

# Security in a Knowledge-based Society: The Role of the South-East European Division of the WAAS

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*A sustainable knowledge society is a response to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In Croatia like in the other countries of SEE, the development of a sustainable knowledge society implies interaction between security, economic and regional development and a sustainable management of natural and human resources.*

*Some of the strategic goals of the Croatian foreign policy, like in some other SEE countries is full membership in EU and NATO. Before became full member of the EU, Croatia and the other SEE countries must strive that its own objectives are in line with EU member countries objectives, and they have fulfilled the economic criteria for the EU membership.*

**Key words:** Knowledge society, EU membership, NATO membership, SEED

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## 1. Introduction

According to most definitions a knowledge-based society is one in which knowledge prevails in all the different types of activities.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, to build a knowledge-based society requires a multi-disciplinary approach, since the challenges which Croatia, as well as the whole world, is faced with are multi-disciplinary. Only a country which is economically well-developed and has good human resources due to constant investment in education and science can properly respond to security issues. The development of a sustainable knowledge society is an inexhaustible resource, linking knowledge, a free market and good governance. A knowledge-based

society is the best guarantee for security, economic and any other development, and it is fundamental for sustainable management of natural and human resources on a local, regional and national scale.

A sustainable knowledge society is a response to the challenges of the 21st century, which have affected all social activities, and therefore require a multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary approach. Cooperation between natural and social sciences is required so that relevant decisions may be taken in today's natural and built-up environment where economic, political, security, cultural, social and other issues are so closely inter-connected. For this purpose the role of education is also very important.

In Croatia like in other countries of South-East Europe, the development of a sustainable knowledge society implies interaction between security, eco-

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conomic development, regional development, the strengthening of the competitiveness of Croatia's economy through its accession to the EU and NATO, as well as sustainable management of natural and human resources. These are all part of the overall system of planning and monitoring of the economic, social and environmental effects of development on the local and regional communities in the Republic of Croatia.

## 2. Security and Knowledge

Underlying the new paradigm of international relations in the 21st century is a new concept of national security, which no longer depends exclusively on a country's military power and defence capability, but also on its ability to ensure general economic, political, scientific, technological, environmental and social development. Security is interactive with the economy: it is a precondition for economic development, on the one hand, while on the other, economic development makes it possible for a country to reach a higher level of security. For Croatia this implies development based on the restructuring and strengthening of the competitiveness of its economy, which can best be achieved through full membership in the Euro-Atlantic structures, the EU and NATO. Free access to the big EU market and its financial institutions is one of the preconditions for strengthening competitiveness, while proper use of natural and human resources may prove to be the most important element for strengthening competitiveness, economic development, security and the development of a sustainable knowledge society. In Croatia, like in every other modern society, one of the main preconditions for security is, no doubt, the building of a knowledge-based society.

Knowledge is essential if we are to respond properly to the problems, dangers and threats emerging in present-day world. Many crises, especially those in South-East Europe, have arisen because of the problems of the so-called Weak States, which, among other things, are the result of lack of knowledge in the governance process. Therefore, political stability, the acceptance of democratic procedures and institutions, as well as the rule of law, are a key precondition for developing a secure environment in an era of global trends.<sup>2</sup>

In such a world, it is not only information, technology, ideology, goods, and money that are rapidly spreading around the world, but also epidemics, and weapons of mass destruction, which frequently

cause serious problems and threats to national, regional and global security. In such a mobile, inter-linked global environment, the security concept is constantly revised and spreading, so that the traditional territorial defence concept is practically no longer applicable. The new security concept implies internal political and social stability, effective and transparent democratic government institutions, healthy and sustainable economic development and citizen's access to education. That is what is known as good governance. What is also important is a country's attitude to the international environment, its capabilities and willingness to take part in peace-keeping missions, in regional arms control, demining, as well as in PfP (Partnership for Peace) and MAP (Membership Action Plan) activities. In accordance with these new developments, the security and defence community is now transformed into a component of the democratic knowledge-based society.

