



# Security Sector Reform in South Eastern Europe

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Security, especially conflict management, has been a core task of international involvement in the Balkans from the beginning, i.e. from the early 1990s. Aspects of "hard" security dominated the international approach for a long time. However, five years have passed since the NATO's Kosovo air campaign, and military security has lost much of its urgency. Surely, we saw the armed struggle for more autonomy by the UCPMB in Southern Serbia (Presevo Valley) in 2000 and by the KLA in Macedonia in 2001 - powerful reminders, that the potential for violent outbursts should not be underestimated and that some optimistic prognoses about seeming stability proved illusory. However, the decreasing international interest in the region can also be interpreted as a positive signal of emerging "normality", of a region finally coming to terms with itself after a decade of horrifying conflict.

Thus, Erhard Busek, the Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, could proclaim during his speech at ZEI on 15 July last year that his Third Working Table is focusing increasingly on issues of "soft" security like organized crime, corruption, trafficking of human beings, border management and migration. From the six core objectives of the

Pact for 2003 and 2004 none has to do with defence and security issues, whereas justice and home affairs command more and more attention. This shift of attention from the first to the second subtable of Working Table III does not imply that the Stability Pact does not design and implement any more projects dealing with defence and security issues. To the contrary, the process of downsizing the armies, of establishing civil (especially parliamentary) control of the military, including transparency of the defence budgets, and of collecting the millions of small arms and light weapons (SALW) circulating in the region is still paramount, especially where it threatens to have destabilizing severe socio-economic repercussions. Some initiatives are noteworthy: the Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) in Belgrade, a joint project with UNDP; the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Centre (RACVIAC), an international training centre near Zagreb initiated by the German and the Croatian government as one of the Quick Start Projects of the Pact; the retraining and resettlement programme of retired officers in Bulgaria and Romania (now also in Albania and Macedonia); or the physical destruction of thousands of SALW in Elbasan (Albania).

We have invited the Bonn Center for International Conversion (BICC), specially Wolf-Christian Paes, to cooperate with us in publishing this edition on Security Sector Reform in the Balkans. We are glad to be able to draw on their expertise, e.g. as concerns the several cycles of arms collection in Albania since the Pyramid scandal of 1997 and in Macedonia since the violent clashes of 2001. You will also find in this edition a short version of the presentation, which Prof. Dr. Xhezair Zaganjori, a member of the Constitutional Court of Albania, gave at ZEI on the progress and the obstacles of his country towards EU integration, as well as a report about the sixth conference of the Network of European Studies in SEE.

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## Content

Tobias Pietz  
Military Reform  
in Serbia and  
Montenegro  
Thorsten Stodiek  
The Police  
Component of  
Post-Conflict  
Security Sector  
Reform  
Wolf-Christian  
Paes  
Combating the  
Proliferation of  
SALW  
Xhezair Zaganjori  
Albanias Difficult  
Path toward  
Europe

## The Shaky Road towards Partnership for Peace Military Reform in Serbia and Montenegro with NATO in mind

Serbia's parliamentary elections on December 28 have left Western analysts shocked and Serbian democrats frustrated. The victory of the nationalist Serbian Radical Party (SRS) of war crimes indict Vojislav Seselj can seriously hinder the process of democratization in Serbia. Because of Milosevic's Socialist Party (SPS) also gaining more votes than expected, these parties now hold one third of all seats in parliament, therefore being able to block any of the very much needed constitutional reforms in Serbia.

It is hard to foresee the impact of this result on the level of the federation of Serbia-Montenegro and its ambitious plans of reforming and restructuring the Army of Serbia and Montenegro (Vojska Serbia i Crna Gora - VSCG). Very much though will depend on the relation of the potential new strong figure in Serbian politics (and former President of the Republic of Yugoslavia), Vojislav Kostunica (National-conservative Democratic Party - DSS), and the acting Minister of Defence of the federal state of Serbia-Montenegro and representative of the Democratic Party (DS), Boris Tadic, who has been the hope of Western policy makers and analysts since the assassination of Zoran Djindjic in March 2003.

One reason for the slow path of military reform - and security sector reform in general - in Serbia-Montenegro since the fall of Milosevic's regime in 2000 was rooted in the deep rivalry of Kostunica and Djindjic and their efforts to either ally with representatives of the VSCG or the special forces of the Serbian Ministry for the Interior (MUP) to strengthen their positions. Moreover, Kostunica's well known reluctance to co-operate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) can spoil Tadic's plan to reach membership for Serbia-Montenegro in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) Program as soon as possible, because NATO still sees the handing over of Ratko Mladic and other war crime indicts to the ICTY as a prerequisite for PfP membership. Nevertheless, a reform of the VSCG is needed not only for PfP or international acceptance but out of pure budgetary reasons. In September 2002 for example, 98% of the defence budget had been already spent which

forced the Ministry of Defence to announce that one fourth of the soldiers had to be sent home on the weekends to save on food rations. The defence budget's share of the GDP between 2000 and 2002 was around 4-6% each year as compared to 1-2% in NATO countries, a situation not tolerable or even endurable in a country struggling with economic depression as Serbia and Montenegro.

### The Legacy of the VSCG

During the cold war, the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) constituted a well-equipped conventional military with two purposes: territorial defence and protection of the federal structure of the Yugoslav Republic. Western military observers perceived the JNA and its successor, the Yugoslav Army (VJ); to be the most professional of all armed forces in post-Communist Europe in respect of organization and



*Minister of Defence of Serbia and Montenegro  
Boris Tadic*

expertise. Since 1974, it had unique position in the federal state, also in terms of civil-military relations. The new constitution gave the JNA a formal mandate within the Yugoslav system to maintain and preserve the Yugoslav federation and its socialist constitutional order. In addition, it was the only 'Yugoslav' element within the federation and given a formal role in the League of Communists of Yugoslavia as the ninth formal constituency within the Central Committee, holding equal status with the two autonomous provinces Kosovo and Vojvodina.

This pan-Yugoslav mandate put the JNA in a difficult position when the nationalist and secessionist movements began in the early 1990s. In order to fulfil its constitutional role of preserving the federation and also

to guarantee its own further existence, the JNA ultimately co-opted with Milosevic's regime and its nationalist Serbian path. The officer corps was increasingly dominated by Serbs. In 1992, the JNA ceased to exist and split into the VJ and the Bosnian Serb Army of Republika Srpska (VRS). The VJ political and professional autonomy was soon undermined by the Milosevic regime by establishing new chains of command, and the development of competing security forces such as special units, paramilitary organizations and the militarization of the Serbian police forces (MUP). In addition, the officer corps was purged and personal changes undertaken throughout the VJ, often through early retirement and discharge of non-Serbs. A newly established Supreme Defence Council (VSO) constituted by the FRY, the Montenegrin and the Serb president held the ultimate command over the armed forces.

