

Introduction

In the aftermath of the wars in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia of the last decade, the legacy of Dayton in Southeast Europe is a range of unresolved issues involving not only Bosnia and Hercegovina, but Kosovo, Macedonia, and Montenegro. This conference, organized to discuss NATO-EU relations in reference to Southeast Europe, envisioned an open and frank discussion of ideas relating to security, stability, and prosperity in this region. But in order to discuss issues relating to the future of this region we must remind ourselves that its history still plays a role in the events of today. By not taking the past into account outside observers have often imposed inadequate or misguided solutions which cannot be realistically implemented on the ground.

While the international community is often viewed as an unwanted arbiter by the peoples of the region, it is clear that future progress depends heavily on the support of the international community. In order for future international efforts to achieve greater success in the region, the support and involvement of local populations, or rather their elite, must be developed. The greatest obstacle to developing a stronger interaction between local elites and external factors remains the local political and cultural mentality which has dominated past action. A parallel issue is the mandate of the international community's involvement in the region which, in my view, should primarily involve the development and strengthening of democratic public institutions and NGOs so that integration in Euro-Atlantic organizations is a realistic and relatively painless goal. To achieve this, the international community needs to define a clear vision of goals to be met and approach those goals with a unified plan of action. There remain, however, those in the international community who believe that Southeast Europe should be isolated from the EU and NATO and seek to impose peace from the outside, a counter-productive strategy doomed to failure. The future European security framework should incorporate, not isolate Southeast Europe. In contrast, others in the international community envision an even greater role for the EU and NATO in this region, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although there is a unity of political will here, there is a lack of coordination on the ground, particularly in the military sector.

The wars of the last decade served to highlight a number of problems and changes in terms of international factors and their response to the crises. The EU proved to be ineffective in dealing with such conflicts; the Russians proved to be ineffectual and no longer a factor of influence in the region; and, last, NATO's role changed from one of defense to one of security. The EU's decision to form a 60,000 man European Security and Defense Program whose mandate would include peacekeeping and security building is a direct consequence of Europe's inability to deal with the crises of the last decade in Southeast Europe.

Although the international community has had some successes in the region, a number of unresolved issues remain and future stability and security in the region are contingent on successful resolution of these issues.

These include:

1. Kosovo;
2. Macedonia;
3. Montenegro - independence or not?
4. Greater Albania;
5. Greater Serbia- financial and political center for Southeast Europe?
6. Bosnia and Herzegovina - post-Dayton failures to achieve equality among nations and institute a strong federal structure;
7. Euro-Atlantic integration - individual entry as favored by Slovenia and Croatia, or regional entry into supra-national structures?
8. Corruption and organized crime;
9. Islamic fundamentalism, especially in Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia.

Security and stability in the region depend ultimately on strong economic recovery with the aid of Western support and on avoiding a regional integration reminiscent of the old Yugoslavia or Western Balkan ideas. The will of the people in this region, with active support from the international community, to develop local potential and develop strong democratic institutions and ideals will be the best guarantor of prosperity in the future in this part of Europe.

Lastly I would like to thank the Editorial Board, particularly Dr. Miroslav Tuđman for the opportunity to publish the proceedings of the conference "NATO-EU and Southeastern Europe: Security, Stability and Prosperity Issues, for the 21st Century"⁷ held in Zagreb in June 2001.

Marin Sopta