

# Crises in Southeast Europe (1990-1999): Have we learned anything?

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## ABSTRACT

Although Southeast Europe has been a source and scene of wider European conflicts in the twentieth century, crisis management by the EU, NATO, OSCE, succeeded only temporarily in extinguishing the fire and removing the sources of conflict. Therefore, the international community should apply short-term crisis management and devise long-term proposals for the region. The Stability Pact may indeed achieve a stabilization of the region if regional players are included and their long-term goals are incorporated into the integral strategy for the region. Both regional governmental and non-governmental think tanks could significantly contribute to the creation of progressive solutions within the comprehensive strategy for the region and thus to the success of the Stability Pact as the main vehicle of the strategy.

## Introduction

The 20th century was a century of three world wars, with tens of millions of casualties on the Eurasian continent. Central European powers, which dominated Eurasia at the beginning of the century, lost their might in two bloody conflicts. Only 50 years ago the seemingly multi-polar balance of world power was replaced by bipolar Cold war conflict. Brief bloody conflicts of previous era were replaced by the continuous struggle of the superpowers. Irrationality of nuclear escalation made the Cold War environment last for a long 40 year period. When the economically weaker Soviet Empire collapsed at the end of the Cold War, political leaders made us believe that important lessons were well learned and that the "New World Order" will not allow such enormous waste of human lives and potential creativity to recur. But the conflict in former Yugoslavia served as an unfortunate

example that human nature has not changed and that historical lessons were not learned by all.

The end of Communism challenged the European political elite in ways that were not expected. Building democratic societies and market economies in former communist countries in Eastern Europe proved to be a difficult task. The collapse of former Yugoslavia became the contemporary case study of both failures and achievements of diplomatic intervention that should be well analyzed. The wars in Yugoslavia have more clearly than ever before showed the value of an effective conflict prevention mechanism in terms of saving lives.

Different states with different political systems left their marks in the region usually called "the Balkans"<sup>1</sup>: Ottoman and Habsburg empires, the first and the second Yugoslavia. It is a region where Islamic and Christian religions, and Eastern and Western civilizations and cultures meet. The influences and interests of world powers have always played an important role in shaping the regional political map as well.

Susan Woodward noted that conflicts were fed by old problems stemming from relations between nations and territories, which resulted from compromises, made after previous regional and world wars.<sup>2</sup> But, as Richard Perle has said, contrary to common wisdom, the disassociation of Yugoslavia was not the result of hundred years old hatred among nations, but of Milošević's intentional program to obstruct a delicate balance which was fundamental for the existence of Yugoslavia.

The Stability Pact has recently been offered as yet another attempt of Southeast Europe. However, it is important to examine the Pact in a context of lessons learned from the breakup of the former Yugoslavia. Too much time has already been wasted on and Southeast Europe should not wait any longer to join the rest of Europe in its democracy and prosperity.

## Short historical overview

Supreme Allied Commander for Europe, General Wesley Clark, recently<sup>3</sup> stated that the region of Southeast Europe geographically belongs to the European periphery, but strategically to its center. The region has been for five centuries an area of collision of tectonic plates of interests and influence of European imperial powers. Each nation in the Balkan region was supported by some European power at some time in its history and those historical links are still important up to a certain level today. Primarily the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Russia and Ottoman Empire, but also imperial Germany, France and the United Kingdom found it politically necessary to protect their own interests in this region. But history has also produced religious and cultural differences among the nations of the region, which was an important inner

source of numerous conflicts.

Southeastern Europe has already suffered five wars in this century. In 1912-13 the Balkan League was created to fight for territories under the rule of the decaying Ottoman Empire. During the summer of 1913, Serbia, Greece, and Romania fought with Bulgaria over control of Macedonia. World War I erupted after the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo in June 1914 by pro-Serbian extremists.

The Treaty of Versailles created a multi-ethnic Yugoslavia, composed of Slavs and other ethnic and religious groups. Its first official name was the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Croatian and Slovenian political parties wanted unification with the Kingdom of Serbia even before the outbreak of the First World War in order to protect their cultural and national identity from assimilation in German and Hungarian culture. However, the new, enlarged Serbian Kingdom was not formed in 1918 on a federative basis as Croats and Slovenes had openly desired, but as a centralized parliamentary monarchy, in which the Serbian nation exercised effective domination over the police, military and bureaucracy.

