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F I N A L R E P O R T

" THE ROLE OF NATO AND EAPC IN THE STABILITY PACT FOR SOUTH EAST EUROPE"

FELLOW: MINKO NOEV, M.A

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I. Introduction

The violent dissolution of former Yugoslavia (SFRY) during the last decade of the XX century is the gruesome chapter in European history after the fall of the Berlin wall. It revived in some minds Southeast Europe's reputation as a region of intractable ethnic conflicts, crippling and incapacitated states and reform deficits (1). Having missed the opportunity to convince the local ethnic elites from former Yugoslavia not to allow the spiral of destruction, the international community faced complicated tasks with increasing intensity in the region. The Dayton Peace Accords of 1995 and the way they were reached surfaced two basic problems:

- the lack of a working security architecture with regional dimensions in Europe (2) was becoming evident through the inability to enact workable conflict preventive solutions in South Eastern Europe (SEE) and
- additional regional stability and security management and efforts had to be implemented in order to stabilize and put in order a vast area of Europe with more than 50 mln. inhabitants.

The Kosovo crisis, which started in early 1998, demonstrated that the problems of the past have not subsided in former Yugoslavia. In October 1998, NATO for the first time in the Kosovo conflict presented an ultimatum, which resulted in the withdrawal of Serbian troops from the province. From January 1999 NATO step by step, prepared to use military force in response to the hazardous and increasingly dangerous steps of Milosevich, which would have led to unpredictable consequences for the region if not stopped by force. The six week–long air campaign brought partial solution, placing Kosovo under international protectorate, regardless of the fact that in legal terms the province is still considered to be part of the FR Yugoslavia.

The war in Kosovo brought qualitatively new dimension to the attitudes and security thinking in Europe and the transatlantic community regarding South East Europe (SEE). The Wasington summit in 1999 was held as operation "Allied Force" was conducted in full swing and a major parallel multifaceted diplomatic initiative has been launched on the EU side by its German presidency – the Stability Pact for South East Europe. It was becoming clear that a

kind of regional approach for establishing peace, stability and security in SEE has to be sought bringing all interests in the region under a common denominator.

The Kosovo crisis was also a signal that the region was at a turning point and in urgent need of a comprehensive concept for peace and stability with substantial regional component as its element. The crisis made it clear to the EU that in view of the area's geographic vicinity and historical proximity, progress in the stabilization of the region is as much in its own interest as in that of the countries directly or indirectly affected by the conflicts(3).

The stabilization of SEE became a serious concern not only for NATO and the EU but also for the countries from the region, which being not involved directly in the crisis suffered diverse negative implications from it in a protracted period of one decade.

Most of the states from SEE had applied for NATO membership or had expressed their will to do so. So did they act in terms of their integration with the EU. Until the Kosovo war most regional foreign policy initiatives coming from within SEE aimed mostly PR effects and had no practical integrative value. Even now it's questionable how efficient they could be without strong backing and support from Brussels.

This paper argues that until the war in Kosovo collective regional input to building regional security was low, had no substantial value in terms of visible capacity for conflict prevention and was dependable on outside impulses. The extensively heterogeneous composition of SEE is one of the reasons, still making questionable its definition as political region in terms of local integrative capacity.(4). The fact that the states from this geographical region were not capable to cope with its problems for a decade only certifies this assumption.

NATO campaign in Kosovo proves to be decisive breaking point in NATO, EU and more generally western policies towards SEE. Within a short period of time – less than 6 months a new more clear approach of regional "division of labour" in international stabilization effort evolved with more distinct responsibilities for all actors from the international community and the countries from the region.

The Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe primarily designed to stabilize and revitalize the region by increasing the pace of political and economic reform and expand cooperation among the countries of the region was set up with the purpose of driving a more comprehensive vision for South Eastern Europe, one that would overcome mistrust between the countries and bring them into the reality of European integration (5).

The basic perception of the Stability Pact for SEE may be defined as follows:

It is essentially a partnership between the countries of South Eastern Europe on one hand and the European Union and other representatives of the international community, the United States and Russia, on the other. Major international organizations such as NATO, the OSCE, the Council of Europe, and the World Bank also play major roles.

In return for democratic reforms and regional cooperation the countries of the region are getting short-term political and economic support as well as the prospect of gradually closer ties to the European Union and other Euro-Atlantic structures. Thus, conditionality and incentives are supposed to be built into the very structure of the Pact.

The Pact is based on a broad approach, focusing on three main tracks; democratization and human rights, economic development and infrastructure, and external as well as internal security.(6)

It's widely perceived, including in SEE itself, that NATO must have prime responsibility for the security of the region (power sharing partly with Russia), the EU must provide for the economic rehabilitation and the rest of the international organizations – the UN, OSCE etc. have to take care of democracy building, humanitarian aid and human rights issues. This pattern of political thinking is characteristic for substantial segment of the regional political elite. It is a matter of more precise definition, however, how the roles and responsibilities of each actor should be made more concrete and binding.

The role of NATO in stabilizing SEE is measured not only with the tens of thousands of troops directly involved in peace enforcement and peace keeping. Being leading actor in implementation of hard security measures, the Alliance made valuable contributions in other security areas as well.

Having taken the largest burden of peace enforcement ("peace making") in Kosovo and in the Balkans in general, clearly understanding that the overall stabilization and "securitization" of SEE is a complex international task with more interests involved, the Alliance took relatively "low profile" role in the framework of the Stability Pact, leaving the EU, OSCE, UN and the countries from the region leading positions in this initiative in healing the wounds from the conflicts. At the same time new approaches were sought with partners from the region to identify specific fields of common interest and possible security co-operation.

The analysis of the relevant documents, research papers and concrete political, diplomatic moves and action and interviews proved the conclusion that NATO:

- Plays a specific role as the most important regional security cooperation facilitator in mastering elements of regional security policy and policies in specific security fields of mutual interest;
- Initiated through SEEI building of synergy oriented mechanisms for consultations with the goal of achieving enhanced security cooperation ;
- Directly supported through political backing of the EAPC measures targeted at increasing the stability of the overall security environment in SEE.
- Supported politically the Stability Pact in the security field and provided expertise in implementation of concrete projects.

This, at a first glance secondary activities have to be correctly assessed and not underestimated.

For several reasons the relatively limited role of the Alliance in the Pact was predetermined by the following:

1. NATO has already launched the South East European Initiative (SEEI) at the Washington summit and was establishing in EAPC format a regional political framework for SEE;
2. The comprehensive approach of the initiative and the leading role EU required inclusive ("embracing") approach to all its participating members, which brings together parties, sometimes with non-identical views or perceptions for the future of SEE (for instance Russia) ,
3. In a period of time (1999-2000) the Stability Pact did not include all states from the region until FR Yugoslavia was admitted;
4. It takes time for some key representatives from the local political, diplomatic and military establishments to accept ("swallow") regionality as a way of thinking in terms of their future Euro-Atlantic integration. Many still do not believe fully that fair and constructive inclusion in building regional stability and security is an important precondition for the Euro-Atlantic future of their states;

For these and some other reasons in the *Cologne Declaration* , NATO's involvement in the future Stability Pact for SEE was dragged to 5-th place, behind all other major international players and defined as:

"…..Role of NATO

26. *We note NATO's decision to increase cooperation with the countries of South Eastern Europe and its commitment to openness, as well as the intention of NATO, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and the Partnership for Peace to work in cooperation with other Euro-Atlantic structures, to contribute to stability and security and to maintain and increase consultations with the countries of the region. We call for their engagement, in conformity with the objectives of the Pact, in regional security cooperation and conflict prevention and management. We welcome these stabilization activities aimed at promoting the objectives of this Pact.* ***The enhanced use of NATO's consultative fora and mechanisms, the development of an EAPC cooperative mechanism and the increased use of Partnership for Peace programmes will serve the objectives of overall stability, cooperation and good-neighbourliness envisaged in the Pact****.*

27. The members of NATO and a substantial number of other participants underscore that the Alliance has an important role to play in achieving the objectives of the Pact, noting in particular NATO's recent decisions to reach out to countries of the region."(7)

The dynamic evolution of the overall security environment in SEE throughout 1999-2002 and the process of stabilization are giving answers to the question how the role of NATO and EAPC have to be defined. An assessment can be made that this role can be identified in two layers (levels)

- Political level - active political backing by NATO and EAPC of Stability Pact moves directed at enhancement and broadening of regional security cooperation in SEE,
- Practical operative level - support to, inclusion in and guidance of concrete security related projects in the Framework of the Regional Table and respectively in Stability Pact Working Table III.
- Conceptual level – initiating and supporting conceptual debate on common regional security matters with the goal to identify more precisely models of regional security behaviour with euro-atlantic characteristics.

