

The Development of Security Community in Croatia: Leading the Pack

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Original scientific paper

UDC 327.56(497.5)

Received in September 2010

Of the former Yugoslav republics, Croatia is in an enviable position. After years of difficult reforms and restructuring, its efforts are paying off. The country recently assumed a seat on the UN Security Council, it joined NATO and there is an expectation of forthcoming EU membership. Through these steps, the country has begun to integrate into the well-established Euro-Atlantic community. This article explores the depths of this integration through the theoretical lens of security community. We draw conclusions regarding security community in Croatia to provide lessons for NATO's New Strategic Concept. Ultimately, we argue that NATO must remember that there remain security concerns in the European neighborhood, even in apparent successes like Croatia.

Keywords: Security Community, Croatia, NATO's New Strategic Concept

1. Introduction

Gazing down from the ancient fortification walls of the beautiful city of Dubrovnik, often fondly called the "Venice of the East," one sees the brilliant blue of the Adriatic Sea and the charming stone buildings topped with bright, new, red tile roofs. The city had to refurbish almost the entire old section of town with these colorful roofs after a seven-month bombing raid and siege of the city during Croatia's struggle for independence from Yugoslavia in the early 1990s.¹ Today, Dubrovnik and the dozens of other stunning cities that dot the Dalmatian Coast of Croatia attract tourists from

around the world. This is not to say that Croatians have forgotten the tragedies of the 1990s or that tensions have totally subsided. However, today Croatia is clearly on the move and is leading the Western Balkan pack toward economic prosperity, political stability and Euro-Atlantic integration.²

Of the countries of the region, Croatia is indeed in an enviable position. After years of difficult reforms and restructuring, its efforts are finally paying rewards. The country recently assumed a seat on the UN Security Council; in 2009 it joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); and there is an expectation that the country will join the European Union (EU) in the next membership round. Croatia now stands poised to take what many there see as its rightful place in Europe. Through these steps, the country has begun to integrate into the well-established

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Euro-Atlantic security community of partnership and trust. Though the post-communist transition is not fully complete, Croatia is a country that is very much looking forward, hoping that its future will be just as bright and shiny as the red roofs of Dubrovnik.

Given Croatia's apparent successes, the country provides a positive case study for international integration. Therefore, this article explores the depths of Croatia's Euro-Atlantic integration. In doing so, we hope to inform NATO members as they work to develop a *New Strategic Concept* that will mold their security thinking into the next decade. We analyze Croatia's integration through the theoretical lens of *security community*. The security community concept focuses on community building and identity. It gets at the very heart of integration to determine the extent to which new norms and rules have become internalized during the integration process. Ultimately, we determine that NATO involvement in Croatia has been a success. However, in drafting the New Strategic Concept, we advise NATO not to look too far beyond its immediate neighborhood or to forget the Western Balkan region. There remains much work to be done, even within Croatia, and the organization's attention and involvement remain crucial for stability and security in Europe.

Without a doubt, NATO's active engagement and encouragement have been important factors in Croatia's post-conflict success. In fact, when NATO gathered to formally reassess its role in the world and composed its first post-Cold War Strategic Concept in 1999, the instability and future promise of the Western Balkan region were important considerations.³ NATO recognized that as a leader in the region and an organization that had the influence to not just halt the violence, but encourage peace and stability, it could also build lasting partnerships in the Western Balkans that would further enhance security in the Euro-Atlantic area. The 1999 Concept reads, "[A] new Europe of greater interaction is emerging, and a Euro-Atlantic security structure is evolving in which NATO plays a central part. The Alliance has been at the heart of efforts to establish new patterns of cooperation and mutual understanding across the Euro-Atlantic region..."⁴ With this goal in mind, NATO assisted in quelling the conflict over Kosovo and sent troops to keep civil order in Macedonia in 2001. However, NATO also sent civilian representatives to the Western Balkan countries and continued to lay the groundwork

for post-conflict cooperation and integration. As articulated in the 1999 Strategic Concept, NATO has worked with other international organizations, such as the EU, to encourage and facilitate Euro-Atlantic integration in the Western Balkans and has taken significant strides toward ensuring greater peace in NATO's "neighborhood."⁵

With the undertaking of a New Strategic Concept, NATO now has another opportunity to determine its future progress, articulate its future priorities and outline its future focus. Considering the growth of NATO since 1999, this is an excellent opportunity to strengthen the Alliance's commitments to each member-state and the Euro-Atlantic neighborhood.⁶ As NATO now prepares to update its security mission, an examination of the Euro-Atlantic integration process in one of NATO's newest members, Croatia, is highly instructive. Determining how well NATO has met its 1999 goal to integrate countries in the Euro-Atlantic area, especially in a post-conflict state, should guide the organization as it develops its new Concept.

