infrastructure; second, environmental protection; and third, securing economic, technological and cultural development for the whole of society. Such prioritisation may indicate the emphasis placed on interests other than the traditional concept of statehood. The already expressed wish by the President to use only political means for conflict resolution, and not to make Serbia's situation more difficult than it already is if Kosovo becomes independent, is a relevant example in this respect. Another important point is that solid security, especially military security, is perceived only as an instrumental value that provides the foundation for the protection of other more important values. This is also evident in the discourse of the President's draft which calls for a more determined break with the past, clear acknowledgement of the political role played by the armed forces during the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, a change of strategic culture, and highlights the urgency of reforms and cooperation with the ICTY.

#### IV. Key Threats in Regional Security Environment

Since the democratic changes in 2000, all subsequent administrations have proclaimed 'good neighbourly relations' as a key foreign policy priority<sup>127</sup>. The successor states of the former Yugoslavia were identified as the first zone of interest followed by the broader Southeast Europe region. Two reasons are most often quoted as justification for believing that the threat of armed conflict between states has significantly diminished. First, in line with the democratic peace theory, the nature of the regimes is quoted as a reassuring factor that guarantees peaceful resolution of disputes<sup>128</sup>. The second confidence-building factor stems from shared key foreign policy priorities – namely joining the EU and possibly other Euro-Atlantic institutions<sup>129</sup>. EU integration is at the same time viewed as the *raison d'être* for networking and improving regional cooperation in the region<sup>130</sup>. This 'logic of consequences' featured in the Stabilisation and

<sup>127</sup> The Resolution on EU Accession (14 October 2004), PM Keynote Address to Parliament (15 May 2007).

<sup>128</sup> Both PM (p. 4) and President's (p. 7) draft NSS papers, White Paper on Defence of SaM (p. 11)

<sup>129</sup> This is highlighted in the President's draft NSS which specifically adds the intention to become a member of collective security institutions such as PfP and NATO as a 'contributing factor to the common understanding that this is a shared security area which shares the same possibilities and perspectives of getting integrated in broader security integrations' (p. 7).

<sup>130</sup> 'Intensification of regional cooperation is perceived by Serbia and Montenegro as part of the overall process of Euro-Atlantic integrations and the so-called "regional approach" to EU membership' available at MFA's site dedicated to SaM and Regional Cooperation -<http://www.mfa.gov.yu/Foreinframe.htm>

Association Process as a major pre-requisite for regional cooperation is frequently quoted as an interest-based argument in favour of taking part in security initiatives regardless of traditionally constructed 'patterns of amity and enmity' between the states in the region (Buzan & Weaver: 2003).

Another rational reason for establishing 'good neighbourly relations and full stability in the region' is the similar burden of threats<sup>131</sup> stemming from its geo-strategic position at the cross-roads of different continents and the legacy of weak and war-torn states, which makes the region fertile ground for various forms of crime. Authors of all major strategic documents agree that the congruence in values and the indivisible nature of security threats, challenges and risks solicit acknowledgement of the interdependence of Western Balkans countries, which can no longer solve their security problems separately. This recognition of the complex security environment of the Western Balkans (Buzan and Weaver, 2003) requires a burden-sharing response through collaborative efforts such as the integration of national defence systems and enhancement of multilateral security fora<sup>132</sup>. This is highlighted in the President's draft NSS which specifically mentions the intention to become a member of collective security institutions such as Partnership for Peace (PfP) and NATO as a 'contributing factor to the common understanding that this is a shared security area which shares the same possibilities and perspectives of getting integrated in broader security integrations' (p. 7).