After World War II, J. B. Tito established an authoritarian communist regime in Yugoslavia. He was at first supported by Stalin, but since 1948 Yugoslavia defined itself as non-aligned in its international orientation. In this communist Yugoslavia the sense of belonging to a nation was replaced by the communist ideology. But Tito, who was half Croat and half Slovene, created national communist parties, unlike Stalin, and instead of completely suppressing national feelings, used them in his favor, but in a very controlled and careful fashion. The balance of national power within Yugoslavia was possible because Tito was a dictator able to easily eliminate any outstanding national/communist leader.

The West nurtured such a Yugoslavia. Former US Ambassador in Yugoslavia W. Zimmermann noted: "Successive US governments believed that Yugoslavia could become a model for independence as well as for the Eastern European political system that, though regrettably communist, could be more open politically and more decentralized economically than the Soviet satellites. Yugoslavia's position between hostile Eastern and Western camps made its unity a major Western concern. As long as the Cold war continued, Yugoslavia was a protected and sometimes pampered child of American and Western diplomacy."<sup>4</sup> Some political analysts say that Tito's Yugoslavia was the best-positioned communist country for transition to a Western style market economy because of its openness to western business and cultural influences, especially in the Slovenian and Croatian parts of the country.

After Tito died, Yugoslavia had no inner interests to preserve the balance of national powers and continue its existence.

Specifically, Kosovo, an autonomous province of Serbia, where ethnic Albanians comprise a 90% majority, was a hot spot of ethnic strife between Serbs and Albanians, which has existed continuously from 1912 when Kosovo became a part of the Serbian Kingdom. Military, financial and political power in the former Yugoslavia was tied to Belgrade, the Yugoslav Communist Party and the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA). Through these institutions, Serbs dominated all the republics and nations of the former Yugoslavia. The military power was concentrated in the hands of the JNA, with 70-85% of the officer corps consisting of Serbian officers.

In mid 1980s, the basis for conflict was set. The Croatian and Slovenian political elite were openly opposed to the use of repression against Albanians in Kosovo, fearful that such treatment would be later applied to them. In 1986, Serbian nationalist intellectuals made public an infamous document named "Memorandum" which had two significant effects: it mobilized Serbian communist politicians on a nationalistic basis; it also mobilized other nations within Yugoslavia to oppose Serbian domination in politics, military and government. The polarization among nations was well under way in 1987 when Milošević, an anonymous assistant to the chief of the Serbian communist party, Ivan Stambolić, made his first public speech to mutinous Serbs in Kosovo Polje, one of a few towns with a Serbian majority in Kosovo. The Serbian Orthodox Church stood by him, and the Serbian political elite swiftly supported him. In 1989, before the first democratic elections were about to take place throughout Yugoslavia's republics, Milošević gave an infamous speech in front of one million galvanized Serbs at the place where Serbs suffered a historic defeat from the Turkish army in 1389. In his speech, he openly threatened war in an open manner with any one of the Yugoslav nations if Serbian domination became endangered. Due to their inability to achieve equality of relations within the former Yugoslavia, the Yugoslav republics of Slovenia and Croatia ultimately initiated a process of peaceful disassociation based on constitutional provisions in effect at that time. In the spring of 1990, shortly after election results in Croatia and Slovenia were announced, Milošević gave a speech in Rakovica, an industrial suburb of Belgrade, in front of Serbian workers who demanded their unpaid salaries: "If you are not skilled to work, you are skilled to fight!"

### **Crises management: UNPROFOR, IFOR, SFOR, KFOR, ...**

In the summer of 1991, the JNA first attacked Slovenia and then Croatia. Maintaining a unified Yugoslavia appeared to be the only acceptable solution for the international community<sup>5</sup> at that time, former US Secretary of State James Baker publicly stat-

ed that the JNA would militarily defeat Slovenia and Croatia in less than 15 days. Such a public statement from a senior US official may have served as a green light for the JNA to trigger its military operations in Slovenia. The armed conflict in Croatia, where Croats refused to simply surrender, quickly escalated into full-fledged war - many Croatian cities, such as Vukovar and Dubrovnik, were heavily shelled and held under siege by JNA and Serbian paramilitaries. The international community imposed an arms embargo on the former Yugoslavia as a whole, which in an ironic twist affected the victim and not the much better equipped aggressor. The international community's only assistance to victims of the aggression was in a limited form of humanitarian aid.