Though the VJ was not directly involved in the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it provided technical and personnel support to the VRS and kept close links to it throughout the Milosevic regime. Most of the war crimes and other atrocities carried out during this war - and also during the Kosovo campaign - were undertaken by Serbian special forces and semi-official units, 'weekend-fighters' which were often randomly recruited at the local level. Nevertheless, the ICTY has indicted numerous members of the VJ for war crimes.

It was somewhat surprising that such a politicised army did not react on Milosevic's call for support after his defeat in the presidential elections in October 2000. Some have argued that this refusal to intervene on behalf of Milosevic was bought by the opposition with a promise not to purge and reform the security forces immediately after their victory which could explain the reluctance of Kostunica as well as Djindjic in this respect. The aforementioned rivalry between these two Serbian politicians enabled the General Staff and the armed forces to preserve its structure and personnel by shifting alliances themselves. At the federal level the VSO continued to exist but was more or less controlled by the federal president Kostunica. Another

obstacle for military reform was posed through the federal structure of the VJ: with Montenegro trying to distance itself from Serbia, no federal military reforms were possible until the status of the Yugoslav Republic was solved - an issue that is still hindering that process today because the status of the newly established state of Serbia and Montenegro will be decided upon only in 2006.

#### A new path with Tadic?

There was a window of opportunity after the assassination of Serbian prime minister Zoran Djindjic in March 2003 to finally oust some of the remaining Milosevic-supporters and war crime indictments in all security sector forces including the military, and to take first steps towards a radical reform of these structures. When Boris Tadic from the Democratic Party (DS) was appointed to the position of federal Minister for Defence, he soon presented a ten-point plan for defence reform in Serbia-Montenegro. Moreover, his first moves showed his seriousness - together with the new Serbian prime minister Zoran Zivkovic - to take on the entrenched interests of military, intelligence, nationalist and organized crime in Serbia-Montenegro.

By 6 May, the Supreme Defence Council (VSO) decided that the army's General Staff will be an organizational unit within the Ministry of Defence. This full subordination of the General Staff to the MoD also puts all special units, military intelligence and the army inspectorate within the MoD's jurisdiction. Especially the highly politicised counterintelligence arm, Kontraobavesajna Sluzba (KOS), and its ongoing support to Mladic and other war crime indictments may finally be ended by this move, also because the commander of KOS, Aco Tomic, has been dismissed. In addition, in August 2003, Tadic dismissed 19 generals and about 300 high ranking officers either with strong ties to the old regime or opposed to the reform plans. Besides these personnel changes in the VSCG, also the paramilitary units of the Ministry for Internal Affairs (MUP) were overhauled, and the 'Red Berets', a special operations unit of the police partly involved in the assassination of Djindjic was disbanded, though parts of it have been integrated into a new Gendarmerie force of the MUP.

The overall military reform Tadic has planned to undertake until 2010 includes some key elements that will be prioritized in the first phase.

Besides the above mentioned structural and personnel related changes, this comprises a clear legal basis for the reform, meaning the creation and verification of the national security strategy and a military doctrine. In this respect, Tadic has made a clear statement by addressing the NATO Council in Brussels already four weeks after his appointment. Strong ties with NATO and entrance to its Partnership for Peace program are seen as the key for the overall reform but also for the rehabilitation of Serbia-Montenegro in the international community.

With respect to a new military doctrine, Tadic does not see the neighboring countries as a risk any longer. A new strategy therefore should be guided rather by a collective security approach for the region and - in the long term - by the needs for building up capacities in the VSCG for participating in international peace operations. This constitutes a good prospect for the Balkan region after years of wars and continuing tensions.

#### International Support

In one of his last visits as NATO Secretary General in November 2003, Lord Robertson praised the crucial changes with respect of military reform by Serbia-Montenegro in 2003: "All this is paving the way for a closer relationship between NATO and Serbia and Montenegro. In particular, it has opened the opportunity for Serbia and Montenegro to join NATO's Partnership for Peace Programme" (Belgrade, 27 November 2003). Nevertheless, the wishful thinking of Tadic to enter PFP by the end of the year did not succeed - also due to the domestic political uncertainties leading to early parliamentary elections in Serbia in December. NATO will probably wait until Belgrade has proven its stability and sincerity in terms of democratic consolidation.

Still, the cooperation between NATO and Serbia-Montenegro has reached a different level in 2003: immediately after Tadic's visit to NATO in May 2003, a team of NATO experts was sent to Belgrade. Military officers were invited to the NATO School in Oberammergau, Germany, to prepare them for PFP. The British Embassy in Belgrade which had become the focal point for NATO activities already in late 2002 has increased its support significantly in 2003. The UK has provided a senior military advisor to defence minister Tadic and is closely involved in consulting on the

formulation and implementation of the military reform. With regard to actual cooperation of the VSCG and NATO, the VSCG had proven already its capacity and expertise in 2001, when it played a key role in helping NATO and OSCE to manage an ethnic Albanian secessionist rebellion in south Serbia.

Another partner for the MoD is UNDP which launched the 'Ministry of Defence Civilian Oversight and Reform Project' (MoDCOR) together with the MoD in July 2003, especially for the task of strengthening the institutional capacity for the civilian oversight and control of the armed forces. The MoDCOR assisted in establishing a Change Management Team within the MoD for that process. It is also seen as a platform for a broader support from the international community.

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Though the international community's and NATO's assistance has grown in 2003, the most important goal of becoming member of PFP is at risk due to various pre-conditions Serbia-Montenegro has to fulfil. While Serbia-Montenegro stopped all financial aid to the Bosnian Serb VRS, and the federal parliament finally ratified the Dayton Peace Accords by December 2002, some conditions still



have to be satisfied: inter alia full cooperation with ICTY - including the surrender of Mladic and Karadzic to The Hague as reiterated by Lord Robertson in November 2003 - and the thorough compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 1244 on Kosovo. With Kostunica potentially being the new prime minister of Serbia and in the past strongly opposed to either one of these conditions it is hard to believe that Serbia-Montenegro will be able to follow that path in the near future.

#### Special Forces to Afghanistan?

Being aware of the obstacles for PfP membership, Serbia-Montenegro has sought other means of proving its sincerity of integrating itself into Western security structures and of holding the capacities and professionalism needed for participating in international peacekeeping missions. As Serbia-Montenegro is a regular member of the United Nations, the Supreme Defence Council (VSO) approved the VSCG's participation in such missions in October 2003.

