

COOPERATION, SECURITY AND STABILITY: RECENT POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SPHERE OF REGIONAL STABILITY AND SECURITY

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Following the brief theoretical explanation of the security in the region of South East Europe, I will evaluate the post-9/11 challenges of the region and how they have shaped the region. Then, I will focus on the issues that are urgently to be addressed by the regional countries. Following that, I will take stock of the recent efforts for the strengthening of the regional cooperation and security, which I will try to put into unit perspective of security sector reform and track two dialogue, consisted of trans-border cooperation among non-governmental organizations and actors, as a means for furthering the regional cooperation.

South East Europe as a Security Region

Is the region of South East Europe, a security region in itself? The answer to this question is crucial for better understanding the security challenges of the region and for better design of the recommendations for the solutions of the problems that it currently faces.

The idea of security regions stems from the fact that regional and international security is a relations matter. Inter-state security is mostly about how states relate to each other in terms of dangers and risks. We cannot talk about the security of an isolated object. The region of South East Europe is enmeshed in a web of security interdependence. Most security threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones, insecurity is often associated with proximity. Most states fear their neighbors more than distant powers. However, with 9/11 this is no longer dominant. We have a threat, which links the North Atlantic security with the security of South East Europe. In the indivisibility of the security we have set of states whose major security perceptions and concerns are so interlinked that their national security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another. In South East Europe we have not been able to realize a pluralistic security community in which states no longer expect or prepare to use force in their relations with each other. The region lies in the middle, where the states still treat each other as potential threats but have made reassurance arrangements to reduce the security dilemma among them. The factors that prevent the South East Europe to become a security region in itself, are the nature of the post-9/11 threats, direct presence of outside powers in a region, and the inability of the countries of the region to project

power beyond their borders, which is strong enough to suppress the normal operation of security dynamics among the local states. Thus, a solution to the problems should be sought not on the region-based proposals but on the international ones that are applicable to the specific circumstances and conditions of the different issues in the region of South East Europe.

9/11 Implications to the Regional Security and Cooperation in South East Europe

9/11 have made it clearer the necessity for moving beyond the traditionalist regional security approaches, where regional security means the sum of national securities or rather a particular constellation of security interdependence among a group of states and adopt the wider agenda approach where we discuss the regional cooperation and security from the issue or unit perspective. Something is clear and that is the countries of the region are not able to deal with the trans-border threats without the support of the international community.

Region-based initiatives have not brought the expected outcome. There have been number of formal initiatives on the regional level, such as NATO's South East Europe Initiative, the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, the South East Europe Co-operation Process, South East Europe Defense Ministerial, the Multinational Peace Force South East Europe, SECI, Central European Initiative, Ionian Council, Royaumont Process. All of them have been successful to a certain level. Therefore, bilateral initiatives should be basis for all the initiatives in the region. We are not able to talk about the free movement of people and ideas in the region, where you do not have regular railway, bus, and air links between Skopje and Thessaloniki, Skopje and Tirana, Skopje and Sofia and vice versa.

The region is still in transition and the states are undergoing radical transformation encompassing all its aspects - political, military, economic, human, social, environmental, information, and others. The transition feature does not apply to the region only, it encompasses also the Euro-Atlantic collective defense Alliance of NATO. NATO itself is in a new face of the transformation. A transformation that radically will change the international community's approach to the region. Verbal commitments for the Euro-Atlantic integration and that 'our state is not a consumer of the security but a producer of the security' will not find positive reactions in Brussels. There will be need for the practical contribution. What this region can do is fight against transnational crimes, do not allow terrorists to take refuge in the region and do that in cooperation with neighboring countries. Cooperation in the intelligence area will further enhance the position of the regional countries in the eyes of the Alliance.

We are witnessing rising political stability in the region. However, the real test of the political stability will be in the upcoming elections in the countries of the region. It is the lack of political stability that hinders the chances of some NATO membership candidate countries to be ready enough for the upcoming Prague Summit in November. The era when we were proud of having democracy and free markets has passed. It is no longer privilege to have democratically elected government. What counts how much able you are to deal with your state's challenges within the institutions of

your state and how much the existing political dialogue is able to move the public discussion towards the crucial reforms for the better contribution to the international efforts for the fight against transnational threats.

We (the region of South East Europe) were not able to make significant progress towards peace and stability, therefore the challenges that currently exist in the region are enormous, because the challenges of 1990s have not been solved yet and these challenges are compounded by the post-9/11 challenges, which are beyond the capabilities of the countries in the region. No Balkan state can deal with these challenges by itself. Consequently, regional and international cooperation and also the ongoing integration processes are indispensable to address the challenges.

The challenges are frequently interconnected and aggravation in one can exacerbate the others, bringing unpredictable consequences. Not all challenges specifically affect each country or affect in similar degree. But, they can affect other countries due to indivisibility of security.