Less than a generation after violence engulfed the Western Balkan region, Croatia has emerged as a willing and eager Euro-Atlantic partner. The country brings with it a promising economic future and a degree of legitimacy to the historically volatile region. Croatia is currently leading the Western Balkans not just in fostering peace in the region, but also in working toward greater regional and international cooperation, both within the Western Balkans and with its Euro-Atlantic partners. Croatia provides us with an excellent case study to highlight the possibilities of Euro-Atlantic integration, as well as to shed light on some of the remaining obstacles. Therefore, Croatia's process of integration into NATO and other international institutions can and should inform other NATO members as they consider revisions to the Strategic Concept and their focus in working toward great Euro-Atlantic stability.

What follows is an investigation of the development of security community within Croatia, between the country and its Western Balkan neighbors and finally with Croatia and Euro-Atlantic states and institutions. Our analysis is based on extensive review of academic and governmental literature as well as research conducted in Croatia during 2007 and 2008 where we had the opportunity to speak with a number of Croatian citizens, government officials and international organization representatives.

In addition, we partnered with a local research agency to conduct a random sample telephone survey that sought to statistically gauge the attitudes of the Croatian public regarding local, regional and international integration. Together this data allows us to draw conclusions about the state of security community within Croatia and between the country and its regional and international partners.

In the forthcoming sections, we provide a brief discussion of the security community framework and an overview of the role of international organizations, specifically the EU and NATO, in fostering security community development. We then explore Croatia's interaction with the international community and examine the country's sense of internal, regional and international identity, as well as the progress it has made toward Euro-Atlantic integration. Finally, the article provides conclusions regarding the development of security community in Croatia and presents the lessons security community development in Croatia can provide as drafters prepare to pen NATO's New Strategic Concept.

2. Security Community: The Theory

When like-minded states with similar values, interests and interpretations of reality become bounded by their similarities, they form a "society" where member-state interactions are governed by a shared set of rules and expectations.

⁷ As Grillot *et al* explain, "the states that comprise an 'international society' or 'community' interact in such a way that they *unilaterally and unconsciously* consider each other, their common values and sets of rules as factors before selecting a course of action."⁸ The concept of international community allows scholars to further understand international cooperation. Like other communities, states within a "security community" jointly identify with each other. The word security in the term denotes not just military security, but more generally stability, peace and security in interactions among members of the community. Members of such a security community expect that the political and social problems they have in common will be addressed without the threat of violence.⁹ Members of what Deutsch and his colleagues call a "pluralistic" security community maintain their state sovereignty, but they work together to address common concerns.¹⁰ In a successfully developed security community, there is a shared sense of identity where the norms of obligation, reciprocity, trust and sacrifice are ingrained. A general "we" or "us" feeling becomes second nature.¹¹

Security communities develop and strengthen through communication, transaction flows and positive iterated interaction. It is not enough to simply claim to be part of a security community. Rather, members are socialized into the community and ultimately come to share common norms and ideas.¹² This is what Emanuel Adler refers to as the security community learning process.¹³ Through

<i>Tiers</i>	<i>Factors</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Level of Trust</i>
Tier I	Precipitating Conditions	States orient toward one another. Advances in technology. Major economic or geographic change. Enhanced external threat. Changes in social reality.	No expectation of increased trust.
Tier II	Conducive Conditions	Increased value put on ideas (democracy, civil society, rule of law, human rights). Enhanced transactions among governments and among people. Increased social learning. Often see IOs working to affect these things.	Trust begins to develop and a sense of community among members evolves.
Tier III	Necessary Conditions	Developed understanding of partner members. No longer a need for IO involvement.	Trust has developed as has a sense of collective identity. These are "reciprocal and reinforcing"

(Table Composed by Authors. See Adler and Barnett 1998).

learning, values and expectations are transmitted among current and prospective community members eventually resulting in a shared identity and a prospering security community.¹⁴

Empirical Indicators of Security

Community

To examine security community in Croatia, we must identify the security community characteristics we expect to see. We must also determine a scale for assessing the development of Croatia's security community. Adler and Barnett's work proves extremely useful in both regards.¹⁵ They provide guidelines in determining the significant factors, which may lead to security community. They also delineate a scale for assessing the development and strength of security communities. Specifically, Adler and Barnett suggest security community emerges in three tiers.

In Adler and Barnett's categorization, Tier I factors consists of "precipitating conditions," which could eventually encourage states to "begin to orient themselves in each other's direction and desire to coordinate their relations."¹⁶ Tier II represents those factors especially conducive to the development of a security community. At this level international organizations can operate to encourage favorable norms, to provide oversight and to generally enhance levels of trust. IOs also serve as a tool for increasing social learning by taking steps to educate countries of democratic norms and by increasing interactions.¹⁷ Finally, Tier III outlines the necessary conditions of what Adler and Barnett call, "dependable expectations of peaceful change."¹⁸ At this level, IOs are no longer necessary to encourage security community as it has developed sufficiently. Relationships within the community, at this point, are based on trust and reciprocity.¹⁹

In light of this tiered development, Adler and Barnett indicate that security community matures in three phases.

Recognizing that security community maturity is not a linear process, this scale allows us to determine which features are present in Croatia's internal, regional and international relationships.