Moreover, Serbia-Montenegro has offered the US to deploy special forces to Afghanistan or Iraq. This offer first came up during a visit of prime minister Zivkovic to the US in August 2003 and was again discussed in September before the US officially accepted Belgrade's offer in October with Afghanistan being likely the

first mission. The New York Times stated that probably a mixed unit of the VSCG and MUP forces of about 250 will be deployed to Kandahar early in 2004, not only for peace keeping but also for fighting Quaeda and Taliban forces in that region. Though military analysts have assured that these special forces have the capability, equipment and professionalism to conduct that mission it seems somehow inappropriate due to the history of some of these units having been involved in atrocities against Muslim Bosnians or Albanians during the wars on the Balkans. Though the MoD announced that all members of these forces have been screened and that those with a suspicious past will not be recruited for that mission, it is hard to envision such forces operating in an Islamic country. Whether the US will push for Serbia-Montenegro's PfP membership because of this contribution is nevertheless uncertain.

#### Ambivalent Prospects

The successful continuation of the military reform in Serbia-Montenegro will be closely linked to Serbian domestic politics. The likely new prime minister of Serbia, Vojislav Kostunica, will play a central role in that respect. If he gave up his reluctance to cooperate with The Hague and overcame his opposition to the Democratic Party (DS) and its strongest representative Boris Tadic, the reform of the mili-

tary with the goal of PfP could continue. But with an unstable four-party coalition in Serbia as foreseen by many analysts, and nationalist agendas being that successful in elections, many parties and also individuals will be tempted to play the nationalist card by opposing the ICTY and any solution that keeps Kosovo not within the federal state of Serbia and Montenegro. Moreover, the referendum on the federation of Serbia and Montenegro in 2006 could lead to another split of the VSCG which complicates all measures undertaken at the moment to turn the VSCG into a modern and professional army.

Nevertheless, the pressing general need for reforming the VSCG will lead to some results at least with respect to downsizing, restructuring, professionalization and democratic oversight. This task can be fulfilled by Serbia-Montenegro also without PfP membership, though that probably comprised less financial and technical support from the international community. Therefore, a continuation of the military reform in Serbia-Montenegro will take place, though it may follow a different and slower path and not tackle the changes needed for acceptance to PfP.

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## The Police Component of Post-conflict Security Sector Reform

In the framework of international post-conflict peace-building activities in the Balkans, civilian police missions are of increasing importance. Alongside monitoring local police forces' adherence to human rights practices, it is necessary to reform or even completely restructure indigenous police forces in order to ensure a sustainable peace process. After international security forces have withdrawn, the local police must have both the ability and the will to prevent human rights violations, protect democratic institutions, and resolutely fight corruption, organized crime and terrorism. The ability to provide for public security is one of the basic preconditions for the socio-economic stabilization of crisis regions.

Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that the police component of security sector reform can only be

successful if the other parts of the (internal) security sector, the justice and penal systems, are also reformed in line with democratic standards. Police efforts in preventing and investigating crimes are undermined if there is no effective and accountable judiciary and penal system to bring criminals to justice. At the same time, an effective and independent justice system is needed to control the work of the police and eliminate police misconduct. Security sector reform also requires the evaluation of existing local legal codes with respect to their compliance with international legal standards or even the development of a legal code that complies with international standards and is accepted by the local population and local judges in particular.

With regard to police reforms, the establishment of ethnically mixed police forces within war-torn, multi-eth-

nic societies presents a particular challenge. In an environment characterized by ethnically motivated hatred and societal mistrust, police forces must be constituted of members of each ethnic group in the population. Otherwise, the people - or at least those belonging to minorities - will not have confidence in the security forces, and may either flee or rely on vigilantism.

The police missions in Eastern Slavonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Southern Serbia (Presevo Valley) and Macedonia, which have been conducted by different organizations (UN, (W)EU, OSCE), illustrate how complex the task of creating multi-ethnic, indigenous police forces following a civil war can be. There are three principle areas of problems which have to be dealt with: Basic structural problems, behavioural problems (including the ethnic dimen-

sion of both aspects), and resource problems.

### Structural Problems

In pre-war Yugoslavia, police forces were dysfunctional in the sense that they served the state, or the ruling parties, rather than the public, let alone ethnic minorities such as the Albanians in Kosovo or Macedonia. Throughout the Balkans, a popular perception emerged - especially among ethnic minorities - that the police was biased in favour of particular ethnic and/or political groups. In addition, the surge in crime in the Balkans was a response to the collapse of the socialist state and the void left by an ineffective security apparatus or a corrupt police force. This left an opening for opportunists in the criminal realm. Furthermore, there were many cases where politics, the police forces and organized crime were entangled.

During the civil conflicts and wars in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia, the ruling parties used the police to control the state's coercive power. In all of these conflicts, the distinction between the military (usually responsible for external security) and the police (responsible for internal law and order) was blurred. Both institutions often became closely associated as governments turned to the military in order to shore up the police's capacity to maintain internal coercive power. Police forces were also militarized in terms of equipment, structures and doctrines.

Furthermore, on several occasions paramilitary police units committed atrocities against the civilian (minority) population. Therefore, the police forces are often discredited among certain parts of the population, especially among ethnic minorities. In order to reform the structures of such police forces, the militarized police must be stripped of military doctrines, structures and equipment. In addition, oversized police forces must be reduced to a reasonable "peacetime level", for which the new governments are also able to pay the salaries. This downsizing becomes extremely difficult when it is necessary to simultaneously incorporate former soldiers and other combatants in the context of general demobilization and when members of ethnic minorities have to be integrated. In particular, the integration of these ethnic minorities "at the expense of" police officers belonging to the majority is a very

sensitive political issue which may be used by hardliners on each side to fan the flames of conflict again.

Another obstacle to the reform process emerges if political parties try to fill the new positions within the police with their own members or if they try to select only members of certain ethnic groups for high ranking positions. The Bosnian case has shown, for example, that despite official agreements to the contrary, parallel chains of command, as well as relations of loyalty based on the membership of a specific ethnic group, existed within the police units in multi-ethnic communities.

A general dilemma for reformers is whether police officers of the old delegitimized apparatus should be retained in the new police force or whether recruitment should be restricted to entirely fresh recruits with clean records, but without any policing experience. This latter point is especially important with respect to the fight against organized crime and international terrorism. A frequent practice is to screen former police officers and to check their human rights records. However, experience has shown that it is sometimes very difficult for recruiters to get hold of reliable information on the applicants, especially if all respective documents have been destroyed during a war as in the case of Kosovo. Vetting processes and rechecks carried out at a later stage at police academies and police stations therefore often lead to the dismissal of officers.