However, the understanding of the level of pacification of the region differs slightly between the two draft NSS documents. This affects decisions on the future role and size of the armed forces. The advisers to the Prime Minister believe that 'risks of wars breaking out and other armed conflicts in the area of South Eastern Europe have been considerably decreased, but they have not been entirely eliminated'<sup>133</sup>. Given that the Prime Minister's draft was formulated by representatives of powerful institutions such as the Ministries of Defence and Interior and the Security Information Agency, this could also reflect the dominant feeling within the armed forces. On the other hand, the President's draft NSS and White Paper on Defence recognise the possibility of inter-state wars only in the case of a major world or regional [European-level] crisis, which are unlikely in the foreseeable future<sup>134</sup>. However, all authors of key strategic documents so far do not rule out military threats in the region, especially armed rebellions. The source of possible armed clashes, rebellions and other disputes involving the use of armed forces is found at intra-state level. The spectre of unresolved statehood issues leading to internal conflicts which might spill over from one state to another is not excluded. Both draft security strategies list non-traditional security issues related, for example, to problems such as accumulated economic and political problems arising from the transition process as potential triggers for re-

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<sup>131</sup> Most frequently quoted are different forms of cross-border crime (illicit trade in narcotics, weapons, human trafficking, forged goods etc) (draft PM NSS, p.4 and draft Presidents NSS, p 9), as well as 'routes for possible and real terrorists' (draft Presidents NSS, p. 9).

<sup>132</sup> Draft PM strategy (p. 3) and

<sup>133</sup> Draft PM NSS, (p. 4).

<sup>134</sup> White Paper, (p. 13), President's draft NSS ( p. 10).

igniting old conflicts<sup>135</sup>. They also share a perception of the secessionist threat as one of the most likely triggers for armed rebellions in the region<sup>136</sup>.

This reflects the dominant perception of threats among the population of Serbia. The findings of seven public opinion surveys and a media content analysis conducted in the period 2003-2005 by the Centre for Civil-Military Relations<sup>137</sup> indicate that the citizens of Serbia are most afraid of threats to their national security stemming from the internal weakness of their state: clashes in ethnically mixed areas, organised crime and economic and social tensions. The next three significantly smaller vulnerabilities are evocative of trauma experienced in the recent past and are mostly located at the regional level: possible renewal of ex-Yugoslav wars, local and regional terrorism and fear of intervention by the US/NATO. The second group of threats was perceived in subsequent surveys to be receding until the presentation of the Ahtisaari plan, which prompted harsh domestic political criticism and fixated domestic debate on the Kosovo issue.

#### Sources of security threats to Serbia

What mostly threatens the security of Serbia	1 <sup>st</sup> Cycle	2 <sup>nd</sup> Cycle	3 <sup>rd</sup> Cycle	4 <sup>th</sup> Cycle	5 <sup>th</sup> Cycle	6 <sup>th</sup> Cycle
Clashes in ethnically mixed areas (Kosovo and Metochia, south Serbia, Sandzak, Vojvodina)	57	55.4	62.1	65.2	64.1	60
Organised crime (trafficking of weapons, humans and drugs, money laundering)	37	36.3	33.5	30.7	27.6	32
Economic and social conflicts and tensions	33.4	32.1	31.1	24.8	24.7	29.5
Possible renewal of ex-Yugoslav wars	15.1	10	10.1	13.4	8.2	11.8
Local and regional terrorism	12.6	10.7	13.4	12	9.8	10.4
New NATO and/or US military aggression	10.3	10.7	12.3	12.4	10.9	10.2
Dissolution of Serbia-Montenegro State Union	7.8	6.1	6.8	6.7	8.2	7.6
Cannot assess	16.9	4.8	4.1	2.9	4.9	4.2
Violent overthrow of democratic authorities	9.2	4.8	3.7	4.2	3.5	3.8
Something else (what)	0.8					

Source: CCMR, 2003-2005

More recent surveys reveal an interesting change. In the survey carried out by CESID in July 2007, 75% of the interviewees thought that in the forthcoming period there will be some type of conflict in Serbia. The greatest number of people (22%) are afraid of possible conflicts related to the Kosovo issue. The second position is taken by the fear of conflict between employers and employees (19%), while the third is the fear of possible conflicts between the rich and the poor (socio-economic conflicts). In conclusion, the citizens of Serbia are more afraid of conflict between different social groups sparked by financial and wealth

<sup>135</sup> This is also the argument quoted in the White Paper on Defence, p. 13 and the Defence Strategy from 2004.