In sum, security community is about trust, belonging and a common sense of identity. As it develops, the likelihood of conflict diminishes and the prospects for peaceful resolution of conflict are enhanced. Security community in Croatia will be analyzed at the national, regional and international level using the factors and phases of development provided by Adler and Barnett. Examining the domestic environment in Croatia, as well as Croatia's interactions within its international environment and its sense of identity internally and externally, allows us to make determinations regarding security community development within the country and between Croatia and other countries. We then can observe how Croatia's path toward security community development and corresponding Euro-Atlantic integration should inform the drafting of NATO's New Strategic Concept.

3. International Organizations and Croatia

For some time NATO, and more recently the EU, has seen the merit in attempting to extend the well-established Euro-Atlantic security community to the former conflict areas of the Western Balkans. Officials in these organizations have worked under the assumption that if they can enhance the sense of community and common-interest within and amongst countries of the region, democratic norms will spread and conflict will be less likely – a prospect favorable to the entire Euro-Atlantic neighborhood.²⁰ These organizations have taken a "carrot and stick" approach with the region.

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Tiers</i>	<i>Development</i>
Nascent	All of Tier I, some of Tier II present	Beginning interaction
Ascendant	All of Tier II, possibly some of Tier III present	Tighter relationship, which strengthens over time.
Mature	Tier III present	Security community is developed and stable. Violence no longer a viable option for the resolution of conflict.

(Table Composed by Authors. See Adler and Barnett 1998).

They have offered organization membership as the reward for significant military, economic and political reforms. There is also an expectation by these organizations of enhanced regional cooperation among the aspiring countries. This expectation was especially evident with regard to NATO, when in 2003 Croatia, Albania and Macedonia willingly banded together to form the Adriatic Charter codifying their dedication to work together toward NATO membership. This has proven to be a significant development for the region.²¹

Croatian Euro-Atlantic Integration

There is a great desire by the Croatian government to join Euro-Atlantic institutions.²² Part of the motivation for integration comes from security considerations (specifically with regard to NATO), while part is a result of a genuine belief that the country belongs with Europe. Most important, however, are the economic benefits that are expected from joining the EU and the resulting stability that will lead to greater investment and tourism that comes with joining NATO.²³ While making strides to meet international expectations by cooperating with and encouraging their neighbors, Croatia also sees its own Euro-Atlantic integration as an independent goal. Much focus of the international community has been to encourage the international integration of Serbia in the hopes that a peaceful region would then be assured. In contrast, Croatia does not see Serbia as key to regional security, nor does it view Serbian integration as necessarily tied to its own. An OSCE official reported to us that, "Croatia is going to integrate with or without the region and with or without Serbia."²⁴

There exist some predictable discrepancies between official statements and public opinion regarding the role of international organizations, the perceptions of membership requirements and the role that Croatia can play in the region. Official recognition of the importance of IO mandates does not always translate into favorable public opinion of these organizations among the public. However, our research shows that even when public opinion is not high, it is not markedly low either. If anything, there appears to be a high degree of neutrality or possibly apathy among the general population. This would seem to indicate an overall acceptance of the role of major IOs, even if there is some occasional disagreement over the particulars.²⁵

NATO

A common theme among Croatian officials we interviewed is that the country is now working to be a security provider rather than a security consumer, as much of the region was during the 1990s.²⁶ NATO membership was much desired by the government and by a majority of the population for a number of years. In fact, already in 1994 Croatian officials visited NATO headquarters in Belgium expressing their interest in joining the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program (the preliminary step taken for NATO membership).²⁷ A government official in Croatia explained that the country "wants an insurance policy that they have never had. There is empirical value evidenced by 60 years of peace among NATO members."²⁸ Others are quick to point out that membership in NATO sends a message of stability to the international community and will hopefully increase direct foreign investment.²⁹

Croatia's relationship with NATO began during the Bosnian crisis and then developed more during NATO's involvement in Kosovo. During the conflict in Kosovo, NATO stationed troops in Croatia and the country's airspace was voluntarily opened to NATO forces. Since then, Croatia has contributed troops to help the NATO mission in Afghanistan. Specifically, Croatians are involved in the search and disposal of landmines in Afghanistan – a weapon with which they are all too familiar given their experiences in the 1990s.³⁰

Croatia's path to NATO membership has been traveled rather quickly. The country signed the PfP agreement in May 2000. One year later, NATO granted Croatia "intensified dialogue" status. By May 2002, the country was part of the Membership Action Plan (MAP), which was one more step toward full membership. Under MAP, Croatia was required to focus on political, economic and security related issues and had to submit an annual report to NATO outlining its progress and the work yet to be completed. In 2003 Croatia also joined with Macedonia and Albania in the Adriatic Charter in an effort to boost cooperation among the three countries and assist with their common goal of NATO membership. At the Bucharest Summit in April 2008, NATO leaders formally extended invitations to Croatia and Albania to join NATO. One year later both countries became full NATO members.³¹

Support for NATO has been fairly strong among the general population. In many regards,