### Behavioural Problems

Demilitarizing police forces means refocusing them on the public rather than on national security. Fundamentally, it is a great challenge for the former paramilitary units of the parties to a conflict to act according to the principles and the spirit of democratic policing in conformity with the rule of law. In this context, conveying the principles of community policing to former soldiers and members of the old police force is a particular challenge for the reformers. The past offers several examples of indigenous police forces either acting inadequately, or not at all, when performing crowd control duties or carrying out investigations concerning members of their own ethnic group. This can partly be attributed to simple partisanship in favour of one's own ethnic group. In addition, police officers tend to face particularly strong social pressure from their own ethnic communities. Another principal

challenge lies in bringing former adversaries to work together in a collegial manner, without which multi-ethnic police operations cannot be undertaken. For this purpose, the hatred and mistrust between police officers of different ethnic backgrounds must be reduced.

After (re-)training the new police force, it is especially important for the reformers to monitor the behaviour of officers on duty in police stations and on the street. Only then

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does it become clear whether the training was successful, that is, whether the officers are adhering to the principles of the rule of law and human rights in dealing with the population, especially with members of other ethnic communities; whether they are able to cope with well organized and "professional" criminals,

and whether they can withstand the temptation of bribes. This last point is of course closely linked to the problem of resources.

Last but not least, monitoring of the local police should also include activities that build up the confidence of the population in the force. Unless the population trusts the police and perceives that the police serves all citizens equally, (sections of) the population may either flee or establish informal parallel security systems. Winning the confidence of the local population can be best achieved in the framework of community policing projects.

#### Resource Problems

Alongside these basic structural and socio-political problems in the process of creating multi-ethnic police forces, police reform missions run by international organizations such as the UN or the OSCE have so far had to cope with fundamental problems in terms of resources: Their reform efforts have suffered from a severe lack of qualified personnel who could deal with administrative, educational and monitoring duties; shortages in standardized curricula and textbooks; and a scarcity of material and financial resources for equipping the international police instructors. Without these resources, effective training of indigenous police forces is impossible. Moreover, local governments have also often been short of material and financial resources for providing local police officers with sufficient equipment and pay. Without these resources, the fight against organized crime, as well as the fight against corruption within the police apparatus itself, is not feasible.

#### Some Final Remarks

For international organizations to be successful, the police reform activities must be accepted by the host

governments, who must also feel a sense of "ownership" over the reform process. If governments and local administrative bodies do not fully support the reforms, they will not be sustainable. However, reforming the



Flag of the EU Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina

police is a very sensitive issue for every government, because it "touches the heart of a state's sovereignty and its monopoly of coercive means". It may therefore not always be easy for international organizations to receive the support they need. Finally, the reform process must also be seen as legitimate by the local population, otherwise the international organizations' efforts will be perceived as assisting the coercive apparatus of an illegitimate government. The public will become even more distrustful if this assistance includes technical support such as riot-control or surveillance equipment.

Western governments have recognized that police reform is not only a crucial element of post-conflict peacebuilding - which is necessary for a sustainable peace process that allows them, at some point, to pull out their troops and police officers from the Balkans - but also an indispensable step for combating organized crime emanating from this crisis region which cannot be dealt with by the local governments on their own. In this way, assistance with reform to the police and the wider security

sector is justified in terms of making indigenous police forces more effective in their fight against transnational crime. It is therefore in the best interest of the European states to provide long-term support for reform of the police and the other parts of the security sector.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Call and Bayley, key characteristics of democratic policing are: civilian control of the police, police responsiveness to the needs of the population and the accountability of the police to multiple external audiences, cf. Charles T. Call, *Pinball and Punctuated Equilibrium: The Birth of a 'Democratic Policing' Norm? Draft paper prepared for the Annual Conference of the International Studies Association, 16 March 2000, Los Angeles 2000, p. 9; and David H. Bayley, Patterns of Policing, New Jersey 1985.*

<sup>2</sup> Community policing aims at fostering the co-operation between the police and the population in identifying and resolving issues of concern to the citizens, e.g. problems of crime, social disorder or the "overall quality of life in the community", cf. OSCE, Strategic Police Matters Unit, *The OSCE and its Policing Activities, power point presentation, p. 22.*

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Hansen, *Strengthening Indigenous Police Capacity and the Rule of Law in the Balkans*, in: Michael Pugh/Waheguru P. S. Sidhu (eds.), *The United Nations and Regional Security. Europe and Beyond*, Boulder 2003, p. 176.

## Combating the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Balkans

The proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) has been identified as a core obstacle to the development of peaceful societies in the countries of the Western Balkans, particularly, but by no means exclusively, in those countries which suffered from civil wars during the 1990s. This problem has been identified both by the Stability Pact for South-

eastern Europe and the OSCE, as well as by other numerous bilateral donors, as one of the key challenges in the field of security on the road to European integration. This new focus closely mirrors the global development in the field of disarmament since the end of the Cold War. Whereas the disarmament debate used to be centered on weapons of

mass destruction, the proliferation of "small" or "new" wars, often fought by paramilitary groups with light equipment, during the last decade has generated new interest in the control of the "SALW problem". This is of particular relevance from a humanitarian perspective, as the vast majority of the predominantly civilian victims of civil wars are suffering



from the effects of small arms, rather than from larger conventional weapon systems. SALW, which are usually defined to include any weapon system that can be operated by either one or two militants and therefore encompassing a wide range of firearms including pistols, rifles, machine guns and even portable mortars and rocket launchers, have some characteristics that make them an instant success with paramilitary groups. Firstly, unlike their larger, conventional counterparts (artillery, tanks, helicopters, fighter jets etc.), SALW can be easily and cheaply obtained on the global black market. Secondly, they can be used with deadly effectiveness after a minimum of training, their ruggedness and low weight matching the needs of a highly mobile guerilla force operating in difficult terrain. Given the new interest in these weapons, the United Nations have sponsored a series of initiatives to curb the proliferation of SALW, culminating in two intergovernmental conferences on this subject in New York City in 2001 and 2003.

#### SALW - the Southeastern European perspective

It is in this global context that initiatives to reduce the number of weapons in circulation in the Balkans need to be viewed. Particularly the successor states of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) and Albania have been the subject of intensive interest with regard to SALW since the mid-1990s. For much of the past decade, this region 'enjoyed' the limelight of the international community as it dealt with a painful



*The 1st RACVIAC Training Course, March 2001*

series of intrastate violent conflicts in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Kosovo. Given the comparatively high profile of these conflicts in the international public opinion, international organizations were keen to apply new ideas for conflict management in this part of the world, particularly as these "new wars" seemed to be the

only game in town until the emergence of international terrorism after 11 September 2001. It is therefore no surprise that a wide range of organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, have focused on the issue of SALW in the post-conflict societies in the Western Balkans, ranging from international peacekeepers, international NGOs such as Saferworld (London) or the Small Arms Survey (Geneva) to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the OSCE.