The war in Croatia resulted in thousands of casualties and hundreds of thousands of refugees in Croatia by the fall of 1991. Lawrence Eagleburger, the US Secretary of State at the time, later claimed: "We didn't have an agreement among ourselves on how important it was, how dangerous it was, and by the time it got dangerous, there were these splits within the Western community".<sup>6</sup> By the beginning of 1992, Croatia and the other republics of former Yugoslavia were recognized by the international community as independent states on the basis of the findings of the Badinter Commission.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, Serb rebels and the JNA, using military power, gained control of over 27% of Croatian territory and proclaimed it as their state known as "Krajina", which had never existed as a territorial or political entity in the former Yugoslavia.

In the beginning of 1992, with the approval of the European Community, the JNA re-deployed their entire military arsenal from Slovenia and Croatia to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Local Serbs employed the newly acquired heavy artillery from Slovenia and Croatia around Bosnian cities such as Sarajevo and Bihać, and the Serb shelling of civilian targets began again. President George Bush, the victor of the Gulf War in 1990, warned Milošević that the US would be prepared to use force if the UN forces deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina were attacked. In a way, this was the beginning of a dialogue between the US and Serb leadership under Milošević, who was always treated as the key player capable of bringing peace to the region. W. Zimmerman expressed his opinion with the following words: "Milošević in the full flush arrogance was illustrating three important character traits: his cynicism about Yugoslavia's unity and institutions, his natural duplicity, and the pains he always took to avoid direct responsibility for aggressive actions. The third trait was to become particularly relevant to Milošević's hidden hand in the Croatian and Bosnian wars."<sup>8</sup>

In 1992, the UN organized a peacekeeping operation under the name of UNPROFOR and its forces were deployed to Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was the biggest ever UN peace

keeping operation. Evident lack of leadership, stemming from political differences and the particular interests of nations, both in the Security Council and the United Nations, and the unclear mandate of the UNPROFOR resulted in such peculiarities as a double chain of command. Hence, UNPROFOR commanders and officials from different countries acted on what they believed were the interests of their own particular countries and not on a common objective. In general, UNPROFOR was not able to cope with numerous crises, which were daily events in the region, so the overall credibility of the UN significantly deteriorated. It is enough to recall the incident when the Bosnian Serb army took UN soldiers hostage and chained them to the bridges and fences of military facilities, transmitting their pictures to the world in order to humiliate them. Another example is the fall of Srebrenica, the UN designated "safe area", monitored and secured by Dutch troops. The Bosnian Serb armies besieged the town and killed more than seven thousand Muslims in less than three days and UN peacekeeping troops were again humiliated. Eventually, the spring and summer of 1995 showed that one of the main problems for the international community was not how to stop fighting in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but how to extract helpless UN troops from the hell.

During 1993, the war in Bosnia reached its maximum intensity. Well-armed Serbs gained effective control of over 70% of Bosnian territory, meaning also that Croats and Muslims were expelled or exterminated from Serbian controlled territory. This situation created strained relations between Croats and Muslims, and finally led to a war between them, because of mutual distrust and fear of losing remaining territories. This relatively short but nonetheless bloody war between Croats and Muslims continues to be a source of mutual distrust and political conflict even today in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In March 1994, Croats and Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina signed the Washington Agreements under influence from the US. In December of that same year, the Croatian Army began an offensive along the strategic areas of the Croatia-Bosnia border. This was the turning point of the war in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. There were many previous attempts at the peaceful reintegration of Croatia, but overall there was no success. Eventually, the Croatian Army undertook Operations "Flash" and "Storm" in the summer of 1995. In a couple of days, the previously occupied 25% of Croatian territory was liberated. In the fall of 1995, after a coordinated effort by the Croatian Army, Bosnian Croat Forces and the Army of B-H resulted in the liberation of over 50% of Bosnian territory. The US, believing that a balance of military power was final-

ly reached and that negotiations could take place, called for an immediate halt of all operations and prevented the military defeat of the Bosnian Serbs. One may speculate that there was a fear of total military victory of joint Croatian and Muslim forces over Serbs in Bosnia because it could cause a great flow of refugees into Serbia from Bosnia, which would eventually destabilize Milošević's power.

The response of the Croatian Serb leadership, who were losing militarily, was to order all Serbs to leave Croatia. The same pattern has been repeated in Kosovo: although they were given all assurances for their safety by the international community, more than 70% of the Serbian population has left Kosovo since the KFOR troops entered the province, and the rest are leaving on a daily basis. It is obvious that this large exodus of the Serbian population has not been a result of organized ethnic persecution, but of a carefully designed policy by the Serbian leadership to retain Milošević in power.