<sup>136</sup> The two documents however differ in the discourse used to portray this threat. While the draft PM's NSS (p. 4) openly singles out secessionist tensions by ethnic Albanians, the President's draft (p. 9), does not name the ethnic groups but the possible countries that can internally be challenged with such risk - Montenegro, Macedonia, Greece and Serbia, all of which have in common only significant Albanian ethnic minority.

<sup>137</sup> For more details see Glišić, J. Hadžić, M., Timotić, M. and J. Matić (2003-2005), *Public opinion on the Reform of the Serbian and Montenegrin Army*, (volumes 1-7), (in Serbian), (Belgrade: CCMR) and Timotić, M. and M. Hadžić (eds), (2006), *The Public and Army*, (Belgrade: CCMR).

distribution disparities than by governance issues or inter-ethnic conflicts. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that only 3% of citizens now consider that inter-ethnic conflict is the most likely type of conflict in Serbia.

If these trends regarding national level security threats are compared with individual fears registered in a more recent survey carried out by Gallup International in May 2007, it is evident that the population of Serbia is primarily preoccupied with the economic difficulties originating from the transition process. These overwhelming feelings of insecurity and powerlessness at the individual level are projected as fears related to societal security at the national level or the preservation of group identity - e.g. the fear that the nation will cease to exist. Western countries and international organisations that impose conditionality and pressure on Serbia are perceived as threats to collective identity. As indicated in the July 2007 CESID survey, there is a high level of agreement on what might be called indicators of a “national state of emergency”, i.e. a situation whereby, for unclear reasons, there is a major conspiracy against the Serbian nation, aimed at harming and changing it in a negative way. Therefore, most Serbian citizens believe that the nation is endangered by the interests of the international community as a whole or by certain elements therein, although they feel there is little readiness on their part to defend these interests through war or by other means. The revolutionary change in comparison to the Milosevic's era is that over a half of the respondents (55%) disagree with the 25% of those surveyed who believe that national interests should be defended by all means.

#### Individual fears

95 %	Incurable diseases (cancer)
74 %	The rich will become richer and the poor poorer
71 %	Losing job
65%	Pressure from the West
55 %	Not being able to (financially) provide for basic needs
48 %	The nation will cease to exist
38 %	Crime
28 %	Personal crisis (not being able to cope with stress)

Source: Gallup International, May 2007

	Agree	Disagree	Indecisive	In total
Our national interests are in today's world endangered in all aspects	55	20	25	100
It is obvious that some nations have conspired against my nation	50	26	24	100
My nation has many enemies	46	32	22	100
There are many traitors in my nation	41	31	28	100
We shall always be ready to defend national interests	26	52	22	100

Source: CESID, 2007

The key question for me is whether the results of this study would have been different if those with the power and legitimacy to shape a national agenda and proclaim something a threat had prioritised the benefits of EU integration over the price of accepting the Ahtisaari plan for resolution of the future status of Kosovo. It is, however, obvious that a change of discourse in this regard would not be enough, and that as long as there are so many losers in the transition process a general feeling of national defeat will prevail. This has created a fertile climate for radical discourse and acceptance of various conspiracy theories.

## V. Responses to Regional Threats

Despite the attempt to de-securitize (Buzan et al. 2001) regional relations by calling for solutions in the normal political framework, such as upholding ‘the principles of peaceful dispute settlement, good neighbourly relations and border integrity’<sup>138</sup>, all documents emphasize that the level of (dis)trust and governance capacity is such that only an international military presence in the region can be a convincing guarantor of its security and stability. It is recognised that only international forces have the capacity to act quickly enough to successfully prevent a possible spillover of conflict from one state to another<sup>139</sup>. A positive sign is that both draft NSS documents propose alternative long-term solutions to an international military presence such as development of better communication systems among the countries of the region<sup>140</sup> or the establishment of common mechanisms for risk prevention and crisis management<sup>141</sup>.