The achieved synergy effect from the activities in those levels is the most important goal reached so far in the framework of the Stability Pact security field with NATO/EAPC involvement. SEEGROUP's work, the SEECAP process, the paper itself and the ongoing SEESTUDY gave real shape with added regional value alongside with RAVIAC regular

seminars and the long list of other new conceptual undertakings in the fields of CBMs, SALW, defence budgeting and humanitarian demining .

It is worth mentioning though, that the ongoing discussion on the future of the Stability Pact (8) and the more sober assessment of its achievements (9) after its first 2 years of operational activity post some serious questions for the future. There grows a strong perception in the non- "Western Balkans" countries from SEE that their expectations from the Pact were either too high or unrealistic. Those countries' agenda (invitation for and consequently full membership in NATO) includes Stability Pact related activities but the regionally oriented security cooperation with the Alliance is set on a **NATO-partner** (19+1 format) practical track (MAP, enhanced PfP etc) and deals with substance that goes far beyond the lousy formulations of the Pact. Interviews with high level officials from NATO and non-"Western Balkans" partner countries from SEE confirm this conclusion.

Another important issue, which still has to be addressed, is how the Pact reacts or intends to react in crisis situations like the one that emerged in one of the participating states from the region in 2001? Can it deliver any real input in such circumstances or it has no crisis management potential?

The analysis of the concrete achievements of the Stability Pact for SEE in the security area so far show that the contribution of NATO and EAPC for the overall success in its most sensitive field (regional security cooperation) is decisive as far as common perceptions and concerns are identified with common approach by the countries of the region.

The evolution of the security component of the Stability Pact for SEE from a list of seminars and center-building initiatives to SEEGROUP, SEECAP and SEESTUDY has to be examined carefully, because it gives additional "food for thought" and expertise, which may be exploited for future establishment of regional cooperative mechanisms in other regions facing similar security and security related problems (for instance the Caucases, etc.).

II. The war in Kosovo as a turning point for enhanced involvement of the euro-atlantic community in SEE.

II.1 The Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (SPSEE) and NATO's South East Europe Initiative (SEEI) – specific Euro-Atlantic response to the regional crisis in SEE

The military action of NATO through operation "Allied force" in March-June 1999 to resolve the Kosovo deadlock gave birth to a new regional EU initiative – the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (SPSEE). In parallel , NATO's Washington summit drew the outlines of the South East Europe Initiative (SEEI). The increased involvement of the two most capable in terms of power international structures proved the conclusion that the South East of the continent remains an area of critical strategic interest to the Western governments. The region's problems were accepted as more complex, deeply rooted and unlikely to be resolved without sustained attention and involvement on the part of the international community.

The **Stability Pact** initiative, triggered by the Kosovo war, had developed in several stages and during this process went through visible modification.

During the European Council meeting in Vienna in December 1998 the implementation of a donor conference and the development of a joint strategy for the Balkans in connection with the CFSP were decided. However, the escalation of violence and increased tensions in and around Kosovo during the winter of 1998/1999 demonstrated that regardless of the range of policies and activities towards the former Yugoslavia the EU was not possessing a coherent and workable regional strategy . In other words, ineffectiveness and incoherence characterized the mainly piecemeal and country-oriented approach towards the Balkans prior to the Kosovo war. In addition the escalation of the conflict into a military operation visibly shifted the focus of international involvement away from the European Union.(11)

The internal EU negotiations on the Stability Pact were indicative for a policy shift on the part of the EU in response to the crisis, only less than a week after operation "Allied force" started. The German government, which took over the EU Presidency in January 1999,

decided to make its South East European policy one of its top priorities, forced obviously not only by the crisis itself, but also by internal political reasons.(12).

Despite German government's support for NATO action in Kosovo, the war triggered certain political problems in the German coalition government. Chancellor Schröder and Foreign Minister Fischer faced considerable opposition from within their parties. Therefore, their immediate priority was to develop a political approach that could act, viewed from outside, as a form of counterweight to NATO's action, thereby securing especially Green party's support for the operation of the Alliance. Thus, the Stability Pact initiative intended to help the German government gain both domestic and international confidence in its policies. In addition, it allowed the German government – due to its agenda-setting power in the European Council – to set the pace for the Pact in the following months.

Negotiating the major parameters of the initiative however, which took place during the air campaign of NATO and the inevitable necessity to give the initiative more comprehensive shape (including Russia), shifted the original idea of giving the Alliance the real role it was playing in stabilizing the region. The original German draft stated that the perspective of NATO membership was one of the most significant incentives for transformation and that the organisation should keep the door open in the long run for new members. It was of no surprise that Russia refused to accept a clear reference to any future expansion of NATO. Hence, the final version of the Stability Pact reaffirmed the right of each participating state to be free to choose or change its security arrangements, including treaties of alliance and the possibility of integration, on an individual basis, into Euro-Atlantic structures. However, NATO had a distinct interest in taking on a substantial role in the Stability Pact and demanded to play an active role at the Regional Table of the Pact, the main steering body under the Special Coordinator of the EU, and at the Working Table on security issues. According to NATO's role as the guarantor of security in the region, it was obvious to offer it a distinctly visible role in the Working table. But due to reservations by France and Russia the role of NATO was formally minimized during the final drafting of the Pact in a way that did not correspond to its actual significance in the region. The necessity to gain Russia's approval and the French objections against a too prominent role of NATO in the region became finally more important than an adequate representation of the Alliance.(13)

The novelty of the German approach was the incentive message, which it contained, in particular, that it would offer the countries of the region the perspective of membership in Euro-Atlantic structures. Criteria or conditions for entering into negotiations on membership were, however, not included.

The idea of extending EU membership as a stabilizing tool was taken from the EU's experience with Central and Eastern Europe although the arguments against the use of this instrument for South Eastern Europe were strong. This can certainly be explained by the urgency of the moment. The final outcome of the negotiating process on the Stability Pact initiative inside the EU reflects a path-dependency that prevailed over rational, predetermined preferences. Furthermore, the case emphasizes that the EU does not possess a tool in its foreign policy set stronger than the incentive of membership perspective. On the other hand, this policy deserves certainly some credit with respect to Yugoslavia. The persistent EU commitment to offer the country a real European perspective if it finally became democratic certainly strengthened the democratic movement in Serbia against the autocratic Milosevic regime at that time.

At the same time the Washington Summit of NATO launched the **South East European Initiative (SEEI)** aiming to promote regional cooperation and long term security and stability in the region.

In its initial phase in 1999 the creation of the new consultative forum consisting of the nineteen allies plus the seven states neighbouring Serbia, (including Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina) was viewed as an Alliance's important new step toward enhancing NATO's political involvement in Southeastern Europe. At that time NATO leaders affirmed that "the security of the neighboring states was of direct and material concern to Alliance members and that NATO would respond to any challenges by Belgrade to the neighboring states resulting from the presence of NATO forces and their activities on their territory during this crisis." This statement, in keeping with the letters sent by Secretary General Javier Solana to some of the same countries, was read as going a long ways toward establishing an Article 5 commitment, even if temporary. Initially the grouping was known unofficially as the "front-line states" in the context of the Kosovo conflict. Building co-operative security relationship between NATO and Southeastern Europe was considered important, because for the

Alliance, potential instability in the South Eastern Europe is perceived as one of the major threats to European security in the near future (14).

The initiative crystallized consequently and is formulated as based on 4 pillars : a Consultative Forum on Security Issues on Southeast Europe; an open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group (AHWG) on Regional Cooperation in Southeast Europe under the auspices of the EAPC in Political Committee Session; Partnership for Peace working tools; and targeted security cooperation programmes for countries in the region.

The Consultative Forum includes NATO countries; six Partner countries in the South East Europe neighbourhood (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia , Slovenia); and Bosnia and Herzegovina. It met initially at Summit level on the margins of the NATO Summit in Washington in April 1999 and has subsequently met at Ambassadorial level at NATO headquarters in Brussels.