Croatians continue to view NATO as a source of stability and peace in the region. In our survey, 55.4% of respondents indicated that they were in favor of NATO membership for Croatia, with 34% answering that they were opposed.³² Among those we spoke with, many viewed NATO (and the US specifically) as the arbiter of peace during both the Croatian independence struggle and the Bosnian war. Some still see NATO membership as an assurance of protection should Serbia once again grow restless. This is not to say that all Croatians were eager about being a part of NATO. Some critics with whom we spoke raised concerns about the effects NATO membership could have on tourism, and others were adamantly against membership due to the inaccurate rumor that NATO will build missile bases in the country. In general, however, the perception of the Bucharest invitation was positive in Croatia.³³

European Union

After concluding the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) in 2003, Croatia made a formal application to become a candidate for full EU membership, and received official candidate status on June 18, 2004.³⁴ Croatia has made rapid progress towards becoming an EU member and is expected to join in the next enlargement round.³⁵ The Croatian government is firmly committed to joining the EU and the government has worked with impressive speed to reach its goal. In a statement aimed at extolling the virtues of Croatian membership, in 2005 Prime Minister Ivo Sanader said, "I believe that this historic enlargement process has a continuous, inclusive, and irreversible character. The EU stands for economic prosperity and cooperation; it means stability and security. Above all it is the shared values of its members that stand out so strongly."³⁶ Others at the elite level share his optimism.³⁷

While the Croatian government has favored EU membership, the population has been somewhat more tentative. When asked in the Eurobarometer poll of 2010, if EU membership would benefit Croatia, 38% of respondents answered that it would, while 45% replied that it would not.³⁸ Our 2008 survey rendered rather mixed results. When asked how they felt about EU membership, 61.4% of respondents replied that they were in favor. However, when we asked about the process toward membership, only 21.8% indicated that they had a positive view of the process.³⁹ As has been experienced in other candidate countries,

the closer Croatia gets to EU membership, the more public support appears to waiver.⁴⁰ This is occurring because tougher regulations are being required and fears about what membership could mean are becoming more pronounced.

Based on our interviews, there are three areas where Croatians view EU membership in rather negative terms or as potentially troublesome for the country. First is the EU requirement that the government end subsidies to agricultural and shipbuilding industries. People in these industries are concerned that they will be left to flounder economically and that their incomes will be severely restricted. Privatization has been quite brutal in Croatia and has not brought out the best in its citizenry.⁴¹ There also remains a connection between the EU and the war tribunals. While a number of people have seen the extradition of suspected war criminals to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) as necessary, public opinion has wavered as more suspected criminals are captured. Some in Croatia consider some of the men wanted for criminal activity as saviors of the country.⁴² Finally, there remain those that worry about the return of refugee policies that EU membership mandates. They are concerned that the process is expensive and could potentially alter ethnic percentages in certain areas, or could lead to greater nationalism among dense minority populations. Among the population there has been a notable degree of *Euro-skepticism*. Some with whom we spoke cite the rather low public approval ratings as a reason why Croatia was not granted EU membership in 2007. A number of the officials we interviewed articulated concern that without greater public approval, Croatia will continue to remain on the outskirts of the Union.⁴³ To remedy this, the government, in cooperation with a group of NGOs and the media, has undertaken a media campaign to educate the Croatian citizenry about the benefits of EU membership.⁴⁴

Croatian Frustrations with the International Community

There is a clear desire by the government and the people of Croatia, to join international organizations. There is also a realization that the international community plays an important role in stabilizing and developing the Western Balkan region. However, there is also a great deal of frustration on the part of Croatian

officials and citizens with regard to some of the activities and apparent inconsistencies of the international community. One official described the international community as having “attention deficit disorder.” Another explained that the actions of the last couple of years show just “how political Euro-Atlantic integration can be.”⁴⁵

Despite being viewed quite positively in Croatia, NATO has made some decisions that leave many Croatians questioning the messages that the international community is trying to relay. Though few Croatians cite a strong emotional attachment to the people of Macedonia, most indicated that NATO treated Macedonia unfairly at the Bucharest Summit in the spring of 2008. At the NATO Summit, Croatia and Albania received invitations to join the security organization. However, the other partner in the Adriatic Charter, Macedonia, was not invited. The failure to include Macedonia occurred despite recognition that the country had met the guidelines and requirements for such membership. The apparent reason for Macedonia’s exclusion came from EU member Greece, which promised to veto any such invitation due to an on-going dispute over the name “Republic of Macedonia.”⁴⁶ Many Croatians did not receive this news well, even though their own country met its goal for NATO membership.⁴⁷

With regard to the European Union, Croatian government officials and citizens largely feel, and IO statements and publications support the belief, that the country has done a great deal to meet EU guidelines. However, the last round of EU expansion in 2007 saw only Bulgaria and Romania admitted to the Union.⁴⁸ There are a number of Croats that view this as a completely political decision, referring to the fact that both Romania and Bulgaria are lagging behind Croatia in terms of economic progress. To further compound this frustration, there is now a sense in Brussels that the EU may have indeed admitted Romania and Bulgaria too soon, which Croatians consider damaging to their chances for membership in the near future.⁴⁹