International trends aside, there can be little doubt that the proliferation of SALW continues to plague this region. Two factors have greatly compounded the problem of weapons in the hands of civilians since the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Firstly, the wars that accompanied the dissolution of Yugoslavia were, at least initially, often fought by irregular forces quickly raised by the break-away republics and armed with weapons originally designated for the Yugoslav territorial defense forces. Scattered across the Yugoslav republics, Tito's military doctrine had foreseen the return to partisan warfare and the arming of the general population from these arms depots in the case of an external threat. Whereas the federal Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) consisted of about 195,000 soldiers in 1991, about 2.3 million weapons were held in stockpiles throughout the Yugoslav territory, many of them (alongside with much of the arms and ammunition factories) concentrated in Bosnia and Herzegovina, soon to emerge as a major battleground, as Tito's strategists had earmarked this mountainous region to be the theatre of Yugoslavia's final stand against potential invaders<sup>1</sup>. This partisan strategy was turned effectively against its inventors, when separatist paramilitary groups raided the arms depots to arm themselves against the JNA. The practice of arming civilians belonging to their own ethnic groups was continued throughout the 1990s by Croat (in Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Serbian (in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in Kosovo) armed forces in an attempt to raise village-level self-defense forces in contested territories. The latest example of this behavior was the handing out of automatic weapons to freshly appointed "police reservists" by the Skopje government during the Macedonian crisis in 2001. Whereas the military value of such acts remains very questionable as it seems that few of these armed civilians ever partici-

pated in coordinated military operations, few of these weapons were ever returned to state depots after the end of combat and substantial numbers ended up with organized criminal groups or were even sold to the enemy.

The second factor, which has contributed greatly to the proliferation of SALW in the Western Balkans was the breakdown of public order in Albania in March 1997. Following the collapse of the country's financial institutions and with millions of people loosing their life's savings, Albanians took to the streets in demonstrations which soon escalated into widespread riots against public authorities. Some 650,000 firearms, 3.5 million hand grenades, a million mines and vast amounts of ammunition were looted from military barracks, police stations and the many arms depots scattered around the country<sup>2</sup>. According to the Albanian authorities, about 20 percent of those weapons were returned voluntarily after public order was restored. However, the vast majority remain unaccounted for. Large numbers have been trafficked across the borders, many of them destined for organized crime and to paramilitary groups in Kosovo, Southern Serbia and Macedonia. This sudden surge of supply saw the price for automatic weapons tumble as low as 15 German marks (about 7.50 Euro) before stabilizing again at about 250 German marks (about 130 Euro).

The various conflicts of the past decade have compounded the problem of widespread possession of firearms among civilians in Southeastern Europe. Most visitors of the region will be aware of the fact that weapons have always played an important role in the value system of the local and particularly the rural population, a tradition which is expressed for example in the ceremonial firing of guns during festivities. Historically, a man was defined by his ability to defend his family in times of crisis and in the absence of an effective police force, villagers in more remote areas carried personal weapons well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with firearms performing both a practical and a symbolic role. While these traditions were suppressed by communist governments, even though the same governments used a vaguely similar concept of partisan warfare as their official defense doctrine, these "gun cultures" have partially returned with the end of communist rule and the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia. Combined with

the rise in organized crime and the question of the status of Kosovo still looming large, the fact that many weapons remain unaccounted for is seen as major obstacle to peace building in the Balkans.

#### Disarmament initiatives

The international community has responded to this challenge by creating the South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) in May 2002. Located in Belgrade and assisted by the local office of UNDP, SEESAC is an important component of the Regional Implementation Plan on Combating the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons formulated and adopted by the Stability Pact in November 2001. Operating with a small staff of international experts, SEESAC was founded to assist donors, regional governments and civil society groups in the development of effective strategies to curb the proliferation of SALW.<sup>3</sup>

Broadly speaking, measure to improve the control of SALW fall into four separate categories:

1. Legislative measures aimed at improving the regulatory framework for the acquisition and possession of firearms by civilians. In many cases, the respective laws date back to Yugoslav times and often fail to address the surge in the availability of military firearms after the violent events of the 1990s. Here, the international community has been providing legal and technical advice to regional governments.

2. Improved cross-border cooperation between regional governments is another important measure to curb the trafficking of weapons (and other contrabands) across the often poorly monitored borders of the region. In this field an important step was taken with the creation of the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Center (RACVIAC) in Croatia.<sup>4</sup>

3. Awareness-raising on the risks associated with the proliferation of SALW among civilians. This task usually lies with local and international NGOs which are offering training for representatives of civil society and support local campaigns both logistically and financially. In this context, the Szeged Small Arms Process, which has been engaging regional governments and civil society groups since November 2000 has been instrumental.

4. Last but not least, practical measures aimed at the collection and destruction of small arms and light weapons. Here government, but also inter-governmental agencies such as UNDP and others take steps to convince the population to hand in weapons in a process often called "micro-disarmament".

The latter category of measure can be sub-divided again into two groups, depending on their main target group and the timing of the intervention. The first tier of programs is usually



SEESAC launch, 8 May 2002, Belgrade

started by international peacekeeping forces directly after the conflict, targeting weapons held by former combatants in the context of demobilization, disarmament and re-integration (DD&R) programmes. Examples for these interventions include the disarmament of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) by KFOR in 1999 and "Operation Essential Harvest" in Macedonia, undertaken by British peacekeepers aimed at disarming the (Albanian) National Liberation Army (NLA) in 2001. The main goal of these projects is to defuse conflicts by disarming the conflict parties and thereby minimizing the risk of renewed fighting.

The second category of interventions targets civilians and usually starts months, if not years after the end of fighting. Usually an amnesty allows the holders of illicit weapons to get of them without having to fear punishment. In addition, material incentives, such as cash or non-monetary rewards are used to encourage the population to cooperate. Examples of such second-tier projects include weapon collection initiatives in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo and Macedonia.

