
The Stability Pact for South-East Europe Security Aspects

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Summary

In search for security stability in the Balkans, one of mechanisms with great potential for solving numerous security issues between states of the region is the Stability Pact. Its primary scope of activities lies not in area of military security, but in a combat against new “soft” security threats (illegal trafficking of narcotics and weapons, illegal immigration, combat against organised crime in the region, ecological security). For Croatia, framework of the Stability Pact could be one of the means for improving Croatian relations with neighbour states, especially with Bosnia and Herzegovina. In that regard, the Stability Pact is one of the means for achieving Croatian strategic goal – membership in the Euroatlantic institutions (NATO and EU).

Introduction

The Stability Pact for South-East Europe is a promising contribution towards the stabilization of this region. However, this is not the first attempt to stabilize the region. The first two stabilization initiatives for the region – the EU’s regional approach and the South-East European Cooperation initiative created by the United States – achieved minor results. In both cases, EU and US demanded from the states of the region to implement certain political and economic conditions, as the precondition for a gradual integration of the region into the Western political (NATO) and economic (EU) structures. However, the unwillingness of the EU and US for a deeper commitment (especially a financial one) in the Balkans at the end created weak results.

Last year, the Kosovo crisis and the NATO intervention against Yugoslavia were just a pretext for a new round of political and security initiatives introduced by the United States. President Clinton initiated the Developmental Initiative for the Southern

Balkans and supported the regional security cooperation within the framework of the NATO program “Partnership for Peace”. But in spite of all that, the most important breakthrough of Western policy towards the Balkans ran parallel with the finalization of NATO’s military intervention against Yugoslavia. The European Union felt it was being sidelined by NATO and as a result adopted The Stability Pact.

The Stability Pact initiative was created as a framework for the coordination of different programs and efforts, and its aim was to achieve three goals: regional security, political democratization and economic reconstruction of the whole region. All these goals are interconnected – to neglect one means the others will deteriorate automatically. To achieve only the security stability is not enough for achieving a long term stability of the region; it has to be accompanied by political and economical measures.

Regional Security

It seems that through the Stability Pact, the international community has eliminated at least some of the challenges for the security and stability in South-East Europe, the challenges that include inter-state contrasts that are the potential sources for military conflicts. The presence of international military forces (SFOR, KFOR) makes the possibility of major conflicts erupting in the region very unlikely. Nevertheless, there are some other potential hot-spots of regional instability that are emerging.

The causes for the instability of South-East Europe might be generally divided into two groups: *military* (or traditional) *causes* and *non-military* causes.

The first group of *military* causes includes the potential conflicts that have different origins (political, historical, geo-political, etc.). That group covers the kind of destabilization processes characteristic of, for example, the Greek-Turkish relations, the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, the situations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, etc. These sources of instability are mostly connected with some unresolved territorial disputes. Even today, this “territorial imperative” destabilizes some parts of South-East Europe through different separatist and greater-state ideas. Therefore, the atmosphere for implementing the political, economic and strategic goals of the Stability Pact will improve only when all the borders in the region become clearly defined and agreed upon. The Stability Pact should stimulate the resolution of the territorial and border issues, because that would create the necessary geo-political presumptions for regional security.

There is one very important question among those relating to the traditional sources of instability – the status of national minorities. There are considerable differences in the countries participating in the Stability Pact with regard to the level of national homogenization. In the early 1990s the highest percentage of national domination could be found in Albania (98%), followed by Hungary (96.6%), Greece (95.5%), Slovenia (87.8%), Turkey (85.7%) and Bulgaria (85.3%). Romania and Croatia are relatively low in that regard (at 78.3% and 78% respectively), and the lowest are Macedonia (66.5%) and FR Yugoslavia (62.3%). Bosnia and Herzegovina was very well defined at the time – there, Moslems were dominant but with only a relative majority (43%). In summary, since many members of the Stability Pact have significant percentage of national mi-

norities in their populations, the question of their status and rights will influence the stability of the host-state and, consequently, the regional stability as well.

An unfinished process of control of conventional armaments in the region should be also included in stabilization efforts, because of the potential for creating dangerous tensions in the region. It is obvious that in the future CFE Treaty would expand on new grounds – the Baltic area and the Balkans. In that regard, the mechanisms for the regional arms control created with the implementation of Annex II of the Dayton Agreement, but also new initiatives in this area in the framework of the Stability Pact, could help in preparing the ground for the incorporation of the states of the region in the framework of the CFE Treaty.