The EAPC-AHWG goals are to identify ideas for further development and promotion of regional co-operation which have been incorporated into a set of activities modelled on activities carried out under NATO's Partnership for Peace programme. The methodology of the Partnership for Peace initiative is envisaged to address a number of issues which are important to South East Europe, including transparency in defence planning, crisis management and defence management. Activities such as workshops on these topics have thus been designed to have a region-wide focus. Some of these are led by the participating countries in the region, facilitated by NATO, and others by NATO itself. Designed to complement each other, they are helping to promote stability through regional cooperation and integration. A South East Europe Security Coordination Group has been later established to co-ordinate regional projects.

A complementary programme of targeted security cooperation with Croatia ,which joined the Partnership for Peace later was introduced building on PfP mechanisms. NATO also has a special security cooperation programme with Bosnia and Herzegovina outside PfP, which likewise complements other South East Europe Initiative activities. (16)

Both initiatives – the SPSEE and SEEI (virtually) were formally launched at approximately one and the same time and both had in their initial phase some immediate goals:

- demonstrate the political decisiveness, unity and potency of both EU and NATO to tackle the crisis in its wider dimension;
- politically reaffirm the strong commitment of EU and NATO to stabilize and make more secure the region of South Eastern Europe;
- offer incentives in the form of euro-atlantic perspective to the countries from the region, surrounding Yugoslavia and strengthen politically the circle of international isolation around the regime in Belgrade,
- demonstrate to the people of FR Yugoslavia that the world and especially, the developed world plus its neighbouring countries has chosen a different regional path of development for SEE which will bring more security and wealth to those included. This last argument contained more clearly in the Stability Pact had to play the role of additional support for the anti-Milosevich opposition in its efforts to oust him from power,

It's worth mentioning that given the basic characteristic of NATO and EU there were perceptions in 1999 that the SEEI has to be considered to some extend as a kind of regional political "stick" and the SPSEE as political "carrot" in dealing with the Milosevich. These virtual functions were, of coarse, never declared openly and were perceived mainly in terms of increasing the direct and indirect pressure on the regime in Belgrade.

Once the initiatives were launched, in the months that followed until the end of 2000 (the fall of the regime in Belgrade) several major conceptual issues occurred, which influenced directly the activities of the SPSEE including its security sector:

1. How far is the EU willing and respectively prepared and to go in stabilizing SEE;
2. Is the Stability Pact a really comprehensive and working platform for relatively fast recovery of the region of SEE, including real support to enhance the overall security;
3. Should the Stability Pact environment (Regional Working Table and respectively its security subdivision Working Table III) allow effective work on designing regional tools and measures to improve the overall regional security environment;
4. What substance (EU and other resources) will fill the Stability Pact basket, knitted of well polished *regional - conditional* diplomatic phrases?

Since the EU has opened a long-term accession perspective for the countries of the region it became evident that some form of its inclusion in the EU enlargement process is the

most promising and cost-effective way of promoting security, stability and prosperity, both for the region and for Europe as a whole. At the same time, in view of the region's potential for hard and soft security risks, it is argued that the financial burden of reconstruction and stabilization as well as the potentially counter-productive multiplication and overlapping of EU initiatives for the region may occur.

In practice, the EU tried to incorporate two partially contradictory strategies in the SPSEE – ***regionality*** and ***conditionality*** . It is assessed that some of the implementation obstacles, which the Stability Pact faces are more or less related to this fact.

Due to the substantial differences in political and economic transition within South East Europe, the bilateral relations with the EU differ from country to country. Regional co-operation is impeded by the heterogeneity of both the national transition processes and the bilateral relations with the EU. For these reasons, the prospects for regionality in economic co-operation, trade and regional infrastructure as a take-off strategy for sustainable reform and stabilisation should not be overestimated.(17)

In early 2000 it became evident that the regionality principle cannot be applied successfully as prescribed by the Cologne Declaration and the Sarajevo Summit Declaration due to the division of the region involved by the process of EU enlargement. Bulgaria, Slovenia and Romania were negotiating EU accession while the rest has a way to go to reach their status. De facto SEE was becoming divided, while at the same time multilateral co-operation among the states of the region is promoted as necessary precondition for their integration in the Union. Only a well balanced differentiated model may alleviate part of these contradictions and reinforce the Stability Pact's way of involving the neighbouring countries.

Therefore, political confidence building should not lead to unwarranted expectation of regional economic reform. Declaring regional co-operation a prerequisite for pre-accession or even accession may be considered both counterproductive and unfair to national reform progress in the adverse and unstable environment of the region.

The Stability Pact as declared to be a comprehensive long-term structural project soon came under pressure of time and expectations (mostly from recipients) to produce accountable and sustainable results in the short term. In one case even one of the countries (Bulgaria)

threatened to reconsider its participation unless its visible progress and investment in one field were not adequately praised (18).

It appeared that an effective implementation of the Pact as a long-term endeavour requires an overarching strategic framework defining priorities and structuring the division of labour with other international organisations with their inevitably diverging interests and views. The SPSEE is finally not an exclusive EU initiative, the European Union has only a ”leading role” at the Regional Table. Its implementation raised the question, if and to what extent the EU would be able and willing to take full responsibility for the Stability Pact. (19)

The Stability Pact basic Document – the Cologne Declaration adopted on 10.06. 1999 designed the framework of the initiative and its working mechanisms. In its “Objectives’ section the accession policies of those countries from the region, which had applied for NATO membership and those intending to do so were indicated as following:

“ …9. The Stability Pact aims at strengthening countries in South Eastern Europe in their efforts to foster peace, democracy, respect for human rights and economic prosperity, in order to achieve stability in the whole region. Those countries in the region who seek integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, alongside a number of other participants in the Pact, strongly believe that the implementation of this process will facilitate their objective.” (20)

Due to reasons already mentioned, security cooperation was relatively downsized in the Cologne Declaration not giving initially much room for effective positive activity that may design fresh and measurable positive results. The tasks of the sub-body, which had to deal with this matters in the framework of the Regional Round Table – the Working Table on security issues were set as follows:

> **“….. (i)** address justice and home affairs, as well as migratory issues; focus on measures to combat organized crime, corruption, terrorism and all criminal and illegal activities, transboundary environmental hazards; other related questions of interest to the participants;
>
> **(ii)** receive regular information from the competent bodies addressing transparency and confidence- building measures in the region. This Table will also encourage continued implementation of the Dayton/Paris Article IV Arms

Control Agreement and progress of the negotiations of Article V, and should consider whether, at an appropriate time, further arms control, security and confidence building measures might be addressed, by the competent bodies, taking into account existing obligations and commitments under the CFE Treaty.

(iii) receive regular information from the competent bodies addressing cooperation on defence/military issues aimed at enhancing stability in the region and among countries in the region, and facilitate the sustained engagement of all concerned to ensure regional security, conflict prevention and management. The work of this Table will complement and be coherent with efforts for the security of this region undertaken by various European and Euro-Atlantic initiatives and structures." (21)

It was argued that the lead organisation for the Third Working Table, however, is not NATO, despite the dominant presence of the Alliance in the region . As Russia insisted that security and stability in Europe should be the responsibility of the UN and the OSCE rather than NATO's, placing NATO in charge of Working Table III would have endangered the co-operation with the Russian government, which was deemed crucial for a sustainable solution in South Eastern Europe.

Having all this in mind it was not surprising that the first Donor Conference of the Stability Pact held in March 2000 allocated only $78 million or a mere **4 per cent** to Working Table III for security related activities out of the overall sum of 2,4 bln. $ pledged for Stability Pact projects as a whole. At that time even far reaching views were expressed that the sub-table on arms control, military budgets and regional defence co-operation seemed to be somewhat outside the framework of the Stability Pact. (22) Being inaccurate this last opinion shows only one of the deficits of the Stability Pact assessed from outside – the lack of coherent structural links between the elements of its main mechanism – the Regional Round Table.

II.2 Structuring of Stability Pact working mechanisms and the role of NATO and EAPC.

After the adoption of the Sarajevo Summit Declaration on 30.07.1999 structuring the Stability Pact working mechanisms began in fast pace. Milosevich was still in power and the international community had to demonstrate its decisiveness in dealing seriously with the region.

One of the conceptual problems that occurred with the Stability Pact was to find out and implement diplomatically balanced approach to its security sector that would give the opportunity to streamline the process in Stability Pact's Working table III (SP WT III) in the right direction.

In late summer of 1999 NATO – Russian relations were still tense over Kosovo and the Russian side was not prepared to make any further concessions at least in creating through the SP WT III new tools for increased influence of the Alliance in the region.