In the process of society's evolution into a knowledge-based society, the functioning of democratic institutions and the rule of law are the main preconditions for internal and external security and economic development. Therefore, its capability of combating various forms of security threats, such as terrorism, organized crime, illegal trafficking in humans, drug trafficking, and weapons of mass destruction is inseparably linked to the promotion of democracy and the rule of law. There is growing awareness of the close relationship between security and democracy and, in this context the indivisibility of cooperative security becomes all the more important.

The main purpose of a knowledge-based society is, among other things, to ensure sustainable economic development enabling an increase in the number of jobs and greater social cohesion, which is essential for maintaining strategic global security in the new interdependent and multicultural world. On the other hand, it is difficult to imagine economic development and improved standards of living in an insecure environment, which is a disincentive for investment, production and trade. Because of this, security backed by a knowledge-based society is of great significance, especially in a region in turmoil such as South-East Europe and in a war-devastated country such as Croatia.

## 3. The Role of NATO

Like almost all the other countries in transition, Croatia has set full membership in NATO as

one of the strategic goals of its foreign policy. In view of the globalization processes and the character of modern non-conventional threats, no single country, especially not a small country like Croatia or other countries of South-East Europe with limited defence, economic and other capabilities would be able to confront such challenges alone. Therefore, Croatia had to opt for a cooperative model and seek to become part of a global security framework, such as NATO. This implies assuming certain obligations stemming from membership in such a mechanism, which also involves certain costs.

In this context it is important to study the relationship between economic and security development in South-East Europe, which at the moment is the most unsettled region in Europe, and as such represents a security threat to the EU. Passing through this area are many corridors bringing new unconventional threats, such as terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, drug trafficking, human trafficking and other forms of illegal trade, flowing from East to West towards the EU. Croatia, like other countries in the region, must control this traffic and this can only be achieved if these are institutionally stable, democratic countries. One of the preconditions for such stability is a well-developed economy, which shows how important economic development is for establishing a stability structure, which is itself a precondition for the development of a sustainable knowledge-based society that guarantees economic and any other aspect of progress in an environment of global security and cooperative coexistence.<sup>3</sup>

The Republic of Croatia is now in the process of accession to the EU and NATO. In this process involvement of different segments of society is required, especially that of the academic community. This particular issue should be the focus of activities carried out by the Southeast European Division of the World Academy of Arts and Sciences, set up at the General Assembly of the Academy in November 2005 in Zagreb. During the General Assembly a NATO workshop was held entitled «Security in a Knowledge-based Society – how to resist terrorism». The workshop was a follow-up to a previous Academy workshop which focused on the danger of nuclear weapons development. To these problems the Zagreb meeting added those of the so-called non-conventional threats with special emphasis on terrorism. One of the conclusions of the Workshop and of the SEED organizational meeting was that it would use the Academy's international reference resources and focus on terrorism, conflict prevention, rapid

intervention in cases of natural disasters and conflict resolution, and the spreading of non-conventional threats. Special attention was to be devoted to the position of the South-East European region as a possible corridor for the transfer of weapons of mass destruction from East to West, and particularly the transfer of elements which could be used for constructing nuclear weapons.

For Croatia this is particularly important at a time when the Croatian public is showing growing scepticism towards Euro-Atlantic structures (NATO and the EU). Current international relations have become increasingly complex and every sovereign country, regardless of whether it is a formal member of an international structure or not, must give its contribution to the building of collective security. Since the world has become aware that current non-conventional threats represent the greatest danger to global security, every country, regardless of its size, must contribute to global security. Considering that present-day international relations have become so interdependent, a country cannot enjoy security without helping to preserve it. At this point in time Croatia is capable of slowly growing from a mere «consumer» into a «producer» of collective security in the region. It is only in this way that a country can over the long term overcome a situation in which it may be a passive observer in matters of security, with the status of an object, rather than of an active subject in international relations. This, of course, should be within the given limits for a country such as Croatia, and would mostly apply to its role in South-East Europe. As the most highly-developed and most stable country of the region, Croatia is rightly expected to play a leading role in establishing regional security, in order to counteract all the threats faced by this very sensitive region, which only ten years ago was ravaged by war. If Croatia is not able to play this role, it will be entrusted to someone else, for example Serbia. It would be naturally assumed that Croatia could play such a role, in view of its strategic position and physical scope and size, and also due to its connections with the international community, parts of which sympathized with its cause in the past, and still view it with approval. If this isolationist trend in Croatia were to continue Serbia would have a chance to regain the trust of the international community, to be seen as a regional stability factor, and will no doubt know how to use this new privileged position to make up for all the frustrations its people suffered from when they lost the war with Croatia.<sup>4</sup>

