

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

from the forum

### *"Regional Aspects of the Defense and Security of the Republic Of Macedonia"*

organized by

**The Association of Macedonian Alumni of  
the "George C. Marshall" European Center for Security Studies,**

Skopje, 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2006

The forum was attended by numerous representatives from the governmental and nongovernmental sector, as well as representatives from international organizations and a significant number of association members. The event began with opening remarks by the president of the association, Prof. Stojan Kuzev and Mr. Nikola Dimitrov, national coordinator for Republic of Macedonia NATO membership, representing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – sponsor of the forum.

Introductory presentations were given by Mr. Esad Rahich, president of the Defense and Security Commission of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia and an association member and by Dr. Matthew Rhodes, professor at the European Center for Security Studies in Garmisch Partenkirchen.

Following the presentations a fruitful discussion ensued, the general conclusions of which are highlighted below.

For a considerable time now, the countries of the Western Balkans have been facing a number of challenges. These include certain constitutional issues as well as problems related to the strengthening of state institutions. The first half of the year saw the referendum in Montenegro, which resolved democratically the dilemma of the joint state with Serbia. By year's end, the negotiations with Kosovo should be brought to a conclusion, thus completing the process of disbanding the former Yugoslavia. However, much remains to be done if the region wants to integrate into the EuroAtlantic family. First of all, Bosnia and Herzegovina will undergo the process of reorganizing their federation. Then Albania will have to carry out reforms if it expects to receive the status of a membership candidate. Also, the new administration in the Republic of Macedonia will need to implement the recommendations from last year's European partnership if it hopes to receive a positive report in October and a date for the start of membership negotiations. Croatia is the only shining example for the countries in the region. Zagreb is successfully managing the negotiations for EU membership, and it is only a matter of time before Croatia becomes a part of the EuroAtlantic integrations. The future of the Western Balkans will depend on how successful the countries in the region are in dealing with these challenges.

All of these challenges have an influence on the different relationships the countries of the region have with NATO and the EU. Albania, Macedonia and Croatia are members of the Partnership for Peace and the MAP process, as well as members of the EuroAtlantic Partnership Council. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro are not members of these organizations. So far as EU membership is concerned, the members of the Adriatic group (Macedonia, Albania and Croatia) have already signed stabilization and association agreements. Two of the above mentioned countries (Macedonia and Croatia) have membership candidate status, Croatia having already begun accession negotiations.

Meanwhile, Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina are engaged in negotiations which will culminate in the signing of individual stabilization and association agreements.

The consequence of this situation is that the countries of the Western Balkans enjoy different levels of access to EU and NATO institutions, more specifically to the economic and military assistance that the two organizations can provide. This makes it difficult for NATO and the EU to involve all the countries of the region equally in regional cooperation activities. Furthermore, we can expect these disparities to grow if some of the Western Balkan countries become full members of NATO and the EU.

The reasons for these different levels of relationships can be found in the varying progress these countries have made in human rights, economic reforms, respect for minority rights and the development of friendly relationships with neighboring countries. This trend will most probably continue for the next several years, leading inevitably to different levels of involvement in regional cooperation activities. However, in the long run, we can expect regional cooperation in the Western Balkans to have a limited effect, if those countries that are the greatest source of instability and conflicts in the region are not considered. Hence, NATO and the EU are faced with the need to strike a delicate balance between, on the one hand, the gradual bonding of the countries into regional cooperation and, on the other, fulfillment of the criteria for their inclusion in the PfP and SAP process.

The strategy of the international community has been for NATO to contribute to security and Europe to constitutional solutions and the economic growth of the Western Balkans. The first involved prolonged NATO presence in the region, while the second required the Union to help in the transformation of the region by promising its countries membership in the EU. Thus, EuroAtlantic integration was to contribute to the stability and development of the whole region.

NATO and the EU are actively engaged in the Western Balkans through their enlargement activities, through the NATO-MAP process and through the EU stabilization and association agreements. Their involvement has also been manifested in the crisis management in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo. The political, economic and military power of NATO and the EU give these organizations significant influence, which is a result of the desire of most countries in the region to become members of these organizations.