Finally, there is a real sense that the international community is cowering to the whims of, and making special concessions to, Serbia. Many Croatians describe Serbia as the “bad child” who acts up and gets all of the attention, incentives and rewards while the “good child,” Croatia, “does as it is supposed to and no one pays attention.”⁵⁰ There is now discussion that Serbia could be admitted to

the EU alongside Croatia – an idea that infuriates many of the Croatians with whom we spoke.⁵¹ While a number of people said there was still some apprehension about an unstable Serbia, one official, speaking about the international attention that Serbia gets, said “We are not fearful of Serbia anymore, we are annoyed.”⁵²

4. Inside Croatia

Though home to some 22 different ethnic groups, Croatia is a relatively homogenous country. This has allowed it to escape many of the ongoing internal struggles, which plagued most of its neighbors. In 2005, Croats made up 89.6% of the population with the remaining residents being 4.5% ethnic Serb or other (5.9%).⁵³ An important feature of the country is its identity as a Catholic state. Croatia is home to a large number of Catholics and continues to feel a great affinity toward that faith. The US Department of State records that 89.6% of the country identifies themselves as Catholic – a figure notable in the region not only for the high percentage of Catholics (nowhere else in the Western Balkans do Catholics make up more than 15% of the population), but also for the homogeneity of religious affiliation. Much of the rest of the region has highly mixed populations of Muslims, Eastern Orthodox and Catholic Christians.⁵⁴

Economically, Croatia has been the most successful of the Western Balkan countries. While unemployment is still a concern, it remains significantly lower than much of the region with Kosovo coming in last at 53%.⁵⁵ Unemployment appears to be generational, as the tech industry has brought a number of jobs for young Croats who have the skills to work in that field. Additionally, the country has relatively low inflation and it has reduced the size of its current accounts deficit.⁵⁶ These market indicators are important preconditions for market stability. The country is also blessed with an extensive coastline and beautiful national parks – this creates significant tourism revenues, which has been crucial to Croatia’s post-Dayton success.

The Disintegration of Yugoslavia

The initial outbreak of hostilities in Croatia came in 1991. Croatia had long sought independence from Yugoslavia and had a history of tensions

with Belgrade regarding the distribution of Croatian wealth, among other things. Serbia (then the government and army of Yugoslavia) reacted militarily to Croatia's declaration of independence, claiming that it was necessary to keep the country together and that it was protecting the Serb minority living in Croatia. Despite various ceasefires, and the added complications of involvement by both countries in the Bosnian War, the Serbo-Croatian conflict lasted some four years. At one point, the Serbian (Yugoslav) army occupied as much as one-third of Croatia.⁵⁷ Peace came in August of 1995. The Croatian conflict was concluded in the Dayton Peace Accords, which also brought an end to the fighting in neighboring Bosnia. Both the human and economic costs of the Croatian war were high, with significant loss of life and destruction of industrial capital. Though often forgotten in international circles, the war was quite significant and is still relevant for many Croats and ethnic Serbs living in Croatia.⁵⁸

The country struggled for its own independence in the 1990s, but also played a pivotal and sometimes controversial role in the two other major conflicts in the region: Bosnia and Kosovo. Croatia's interest in BiH was in potentially gaining territory in the areas of Herzegovina and central Bosnia where a number of ethnic Croats reside, in an effort to protect that population.⁵⁹ The exact nature of Croatia's role in the Bosnian conflict remains debatable. Many question if Croatia was part of the Bosnian solution or if the country was an instigator. In many ways it was both. During the conflict Croatia allowed over 200,000 Bosnian refugees to seek asylum within its borders, and in the summer of 1995 the Croatian Army started military operations in BiH that would help stabilize the country in the follow up to Dayton. However, the ICTY also found Croatia to have been responsible for atrocities committed against Serb and Bosniak populations in the country and the Tribunal continues to seek Croatian accountability for "war crimes." During the crisis in Kosovo, Croatia's role was much clearer. The country opened air space and provided support for the EU and NATO missions across the border.⁶⁰

International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia

One of the on-going effects of Croatia's actions in the 1990s has been its tense relationship with the ICTY. The ICTY serves as an international body for the prosecution of those wanted for war crimes in relation to conflicts in the Western Balkan region. Initially, the Croatian government cooperated with the ICTY and extradited a dozen suspected Bosnian Croats to The Hague, home of the Court, and acted against some others suspected of inappropriate actions during the Croatian and Bosnian conflicts.⁶¹ More recently, however, dealing with Croatian suspects has been controversial in the country, resulting in a rather slow speed of compliance.⁶² In 2005, four years after being indicted, the Croatian government assisted in finally apprehending General Ante Gotovina. Gotovina's case concluded in late summer 2010 and, at present, he is awaiting a verdict. The General is accused of committing war crimes against ethnic Serbs during the Croatian war for independence. His capture, along with two other former generals, went a long way toward gaining favor with both the EU and especially NATO.⁶³ More recently, in 2008, Slavko Šakic was also arrested and charged with criminal behavior for his actions during the Bosnian war. Šakic signed a plea bargain and admitted his guilt.⁶⁴ Though public opinion is shifting somewhat, it is not especially popular for Croatian politicians to send what many still consider "national heroes" and "defenders of their country" off to be tried for war crimes. In fact, the government has paid the legal defense costs for Croatian citizens tried at the ICTY.⁶⁵