#### 4. The Role of the EU

Croatia still has time to make up for the opportunities that were missed with regard to the EU and also NATO. It is well-known that NATO's main motivation for offering transition countries full membership in the organization is that they want to recruit people for the rapid response forces in potential trouble spots. It is not a question of getting «cannon fodder», as advocates of isolationism would say, but rather of getting professional volunteers, who have on many occasions volunteered to take part in such actions. It is not, therefore, a matter of coercing conscripts to join. In Iraq, for example, there are Hungarians, Georgians, Ukrainians, Poles, Romanians, Bulgarians ... In Afghanistan there are many others, participating in the global task of preserving collective security. As has already been said, such security is closely interlinked with the establishment of a knowledge-based society. The global and regional effects of the 9/11 terrorist attack on the United States have also been felt in Croatia.

On a global level, this event has united all the relevant international players in the struggle against the global threat. There is now a new type of conflict: between liberals and fundamentalists, globalists and anti-globalists, terrorists and anti-terrorists, which can be found in all civilizations, religions and individual countries. The United States is the main vanguard of the anti-terrorist global coalition. In spite of all the potential dangers of such unilateralism, something that analysts of international relations have been warning of, this leadership is tolerated for the time being by all the other big powers, including Russia and PR China, which have often criticised it. This situation has made it possible for common problems and other areas of potential conflict to be resolved. For Croatia this is a message that its accession to international integrations and organizations, which are part of the globalization process, and its close cooperation with the USA, especially in the fight against terrorism, is the best response to the latest challenges. Furthermore, this is also in the country's national interest. For such cooperation it is essential that a clear distinction be made between the terrorist act itself, and occasionally perhaps even legitimate goals in the name of which such terrorist acts are undertaken.

On a regional level, especially after 9/11, it was seen how important it is to have a subregional security zone in South-East Europe, which under the new circumstances might become a significant element of the anti-terrorist coalition. It also showed the importance of functional regional cooperation and the exchange of information between police and in-

telligence agencies at a country's internal security level. This would enable a joint regional struggle against terrorism as part of the global anti-terrorist struggle. Because of its long frontier with Bosnia and Herzegovina and its shorter but highly sensitive frontier with Serbia, Croatia finds itself in a delicate position. What is required to solve this difficult situation is close cooperation in the struggle against terrorism between the neighbouring countries of the region as well as the open and unambiguous support of the United States and the anti-terrorist coalition. Also required is the active participation of the countries in this coalition (unconditional opening of air space, exchange of information, cooperation between the intelligence agencies, etc.).

While developing a knowledge-based society, which is closely interlinked with security, Croatia must take into account new tendencies arising not only in international political, security relations but also in economic relations. It must also be aware that the accession of Croatia and the whole South-East European region to NATO is not the only precondition for stability and security in the region and for the development of a knowledge-based society, accession to the EU being equally important. In its Lisbon Strategy the European Union has set itself the goal of becoming a Sustainable Knowledge Society by the year 2025. The Republic of Croatia, which expects to accede to the EU by 2010, must set itself the same goal. In this context, it is important to study the concept of the Lisbon Strategy and how it is to be implemented in an enlarged EU, since this could help Croatia not only to meet the economic criteria for the EU membership, but also to develop a knowledge-based society that would be compatible with the knowledge-based society now being developed in the EU. While considering the dynamics of the internal EU reforms as envisaged in the revised Lisbon Strategy, before becoming a full member Croatia must strive to ensure that its own objectives are in line with those of the EU member countries in order to keep pace with EU developments and fulfil the economic criteria for the EU membership, which are complementary to the Lisbon Agenda.<sup>5</sup>