Allow me now to mention some of the issues that requires urgent attention by the governments that need to deal with them with other states in their vicinity:

1. The protection of the borders;
2. Terrorist activities and militant extremism. Links between local extremists and international terrorist and radical fundamentalist groups. Illegal armed groups that are or could in the future become operational against the security of States potentially challenge the stability of intra- and inter-State relations;
3. Organized crime, money laundering, illegal trafficking of arms, narcotics, human beings, components and materials for weapons of mass destruction are menaces to many countries and corruption;
4. Isolation and estrangement of nations are potentially significant challenges;
5. Lack of basic transport, energy and telecommunication infrastructure;
6. Existence of shadow economies, tax evasion, brain drain and qualified labor force migration. Illegal migration and massive refugee flows;
7. Reforming the security sector agencies; and
8. Development of the track two dialogue.

Security Sector Reform

The security sector reform needs further attention, which includes, overcoming the existing political, cultural and ideological gap between civilians and soldiers, transparency and accountability in the work of the security sector agencies, border guard consisted of specialized police force, increase of the civilian defense and security expertise, rooting out the corruption from the security sector and other issues that are significant for the compatibility of the region's security

sectors with EU and NATO standards. The region is in the era of second-generation reforms of security sector where more importance is given to the strengthening of the democratic control of armed forces and increasing the transparency and accountability of the armed forces. Police reform is another area where major attention is being given for the community policing and the establishment of the multiethnic police structures in the countries of the region. It is of major value to mention here the successes of the Republic of Macedonia and Serbia-Montenegro for the increase of the multi-ethnicity in the police structures.

Defense reform is a necessity and a high priority in the region and has its own set of challenges. Already, processes of reform are underway to reorient, re-organize and downsize them. Those countries aspiring to join NATO recognize the fact that their armed forces must be able to deal effectively with the full range of missions including collective defense and peace support operations. Achieving this end-state requires a long-term effort and a fresh look at reform of the broader security sector is required at all levels, national, regional and international.

Track Two Dialogue

The other area that needs further development is the Track Two Dialogue (T2) at the regional or bilateral level. By that we mean creation of the loose mechanisms among the civil societies in the region, consisted of wide range non-governmental networks and intellectuals existing in the region. With this, the institution of mechanisms for dialogue, consultation and cooperation can alleviate sources of tension, suspicion, and misunderstanding. The rationale is that such dialogue will lead to better appreciation of the concerns, interests and perceptions of the participating parts, enhancing mutual understanding and trust, and preventing misunderstandings and suspicions which are likely to cause tensions and even conflict. More generally, to serve as a mechanism for managing some of the uncertainty which presently confounds country's policy planners and analysts.

T 2 activities, carried out under the banner of private and non-governmental efforts, can gauge the possibility of a real track one (political track) opening. In this context, T 2 can facilitate opening of a wide range of dialogue on various topics. T 2 can come in various guises and capacities. However, in this paper I refer to a particular type of T2, which means a brand of diplomacy where dialogue and exchange are not held among governmental (political) organizations, but rather between non-governmental organizations.

More than just being a second track initiative, it can also in fact be transformed into a policy network with immense intellectual influence, which can also help the region in its other future national and regional efforts. It should be explored that T 2 produce salutary benefits beyond the mere exchange of ideas and information. The emphasis should be made that T 2 becomes more offering solutions, rather than confronting or exposing the ineptitude of respective political factors. The members of T 2 shall have independent opinions and ideas of their own, but they should be selected from a pool of NGOs who can mingle comfortably with members of the first track, such as President, political party leaders, ministers, foreign policy officials, ambassadors, and even army personnel.

The benefits emerging from T2 are three fold. First, they provide an avenue for establishing transparency in terms of sensitive security issues, while at the same time improving perceptions concerning a motives and intentions of the parties in the negotiations. Misperceptions, often harbingers of imminent clashes of conflict, can be greatly reduced. Secondly, the T2 itself is a positive development in a region where we lack a proper communication. Finally, it is hoped, these unofficial talks will influence and ascend to higher levels of 'official' interaction between political factors. T2 tends towards breaking down stereotypes.

Accordingly, as the line of communication becomes more open and accurate, the ability to see each other's intentions more clearly and fully follows. This allows a more thorough and careful evaluation of policy. Thus a commitment to a mutual, cooperative exchange develops which helps to move the participants towards the ultimate objective of solving the problems.

Conclusion

Following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the issue of the regional cooperation in South East Europe, asks for the new perspective in the evaluation of the current form of regional cooperation. Conditions of 1990s for the development of regional cooperation, no longer applies in the current era of post-9/11. Regional cooperation at the regional level should be strengthened with bilateral cooperation and coordination. The regional cooperation at the bilateral level, will give further boost for the overcoming the difficulties that are ahead of the countries of the region of South East Europe.