Without a clearly defined "lead agency" (international organization) the SP WT III and especially its sub-table on defence and security issues seemed to have been left aside from the intensive preparations for project drafting that were taking place in other Working tables (WT I and WT II).

In those conditions NATO preferred initially to implement a policy of low profile inclusion in SP WT III retaining at the same time its potential and capacity for non declared but sensible "steering directorship" of the processes in the sub-table on defence and security matters . The analysis of the documents from the Oslo meeting of WT III confirms this view.

The role mentioned was implicitly approved in the Conclusions by the Chairman of the Inaugural meeting of SP WT III held in Oslo on 13-14.10.1999:

" .....There was agreement that the Working Table is a useful and important forum for interaction between the various initiatives that are taking place in both of the principal sectors of its competencies. It should be used to put the spotlight on ongoing projects and programs, in order to address gaps as well as overlaps…... A number of delegations underlined the need to build upon existing expertise and projects.

The Table welcomed the preparedness of the relevant international organisations …… to utilise the Table for this purpose, and underlined that this was one of the added values of

the Stability Pact. There was recognition of the need to respect the role and competencies of each organisation and initiative. In this light, the Chairman of the Working Table and the Chairmen of the Sub-tables would liaise with the organisations …..as appropriate" (23)

It was clear at that time (autumn of 1999) that the only international organisations having responsibilities or ongoinig defence and security related projects in SEE were NATO and the OSCE. Having proven its limited capacity to deal with anything but monitoring, registering, or listing multilateral CSBM's in the region, the OSCE was obviously not assigned to play a role, different from its existent in this domain. Using the exclusion logic it was becoming obvious that this segment of the Stability Pact would be as much alive or productive as NATO through its political channels of influence was willing to keep it. This was further illustrated with the inclusion in the final documents of the Oslo meeting of projects and activities politically and directly sponsored by the Alliance:

" THE SUB-TABLE ON DEFENCE AND SECURITY AFFAIRS

……The Working Group would in particular consider ways to facilitate implementation of existing instruments. Building on existing arrangements, region-wide, ***confidence-building meetings of Defence Ministers*** could be considered.

…….The establishment of the ***South Eastern Europe Peacekeeping Force*** was welcomed as a good example of confidence building and an innovative approach towards regional crisis management. The Sub-table encouraged the States participating in the Force to share their experiences ……..." (24)

One of the main channels to ensure the adequate political direction of the activities in Stability Pact Working Table III became the agenda setting policy. The co-chairman system of operational guidance and leadership in the Working Table and its sub-tables ensured the opportunity to practically streamline the practical activities in a direction compliant with NATO and NATO partners' policies in the region.

The Alliance began to develop a variety of means to support the Stability Pact in NATO's area of comparative advantage – military security (25). In this process EAPC as a forum and its mechanisms and tools were actively exploited to ensure successful NATO-EAPC shaping of the future work of SP WT III and especially its sub-table on security and defence issues.

In December 1999 the SPSEE entered firmly the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) **Action Plan 2000-2002** and was placed high on the agenda in terms of priority in the Long-Term Programme for Consultation and Cooperation (Political and Security-related Issues) . A number of topics, activities and events were planned for the forthcoming period, which were either directly SPSEE linked or openly targeted at reaching the broader SP goals (26).

In this way NATO and EAPC under the SEEI guidelines were assuming the role to become driving force and concept builder of SP WT III sub-table on defence and security issues. What was not possible to reach during the negotiations on the Stability Pact initiative in April – June 1999 gradually was becoming reality – NATO and its partners from South Eastern Europe were taking over the responsibility for the most disputed segment of the Pact.

II.3 Setting the Agenda of the Stability Pact in the defence and security field in its initial phase (1999-2000)

The working process and modeling of the SP WT III after the Oslo inaugural meeting was strongly influenced by NATO/EAPC. NATO members and partners from the region practically defined the activity list of WT III sub-table on defence and security issues and set the Agenda for the forthcoming period in compliance with SEEI and NATO/EAPC policy directions. It is worth mentioning that the guiding role of the Alliance became more visible from the Second Meeting of WT III in Sarajevo (February 2000) through the explicit mentioning of its initiatives and concrete involvement in projects and the direct linkage of some of the projects listed with ongoing or planned activities in the framework of EAPC and PfP.

The comparative analysis of relevant NATO/EAPC documents with the Agenda of the respective sub-table of SP WT III set already at the Sarajevo Meeting in February 2000 clearly brings to the conclusion of existing ***matrix effect*** . (27). Visible identities were further emphasized with direct references to NATO and the Euro-atlantic structures in the Chairman's conclusions of the Meeting.

The main directions of SP WT III sub-table on defence and security work were defined in Sarajevo as:

- **Defence Economics and Demobilisation**
- **Arms Control and Non-Proliferation**
- **Military contacts**
- **Small Arms**
- **Humanitarian Demining**

The practical activities in those fields were concentrated in a number of seminars, exchanges and other forms of co-operation with increased involvement of the countries from the region. Generally assessed, the period till the Third meeting in Sofia of SP WT III (October 2000) was utilised in generating practical and applicable ideas, sorting and evaluating of projects and defining sources for implementation of those, which were approved as viable in the concrete circumstances.(28)

The joined work of all parties in SP WT III in 1999-2000, the overall developments in the SPSEE and the results from the Financing Conference held in March 2000 in Brussels revealed the strengths and the weaknesses of the Pact in the defence and security sector in its first phase. From practical point of view, the main regional defence and security concerns of NATO and its partners from the region were differing in their predominant substance from the limited opportunity, which the SPSEE was offering. The heterogeneity of participants and the necessity to hold the "inclusiveness" of the process additionally closed the window of opportunity to use the Pact as something more than an environment for exchange of opinions and verbal exercises in its security and defence working forum.

The implementation of the regionality principle and the increased insistence on the "regional ownership" (29) affected and lowered to some extend the relative value of the activities in SP WT III sub-table on defence and security issues. It is worth mentioning for instance, that in the basic document "AGENDA FOR STABILITY" adopted at the Second Meeting of the Regional Table held in June 2000 defence and security issues are almost non existent, or too vaguely marked. The reference made, that SP WT III "policy framework" recommendations for the "way ahead" will be drawn in a separate study and the declaration that the first phase of the Stability Pact was "over' with the Financing Conference of March

2000 made further clarification to what extend the countries from the region may rely on the SPSEE in those fields in the future. The generally expressed enthusiasm of countries like Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia etc. from the achievements of SP WT III sub-table on defence and security issues was supported in a limited way to the extend of the donors' support for concrete projects and in the framework of NATO's SEEI, PfP programmes with regional focus or bilaterally.

For this reason, concentration on less but more result-oriented projects (exercises) became a logical result in drafting and organising the future activity of SP WT III sub-table on defence and security issues. Major regional security issues were neither assigned to the SPSEE nor were its bodies tasked to deal with them, which paradoxically sidelined it from the mainstream.

NATO, individual NATO members and partners from the region established the main framework of SP WT III sub-table on defence and security issues and began to utilize it for exercises with practical value.

Strong political support for the SPSEE from the major players of the international community was additionally giving the necessary impulse and encouragement to the process, which had to develop own mechanisms and formats for security co-operation (30)

III. Stability Pact regional defence and security projects and exercises and the role of NATO and EAPC in facilitating regional co-operation in SEE through the SPSEE.

III. 1. Formation and activities of the South East Europe Security Cooperation Steering Group (*SEEGROUP*)

In mid 2000 the main tracks of activity in the SPSEE have been consolidated. With the adoption of "AGENDA FOR STABILITY" in June 2000, identifying the relative reluctance of the donor community to invest in defence and security sector activities, innovative forms had to be sought for giving new impetus to regional security cooperation including SP WT III (31). WT III sub-table on defence and security issues gradually focussed its work on more result-oriented concrete projects and activities.

The formation of the **South East Europe Security Cooperation Steering Group** (SEEGROUP) in October 2000, initiated and co-ordinated by Bulgaria – a NATO aspirant and strong regional partner as a SEEI driven move, marked the formal beginning of a new phase of NATO/EAPC involvement in SEE and the SPSEE in particular – the open political and practical guidance of the regional security co-operation in wider than EAPC format.