However, even this incomplete victory of joint Croat and Muslim forces in the fall of 1995 created preconditions required for bringing Serbs to the negotiating table and resulted in the signing of the Dayton Agreements in 1995. Richard Perle of the American Enterprise Institute concluded that the crisis in former Yugoslavia was the result of an inaccurate interpretation of events and lack of will from the international community to act in a timely manner. His opinion is also that the Dayton Agreements was made possible by the strength and vigor of the Croatian and Bosnian military action.<sup>9</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina officially became a state consisting of two entities. The international peace-keeping forces under NATO leadership entered the country and a *de facto* international protectorate was established. IFOR / SFOR forces were successful in dividing warring parties, disarming military elements, and, finally, in establishing and keeping virtual peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The restructuring of civil society and so-called nation building in Bosnia and Herzegovina has not met with the same level of success.

Susan Woodward from the Brookings Institute claimed that NATO did not have the institutional capacity to develop a consciousness about the real sources of the problem. The consequences of that can be illustrated by the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is barely able to function as a state, and all its nations are unsatisfied by the political provisions.<sup>10</sup>

The UN High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in charge of the social reconstruction provisioned by the Dayton Agreements, was not able to produce the desired results. The former commander of SFOR, General Leighton W. Smith commented: "On the civil side, Carl Bildt, the first HR, was given an impossible task. His challenge was to coordinate the work of hundreds

of private volunteer organizations (PVO) and non-governmental organizations (NGO), very few of which wanted any part of being told what to do. Bildt had no staff and no plan."<sup>11</sup>

In 1999, Slobodan Milošević decided to take the next step in his thus far unsuccessful political program of creating a Greater Serbia: his military and police forces intensified the campaign of repression in Kosovo. The NATO air strikes that followed did not preclude the humanitarian disaster in the province. On the contrary, the ground offensive intensified and resulted in one million refugees and tens of thousands of casualties. After 78 days, the air campaign over Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro, and Vojvodina, stopped and international forces entered the Kosovo province.

## Consequences of the crises

Today, the region of Southeast Europe enters the 21st century faced with at least the same number of problems in 1991. The situation in the region may be considered even more complex today than ten years ago. It has finally been realized, however, that those problems were inherent and structural, and that they can be resolved only with a comprehensive approach, addressing a wide range of issues in a systematic manner.

A tragic chain of events in the former Yugoslavia started with war in Slovenia in 1990 and lasted for almost ten years. The conflict in Southeast Europe has produced important implications not only for Europe, but also for other parts of the world. The results on the ground were hundreds of thousands killed and over one million refugees, mostly to Croatia, Germany, Italy, Macedonia and a few other countries. In the humanitarian sense, the refugees fleeing to neighboring and distant countries seeking aid were not foreseen and anticipated by European power centers in 1990.

Armed conflicts in Southeast Europe from 1991 to 1999 have resulted in the displacement of whole nations, massive human casualties and traumas. Infrastructure has been devastated, economies ruined, investments stopped, and many well-educated people, who were capable of contributing to the recovery of regional economies, have left the region permanently. The emotional profile of individuals and of even whole nations has been reshaped, and thus their political attitudes have been changed. Differences among the nations of Southeast Europe prior to the escalation of conflicts in 1991 have deepened in the last ten years.

The inability of the international community to predict events and initiate a timely reaction certainly contributed to this huge tragedy. It appears that the chief preoccupation of the international community - primarily the European Union - at the beginning of the crisis in 1991 was focused elsewhere. At the time, Central and Eastern Europe and relations with Russia were chief



concerns. Events in Southeast Europe were ignored and neglected. Unfortunately, the implications of the conflict in Southeast Europe on relations between European nations, between the European Union and the United States, between NATO and Russia, and the decline in significance of the United Nations, were severely underestimated.

Lawrence Eagleburger admitted that the international community was not ready to act at the beginning of the crisis, partly because Southeast Europe was not perceived as a region of significant interest. Had the international community acted on time, the bloody disintegration of Yugoslavia (but not the disassociation of Yugoslavia itself) could have been avoided.<sup>12</sup>