The key conceptual difference between the two drafts is their perception of the level of regional integration required to create a successful autonomous prevention mechanism to offset future conflicts. The Prime Minister's draft opts for a cooperative security approach based on joining national security capacities, primarily through regional and world-level multilateral international forums, and in compliance with the principles of international law (p.3). The President's draft, however, calls for a greater level of integration into collective defence systems such as NATO, despite possible domestic public disapproval of such a move (p.5). The Prime Minister's draft avoids mentioning NATO membership, but lists among foreign policy priorities membership in the EU and Euro-Atlantic integration (without specifying the extent of preferred integration), improvement of relations with the US and Russia, enhancement of regional stability and security cooperation, and a consensus-based solution for the future status of Kosovo (p.10). Preference for multilateral fora over membership in a system of collective defence is evident in the Prime Minister's draft. However, at the height of the recurrent negotiations on the future status of Kosovo, the attractiveness of EU membership diminished among ministers from the Prime Minister's party who accused the US and NATO of trying to create “the first NATO state in the world”.

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<sup>138</sup> National Strategy of Serbia for SaM Accession to the EU, p. 44.

<sup>139</sup> Draft President NSS, p. 7.

<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> Draft PM NSS, p. 4.

The President's NSS draft prioritises membership in NATO as a key national security policy goal justified by Serbia's inability to solve its security problems in an isolated and non-aligned mode and the perspective of it being able to retain its leadership position in the region by joining the dominant club.

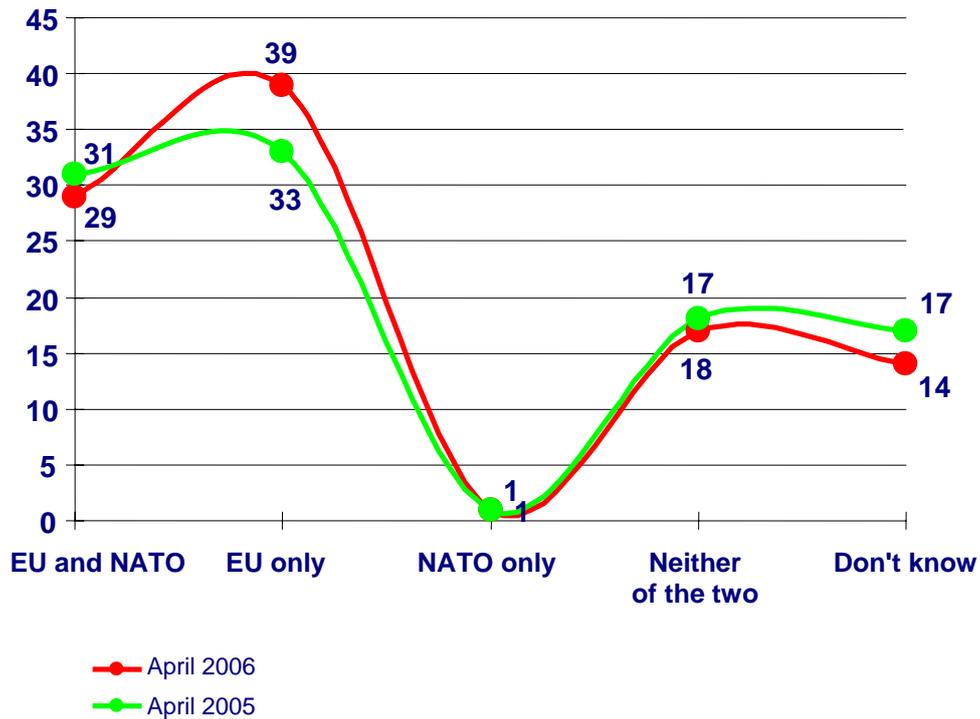
Public opinion polls indicate stable support for EU membership and increased support for membership of the PfP, especially after Serbia was invited to join the organization at its summit meeting in Riga last year. Opposition to joining NATO is most unstable and decreases in response to perceived external pressure/conditionality. The discrepancy between the support for the PfP and NATO could be explained by the cognitive dissonance in Serbian public opinion which does not view the PfP as a purely NATO forum. Political leaders believe that PfP membership is an opportunity for the promotion of Serbia and its armed forces through participation in international organisations. It is likely that the opposition to NATO membership will increase during the ongoing negotiations to resolve the Kosovo issue if the latter continues to dominate the national agenda to the exclusion of other national priorities such as EU membership or policies to address the problems of the great number of people marginalized by the transition process.