#### Experiences with "micro-disarmament" in the Western Balkans

The results of these initiatives are extremely mixed, depending on the approach used and the time and

locale of the intervention. The following section provides a short overview on successes and failures:

#### Albania

As mentioned before, Albania is the only country in the region suffering from the widespread proliferation of SALW without having experienced a civil war. After the tumultuous events of 1997, the Albanian government asked the UN to assist them in the collection of the weapons stolen during the riots. UNDP launched a pilot project in Gramsh in 1999, offering collective incentives (such as the rehabilitation of infrastructure) to villages and towns willing to hand in their weapons and recovered some 6,000 weapons along with more than 137 tons of ammunition until 2000. This pilot project was followed by two subsequent UNDP programs expanding the geographic scope of the project and collecting a total of about 14,000 weapons between 2001 and 2003. Whereas the project is seen as a success by most stakeholders, it came at a high cost as the development projects awarded to municipalities were expensive in relation to the number of weapons recovered.<sup>5</sup>

#### Bosnia and Herzegovina

In Bosnia and Herzegovina SFOR has been running a weapons collection and destruction campaign, dubbed "Operation Harvest" since March 1998. Like most military-led campaigns, no incentives are offered to gun-holders, however the campaign is accompanied by an extensive awareness raising campaign, highlighting the risk posed by firearms and unexploded ordnance in private hands. In 2003, Operation Harvest collected and destroyed 11,000 guns and 45,000 hand grenades. In 2004, the campaign will continue. However, the gradual reduction of SFOR strength and the improved security environment means that Operation Harvest will eventually be handed over to the national authorities.

#### Croatia

The origins of Croatia's weapon buy-back program lie with UNTAES peacekeeping force in Eastern Slavonia. From October 1996 to August 1997, approximately 10,000 rifles, 7,000 anti-tank rocket launchers, 15,000 grenades and almost two million rounds of ammunition were bought by international soldiers from civilians.<sup>6</sup> This program was continued and later expanded to all parts of the country by the Croatian government, which



had already provided financing for the UN-led project phase. In total some 30,000 weapons were recovered until the end of the program.

#### Kosovo

The province presents a special case, as it continues to be administered by the international community and hosts a large international peace-keeping force. In theory, this would be an ideal environment for weapons collection. First-tier disarmament was carried out by KFOR in 1999, when about 10,000 weapons were collected from the KLA.<sup>7</sup> KFOR continues to search for weapons throughout the province. In 2003, UNDP initiated a second-tier disarmament program combining a month-long amnesty with development funding for municipalities collecting more than 300 weapons. This project failed with only 155 weapons collected in the territory of Kosovo, probably as the result of widespread anxiety over the future status of the province.<sup>8</sup>

#### Macedonia

Like Kosovo, Macedonia has also played host to both first and second tier disarmament programs since the end of interethnic fighting in 2001. The first international intervention by Task Force Fox succeeded in collecting some 3,800 weapons within a 30 day period from the NLA, even though many Macedonian observers questioned whether the rebel group had indeed relinquished its arsenal.<sup>9</sup> Following parliamentary elections and a change of government UNDP assisted with the organization of second-tier weapons collection programme targeting civilians

from all ethnic groups in November and December 2003. Combining an amnesty with a national lottery, where every person handing in a weapon received a lottery ticket, this project netted some 7,600 guns as well as more than 100,000 rounds of ammunition.

In conclusion, it seems that the international community has played an important role in initiating and supporting initiatives to reduce the number of weapons in civilian hands in the Balkans. Where international peacekeeping forces are present, their operations have usually included a disarmament component. Whereas it seems doubtful that either the KLA or the NLA have completely given up their arsenals and indeed more independent scrutiny of the quality and origin of those weapons would have been preferable, the first-tier disarmament operations have been comparatively successful in Kosovo and Macedonia. As far as second-tier disarmament is concerned, the international community has been using various methods in different countries ranging from no incentives to straight buy-back programs. The key to success seems to be to find the appropriate set of incentives for any given society and to combine it with an amnesty and the credible threat of punishment after its expiration. Nevertheless, these programs will not succeed unless the population is convinced that no return to violent conflict is likely, as witnessed by the failure of UNDP's initiative in Kosovo.

Wolf-Christian Paes

Bonn International Center of Conversion (BICC)

<sup>1</sup> *Armed and Dangerous – The Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Balkans*, in: Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC): *Conversion Survey*, Baden-Baden 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Henny J. van der Graaf and Sami Faltas, *Weapons in Exchange for Development: An Innovative Approach to the Collection of Weapons in Albania*, in: Sami Faltas and Joseph Di Chiaro III (eds.), *Managing the Remnants of War – Microdisarmament as an Element of Peace-building*, Baden-Baden 2001.

<sup>3</sup> For more on SEESAC see [www.seesac.org](http://www.seesac.org).

<sup>4</sup> For more on RACVIAC see [www.racviac.org](http://www.racviac.org).

<sup>5</sup> Sami Faltas and Wolf-Christian Paes, *You have removed the devil from our door – An assessment of UNDP's Small Arms and Light Weapons Control (SALWC) project in Albania, Belgrade 2003*. Available at [www.seesac.org](http://www.seesac.org).

<sup>6</sup> Derek Boothby, *The UNTAES Experience: Weapons Buy-back in Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (Croatia)*, Bonn 1998 (BICC brief no. 12).

<sup>7</sup> Andreas Heinemann-Grüder and Wolf-Christian Paes, *Wag the Dog – The Mobilization and Demobilization of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA)*, Bonn 2001 (BICC brief no. 20).

<sup>8</sup> Anna Matveeva and Wolf-Christian Paes, *The Kosovo Serbs: An ethnic minority between collaboration and defiance*, Bonn/London 2003 (BICC and Saferworld). Available at [www.bicc.de](http://www.bicc.de).

<sup>9</sup> Anna Matveeva with Duncan Hiscock, Wolf-Christian Paes and Hans Risser, *Macedonia – Guns, policing and ethnic division*, Bonn/London 2003 (BICC and Saferworld). Available at [www.bicc.de](http://www.bicc.de).

## Albania's Difficult Path Toward Europe

On 15 December 2003 Professor Dr. Xhezair Zaganjori gave a presentation at ZEI's "Europadialog" on the current prospects for EU integration of his country. Professor Zaganjori is a member of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania and was Albanian Ambassador to Germany from 1992 to 1997. Here you can find a short, translated version of the presentation.

When speaking about Albania's path toward Europe, one must also discuss the many problems along the way to final integration in the EU. Geographically, Albania is an integral part of Europe. Language and culture

are unmistakably linked with European culture and civilization. But given the historical peculiarities and especially its 50 years of iron isolation, which Albania experienced under a fanatical Stalinistic regime, Albania remained excluded from the European integration process.

For this reason, the student movement, which set the democratization process in motion thirteen years ago, declared: "We want an Albania at the heart of Europe." Indeed, successes, even if not to the desired degree, were achieved toward opening and fully integrating Albania into the European process. Albania is currently a member of the OSCE, Council of

Europe, WTO, and works closely with NATO, WEU, World Bank, IMF, etc. However, membership in the most important organizations, NATO and the EU, remains problematic.

The first contacts between Albania and the EU already begin during the onset of the democratization process in the 1990s. In December 1992, a trade and cooperation agreement was signed, which remains valid. The agreement requires the fulfillment of various stipulations for the realization of an association agreement. Indeed, the past few years have shown a clear, progressive expansion of co-operation. As a whole, the assistance from the EU

during this period reached around one billion Euros, of which almost 30 per cent came from Germany.