Despite the strong presence of the major European and international organizations in this region, we cannot yet point to any significant results. The policies on enlargement were founded on the premise that the countries could be treated as a group. However, the decisions about membership will be based individually on the readiness of each applicant country. This period has not encouraged regional cooperation among the partner-countries, and at times it has even provoked competition among them as they seek to develop closer ties with the West.

While NATO and the EU can and should do more to improve regional cooperation in the Western Balkans, progress in regional cooperation cannot be isolated from broader political and security development in the region. Regional cooperation cannot improve or play a significant role if the Western Balkans continue to be characterized by violence and a deterioration of interethnic or reciprocal relationships. The West has not succeeded in developing an effective strategy for confronting regional problems caused by deficiencies in the democratization process and by violent nationalism. In the long run, the solution to the problems in the Western Balkans and the extension of stability throughout the Southeastern region will depend on the development of democracies which will adopt a common standard of respect for human and minority rights and will adhere to the principle of the inviolability of international borders. To achieve this goal, the key NATO and EU members will have to

remain deeply involved in the Balkans. One element of this engagement should be an enhanced support for regional cooperation. The challenge for the main European and international organizations will be to find a political space within which the regional organizations will develop and provide material support to enhance this cooperation.

Generally speaking, the international community has shown a willingness to devote political, military and financial resources to the region. Still, both NATO and the EU have been careful in taking over responsibilities when the region was supposed to be integrated. At the Salonika summit of the EU and the Western Balkan countries a resolution was adopted, in which the EU promised a European perspective to the states of the region; however, the instruments that were proposed for achieving this suggest that the process will be a relatively long one. Furthermore, during this process, the countries in the region are expected to show a greater interest in the EU than the Union shows in them. This asymmetry does not encourage regional cooperation.

Although this fragmented period of integration may not cause a further division among the Western Balkan countries, it doesn't promote integration or increased cooperation in the region. However, as has been mentioned earlier, the political and economic integration of the countries in the Western Balkan region is one of the conditions for long-term regional stability and integration into the EuroAtlantic structures.

With the latest crisis in the Union, and NATO's declining interest in the Balkans, it has become important for the countries of the region to show a greater interest in regional cooperation. With this situation in mind, there have already been warnings that the region could once again be destabilized, if the process of integration comes to a halt because of the new challenges for NATO in Afghanistan and Iraq and the crisis in the EU.

The plan was for the Union to take over responsibilities in the Balkans. However, following the French and Dutch "No" to the proposed EU Constitution, it seems that the plan is not set in stone and that enthusiasm for the most recent extension has fallen. On top of that, in other European countries there have been calls for the EU to take a breather in the enlargement process. If the countries of the Western Balkans are not integrated, they will be engaged and under the strong influence of the West. Examples of that are the protectorates in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in Kosovo and the strong presence of the EU in Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro.

The problem lies in the fact that most of the cooperation so far has been based on the premise that it will be implemented via outside mediation. That is how many initiatives took place, among them the NATO Initiative for Southeastern Europe and the Stability Pact, both of which were supposed to facilitate cooperation among the Balkan countries. What it did, though, was foster a dependence on the "third party." So, for certain problems that are supposed to be solved via bilateral relationships there is an expectation that the international community will act as go-between.

There is a need for a concerted effort on the part of the Western Balkan countries in their bid to become part of the EuroAtlantic family. Otherwise, the whole region faces the prospect of remaining outside NATO and the EU for an extended period of time. In some European countries, it is even thought that Western Balkan countries should be excluded from the EuroAtlantic integrations. This attitude could gain even greater currency if the crisis in the Union deepens and debate continues about the future of NATO. For this reason, the Western Balkan countries need to act together, regardless the fact that each one will be integrated in accordance with its own level of development.

There is an urgent need to define the “final outcome” in the region, so that complete attention can be focused on the economy. Countries of the region must have a precise agenda of the steps they need to take in order to be invited into NATO and the EU, and to know when it is going to happen. Failing that, these states will be kept in limbo for an extended period of time, during which they will be confronted with constant changes in the conditions they must meet. This could lead to disillusion and cause the countries to turn towards other values. Thus, instead of fostering cooperation and prosperity, the old animosities could be rekindled. It would be very easy for the quest for greater security to in fact bring less security for all those involved in the process. There will be differences among the countries in the region upon certain issues. However a common agenda for business and attracting foreign investments should be developed. That will accelerate integration of the region into NATO and the EU. If different alternatives are kept open for too long, the feeling of uncertainty could be disastrous. It is important not to let the economic and social gap get any wider. Otherwise the region will be destabilized, and instead of getting closer to NATO and the EU it will experience a meltdown. It makes no sense – either strategically or morally – to leave this region on the sidelines of Euro Atlantic progress.