#### What would contribute most to the security of Serbia

	1 <sup>st</sup> Cycle	2 <sup>nd</sup> Cycle	3 <sup>rd</sup> Cycle	4 <sup>th</sup> Cycle	5 <sup>th</sup> Cycle	6 <sup>th</sup> Cycle	7 <sup>th</sup> Cycle
Orientation towards the West and EU membership	32.1	30.8	31.8	33.8	33.9	34.5	37
Keeping an independent position and relying on national defence forces	19.7	22.2	24.4	12.9	15.9	15.5	19.2
PfP membership	9.3	12.7	15	21.6	20.5	15.9	18
Development of cooperation with neighbouring countries	13	14	11.4	11.3	14.1	12.7	10.6
Cannot assess	15	12.3	8.2	10.4	7.9	8.9	8
Strengthening alliance with Russia and relying on her help in defence	5.2	5.5	7.4	7.4	5.8	9.9	6.5
Return to the Non-aligned Movement	1.4	2.3	1.9	2.5	1.8	2.4	2.1
Entering NATO as soon as possible	3.9						
Something else	0.4	0.2		0.1		0.1	

Source: CCMR, 2003-2005

### Are you in favour of our country joining the EU and NATO?



	PfP	NATO	EU
For	60 %	32%	76%
Against	24 %	50 %	11 %
Don't know	16 %	15 %	7 %

Source: Gallup International, May 2007

## VI. Regional Security Cooperation

The vision of regional cooperation highlighted on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website as “a large free-trade area with a visa-free regime”, and an integrated region of ‘soft borders’ indicates that the economic benefits of regional integration are the primary driving force behind cooperation in the security domain too. This corresponds to the functionalist argument that development in one policy area could unintentionally lead to *spillover* into other functionally linked areas, and subsequently to greater integration at supranational level. In that case, economic integration implies greater mobility of goods, services, capital and people across national boundaries, which in turn intensifies the need for increased police cooperation to enhance border controls to prevent cross-border criminal activity in the region. This argument could be refuted by the fact that the great majority of security initiatives, including cooperation within the Integrated Border Management (IBM) organization, were initiated externally and that the real driving force behind security integration is conditionality inherent in the Stabilisation and

Association Process (SAP). Critics claim that this conditionality is primarily motivated by the interests of EU member states to protect their own security by building up the capacities of Balkan security forces to act as a fortress rather than to support the democratisation of security forces and enable a freer flow of people across borders. While this is true for the whole region, other motivating factors for cooperation can be found at the level of national self-perception.