Given the relative success of the reforms between 1992 and 1996, discussion on a new agreement could begin. Particularly Germany and France supported the form of a special accord *sui generis* that resembles the association agreements with the countries of Central Europe. In regard to its pattern of economic development and macro-economic index, Albania was leading in the OECD statistics. In the European integration process, Albania generally seemed to be ahead of not only other countries in the region such as Croatia and Macedonia, but even ahead of Bulgaria and Romania. Moreover, in December 1995, during a luncheon in Bonn given by the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, for former President Sali Berisha, the author was witness to a promise that Germany would support an association agreement in 1996 as well as the fastest possible integration for Albania.

Unfortunately, this process has been halted completely. The problematic situation culminated in the parliamentary elections in May 1996 and the subsequent crisis at the beginning of 1997 due to the collapse of the pyramid firms. Massive damages, the breakdown of government institutions, and the loss of citizen trust in the rule of law and even democracy followed, which meant a severe blow and a reversal of the European integration process for Albania. Much time was needed to normalize the internal situation and to renew contact with the EU.

The Kosovo crisis and further problems in the Balkans have pressured the EU to follow a new policy. Despite all criticism, delays, and flaws, the "Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe" provides strong support for the reform process as well as the improvement of the conditions and cooperation in the region. Concurrently, the EU has formulated a new strategy for European integration of the Western Balkan countries, eventually leading to Stabilization and Association Agreements (SAA) with each individual country as a condition for full membership in the EU.

At the end of 1999, the European Commission completed its "Feasibility Study" about the possibility of beginning negotiations with Albania. The report indicated clearly, that Albania had a long way to go before

fulfilling all requirements for such an agreement. The Commission formulated several tasks to be completed by certain deadlines in order for negotiations to start:

1. Enhancement of order and security;
2. Improvement of government work and the implementation of law;
3. Continuation of structural reforms and strengthening of macroeconomic stability.

A joint EU-Albania working group analyzed achievements and difficulties during 2001. The Joint Consultative Task Force continued the work. Their conclusions were nearly the same as the previous year. The long, problematic parliamentary elections in 2001, the critical reports by the international election observers, and the enduring crisis within the governing Socials Party exacerbated the political atmosphere and increased the criticism from the EU toward Albania.



R. Prodi and deputy Prime Minister Meta

Nonetheless, the international pressure, the improvement of relations between government and opposition in the spring of 2002, the so-called "period of compromise" between Sali Berisha and Fatos Nano, as well as the joint election of a president aroused hope for the start of SAA negotiations. Despite the non-fulfillment of many tasks and the generally critical evaluation, the Council suggested in June 2002 that negotiations begin. In September, the suggestion received support from the European Parliament. Thus, negotiations were opened officially during Romano Prodi's visit to Albania on January 31, 2003.

The start of negotiations was welcomed optimistically in Albania. The state ensured the creation of all necessary structures so that the process could be coordinated and controlled smoothly and quickly:

1. a parliamentary committee for integration was set up;
2. an inter-ministerial committee for integration to meet periodically, led by the Prime Minister;
3. the Ministry for Integration, whose Minister acts simultaneously as Vice-Prime Minister.
4. the negotiation group for European integration, which consists of representatives from Ministries and top institutions and is led by the Minister of Integration;
5. the General Directorate for Euro-Atlantic Cooperation within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
6. the department for harmonization of legislation within the Ministry of Justice, etc.

In 2003, numerous working meetings took place in Tirana and Brussels. Particular attention was devoted to Justice and Home Affairs as well as to regional cooperation. Moreover, the working groups dealt with issues such as the free movement of goods, people and services, agriculture, and fishing. The Presidency of both Greece and Italy in 2003 had a positive effect. These two countries understand well the necessity of integrating the Western Balkans, especially Albania, as became evident during the Thessalonica Summit.

At first, one expected that the negotiations would last between six months and one year, as was the case for Croatia and Macedonia. Supporting this optimism was the fact that Albanian government and opposition as well as society as a whole recognize the priority of rapprochement with the EU. A survey would find no less than 90 per cent approval. This does not stem merely from the economic regression inherited from the past, or the xenophobia due to 50 years of isolation, or the problems of internal security and the confrontational politics in Albania, but also the uncertainty about what EU integration really signifies. Many view integration in its advantages only, even as a possibility to travel in the countries of Western Europe.

With the end of 2003, the signals from Brussels no longer seem very optimistic. The reports about Albania are once again unfavorable. On the one hand, progress (mainly in the economic sphere) is undeniable. Yet, most reports note that there remains a great deal to be done in Albania. Some of the troublesome concerns

that include:

- persistent conflicts not only between government and opposition, but also within the governing Socialist Party;
- a lack of success in the struggle against crime in general and organized crime in particular, which regrettably continues to spread;
- corruption in the state administration and in the institutions of law;
- the inability to create functioning, stable, and democratic institutions;
- failure to develop reforms in constructing a social market economy; and
- the necessity of creating an efficient bureaucracy.

To expound on several points:

*Firstly:* The reforms in the area of economics have been indeed successful. But one should differentiate between the reforms that were required by the system change and the reforms that are essential for EU membership. The first reforms are evaluated, in general, as a relative success. Apart from the years 1997-98, there has been continual growth in GDP (one of the highest in Europe between 1992-1996 and 1999-2002). This can be traced back to the effective privatization, trade liberalization, bank reform, stabilization of the micro- and macro-economic index, etc. On the other hand, the Albanian economy has received assistance from the international community, most strongly from the EU, but also from the World Bank, IMF, and individual countries, and from immigration after the opening of Albania.

An important step was made by returning land to farms and privatizing small and mid-sized firms. Currently, privatization continues in the strategic sectors such as the savings banks, telecommunications, and energy companies. In general, the economy has endured a smooth transition, although privatization has received considerable criticism because this process frequently involves collusion and nepotism and because the requirements for efficient management were often missing. In many cases, firms were privatized, but they still remain closed since the current proprietors do not possess the financial capacity to make the company profitable.

The issue of ownership in property and land is problematic. The law, which is currently in effect, has been changed several times. After many debates, a new bill has been developed in cooperation with OSCE experts. In regard to land acquisition by foreigners, the situation is as follows: In 1999, the possible purchase of land was made possible for foreigners, only through investments three times as large as the actual value of the property; foreigners also have the right to rent construction property for a period of up to 99 years. Indeed, such a complicated solution represents a hurdle for foreign investment.