Refugee Return

Over a decade after the Dayton Accords put an end to fighting in Croatia, the country is still struggling with the return of refugees displaced by the conflict. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) estimates that around 250,000-300,000 Croatian residents were displaced during the conflicts of the early 1990s. Of these about 30% have returned home and 120,000 have been integrated into their country of exile. That means that around 80,000 refugees remain in limbo 15 years after the end of the struggle for independence.⁶⁶ There are currently a number of housing programs to entice refugees to return to the country, but this is somewhat

controversial. There are those that argue that too much time has passed and that the country must now only look forward.⁶⁷

Additional Issues

Beyond the ICTY and the problems surrounding the return of refugees, there are other pressing internal issues. Issues such as confidence in the government and political parties are significant. Likewise, there is a lack of citizen confidence in government, as well as a feeling that the media does not serve as a check on political wrong doings.⁶⁸ Although government corruption does not appear to be as big of an issue in Croatia as elsewhere in the region, it is still a concern. This was apparent in 2007 when the *Croatian Privatization Fund*, a government agency created to help with the process of privatization, saw seven of its members questioned and arrested for taking bribes and engaging in corruption.⁶⁹ There is a widespread belief that this scandal was even more far reaching. Despite these concerns, Croatia is the "most free" country in the region, scoring 1/2 on the Freedom House rankings.⁷⁰

5. External Relations with Western

Balkan Neighbors

In general, Croatia enjoys good relations with its neighbors. The Croatian government has been pragmatic in this regard. Due to their desire to join Euro-Atlantic institutions and the realization that regional cooperation was necessary for meeting that goal, Croatia has been working together with other countries in the region. After a period of trying to disassociate from the Western Balkans, government officials now see the benefit that comes from being a leader in the region – a role they have taken on with gusto over the last five years. Prime Minister Sanader said in 2005 that, "Croatia's relations with neighboring countries are based on the principles that regional and cross-border cooperation are indispensable components of regional security, democratic stability, prosperity, and economic development."⁷¹ He continued, "Croatia today...stands ready to assume another important responsibility – to serve as a model country in southeastern Europe, encouraging and assisting its eastern neighbors to

achieve their Euro-Atlantic ambitions."⁷²

Regional cooperation is most pronounced among the countries that signed the Adriatic Charter. Today, it is not uncommon to hear that the Adriatic Charter is a more important path to NATO membership than even the PfP Program.⁷³ In fact, with the admission of Croatia and Albania into NATO, the Adriatic partnership has now extended to include Montenegro and most recently BiH, which seek to learn from the lessons of the original three members.⁷⁴

As one Croatian governing official explained, "initially the region was friends in need (forced cooperation for gains), now we are more friends in deed (cooperation between governments is genuine)."⁷⁵ While this may indeed be the feeling among governing elites, our survey indicates that a significant percentage of the Croatian population views regional cooperation as a means to an end (economic growth, security, IO membership), not as a congenial partnership between friends. When asked how respondents to our survey would characterize regional relations, 21.5% indicated that cooperation was based on "trust and belonging," whereas 69% cited "necessity and duty" as the primary motivation for regional cooperation.⁷⁶ As regional programs and partnerships deepen, one can hope that what is currently perceived by many Croatian citizens as positional formality will develop into internalized norms of genuine positive feelings, and hence a blossoming regional security community.

Though Croatia currently exists peacefully with its neighbors, there remain some sources of anxiety. With regard to Serbia, as with many things in the Western Balkans, history, and not just recent history, is significant. There are still Croats and Serbs today that harbor ill-will toward each other due to atrocities committed in the 1990s, World War II and even earlier. Moreover, there were numerous economic and social disagreements between Zagreb and Belgrade when both were part of Yugoslavia. Today, despite elite level cooperation and some increased travel between Serbia and Croatia, there still exist some underlying concerns among some Croatians.⁷⁷

The one country of the former Yugoslavia that was able to avoid much of the violence of the 1990s and managed to escape the Balkan label is Slovenia. However, the relationship between Croatia and Slovenia is a rocky one. Although there are a number of old rivalries between the

two countries (the two richest Republics of the former Yugoslavia), the biggest issue has involved a border dispute along Piran Bay, as well as Slovenia's claim to a corridor connecting its territorial waters to the international waters of the Adriatic Sea. The barrier was implemented in 1991 when both countries broke from Yugoslavia, but it was never confirmed and has remained a contentious issue. Additionally, there is a nuclear power plant in Krško, Slovenia that is quite close to Croatia and has caused some controversy as well.⁷⁸ These issues have become politicized in recent years and many Croats with whom we spoke felt very strongly that Slovenia is taking advantage of its position as an EU member to gain favor on these topics. The situation escalated in 2009 when the Swedish Representative and holder of the rotating six month European Commission presidency stated that Croatia should not be considered for Union membership until it worked out its conflicts with Slovenia. Just in 2010, a possible resolution is under debate.⁷⁹

Finally, there is Montenegro, which was united with Serbia until only recently.⁸⁰ Breaking from Serbia in 2006, Montenegro has been attempting to catch up to its regional partners in terms of economic development and Euro-Atlantic integration. One significant step was the Montenegrin government's apology acknowledging responsibility for the violent events in Dubrovnik during the Croatian war. This was a welcome recognition in Croatian eyes and has helped strengthen cooperation between the two countries. Croatia sees in Montenegro a country that it can guide, assist and influence. The government of Croatia has taken Montenegro under its proverbial wing resulting in a growing affinity. Some Croats interviewed admit that given the fact that this special relationship might appear to be a rebuff of Serbia only makes it more appealing.⁸¹

6. Identity

Taxi Driver: "Oh you are a foreigner, welcome to Croatia. What will you do here?"