The international community has not only failed to predict these tragic events but also in rare instances when predictions proved accurate has failed to prevent and respond to the early phases of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Some analysts predicted the Kosovo crisis even in 1994: "If violence were to break out, many Kosovars would be slaughtered and as many as 400,000 would flee. Massive refugee flows would have drastic consequences on Serbia's neighbors. Though many Kosovars could flee to Albania, the majority are likely to go to Macedonia, where President Kiro Gligorov publicly cannot even discuss plans for refugees because it would destabilize the government. Since refugee planning is totally inadequate and Macedonian resources are non-existent, many refugees could not be contained in Macedonia, so their movement in an effort to find safe access to the West would likely continue south towards Greece. Some would arm and return to fight Serbs in Kosovo."<sup>13</sup> The international community was once again not ready to act in time and thus not able to prevent the Kosovo crisis in 1999 and its catastrophic consequences, in spite of having previous experiences in engagement in the region from 1991 to 1998, from Slovenia and Croatia to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

One early response of the international community to the crises in Southeast Europe was to deploy a number of envoys with the difficult task of communicating with local leaders. The international community frequently rotated its envoys, which resulted in many confused attempts to reach solutions that were either based on flawed assumptions and concepts or failed at some point in the implementation. It is of critical importance that decision-making is based on a comprehensive understanding of the region and its diversities, rather than ad-hoc decision-making by individuals entering the region in a manner of rotating, shuttle - diplomacy envoys.

Two important lessons may be extracted from the history of the region in order to apply accepted solutions. First, short-term actions of the international community should be consistent with

long-term solutions, or short-term solutions as a part of crisis management must be flexible enough and open for later adjustments. Second, the preemptive actions must be decisive and without delays. Timely reactions save resources just as timing delays increase the costs of regional stabilization. The actions of the international community proved to be reactive as opposed to proactive. Evidently, the international community lacks initiative, which thereupon affects its power to shape regional politics. The quick and timely deployment of 600 soldiers to Macedonia in 1992 proved to be the most effective preemptive action of the international community in the last ten years, especially compared to the delay in sending 60,000 soldiers to Bosnia, which resulted in little real progress. This demonstrates the deterrent value and ultimate cost-effectiveness of timely decision making.

“Prevention, however, is not only a question of mechanisms, it is also a question of resources and capacity. How do we generate the political will and resources to prevent new conflicts from breaking out? How do we build consensus on strengthening preventive diplomacy in Nagorno-Karabakh or Central-Asia, when Bosnia and Kosovo are laying claim to such enormous resources?”<sup>14</sup>

## **A Need for Comprehensive Strategy**

The international community must achieve two main goals in Southeast Europe: sustain viable peace in the region through the establishment of conflict-prevention mechanisms and devise a long-range self-sustainable political solution for regional stabilization. The instabilities of this region seriously affect relations within the international community, which cannot afford to invest in a regional stabilization that shows no real progress. In the words of D. Daianu, a regional expert: “However, it seems to me that crisis management in this region is of a different variety in that it has to be projected over the long term. It has to be an exercise linked with the nature of conflicts among the local players. It may take many years, if not decades, for the wounds to heal. It may require the presence of “outsiders” for a long period of time.”<sup>15</sup> He continues: “tackling Southeastern Europe, in my view, needs to be viewed from two inter-related perspectives. The first is an exercise in crisis management, which aims at arresting (reversing where possible) bad path-dependencies. The second perspective concerns reconstruction, a two-pronged strategic endeavor: physical reconstruction (of the infrastructures destroyed by war); and development (modernization), including institutional and political change.”<sup>16</sup>

Southeast Europe has historically had many causal influences, which are still visible in regional economic, cultural, religious and demographic structures. As Istvan Gyarmati, senior counsel to the

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary, has correctly noted, reasons for western misunderstanding of the nature of conflicts lay partly in the fact that they were outside the experiences of developed democracies. The values of the western democracies are unfortunately not shared by two thirds of the world population.<sup>17</sup>

To find a real solution to the crisis, the international community first needs to better understand the origins and characteristics of the problems and to learn lessons from the past. Although all the conflicts in former Yugoslavia between 1991-1999 seemingly had the same origins and were, therefore, rather predictable - reactions of the international community were late and inadequate, and lacked clear vision and realistic goals. As the conflict spread and the suffering increased, emotional factors came into play and the situation worsened. The differences of opinion among members of the international community and their inconsistent reactions damaged its overall credibility.