SEEGROUP was inaugurated on 03.10.2000 on the margins of the Sofia Meeting of SP WT III (October 2000) with the goal to coordinate, guide and strengthen the already existent regional formats and initiatives emphasising on the ***practical*** regional security co-operation with EAPC/PfP and PfP tailored tools. As a first true regionally driven endeavour it was designed to involve NATO more closely and the individual NATO countries in two aspects – by participation of the Alliance in the process itself and with using its expertise as Clearing house for endorsement of projects with regional value not funded by the SPSEE (32)

Following its establishment as part of the NATO South East Europe Initiative (SEEI) in the second half of 2000, the SEEGROUP shaped its overall direction of work in its Action Plan for 2000 – 2001, which approved initially 9 fields of co-operation and concrete activities, which was submitted to the EAPC foreign and defence ministers for notation at their meetings in Brussels in December 2000.

The composition of SEEGROUP reflects its inclusive character –it is shaped as a "***format of the willing***" - Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (33), Slovenia, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States of America participate and contribute actively to its goals. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia joined SEEGROUP in May 2001, which may be considered as a breakthrough in Serbian views on regional security co-operation under NATO inspired SEEI (34).

Since the SEEGROUP has been modelled to support and promote practical regional co-operation in the area of security and defence, as well as to improve harmonisation and coordination among the countries from the region, SPSEE staff regularly attended its meetings and made certain contributions to its work. Thus a kind of a merger effect occurs with SP WT III as far as SEEGROUP activities are usually listed in SPSEE documents as well.

The active participation of interested NATO Allies, as well as non-regional interested PfP Partners like Switserland and Austria gives additional momentum to SEEGROUP's activities. Practical support and facilitation from NATO international staff in guiding and co-ordination further improves the quality of work of the SEEGROUP and its interaction with the Alliance.

Under the Chairmanship of Bulgaria, the initial idea for the establishment of SEEGROUP as new regional security and defence related forum was realized in practise while the second period of six months proved the usefulness of its existence and outlined the directions of its future work and development.

Several concrete projects were initiated in the framework of SEEGROUP in its first year of operation: *Forest Fire Fighting Exercise (in Croatia, called afterwards "Taming Dragon") Database of projects relevant to SEEI and Stability Pact (with strong Swiss involvement) Initiative for Transparency of Defence Budgeting(UK – Bulgarian initiative)*

Following on a project, which was submitted earlier to the SPSEE WT III sub-table on security issues, Croatia initiated a discussion in SEEGROUP on the proposal to host a regional open area fire fighting exercise, aimed at improving regional capabilities to prevent and manage natural and human-caused disasters. According to the proposal, the exercise, provisionally named "Taming Dragon 2002", should become part of the Partnership Work Programme and would involve planning and assistance of NATO experts, most notably the EADRCC. Furthermore, the exercise enjoys the support of the SPSEE DPPI.

The discussion in the SEEGROUP on this project revealed high level of interest among the participants.

In accordance with its first Action Plan, the SEEGROUP initiated also work on development of an inventory or database of ongoing projects and requirements relevant to the SEEI and the Stability Pact Working Table on Security Issues. The original idea was to create an Internet-accessible central database that would improve co-ordination, increase public attention and promote integrated strategy related to the projects. With that in mind, and after preliminary discussion, this idea was extended in the way to comprise not only ongoing projects, but also the proposed ones, that are not included in the existing QSP database of the SPSEE, with the aim to support the preparatory process for donor conferences.

Switzerland agreed to evaluate the feasibility of such a database and conducted exploratory discussions with the SP WT III – sub-table on defence and security issues. A draft project proposal was developed to expand the current SPDB to meet the goals set within the SEEGROUP. After consultations, the SEEGROUP would follow-up on the Swiss proposal, in close co-ordination with the representatives of the SPSEE.

The SEEGROUP took note as well of the conclusions from the first joint meeting of the Multinational Steering Group (MSG) and the Academic Working Group (AWG) of the Initiative for Transparency of Defence Budgeting, held in March 2001 in Vienna under the joint organisational guidance of the United Kingdom and Bulgaria . A number of SEEGROUP participating countries were represented at the meeting, alongside the representatives of the Special Co-ordinator of the SPSEE, NATO international staff and OSCE Secretariat .

The most important conclusion from this meeting was that the SEEGROUP, with NATO support, could form an appropriate framework for mobilising expertise, as well as political and financial support for this initiative among the Allies and interested EAPC/PfP Partners. The SEEGROUP undertook to follow-up on this conclusion, as well as to consider ways to support the implementation of the MSG paper adopted at the meeting.

Parallely with the work of the SEEGROUP, work was conducted on the drafting of the South East Europe Common Assessment Paper on Regional Security Challenges and Opportunities (***SEECAP***), which is the other major SEEI initiative. Although SEEGROUP as such was not directly involved in the preparation of the SEECAP, it closely followed the process of its drafting, due to the partial identity in the SEEGROUP/SEECAP participation and staff involvement (35). A range of issues dealt with in SEECAP are of direct interest for the work of the SEEGROUP. On the other hand, in the discussions during the preparation of SEECAP a number of countries expressed the opinion that SEEGROUP could serve as a forum for further elaboration of certain issues, as well as for facilitation of the SEECAP follow-up.

SEEGROUP activities and the SEECAP process marked the increased necessity for enhanced interaction between the respective SEEI endorsed initiatives(36)

The SEEGROUP agreed that, following the endorsement of the SEECAP, it would start discussion on the modalities to support the SEECAP follow-up, as well as to include in its future agenda the issues such as reform of the security agencies, border control and others.

Since the SEEGROUP has been designed to support regional practical co-operation in the area of security and defence, as well as to improve harmonisation and coordination among the regional countries, it can be considered as a generator for practical support to the SPSEE WT III. Finally, continuous support and facilitation of the NATO International Staff representatives remains invaluable for the work of the SEEGROUP and its interaction with the Alliance.

Gradually, SEEGROUP largely turned into a mechanism for coordination between the countries of the region on issues before the Stability Pact Working Table on security issues, as well as on other security issues. (37)

In the second half of 2001 SEEGROUP dealt with several new activities, as a follow up to the SEECAP document, agreed by the foreign ministers of the SEECAP participating countries at their meeting in Budapest on 29 May 2001. The scope of these and other activities required intensified efforts, so the SEEGROUP increased the dynamics of its work from monthly to weekly meetings.

The senior level meeting of the SEEGROUP, traditionally convened a day before the Stability Pact WT III on security issues meeting, was held on 26 November 2001 in Budapest. The meeting reviewed the activities in the second half of 2001 and discussed the Action Plan for 2002. Particularly valuable was the discussion on the lessons-learned in the South East Europe regional co-operation process embodied in SEEI, SEEGROUP and SEECAP, as well as on possible sharing of experience with countries from other regions.

As the first follow up activity to the SEECAP, and in line with the SEEI recommendation from the PMSC report, the SEEGROUP agreed on the "Framework Guidelines for the Exchange of Border Security Personnel in South East Europe" (***SEESTAFF***). In it, the SEEGROUP participating countries have agreed, as a matter of priority, to begin the exchange of liaison officials at border crossings and in headquarters, as well as to consider other forms of border security personnel exchanges. Furthermore, exchanges of other personnel, inter alia among Foreign and Defense Ministries, are also envisaged. (38)

The modalities for the abovementioned exchanges will be developed among the SEEGROUP countries bilaterally and/or in the future SEEGROUP meetings, and the SEEGROUP will follow the implementation. Additionally, and in order to benefit from the training and education capabilities in the PfP framework, the PfP Training Centers are encouraged to develop a basic training curriculum for the exchange of personnel.

The SEESTAFF reflects the need to counter the threats to security and stability in South East Europe generated by organized crime, terrorism and illegal immigration, as well as trafficking of human beings, arms, narcotics and other illicit materials. Improvement of border security in a co-operative and co-ordinated manner is perceived as one of the essential elements in the fight against those non-conventional threats.

The SEEGROUP participating countries initiated a South East Europe Comparative Study of National Security Strategies (***SEESTUDY***). This study, a concrete follow up of SEECAP, is envisaged to review and recommend improvement of the countries' capabilities for risk assessment, early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, defense and civil emergency planning, as well as national security strategy formulation and implementation.

The *Pilot Paper*, defining the requirements for the SEESTUDY, has been agreed by the SEEGROUP, together with a concept for a Scoping Study. The SEESTUDY should finally give its results in specific non-binding recommendations on improving the respective national security strategies and related documents, as well as ideas what reforms may be needed for each country in the security sector field , based on the common perceptions (39).