It is also very important to analyse the concept of the Lisbon strategy and its implementation, considering the reforms carried out so far, the implementation instruments, policy coordination and the progress and achievements of particular countries (best practice analysis). This is something that can be done also within the framework of the South East European Division (SEED) activities\*. The implementation of the strategy should be viewed

\* SEED is a selection of the World Academy of Arts and Science (WAAS) established at the Zagreb convention in november 2005.

through three key pillars: (i) knowledge and innovation as driving forces of sustainable development, (ii) promotion of a favourable climate for investment and employment and (iii) growth and employment seen as elements for achieving social cohesion.

Another project that needs to be discussed within the framework of SEED activities concerns the prospects for Croatia and other countries of South-East Europe to bring their development in line with the Lisbon goals, since these are to become an integral part of the EU policy toward the region. As for Croatia, it is necessary to see how EU accession may affect some of the key areas in the accession negotiations. The third project could deal with the role of civil society in the process of the EU accession and the attainment of the Lisbon goals, and provide a better understanding of the main mechanisms used by the EU to ensure the evolution of governance structures in Croatia and other countries of the region. It could also identify new paradigms in public policies that combine the capacity for sustainable institutional change with the promotion of social and economic cohesion.

The EU must be aware, however, that its member countries will be encountering ever growing competition not only in the economic but also in the scientific field. They will be competing not only with the new states but also with potential economic, political and scientific powers from among the former developing countries. It was long believed that globalization as a process mostly benefits the developed countries, and especially the world's superpower, the United States. Now it is becoming evident that the process is turning in the opposite direction. Thanks to the free access to the world markets, and to scientific and technological progress, many Asian countries such as PR China, India and others have begun to compete in Western markets with their cheap and at times higher quality products. It is not only a question of cheaper goods, but also of cheaper and sometimes superior knowledge. In many of the cities in these countries there are information science centers in which highly qualified computer scientists are doing accounting, bookkeeping and occasionally even strategic work for big Western companies. In this way they are taking over the jobs of their col-

leagues in the developed countries. Entire teams of computer scientists from Bangalore, Lucknow, Dalian and other Asian cities are sending all the necessary data to Western companies overnight for the price of 150 euros a month, which under the local circumstances represents relatively high earnings. Western experts cannot compete with this price and they lose their jobs. Thus an entirely new area has developed, the so-called outsourcing industry, which directly benefits less developed countries. If to this we add the increasing competition of the cheap products from these countries, and the increased price of raw materials, which many of these countries export, it can be said that globalisation is going in the reverse direction, so that now the process is beginning to benefit the underdeveloped, rather than the developed countries.

This shows that not only is it ever more difficult for the EU members to compete with the cheap goods and services offered by the less developed countries, but also that this competition threatens, so to say, the market of the academic community in the EU countries. Many member countries have to reduce the budgetary allocations for science and education, so the question now is whether the goals set out in the Lisbon strategy can actually be attained. Investments in the social welfare network are also being reduced, so there is the danger that the Union might lose one of its main features, that of a social welfare state. All this could directly affect the security and stability of the European continent, which has so far been relatively well preserved. Because of the EU enlargement to South-East Europe is important not only politically and geographically but also from a security point of view.

This is the political, security and economic frame for the main activities of SEED, and as stated when this international division was first founded, its mission is to develop a sustainable knowledge society, which also implies security and the culture of peace. Although, as it was said, the activities of the South-East Division will not be geographically limited, the region of South-East Europe, and its accession to NATO and the EU could be a starting point and an encouraging model for further discussions. ■

## NOTES

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3 For more on this subject see: Security and Defence Reform in Central and Southeast Reform, NATO Defence College, 2003

4 One of the indicators showing that this might happen was Serbia's recent accession to NATO's Partnership for Peace, although this country has not fulfilled the requirements for cooperation with the ICTY in the Hague.

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