In the words of J. Simon: "The European Union (EU) and West European Union (WEU) remain "blind" to many of the region's countries and their problems. Unfortunately, some of the actions these organizations have taken may have had a negative effect on the region's stability."<sup>18</sup>

He continues: "The roots of Balkan insecurity and instability can be attributed to at least the following four interrelated problems: (1) psychological factors; (2) state-building challenges; (3) economic development; and (4) security/defense issues. Efforts to eradicate the sources of Balkan insecurity and conflict must attack all these problems simultaneously. Because NATO is only effective in ameliorating two of the four problems—psychological and security/defense—a more comprehensive and coordinated strategy is necessary."<sup>19</sup>

The international community was, until recently, focused on efforts to bring an end to armed conflicts in the region. Nowadays, when these efforts have brought results both in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo, it is time to initiate a process that will lead to self-sustaining long-term stability in the region and to the establishment of regional deterrents to discourage further conflicts.

The active participation of local players in the region is crucial for the achievement of long-term and sustainable results, as they have a more comprehensive understanding of events and are aware of realistic constraints. Thus, they can actively contribute to finding a long-term solution for the region. It is obvious that the analytical support and education of the decision-makers regarding preventive action and long-term strategies must be improved. An important constraint that is often forgotten under the pressure to achieve results is time dynamics. It is not realistic to expect that

deep emotional, psychological, social and economic wounds can be forgotten and their effects neglected in just six months (which was the intended duration of the first mandate of the peacekeeping forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina – IFOR), or in a couple of years. In the words of Knut Vollebaek: “Peace and stability cannot be imposed from outside. The international community must get people to work together in order to solve common problems. I have no illusions about the complexity of this task. It will take decades to achieve.”<sup>20</sup> The manner in which former Yugoslavia collapsed taught us a valuable lesson: each of the nations in the area needs time for its own “transition” and realization of its full identity. Only after reaching this “stable identity”, inherent to a democracy, the sovereign nations of former Yugoslavia will be able to reach excellent neighborly relations. However, continuous convergence toward a long-term solution can and must be assured.

## **The Stability Pact for Southeast Europe**

The Stability Pact for Southeast Europe is an initiative that integrates political, economic and security efforts in order to stabilize the region. The Stability Pact for Southeast Europe is the result of an initiative by the German EU Presidency, and was accepted with the consensus of all members of the European Union on June 10, 1999 in Cologne. It is supported both by the US and Russia. The Declaration of the heads of state and governments of the participating and facilitating countries of the Stability Pact and the Principals of participating and facilitating international organizations and agencies and regional initiatives was adopted in Sarajevo on July 30, 1999.

The Stability Pact is a response to the need for comprehensive, long-term and regional action in southeastern Europe.<sup>21</sup> The Pact has been established as a forum where the participants will be able to discuss measures to strengthen democracy, respect for human rights, economic growth, confidence building and arms control, and thus ensure greater security and stability in the region.<sup>22</sup> But this forum should also have the financial capability to help its members in reconstruction and modernization projects in the region.

The Stability Pact for Southeast Europe is a serious attempt by the international community to find a strategy for the prevention of future conflicts and aims to establish a self-sustaining democratic and economic system in Southeast Europe. To reach these goals, the initiators of the Pact attempted to be realistic and based the Pact on the principle of equality, since it hopes to make it acceptable to interested countries.

The Declaration of the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe at the Summit in Sarajevo<sup>23</sup> states that “the countries of the region

are the owners of the stabilization process and their full efforts and commitments to this undertaking are crucial for its success." Possessing the capability to bring an end to armed conflicts, NATO member countries should play a main role in the stabilization processes. But only active involvement and communication with the countries in the region can result in natural and acceptable solutions for regional entities leading to a successful regional stabilization.

It is very important to clearly state the final goals of the Pact, and that those goals ensure achievement of strategic political and security interests of regional states. The activities of the international community must be consistently focused on achieving that end-state, which for the countries in the region is represented by general modernization and westernization in both an economic and military sense, and inclusion into Euro-Atlantic institutions, EU and NATO.

The economic dimension of the Stability Pact cannot be overemphasized. "Ethnic conflict is often rooted in the economic and social disparities in a region, both within and across national borders. Regional economic growth and reduced poverty therefore provide the best basis for stability. The conflicts in and around the former Yugoslavia are a good illustration of this. They show that to each long-term solution we must focus just as much on economic reform and development as on democratization, institution building, respect for human and minority rights and military security."<sup>24</sup> Regional economic discrepancies may be one of the sources of political conflict among regional nations. D. Daianu noted: "...the region is, by far, the least developed of the Continent. There are also major discrepancies inside the region resulting in the strong propensity of the better-off countries (such as Slovenia, Croatia) to cut off links with the rest of the region..."<sup>25</sup>

If the international community does not want to repeat costly failures made in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which may be viewed as a small-scale model of the whole region, it must understand regional differences and must cautiously approach emotionally charged issues. All participants in the Pact should pay attention to the history and complex relations among the nations in the region. A constructive approach to stabilization in Southeast Europe for most regional players can be achieved by accelerating economic development, and by integration in international political, economic and military organizations. In this way, values of the West will be adopted in a most natural manner by regional players and will lead to changes in their behavior.