The synergy effect expected with the SPSEE gave grounds to include the SEESTUDY was included into the Report of the Stability Pact AHWG on Security Sector Reform on a priority basis.

The SEEGROUP held a special meeting, dedicated to the fight against terrorism on November 30, 2001, an issue of particular importance after the terrorist attacks against the USA on 11 September 2001. At the meeting, a project was presented aiming at creating a Compendium of Anti-Terrorism Measures in SEE. The goal of the project was to achieve a basis for possible future co-ordinated regional action in this domain.

The Compendium is an open-ended document to which all SEEGROUP participating countries and international agencies are invited to contribute with their specific input.

In its last meeting in 2001, the SEEGROUP agreed upon the Action Plan for 2002, which defined by the determination of the SEEGROUP participating countries that the SEEGROUP should remain the main forum which will develop and implement activities recommended by the EAPC, through the PMSC, in the framework of the SEEL It also takes into account the need to follow-up on the SEECAP recommendations.

The SEEGROUP will engage in three types of the activities. It will continue to follow up on the activities in which it had a leading, supporting or otherwise substantial role; it will strive to develop new instruments and measures for enhancing regional security; and it will continue its steering, co-ordination, clearing-house and information exchange activities. Particular emphasis will be given to the issues of security sector reform; exchange of political-military and other early warning, conflict prevention and crisis management information; strengthening of public visibility of the SEEGROUP work; and sharing of experience with countries from other regions.

The SEEGROUP work is assessed by the leading candidates for NATO membership from SEE as complementary regional initiative, supportive of the Euro-Atlantic integration but inadequate to be a substitute for full accession to the Alliance(40).

III.2 The SEECAP exercise and its value as activity and contribution of SEEI to the objectives of the Stability Pact for SEE

The **South East Europe Common Assessment Paper** (**SEECAP**) is widely perceived to be one of the most important contributions to the SPSEE goals in the defence and security field so far

This was a NATO idea, taken forward by countries of the region, including the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.(41)

The **South East Europe Common Assessment Paper** (**SEECAP**) was one of a set of proposals for activities in support of the SEEI, developed by NATO's Political Military Steering Committee for PfP and approved by the North Atlantic Council. It included activities that could be NATO-sponsored and activities that needed to be supported by the Alliance, but regionally-led. SEECAP was based on the idea that common perceptions of the security challenges facing the region would promote common action to address these challenges and

ultimately lead to security strategies and defence planning based on these agreed common perceptions.

SEECAP is the first comprehensive common document on regional perceptions and priorities to build a secure, stable and indivisible Euro-Atlantic area. It has been developed within a difficult period, when stability in SEE faced strong challenges.

The document identifies the security challenges and opportunities of the region and tends to intensify and enhance the participants' common and individual contributions to European and regional security and stability.

Romania assumed the role of coordinator and opened formally the process in Bucharest in October 2000. The FR Yugoslavia was invited to observe, and subsequently requested, and was accepted, to be become a participant. The work was carried out at NATO headquarters with the Alliance providing facilitating support and advice. The Allies participated in different ways, from full participant to observer.

SPSEE WT III has been kept informed of the SEECAP project since its Sarajevo meeting. The Chairman of the Working Table III supported the development of the SEECAP by contributing to a Seminar held in Istanbul in April 2001.(42)

SEECAP has been negotiated among countries of the region to set out their common perceptions of security risks, with a view to promoting an agenda for cooperative actions to deal with regional challenges.

SEECAP details the security and risk perceptions of the regional countries under the headings: the security environment; political; defense and military; economic; social and democratic development; and environmental challenges. The last section is devoted to opportunities to address these challenges.

The key elements of the SEECAP were defined as follows: a reaffirmation that SEE countries perceive no direct threat of military aggression on the part of the others' national sovereignty, territorial integrity or political independence; an idea was approved that the future stability and security in SEE will depend on successful management of inter-ethnic, religious and cultural relations; the necessity to reform the entire spectrum of the security sector, including through further adaptation of military and security strategies and doctrines, transparency of defense planning and budgeting.

Analyzing the process of SEECAP drafting and approval, three main innovative elements can be identified that can be considered a real contribution to improving security environment in SEE**.**

The first most important novelty was that all the countries from SEE participated - there were no exclusions. All of the countries of South East Europe are now agreeing on common perceptions of security challenges, and the best mutually agreed upon and acceptable ways to address them.

The second breakthrough common assessment with historic value is the assertion that interstate war was not an option any more in SEE "Participants perceive in the foreseeable future no direct threat of military aggression on the part of one state against another's national sovereignty, territorial integrity or political independence".

The third exceptionally important outcome from the SEECAP was that it sets out a common perception of the security challenges faced by the countries of the region. This is clearly a crucial first step in the process of building peace and security in an area that has suffered from far too much instability in its history.(43)

In direct relation to the post September 11 context, the sub-chapters on political and defense/military challenges respectively elaborate the specific challenges in the security field, including terrorism. SEECAP explicitly states that terrorist activities and militant extremism generate political challenges and instability which can be aggravated by links between local extremists and international terrorist and radical fundamentalist groups attempting to use SEE as a transit point for missions in third countries, as well through the expansion of links with organized crime as a significant funding source. The SEECAP underlines that protection of populations from terrorism is an important task even for those states, which are not immediately targeted. (44)

SEECAP has approved itself subsequently as the beginning of a regional process, not an end in itself. It calls for concrete measures to be carried out in "follow-up" annual reviews. The practice of individual nations assuming the coordination of specific initiatives has been proven useful under NATO's SEEI and will continue in the SEECAP follow-ups. Regional ownership and lead of such initiatives has to become the norm. SEDM, SEECP and the Stability Pact are perceived as suitable, already existent frameworks and instruments to be used to foster, in the first stage, the objectives identified under the document.

Since the adoption of SEECAP participating countries have devoted energy to the follow up process discussing the following topics:

- Elaboration and adoption of a document on the comprehensive exchange of information on security forces.
- A document on the exchange of early warning, conflict prevention and crisis management information.
- The security sector reform.
- A comparative study on national security strategies.

SEECAP details the security and risk perceptions of the regional countries under the headings: the security environment; political; defence and military; economic; social and democratic development; and environmental challenges.

The document provides for a flexible, general indicator of regional priorities an offers a list of chalanges and opportunities, which may help guide national, regional and wider international efforts. Regional cooperation in addressing the challenges identified in the SEECAP refining process will be followed up to the extend possible in the existing formats like SEECP and SEDM.(45)

It was endorsed and inaugurated at the Budapest EAPC Ministerial on 29 May 2001, which bolstered politically its significance and gave further green light for the follow-up activities incorporated in its substance (46)

The general assessment that in principle all SEEI activities support the objectives of the SPSEE (47) reflected practically the existent status of interlink dependency which becomes clear with both SEEI and the SPSEE enter a phase of maturity in the second half of 2001.

III.3. NATO supported security co-operation projects in the framework of SPSEE.

In an attempt to increase the sense of security and confidence among the countries in the region, the SPSEE was directly involved in projects in SEE targeted at resolving concrete problems in areas with increased social effects. With direct consultative support from NATO, and donors, the SPSEE was engaged in a number of programs in SEE countries – Bulgaria,

Romania etc. with the goal to participate in programmes for socializing the redundant military personnel (48).

These programmes are directed at arranging SEE countries budget costs in providing training opportunities for former military personnel so as to ease and speed their transition to civilian life. Active programs are currently operating in, Bulgaria, Romania, Bosnia etc.

These activities in the framework of SEEI and SPSEE are openly supported by NATO and are considered as direct input of the Alliance in SEE military co-operation with the partner countries. As mentioned at the Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council held in Florence on 24 May 2000 " We applaud the co-operation between the Alliance, the World Bank and Bulgaria and Romania, facilitated through the Stability Pact, to retrain and reintegrate former military officers into labour markets"(49)

The single biggest cost factor in every military establishment is the personnel. Restructuring the armed forces requires direct release of military personnel into the civilian labour market. As the skills acquired by these personnel rarely have direct value from commercial point of view, the likely initial result is unemployment and disillusionment, which may create potential security implications. Aimed at facilitating this painful and difficult transition the projects carried out under several project frameworks are considered as very important in the SPSEE framework The projects focus on seeking ways to assist the military restructuring and downsizing and finding additional opportunities for redundant resource allocation.(50)

The military sector in every SEE country faces the difficult challenge of restructuring and, inevitably, downsizing its forces and activities. While that entails a number of internal challenges for future military strategy and tasks, it also involves considerable external dislocation, particularly in economic terms.