Agriculture continues to be the main area of employment in Albania (nearly 60 per cent). In general, Albanian farmers carry out self-subsistence agriculture; little is left over for the market. In agriculture, Albanian farmers work individually, they lack the necessary machinery, state subsidies are few and far between, and production is not efficient enough for competitive goods. Through the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, Albania did obtain many significant concessions for the purchase of agricultural products on the European market. Yet, Albania could hardly take advantage of these possibilities. Unemployment remains one of the largest wounds for Albanian society, especially in cities and particularly in the North. Many families live below the poverty line. The informal sector of the economy is relatively large. But the unequal distribution of wealth exacerbates the problem. This has led to a deep polarization.

*Secondly:* There are some achievements in the harmonization of legislation with the *acquis communautaire*. Once again, the consultation of foreign experts and the adoption of laws from other legal systems play an important role. Accordingly, the competition law was based almost completely on the German law, and the expertise came from Germany. However, it poses a disturbing problem, that the Albanian courts and bureaucracy do not consider the *Acquis Communautaire* and the judicial review of the European Court of Justice.

*Thirdly:* The domestic political tensions, the disregard of democratic rules, the treatment of political opponents as enemies, the refusal to cooperate in solving the most important issues of the country, and

the lack of determination and professionalism are the most important obstacles on the path to EU integration. The current crisis with the governing Socialist Party only worsens the situation. The rivalry within the party leadership infiltrates the governance of the country and is leading to the practical blockade of parliamentary activity. For the third time, appointments of the Foreign Minister and of the Minister for Public Order have failed in Parliament.

*Fourthly:* Crime represents a serious hindrance for the efforts at EU integration and is a threat for the young Albanian democracy. The Prime Minister has emphasized that organized crime maintains relations to politics and high state bureaucracies or the justice system with the help of the finance sector. The state executive institutions do not function as they should: above all, the police, courts and state's attorneys and prosecutors. The parties use these phenomena as means in political disputes and as reasons to attack one another instead of working together for the stability of democracy and the country.

*Fifthly:* Although the environmental problems in Albania have not given rise to much concern, they could become dangerous in the future. The territory of Albania is covered with forests, meadows, fields, rivers, and lakes. Its coast stretches about 470 km (282 mi). During the Communist regime, no industry posed a serious threat to the environment - apart from the metallurgy magnate in Elbasan, which was equipped with outdated Chinese technology. But the development of democratic processes was accompanied by an indifference and lack of concern for nature. As a result, there has been massive deforestation, severe damage to water reserves, hunting against animals without limit, and fishing with dynamite. Air pollution, caused by automobile traffic, has also become a grave problem, especially in Tirana with its 700,000 inhabitants. At the beginning of the 1990s, there existed about 2,000 personal cars in Albania, whereas there are almost 400,000 currently. Most vehicles are very old.

Until now, there has hardly been any initiative to make people responsible for environmental protection. For the years 2000-2006, the EU appropriated ca. 5 million Euros to Albania for this purpose.



## Task Force South Eastern Europe

### All Politics is Local – Networking for Europe in Remote Rousse

Rousse, a picturesque town with the only harbour and the only bridge on the Bulgarian shore of the Danube, was the setting of the sixth yearly conference ZEI organized from 29 January to 1 February this year. Rousse actually has an airport, but only the military part is in use, maybe in future for American B52 bombers starting for their missions to somewhere farther in the East. The trip for those coming by plane, landing in Bukarest and trying their way to 80 kilometer away Rousse is therefore arduous, similar for those taking the bus from 350 kilometer away Sofia. Not only because of the difficult road conditions. Anyone wishing to cross the bridge from the Romanian Giurgiu to the Bulgarian Rousse has to pay about forty Euro for each crossing, passing five different border crossings for passport control, national and local taxes and bridge toll - if he or she is not a lecturer or student of the BRIE project, the Bulgarian-Romanian Inter-University Europe Center, which was the co-organizer of this year's conference.

It was a nerve-racking amount of work to get the authorities of both countries, in the local town halls as well as in the relevant ministries in the distant capitals, to agree to suspend the bridge toll and the taxes for the students, which is a vital prerequisite for any proper functioning of this pilot project for both Bulgarian-Romanian trans-border cooperation and the establishment of European Studies programmes with region-wide recruitment.

The strains of the trip paid off. The University of Rousse with its about 11.000 students is said to be a vibrant one, seeking close ties with the outside world. The modern premises of BRIE, mainly financed by the German Rector's Conference, are a vivid proof of that, as are the capable students coming from all over South Eastern Europe, who also took part in the conference - apart from those studying at present in Chemnitz or Frankfurt / Oder.

After opening the conference with greetings from the mayor of Rousse, from the University Rector and from ZEI Director Professor Dr. Ludger Kühnhardt, the main day was spent hearing and discussing different presentations dealing with the overarching topic "The European Perspectives of South Eastern Europe and the Black Sea". Professor Kühnhardt, talking about the process leading to the present deadlock in the EU constitution building process, vividly warned not to forgo the historic chance to find a compromise on the constitution presented by the Convention last year. Dr. Emil Mintchev (ZEI) and Professor Dr. Marius Spiridon were both pretty optimistic about the chances of their respective countries to join the Union in January 2007. Dr. Harald Kindermann, German Ambassador in Sofia, pointed to the necessity of closer regional cooperation between Bulgaria and Romania, also to attract more FDI. The perspective was then widened, as Dr. Rafael Biermann (ZEI) presented the progress of the Western Balkan countries on their journey into the EU,

specifically discussing the new uncertainties after the elections in Croatia and Serbia, as Oleg Kokoshinsky (Vice President of the Atlantic Council Ukraine) pleaded for closer and more substantial EU-Ukraine ties; and as Professor Dr. Huseyni Bagci (METU, Ankara) vigorously presented his arguments for a start of accession negotiations with Turkey in December.

More about the Euroregion and the BRIE project was finally offered by the Governor of the Province Rousse, Roumen Januarov, and the Director of BRIE from the Romanian side, Professor Dr. Gabriel Popescu. How much still needs to be done was revealed by a student from Kosovo who complained that the Bulgarian authorities still do not accept his passport issued by UNMIK, forcing him to go back and get a passport from Serbia and Montenegro through dubious channels and for much money. Erhard Busek, the Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, who recently lectured at BRIE as part of the Hertie-Lecture Series organized by ZEI, promised to push the authorities in Sofia to change this practice, which hardly matches with the European aspirations of the country.

During the conference a new Reader by Professor Dr. Georgi Karassimeonov (University of Sofia) was presented on party systems in Central Eastern and South Eastern Europe, designed for use in seminars and available soon on the homepage of ZEI for download (ZEI series "European Integration and South Eastern Europe").

### Next Edition: Croatia and Serbia - The Political Upheaval and Its Repercussions



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