First, the President's draft NSS prioritises regional stability as one of the three goals of its national security policy. Seeing Serbia as a key factor for regional stability, the President's draft prioritises further enhancement of security stabilisation in the region and democratisation processes, as well as the creation of a climate of mutual trust and confidence. Greater involvement in regional cooperation is emphasized in the third priority of this draft document, in particular the necessity for Serbian armed forces to 'shift from being an importer of security to become an exporter of security' (p.6). The President's draft recognises the possibility of improving its foreign policy position through the use of Serbian forces in peace missions abroad and participation in regional security fora. The Prime Minister's draft lists regional security cooperation as one of its foreign policy priorities. This section does not include further explanation/motivation for participation in regional security initiatives, but through an examination of the detailed list of areas of possible cooperation<sup>142</sup>, we can conclude that it primarily involves burden-sharing. However, this draft clearly lists the priorities for bilateral cooperation and coordination dealing primarily with the resolution of lingering conflict-related problems such as the status of refugees and borders.

Interviewed professionals from the relevant ministries, especially the Ministry of Defence, also expressed their hope that participation in regional security initiatives will serve as an opportunity to promote and regain respect for their service and profession, both domestically and also with international sponsors of these activities<sup>143</sup>. In this respect, the Serbian Ministry of Defence has offered to provide its medical staff for peacekeeping missions, and has proposed its ABHO Centre in Krusevac and its Military Academy as regional centres of excellence. In parallel, the Ministry is opposed to an expansion of the Adriatic Charter A3 framework (Albania, Croatia and Macedonia) to include new PfP member countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia) who would be laggards in terms of compliance with NATO norms. Instead, the Ministry proposes the creation of a separate B3 framework which would allow new PfP member states to work closer together and to receive tailored assistance and support from the US to accelerate the NATO integration process. It is also assumed that such a B3 framework would facilitate a revival of Serbia's leadership role in the region.

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<sup>142</sup> From the cooperation in the fight of different types of trans-national crime to the common mechanisms for protection in the cases of natural disasters and emergencies.

<sup>143</sup> In the document describing international cooperation of the Ministry of Interior, it is highlighted that the regional cooperation 'aims above all at political affirmation of the country and identification of possibilities for establishing new bilateral relations'.

The second motivational factor for professionals to take an active part in security cooperation is the possibility that it would afford them an opportunity to learn how their colleagues resolved difficulties in the painful process of security sector reform and to share the burden through externally sponsored professional networks. For example, in the review of membership in different regional security initiatives undertaken as a part of the restructuring of the Stability Pact into the Regional Cooperation Council, representatives of the Ministry of Defence prioritised membership in the RACVIAC and its Defence Conversion Cell. This was explained as an opportunity to develop common strategies for the painful process of re-training surplus military officers, as well as military base and military industry conversion. However, when examining the scope of defence cooperation with neighbouring countries, it is indicative that Serbia has established closer connections with the three neighbouring NATO member states than with the successor states of the former Yugoslavia. In 2006, for example, the Ministry of Defence was involved in 28 high level projects with Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania and in only 20 with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Montenegro. This is probably a consequence of the distrust stemming from the experience of war, as well as prioritisation of cooperation with more successful countries than Serbia in the process of Euro-Atlantic integration.

The interviewees stressed that it was difficult to carry out a cost-benefit analysis of participation in existing regional initiatives because of the lack of clear policy guidelines at all government levels. The second major obstacle to a prioritisation of methods for regional cooperation is weak administrative capacities for horizontal coordination among the various ministries, as well as for analysis, planning and programming international assistance within the Ministries<sup>144</sup>. It is therefore no wonder that civil society has already assumed an agenda-setting role by preparing an analysis of the benefits of regional cooperation and by facilitating intra-state dialogue in the National EU Convent framework. All interviewees from both state institutions and civil society, however, highlighted the importance of regional ownership. The preferred ways of ensuring regional ownership are: first, greater representation and involvement in political fora which decide on priorities for regional cooperation; second, carrying out common assessments of threats and priorities; and third, putting procedures in place for operational cooperation among the forces in the region<sup>145</sup>.

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<sup>144</sup> The last comment is more relevant for the Ministry of Interior than for the MoD.