After an initial post-independence skepticism, the Republic of Macedonia has come to recognize the importance of cooperation with the countries of the region, as a way to enhance its security and realize its goal of EuroAtlantic integration. So the country has intensified regional cooperation and under a policy of “equal readiness to cooperate with all the neighbors” it has evolved into a “leader in regional cooperation.” This constitutes one of the pillars of its foreign policy, which complements its strategic goal of EU and NATO integration. The activities undertaken at the national, regional and international level have made the Republic of Macedonia a promoter of regional peace and stability.

The Republic of Macedonia's determination in favor of EuroAtlantic integration is backed by a general consensus among the country's political parties and is broadly supported by public opinion. Obviously major steps have been taken in the security and defense area to define and build the institutions and fulfill the criteria for NATO and EU membership. With that as a starting point, measures to build trust and implement the Ohrid Framework Agreement have enhanced the stability and security of the Republic of Macedonia. That fact enables the Republic of Macedonia to assert itself as a key factor in the security and stability of the region. The Republic of Macedonia has gone from being a consumer of international assistance to being a contributor to peace, security, and stability in the region.

Regardless of the efforts made by the government and the positive assessments given by NATO and the EU, it is clear that Macedonia still has "homework" to do. The path that we are taking is the right one, but for objective and subjective reasons the pace of progress has slackened.

The consensus achieved needs to be followed by additional improvement in the structure and functioning of institutions. Improving coordination at the decision-making level is an additional contribution to that process. Other elements that can have a far-reaching influence on the process include investment in the training of civil servants and distribution of knowledge and experience throughout the whole population, thus preparing the experts who will assume and accomplish the tasks of the EuroAtlantic structures after integration. Additional factors are development of expertise for the smooth functioning of state institutions and provision of support for efforts to integrate into EuroAtlantic structures.

The above discussion provides a context for understanding why we should consider establishing a Center for Documentation. This would bring together in one place all of the

literature and documents needed to prepare for, coordinate, and implement the commitments that come with membership in international organizations and forums.

Therefore, to hasten achievement of our goal of becoming members of the Alliance and the Union, the following steps, among others, need to be taken:

**F**irst, it is important, within the framework of enhancing the structure and performance of the institutions, to improve coordination among top-level decision-makers. Investment in the training of civil servants is of the highest importance in preparing the state administration to carry out functions, responsibilities and tasks in the EuroAtlantic structures, both political and military. This is essential not only in the state administration, but also as part of our missions in structures of the Union and the Alliance. A primary obligation is still to establish a system for the distribution of experience within the public administration and governmental and nongovernmental organizations. This is needed in order to select and train the experts who will work in the EuroAtlantic structures after integration. An additional priority is the development of experts who will ensure the smooth functioning of state institutions. Finally, general support should be given to efforts being made for integration into EuroAtlantic structures. The idea can be accomplished by having institutions embody it in legal and systematic decisions.

**S**econd, as a corollary of the above, it is important to establish a “center for documentation” as well as to create a website, with access depending on the security classification of the user and the information/document requested. Such a center would shorten the time needed to gain access to needed documents. The Center would be multipurpose for internal use. The link with information and different types of documents published in the countries of the EuroAtlantic structures would be two-way (with open access for the countries and enriched contents, but also by using domestic publications)

**T**hird, it is necessary to improve the cooperation of experts from state institutions with their counterparts in other countries. Such advisory teams (individuals) would be selected with the assistance of the strategic partner. Their role in the advisory process (content, methods, norms and sponsorships) would be defined in the area where they are used. Following the completion of a needs analysis, coordinators should be assigned according to area of expertise, their first task being to define the programs and plans that will be carried out with their assistance.

**F**ourth, the Association of Macedonian Alumni of the “George C. Marshall” European Center for Security Studies can make a practical contribution to developing strategies and doctrines, especially in the defense and security areas. The knowledge and the expertise of association members would be incorporated into analyses, planning and training with suggestions for specific studies, analyses and solutions.

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