## Conclusions

acteristics of a feasible, self-sustaining long-term solution for disputes in Southeast Europe. Inaccurate assumptions and simplification of problems can lead to unstable or unfeasible solutions. In such instances, solutions tend to be difficult to implement, very expensive to carry out, and are continuously unstable. Realistic constraints - financial, cultural, psychological, and political - have to be taken into account. Otherwise, the proposed solutions, which seem good in theory, are prone to fail in practice, as they are rife with internal contradictions and become impossible to sustain.

An integrated analytical approach to the fulfillment of the goals of the Stability Pact is required, which includes the best methods for crisis management. The synergetic effect in achieving adequate regional stability will be obtained by stimulating the active participation of cooperative regional players and regional think tanks in adopting strategic solutions. In order to make the Stability Pact a success, it is essential to fully include the experts from the region into the process. The regional countries involved should not be left out and viewed only as objects of the stabilization process.

A systematic approach to regional conflicts also requires taking into account more than just military factors; it must include economic, cultural, humanitarian, sociological, religious, legislative, demographic, historic and other relevant factors. In that context, an important component of such an approach is a socio-psychological and emotional dimension of the problem and recognition of the characteristics of actors on the local, regional and macro level.

Given the future changes in the regional political military environment, there is a clear need to improve the training and education of both military and civilian decision-makers and analysts in international organizations, especially in the region.

Militaries clearly have to understand that it becomes more difficult and complex to use military power in political-military crises, especially given the new sources of threats and instabilities. Analytical simplified models used in the Cold War are now insufficient and the future will challenge them even more. Rob de Wijk from the Clingendael Institute for International Relations assesses that conflicts in the future will emerge mainly within a country, not between states. They will be conducted on a high technological level, with very motivated combatants, often in urban areas and with the use of weapons of mass destruction. Such asymmetric conflicts will be the best choice of the weaker side in the conflict.<sup>26</sup> New security management oriented towards crisis prevention rather than crisis management requires different training of both analysts and decision-makers alike, but the education of international and regional political leaders is critical.

Powerful and reliable analytical methods require equally reliable data, which rarely exist in the offices of public and non-government institutions. It is therefore important to skillfully coordinate data gathering, analytical activities and decision making. Decision-makers need desperately better analytical support to assist them in framing the questions and weighing the alternative strategies, in order to avoid unproductive decisions. Sound analysis also requires the availability of the most accurate, timely and focused data. The data gatherers must understand issues that decision-makers are addressing to enable collection of appropriate data. An initiative to develop coordinated multilateral regional data collection and exchange system regarding so-called "soft" security issues like immigration, organized crime, drugs trafficking, and a limited number of "hard" security issues like the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional arms control, etc., may support these efforts in Southeast Europe.

D. Daianu noted: "...this region causes most of the headaches for European policymakers, thereby adding fodder to the talk about new dividing lines on the Continent. It is true that a similar logic (language) can be applied on an East-West axis, when one refers to Ukraine and Russia as well. However, I would say that the sense of urgency is and should be much higher for the Balkans. What has occurred in the last ten years in this region, in terms of losses of human life, substantiates this assertion."<sup>27</sup>

In the future, one of the most important tasks of the international community is to develop and maintain a comprehensive strategy for the long-term stabilization of the region. Problems in Southeast Europe are complex, chronic and recurring, and therefore a thorough analysis and appropriate understanding is required before solutions can be proposed. The international community, including and relying on regional actors, should quickly and decisively undertake preventive measures when required, if it wants to avoid similar disasters in the future, based on lessons learned from 1991 to 1999 in Southeast Europe.

In the words of K. Vollebaek: "We need to contribute to what UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has called 'a culture of prevention'".<sup>28</sup> No single security institution (OSCE, EU/WEU, NATO) or country (such as the United States) is capable of resolving all the sources of Balkan insecurity alone. Because psychological factors, state-building challenges, economic development problems, and security/defense issues are all interrelated aspects of Balkan insecurity, a comprehensive "action program" needs to be created and implemented.<sup>29</sup>

Political stabilization must be based on economic prospects for the region. All countries (including Serbia, when it transforms into a democratic society) should have an equal position in the search for solutions. As a part of Europe, the nations in the

Southeast have every right to strive for a better future.