<sup>145</sup> The examples of such good practise which were frequently quoted are: SECI Centre to Combat Organized Crime, Regional MARRI Centre (migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees), Sava Commission.

## VII. Possible Implications Arising from a Resolution of Kosovo's Future Status

Apart from triggering diplomatic protests of unpredictable scope and determination, the period of resolution of Kosovo's final status will indirectly influence security sector reform in Serbia.

This has already become evident as demonstrated by Serbia's intention to permanently enhance its military and police presence in South Serbia, where the joint military-police Cepotina base near Bujanovac, also known as 'Serbian Bondsteel', is currently under construction at a slow pace. Based on statements made by military officials, it is likely that serving in that part of the territory will soon become a precondition for promotion, thus socialising the whole force within the framework of possible small-scale conflict escalation. This will necessitate greater development of community-based security, especially in ethnically mixed areas of Serbia, to ensure that ethnic minorities do not feel threatened by armed forces movements.

It is likely that the region of South Serbia will be most representative of the dynamics of resolution of the Kosovo issue. In the Platform Document published in January 2005, most local Albanian political leaders already demanded greater decentralisation and a significant transfer of competencies from the national level to their municipalities. They requested control of public and border security in the region by local police and the removal of gendarmerie forces based there, as well as greater autonomy regarding the economy and education. They also announced that their requests had to be in line with rights envisaged for the Serbian minority in Kosovo, as provided for in the Ahtisaari plan. Although there is no fear of major armed conflict spillover from Kosovo to South Serbia, there are likely to be future incidents within the Albanian community there<sup>146</sup>. This is due to the polarisation between 'the moderates' led by Riza Halimi – the only Albanian MP in the Serbian parliament – who ask for a solution within the Serbian state, and 'radicals', parties led by former commanders of the Liberation Army of Bujanovac, Presevo and Medvedja, who link their fate to the future of Kosovo. In the eyes of both the Serbian and Albanian communities it is evident that the Serbian Government should continue pacifying the region through greater economic assistance and involvement of national political authorities in the framework of the Coordination Body for South Serbia.

The last and most important consequence of the Kosovo issue is a radicalisation of Serbian politics. This does not mean that more people are voting for the right-wing Radical Party, but it does reflect an increase in right-wing discourse. Polarisation among political leaders regarding ethnic minority issues, – not reform policies – could trigger more incidents inspired by right-wing groups against domestic proponents of Euro-Atlantic integration, such as those witnessed

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<sup>146</sup> Such as the attack on Bujanovac mayor, Mr. Arifi who is from Riza Halimi's party. See <http://www.mod.gov.yu/000english/index-e.php>

recently in Belgrade, Novi Sad and inner Serbia<sup>147</sup>. Opposition to NATO membership has increased owing to the view expressed by the Prime Minister's camp that the Alliance is trying to create "the first NATO state in the world" in Kosovo. This trend is likely to persist over the short term during the ongoing negotiations to resolve the issue of the future status of Kosovo.

Prospects for Serbia's move into the consolidation phase of democratisation and security sector reform will largely depend on how it reacts from a security standpoint to the unfolding political efforts to resolve the issue of the future status of Kosovo, as well as progress achieved in other key policy areas such as the economy.

## Conclusion

Political rivalry and the outcome of the Kosovo negotiations will shape the future of Serbia's security policy – especially regarding possible NATO membership. There is widespread consensus favouring EU membership and opposing war and the use of violence. The negative consequences of the discourse by certain political circles, which focus exclusively on security aspects rather than acute economic issues, could lead to radicalisation and possible self-isolation.

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<sup>147</sup> Creation of Tsar Lazar guard of former veterans willing to defend Serbs in Kosovo and the threat to violently obstruct a marihuana march because it would have gathered traitors such as peace activists.

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2. Drazen Maravic, Head of Bureau for International Cooperation and European Integration, Ministry of Interior (9 May 2007).
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