Researcher: "I am working on a project that looks at community and security in the Western Balkans."

Taxi Driver: "Western Balkans? You are in the wrong place, this is Europe!"

Internally

On the whole, Croats are quite aware and proud of their national identity.⁸² There is clearly an association with the state of Croatia and patriotism is strong. Croatian citizenship and passports have been granted to ethnic Croats living in BiH. This extension of passports is significant because Croatia was, until just recently, the only country in the region that did not face a strict visa regime with the EU, meaning that those with Croatian passports were more easily able to travel to Europe.⁸³

Croatia has been fortunate that its internal problems are not often based on ethnicity. However, there is a small group of ethnic Serbs living primarily in Northeastern Croatia near the Serbian border. At times there has been tension with this minority group and there is an occasional call for joining greater Serbia. While this issue exists, it is not a major threat to peace in the country, nor is it a large barrier in terms of the Croatian sense of self.

Externally

Croatia has traditionally seen itself as more closely tied to Central Europe than the other states of the former Yugoslavia. In ethnic make-up and religious affiliation, Croats appear (and are not shy about claiming) to have much more in common with Central Europe. This is compounded by the continued activities of new and old Croatian Diaspora in Central and Western Europe.⁸⁴ The 2005 Eurobarometer report explained that, "even though they [the Croats] are very proud of their nation, the majority of Croats consider themselves and are proud of their affiliation with Europe."⁸⁵ One individual interviewed explained that Croats are pragmatic people who have an even temperament as opposed to their Balkan neighbors who are more "fiery, stubborn and emotional."⁸⁶ Almost every Croatian interviewed for this project, pointed out the greater affinity that Croats have for Europe over the Western Balkan region.⁸⁷

While it is quite clear that Croats feel strong national loyalty and a European identity, it is difficult to say if there is a feeling of regional unity among Croats. Most interviewed explained that there was no real unity with Balkan neighbors, with the exception of ethnic Croats living in BiH. This aside, people were quick to

point out that language and culture continues to cross state borders, and does much more now than even five years ago. This is due to increased access to television from neighboring countries, to the internet and to an enhanced tourism and travel infrastructure. There is also recognition, especially among the elite, that like it or not, countries in the region do face similar challenges and do have some of the same interests. Some interviewed were more willing to respond that they felt a Southeast European identity, which would include not just the countries of the Western Balkans, but also Greece, Romania and Bulgaria. Few feel any real affinity or like-mindedness with Albania, which many view as too culturally distant, though there do not appear to be negative feelings for Albania either.⁸⁸

For some years there was an attempt by Croatia to separate itself in the eyes of the international community, especially considering the economic disparities of some of its Balkan neighbors and the war torn areas of the region.⁸⁹ More recently, however, Croatia has been an active partner in forming sub-regional relationships. With the encouragement of the international community, Croatia has begun to see that it can play a significant role as a regional leader. Despite this, many Croats continue to denounce the Balkan label.

7. Expectations of Peaceful Change

The economic progress witnessed in Croatia has not only helped integrate the country into the Euro-Atlantic partnership, it has also left its citizens with a sense that violence and turbulence are aspects of their past, not their future. While there may remain the occasional ethnic Serb who is still pushing for union with Serbia at any cost, peace and stability is the order of the day. There is general recognition that the international community is not likely to allow a repeat of the events of the 1990s, but there are also underlying tensions that are still palpable in other countries of the region. Should violence erupt again, Croatians interviewed were adamant that it would not take place in Croatia. Rather, they warned about the powder kegs of BiH and Macedonia. In our 2008 survey, respondents were asked about the resolution of conflicts in the area. 28.9% indicated that the conflicts of the region had been solved successfully, however 35.6% said that the conflicts had been solved unsuccessfully and perhaps only temporarily. What is perhaps

most troubling is the 26.8% who responded that the conflicts had not really been solved at all.⁹⁰ Our survey results illustrate the hefty amount of skepticism still present concerning the potential for future conflicts in the area. When one remembers that Croatia was not the site of the worst of the violence (BiH and Kosovo retain those unenviable positions) these figures are even more telling.

There also remains some concern about motivations and activities within neighboring Serbia. It is perhaps no coincidence that NATO membership is a more important topic of discussion when Serbia evidences nationalist tendencies.⁹¹ This has been evident in Croatia at various times as Serbs reacted to Kosovo's desire for independence. Security is still a concern, even in the region's biggest success.