The Bulgarian MoD Resettlement Program 2000 -2004 was developed with the valuable support provided by experts from NATO.

It was drafted taking into account the presumption that a great number of these servicemen are younger than 50 years. Many of them are well educated and highly qualified, but not prepared to realize themselves on the labor market. The Program was submitted to the Stability Pact and the World Bank. The economic situation in Bulgaria excluded consideration

of a World Bank loan and it was made operational with a funding scheme including internal resources, NATO-member donations (51) and NGO financial support.

The respective Programme of Romania is financially constructed in a different manner with implementation of a World Bank loan.

Those two examples demonstrated the diversity of optional solutions in implementation of redundant defence personnel inclusion in civil labour markets with the support of NATO and SPSEE. (52)

NATO played a central role in this new form of cooperation in which the overall political umbrella of the SPSEE facilitated the establishment and making operational of the programmes for retraining and resettlement of redundant military personnel in Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia. The Alliance provided advice and expertise in the development phase for reaching the requirements of the World Bank and other donors. Financial arrangements were worked out between the countries and the donors. Till the beginning of 2002 3,600 personnel in Bulgaria and Romania have taken advantage of both programmes. (53)

IV. Other SPSEE defence and security topics and their relevance to NATO's SEEI

The wide scope of SPSEE activities in its defence and security sector (WT III) identified the necessity for more purpose oriented approach in its work already in the course of 2001. The seminar and workshop forms of exchange proved useful for the initial phase of the SPSEE in presentation of different views, ideas and perceptions of the participants. At the same time the overall political environment in SEE was changing rapidly in the positive direction, which initiated discussions for the Stability Pact's future.

An opinion circulated on the basis of analysis in European and US think – tanks, which began to enter political power houses as well, described the SPSEE as an initiative that had to be substantially modified and transformed in terms of achieving higher degree of functionality of its working bodies and mechanisms. It was considered even that " ….the Stability Pact has at best been a temporary expedient, awaiting the maturing of events……particular the passing of the Tudjman and Milosevic regimes, and thence the confirmation of EU integration perspectives for the whole of the region. It was ambiguously

conceived from the beginning, however, as to what its real role might be, and has had insufficient substance in practice to become credible. It is now due for reform, or at least down-sizing." (54)

In an environment of rising criticism the SPSEE had to prove it viability including the necessity of its WT III activities. The need for differentiated and structured approach to the specific security situation in different countries of the region was described as fundamental condition for the successful work of WT III (55).

In such conditions SPSEE WT III list of topics outside the directly linked to NATO/EAPC supported SEEGROUP, SEECAP and defence economic projects was concentrated on the following major activities:

1. Arms Control and Non-Proliferation
2. Defense Economics, Military Budgets and Military Contacts
3. Small Arms and Light Weapons
4. Humanitarian Demining
5. Disaster Preparedness and Prevention
6. Security Sector Reform

It was elaborated that proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) and their uncontrolled flow poses serious threats to peace, stability and reconciliation in the region. The SPSEE pursues the objective of developing a co-ordinated regional approach to fight the excessive and uncontrolled circulation of small arms and light weapons in the region. It builds on the existing processes of, inter alia, the Wassenaar Agreement, the EAPC etc. (56)

Initiatives in this sector are closely interconnected with the efforts in the field of security sector reform which form an essential part of any strategy to fight the illicit spread of SALWs. Increasing the capacity of police and customs services to enforce arms trade laws through training, information sharing and regional cooperation deserves particular attention. The emphasis of this program is on moving forward with tangible projects resulting in a lasting reduction of small arms and light weapons in South East Europe, not on setting up new international structures and obligations.(57)

Security sector reform deserves special attention in the future due to the deep security effects of the 11 of September terrorist attacks.

Although NATO does not directly play leading role in the SALW process, the Alliance supports it politically as part of the efforts targeted at normalizing the situation in SEE. (58). Its members from the region do actively participate in the drafting and preparation of initial documents thus creating grounds for future implementation.

The SPSEE received strong political backing from the NATO PA for its future as an initiative. In its Resolution 311/2001 the Parliamentary Assembly called for the Alliance to:

"…provide for a long-term commitment to developing cross-border co-operation and co-ordinating assistance to the region and thus to extend the mandate of the Stability Pact for South-East Europe beyond 2003"(59).

This call as well as the practical involvement of NATO and EAPC in SPSEE-listed activities gives certain grounds to believe that the future of the Pact in its defence and security segment, being closely dependant on the will of the participating states to deliver fresh input, will be practically oriented to achieving concrete positive results in increasing regional stability and security with joint efforts.

V. Conclusion

The analysis of the role of NATO and EAPC in the SPSEE in the period from its establishment and the work of its WT III in 1999-2001 clearly prove that regardless of the statement in p.5 of the Sarajevo Declaration underlying the basic principle that "The countries of the region are owners of the stabilization process" it was and is practically impossible for them to implement viable projects in the security domain otherwise but in close interaction with NATO.

It was identified that the four basic pillars of SEEI – The Consultative Forum on Security Issues on SEE, the AHWG on Regional Cooperation in SEE under the auspices of the EAPC in PC session, the PfP tools and the targeted security cooperation programmes present a well defined opportunity for development of methodologies and concrete activities, designed to address a number of important issues for South Eastern Europe. As a logical step the emergence of South East Europe Coordination Group (SEEGROUP) was established in order to coordinate and extend the necessary support to regional security projects.

The complementary and coordinated effort between different ideas and undertakings in the framework of SEEI and the Stability Pact became the key to their future effectiveness in the region. The practical steps in policy definition and implementation had to be directed through refining of objectives, tools and mechanisms.

The establishment of SEEGROUP as a regionally led forum was proposed in the context of NATO SEEI , designed to support practical regional security cooperation and its intention to encourage improved coordination and accelerated implementation of relevant activities in fields of common interest further proved that a useful tool for reaching common security goals. SEEGROUP helped in formulating and refining ideas thus contributing for avoiding duplication and giving due consideration to the role of NATO/EAPC in the area of security and defence in SEE. The active inclusion of the regional countries in the work of SEEGROUP as an adequate forum for discussion of practical activities and projects proved to be productive.

During extensive work on the South East Europe Common Assessment Paper on Regional Security Challenges and Opportunities (SEECAP) a common understanding

evolved that developed as regionally-owned and led processes in the framework of NATO SEEI, both interlinked to the Stability Pact, reinforces the involvement of NATO in the process.

The SEECAP released in May 2001 was perceived as the most significant activity in the SEEI framework. It marks an agreement on the nature of the security environment, which gives opportunity for the development of security policies and strategies to meet the requirements of the agreed security environment.

In the period since the adoption of the Cologne declaration NATO and EAPC as forum played the important role of regional security cooperation facilitators. The Alliance and EAPC initiated through SEEI building of synergy oriented mechanisms for consultations with the goal of achieving enhanced security cooperation in the region building upon specific elements of regional security policy and policies in specific security fields of mutual interest

Directly supported through political backing of the EAPC, measures targeted at increasing the stability of the overall security environment in SEE though with limited scope were undertaken.

The Alliance provided expertise in implementation of concrete projects which alongside with the political support for the Pact in the security field further contributed to improving the overall security environment in SEE.

It must be mentioned however that the supportive policy of NATO was and will be effective in the framework of the Stability Pact to the level of its own capacity to deliver real positive effects for achieving its goals. The SPSEE needs reform and this fact is more than obvious at the end of 2001 and the beginning of 2002 for several reasons:

1. The Pact contains an inherent contradiction between the sub-regional nature of the problems it addresses and the regional definition of the tasks it takes on.

2. The Pact does not recognize in sufficient measure the essential differences in the level of development among the countries from SEE.

3. The Pact tends to put under a common denominator the politically stable and unstable countries in the region, financially stable and unstable countries, countries with a clear European and Euro-Atlantic perspective and those where it is not so clear, countries that are negotiating for EU accession and countries that are not. That artificial assemblage may make the position of any country dependent on the progress made by the least developed one.

4. The Stability Pact did not satisfy the public expectations for “a new Marshal Plan”. The Pact has no available financial resource and instead offers a tool of mediation for borrowing that is largely affordable to countries enjoying high-level financial stability. The grants are far from sufficient. (60) . A concrete example for the last conclusion is the inability of the SPSEE to mobilize adequate financial resources for the most important regional defence achievement SEEBRIG (building CIS).