## NOTES

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- 1 We will use the term "Southeast Europe" instead.
- 2 In their respective speeches at the conference "NATO and Southeast Europe".
- 3 In his speech, "Lessons of Kosovo", given at the American Enterprise Institute on August 31, 1999.
- 4 Zimmermann W., former US ambassador in Yugoslavia, in his book, "Origins of a Catastrophe", p 7.
- 5 We will use the term "international community" when appropriate instead of the long term "the NATO, EU, the US, and individual European national governments".
- 6 According to: Dan Oberdorfer, "A Bloody Failure in the Balkans: Prompt Allied Action Might have Averted Factional Warfare," Washington Post, February 8, 1993, A1.
- 7 SFRJ's Constitution from 1974 provided for a peaceful disassociation of the federal state. The Socialistic Federative Republic of Yugoslavia was the official name of Yugoslavia at the time.
- 8 Zimmermann W., former US ambassador in Yugoslavia, in his book "Origins of a Catastrophe," p 125.
- 9 In his speech at the conference "NATO and Southeastern Europe", April 25-27, 1999, Washington DC.
- 10 In her speech at the conference "NATO and Southeastern Europe", April 25-27, 1999, Washington DC.
- 11 Leighton W. Smith, "NATO's IFOR in Action: Lessons from the Bosnian Peace Support Operations," Strategic Forum, INSS, National Defense University, USA, No. 154, January 1999.
- 12 In his speech at the conference "NATO and Southeastern Europe," April 25-27, 1999, Washington DC.
- 13 Binnendijk H., Simon J., "Preventing a Sixth Twentieth-Century Balkan War," Strategic Forum, INSS, National Defense University, October 1994.
- 14 Knut Vollebaek, Foreign Minister of Norway, Chairman-in-Chief of the OSCE, in his speech "OSCE priorities for Southeastern Europe," Athens, October 22, 1999.
- 15 Daianu D., President, Romanian Institute for Economic Policy, Bucharest, Romania, in his paper "Reconstruction in SE Europe".
- 16 Daianu D., President, Romanian Institute for Economic Policy, Bucharest, Romania, in his paper "Reconstruction in SE Europe".
- 17 In his speech at the conference "NATO and Southeast Europe."
- 18 J. Simon, "The Sources of Balkan Insecurity: The Need for a Comprehensive Strategy," Strategic Forum, INSS, National Defense University, USA, No 150, October 1998.
- 19 J. Simon, "The Sources of Balkan Insecurity: The Need for a Comprehensive Strategy", Strategic Forum, INSS, National Defense University, USA, No 150, October 1998.
- 20 Knut Vollebaek, Foreign Minister of Norway, Chairman-in-Chief of the OSCE, in his speech, "OSCE Priorities for Southeastern Europe," Athens, October 22, 1999.
- 21 Knut Vollebaek, Foreign Minister of Norway, Chairman-in-Chief of the OSCE, in his



- speech, "OSCE Priorities for Southeastern Europe", Athens, October 22, 1999.
- 22 Knut Vollebaek, Foreign Minister of Norway, Chairman-in-Chief of the OSCE, in his speech, "OSCE Priorities for Southeastern Europe," Athens, October 22, 1999.
- 23 Sarajevo Summit Declaration of the heads of state and governments of the participating and facilitating countries of the Stability Pact and the Principals of participating and facilitating international organizations and agencies and regional initiatives, Sarajevo, July 30, 1999, Article 5.
- 24 Knut Vollebaek, Foreign Minister of Norway, Chairman-in-Chief of the OSCE, in his speech, "OSCE priorities for Southeastern Europe", Athens, October 22, 1999.
- 25 Daianu D., President, Romanian Institute for Economic Policy, Bucharest, Romania, in his paper, "Reconstruction in SE Europe."
- 26 In his speech at the conference "NATO and Southeastern Europe."
- 27 Daianu D., President, Romanian Institute for Economic Policy, Bucharest, Romania, in his paper, "Reconstruction in SE Europe."
- 28 Knut Vollebaek, Foreign Minister of Norway, Chairman-in-Chief of the OSCE, in his speech, "OSCE Priorities for Southeastern Europe," Athens, October 22, 1999.
- 29 J. Simon, "The Sources of Balkan Insecurity: The Need for a Comprehensive Strategy," Strategic Forum, INSS, National Defense University, USA, No 150, October 1998.