However, Croatians are well aware of what turmoil in the region can mean for them. The country witnessed firsthand the devastation of conflict and the ongoing consequences of rebuilding and reconciliation. They also suffered from the events surrounding Kosovo in 1998 and 1999 in terms of lost tourism revenue and foreign investment. A great deal of revenue – some estimate up to US\$1.5 billion – was foregone during those years.⁹² It has taken time to re-earn international trust and to once again entice travelers to the Croatian coasts. Croatians know from experience that peace in the region benefits their pocketbooks.

8. Security Community Development

in Croatia

In the preceding pages we have attempted to determine the level and depth of Croatia's Euro-Atlantic integration. We did this by utilizing the theoretical concept of security community (ingrained trust and cooperation) internationally, regionally and internally. For our investigation, it is clear that Croatia has a developing security community at the internal, regional and international levels – certainly more so than its Western Balkan neighbors. Internally, security community is quite apparent. There is little civil strife, a sense of national identity and the expectation that internal divisions will not lead to violence. Croatia has also made advances toward security community in its relations with the rest of the region. However, there remain mixed results.

Croatia has led the way in developing relations among the states of the region (specifically with the Adriatic Charter and Montenegro) and, at the government level, appears to work increasingly well with even officials from Belgrade and BiH. At the level of the average citizen, these same norms of cooperation and reciprocity inherent in security community are not as mature as at the elite-level. Finally, at the international level, Croatia already feels a part of the Euro-Atlantic security community, and it is well on its way to formal membership in Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Returning to Adler and Barnett's discussion of security community evolution, Croatia is definitely in the ascendant phase, and may soon reach the mature phase of security community development. The ascendant phase indicates that the country is in Tier II, displaying some momentum towards Tier III characteristics. Croatia is now moving beyond the assistance of the international community and is beginning to claim ownership in the nation and in some regards in the region – a necessary condition for a fully mature security community.

International organizations have been important in fostering this growth of security community in Croatia at all levels. It was the UN and NATO that helped broker the peace that ended violence in the country and it has been, in large part, the promise of membership in NATO and the EU that have encouraged reforms of governing and economic institutions. It has also been the OSCE that has worked tirelessly with officials inside the country to actually implement the changes needed. Many Croatians we interviewed explained that Croatia is now in a situation where it no longer must rely on the international community, a sure sign of growing security community, but they also explained how important having that assistance and membership incentive has been and will continue to be for them and especially the region. Has Croatia been successfully integrated into the Euro-Atlantic partnership? Not yet, but it has made significant strides. The roads toward security community at the local, regional and international level clearly have helped with the process of integration and cannot be separated from that goal.

9. Strategic Concept Lessons

from Croatia

The purpose of this project was two-fold. First, we wanted to determine the depth of Croatia's Euro-Atlantic integration and its corresponding level of security community development. Second, we aimed to highlight how the Croatian experience might inform NATO members as they determine where the organization's future security emphasis should lie. Having addressed our first goal, we now turn to the second.

Nowhere in the Western Balkans is security community more apparent than in Croatia. Yet even in Croatia, there remain internal and regional issues that have precluded the full development of security community. NATO and the international community have engaged the country and the region, but as this examination of Croatia highlights, there remains work to be done even in the region's most fully developed security community.

Ultimately, the Croatian experience provides two valuable lessons for NATO, and other international organizations that have sought to integrate the countries of the Western Balkans. First, IOs such as NATO that aim to facilitate security community and peace through the promise of membership can be successful even in post-conflict areas. Fifteen years ago, who could have imagined that any country from the Western Balkans would be within the NATO fold? Due in large part to its desire to join NATO and the European Union (EU), Croatia has become a great success story. The country has truly gone from being an agent of insecurity to a creator of security.

The second important lesson is that the mission in the Western Balkans is not complete and should not be forgotten. NATO, and indeed the international community, must stay steadfast in its dedication to the region. It is tempting to suggest that NATO now considers officially extending its reach beyond the Euro-Atlantic neighborhood. Recently, a 12-person committee headed by Dr. Madeline Albright made just such a recommendation as it considered how to revise the organization's Strategic Concept.⁹³ The committee also suggested that NATO should begin to address global issues such as the environment and that NATO should seek greater attachment to the UN.⁹⁴ Given NATO's continuing search for a mission beyond the duality of the Cold War, this

proposed extension outside "the neighborhood" is understandable. However, the situation in Croatia, although in many regards a success story, highlights the fact that there remains much to be done in the Western Balkans (in Croatia and beyond). The region continues to require encouragement, involvement and possibly even protection if the current tentative peace is to be maintained.

Drawing from our analysis of Croatia's international, regional and internal security community development, the case study should

give NATO pause. The organization can look at Croatia's progress and take pride in the role it played in helping to lay the groundwork for future peace and stability in the country. However, it must not simply see Croatia as a success story and move on to find new arenas of potential influence. Croatian integration is not complete and it, and the entire Western Balkan region, still requires international attention. In sum, the drafters of NATO's New Strategic Concept must be careful not to look too far afield when insecurities remain in its immediate neighborhood.

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