The SPSEE proved to have certain values in the defence and security field to the extend NATO and parther countries from the region engaged themselves in regional defence and security cooperation. Future success of the SPSEE undertakings in this field will depend strongly on the continued engagement of the Alliance and the leading candidates for NATO membership in the SPSEE security related activities.

NOTES

1. Dr. Wim van Meurs- "The Balkans and the new European responsibilities' - Strategy paper for *THE CLUB OF THREE AND THE BALKANS* June 29-30, 2000, Brussels, C.A.P. Bertelsmann foundation , p. 4

2 Studies in Contemporary History and Security Policy. Studien zu Zeitgeschichte und Sicherheitspolitik Kurt R. Spillmann and Andreas Wenger (eds.)

3. http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/en/eu_politik/gasp/eu_aussenbez/balkan_html

4. Due to historical reasons, differing paths of economic development and security concerns, regional integration was placed until recently low on the foreign policy agenda of the countries in SEE. Even presently, regional integrative moves are not considered of prime importance from national power structures – governments etc.

5. Democracy, Security & the Future of the Stability pact for South Eastern Europe . A Framework for Debate by the EastWest Institute in partnership with the European Stability Initiative 4 April 2001 http://www.esiweb.org/

6. Statement by *Ambassador Kim Traavik, Chairman of the Stability Pact,Working Table on Security Issues***,** at a Seminar on: "Towards Harmonized Perceptions and Cooperative Security Studies" - organized by NATO the Stability Pact and the Boğaziçi University Center for European Studies, Istanbul, Turkey, 6-7 April 2001

7. Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe**,** Cologne, 10 June 1999

8. Michael Emerson **:"**On the Forming and Reforming of Stability Pacts: from the Balkans to the Caucasus" Europa South-East Monitor**,** Issue 23, May 2001; see also
Minko Noev: "Foreign Policy of Bulgaria in South Eastern Europe – realities and potential" in: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung & Institute for Political & Law research "Bulgarian Foreign Policy & the Situation in South eastern Europe", Sofia, Gorexpress 2002

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18. In November - December 2000 Bulgaria, after fulfilling all conditions for exclusion from the Schengen visa "black list" made it clear that it might reconsider participation in the Stability Pact if the EU does not change its visa regime as stated and promised. This uneasy political step was undertaken by the Bulgarian government after strong signals were received from Brussels that regardless of national progress achieved and technical requirements met, there was a general mood of applying "the regional approach" thus leaving the country in the so called visa "black list". This case is indicative for the perceptions in the non-"Western Balkans" SEE countries that the general application of the regional approach for SEE form Brussels may hamper their integration binding them artificially to "lagger states" from the region.

19. Dr. Wim van Meurs- "The Balkans and the new European responsibilities'. Ibid. p.3

20. Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe**,** Cologne, 10 June 1999

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23. Conclusions by the Chairman Jan Eliasson. Working Table on Security Issues - REV 1, Oslo, 13-14 October 1999, www.stabilitypact.org

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25. Lord Robertson, "NATO and South – Eastern Europe", Secretary General's Remarks at the Conference of the CeSPI/IAI – East- West Institute on "Prospects for Stability and Security in South Eastern Europe", http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2000/s000508a

26. Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) **Action Plan 2000-2002,** Press Release M-2-EAPC (99)169 16 Dec. 1999 **http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/**

27. Conclusions by the Chairman Jan Eliasson, WORKING TABLE ON SECURITY ISSUES Sarajevo, 15-16 February 2000, www.stabilitypact.org compare with: **Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC)** Action Plan 2000-2002, **Press Release M-2-EAPC (99)169 16 Dec. 1999** http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/ - p. 3-6

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29. "AGENDA FOR STABILITY", Stability Pact Regional Table, 8th June 2000, Thessaloniki, p.4 . www.stabilitypact.org

30. Statement of the European Union and the United States on South East Europe **EU/US SUMMIT, WASHINGTON, DC, DECEMBER 18, 2000, CONCLUSIONS :** "……We also emphasise the importance of the Stability Pact for South East Europe as a means to accelerate the integration of the region into the Euro-Atlantic mainstream. The inclusion of the FRY in the Stability Pact will make it possible for the Pact to reach its full potential. The Stability Pact deserves our continued political and financial support. We welcome the call of the High Level Steering Group, which met in Paris on 14 November 2000, to organise a second Stability Pact Regional Funding Conference as early as feasible in 2001." EUROPE – Magazine of the European Union
http://www.eurunion.org/partner/summit/Summit0012/SEEurope.htm

31. "AGENDA FOR STABILITY", Stability Pact Regional Table, 8th June 2000, Thessaloniki, p.4 . www.stabilitypact.orgIbid.; , see also "Democracy, Security & the Future of the Stability pact for South Eastern Europe" . A Framework for Debate by the EastWest Institute in partnership with the European Stability Initiative 4 April 2001
http://www.esiweb.org/

32. MoFA – Republic of Bulgaria, Archive

33. Bulgaria recognises the Republic of Macedonia under its constitutional name.

34. The presence of FRY for the first time in NATO guided security related activity marked major shift in Yugoslavia's security policies since the fall of the Milosevich regime.

35. MoFA – Republic of Bulgaria, Archive

36. Statement by *Ambassador Kim Traavik, Chairman of the Stability Pact,Working Table on Security Issues***,** at a Seminar on: "Towards Harmonized Perceptions and Cooperative Security Studies" - organized by NATO the Stability Pact and the Boğaziçi University Center for European Studies, Istanbul, Turkey, 6-7 April 2001

37. Its worth mentioning that the civilian staff engaged in the SEEGROUP,SEECAP, SEESTUDY, SPSEE, SEEI etc. in most of the countries from the region is almost one and the same.

38. http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2001/0112-hq/seegroup/

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40. Statement by His Excellency Mr. Boyko Noev Minister of Defence of the Republic of Bulgaria at EAPC Defence Ministerial Meeting Dec. 2000 http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2000/s001206c.

41. James Appathurai: "NATO's evolving partnerships. Promoting regional security" in NATO Review, Web edition Vol. 49 - No. 3 Autumn 2001 p. 13-15

42. . Statement by *Ambassador Kim Traavik, Chairman of the Stability Pact,Working Table on Security Issues***,** at a Seminar on: "Towards Harmonized Perceptions and Cooperative Security Studies" - organized by NATO the Stability Pact and the Boğaziçi University Center for European Studies, Istanbul, Turkey, 6-7 April 2001

43.Statement by *Ambassador Daniel Speckhard, NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs* at a Seminar on: "Towards Harmonized Perceptions and Cooperative Security Studies" - organized by NATO the Stability Pact and the Boğaziçi University Center for European Studies, Istanbul, Turkey, 6-7 April 2001

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47. Progress Report on Development of the South-East Europe Initiative and Contributions of the Alliance to the Objectives of the Stability Pact : EAPC(PC)D(2001)9 EAPC/PFP(PMSC)D(2001)1 ANNEX 1, p. 6

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49. Final Communiqué, Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council held in Florence on 24 May 2000 http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2000/p00-052e.

50. Bulgarian MoD Resettlement Programme. MoFA - Archive

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52. NATO Review, Web edition Vol. 49 - No. 3 Autumn 2001 p. 23

53. Meeting on security issues in South Eastern Europe. www.nato.int

54. Michael Emerson **"**On the Forming and Reforming of Stability Pacts: from the Balkans to the Caucasus" Europa South-East Monitor Issue 23, May 2001; also Democracy, Security & the Future of the Stability pact for South Eastern Europe . A Framework for Debate by the EastWest Institute in partnership with the European Stability Initiative 4 April 2001 http://www.esiweb.org/

55. Amb. Vladimir Filipov, Bulgarian SPSEE National Coordinator, Statement at the SPSEE WT III Meeting in Zagreb, 12 June 2001

56. Stability Pact Special Co-ordinator's Office www.stabilitypact.org

57. Stability Pact Special Co-ordinator's Office. www.stabilitypact.org

58. Final Communiqué, Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council, Press Release M-NAC- 1(2001)77 29 May 2001

59**.** Committee Resolution 311, 2001 Annual Session Resolution on the Current Situation in South-East Europe presented by the Political Committee to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Ottawa, 9 October 2001

60. Vladimir Filipov, Bulgarian National Coordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe **"**The Stability Pact and the new situation in SEE in "Globalization and NATO in the 21st Century" Conference, Sofia 2001

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