Another great problem in the region is the so-called *mine legacy*, a particular source of insecurity. In some countries in the region (B&H, Croatia)¹ it is essential to carry out the mine-clearing at a faster rate and to provide adequate education and assistance to the victims. For all those countries, the land- and antipersonnel mine clearing must be a top priority; on the political level they should all adopt the Ottawa Agreement.

Non-military dangers for the security in South-East Europe are not less relevant than the above mentioned traditional ones. In fact, this kind of threats currently pose a much greater threat for the destabilization of the region. First, economic problems are very important because the Stability Pact states are countries in transition. Economic problems in some of the countries in the region, such as unemployment and poverty, are really a threat to the political stability and the development of democracy.

One of the consequences of political and economic instability is the spread of organized crime, which is now a main problem for the regional security. It creates corruption, deteriorates social stability, adversely affects the chances for foreign investments and makes the institutional development of democratic forms of government impossible. Stability Pact should harmonize and make possible the common efforts and strategies of the states in the region in their fight against the trade in illegal arms and substances, illegal immigration and against all other forms of organized crime. Because of that, within the framework of the Stability Pact, the Organized Crime Initiative was established, focusing on the development of common strategies for the fight against organized crime.

A new, particularly important aspect of security in the region is the so-called ecological security, because pollution might create serious long-term environmental and health hazards and could affect several states.

Within the framework of the Stability Pact there are now several important initiatives, created as a response to the above mentioned threats to the regional security and stability.

1. The establishment of the Stability Pact sponsored the Regional Arms Control and Verification Assistance Centre (RACVIAC) last week in Zagreb. This project has

¹ For example, according to the estimates, there are between a million to 1.2 million mines and unexploded ordinances in Croatia. The contaminated area covers around 4500 km².

- been developed in a partnership between Germany and Croatia, with a goal to contribute to the achievements and implementation of arms control treaties in the region, and for the region.
2. The facilitation of comprehensive programs, created by the World Bank and NATO, for the reintegration of demobilized military personnel in Romania and Bulgaria into the civilian labor markets. A similar project has been launched in Bosnia and Herzegovina (with aim of achieving a 15 % reduction of the military personnel). Croatia and Albania will very soon become beneficiaries of similar programs.
 3. Stability Pact has launched the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative, aimed at creating a regional approach to preventing and responding to natural and man-made disasters.
 4. With the help of the United States and Norway, and with an active support of Germany, Albania has vowed to destroy some 130,000 pieces of small weapons. This project will very soon include other countries in the region.

Stability Pact and FR Yugoslavia

However, for a successful implementation of the security and other initiatives of the Stability Pact, it was necessary to include the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the Stability Pact. In the moment of its creation, this was impossible. As a result, the absence of FR Yugoslavia from the Pact framework created a whole range of specific questions regarding the viability of the Stability Pact and EU policy regarding South-East Europe. But, as a result of the recent sweeping changes in Serbia and the demise of Slobodan Milošević's regime, FY Yugoslavia is now a member of the Stability Pact.

In terms of its geopolitical characteristics Yugoslavia is actually the most important country in the region. Therefore, the wish of the international community for Yugoslavia to become a part of the regional stability processes is very understandable. The FR Yugoslavia should be quickly integrated into the ongoing activities of the Stability Pact, especially in the activities in the security field (arms control issues and the implementation of Dayton Agreement). Getting involved in the Stability Pact activities will be, without a doubt, beneficial for the evolution of a democratic political system in Yugoslavia.

So it is of utmost importance for the region that the reform process in Yugoslavia gathers momentum; it must not be allowed to fail. But, at the same time international community must be aware that the support to the FR Yugoslavia must not come at the expense of the other countries. If that happens, the Stability Pact would become pointless.

Croatian view

As the country whose territory is divided between three European regions (the Central Europe, the Balkans and the Mediterranean), Croatia is naturally interested in solving the security problems and prevent them from spreading. In that regard, the Stability Pact (together with other initiatives) could be a valuable tool for a peaceful resolution of some of Croatia's security concerns.

The Stability Pact could be an important factor in solving the Croatian border dispute with Slovenia (the border at the Piran Bay). Also, regarding the Prevlaka Peninsula (the border with Montenegro), the Pact's mechanisms could facilitate the process of finding a permanent solution for that dispute. For Croatia, the question of the Prevlaka Peninsula is a security question, not a territorial one: the lasting solution is the demilitarization of both sides of the border, and not its change.

An important issue the Pact might help to solve is the transportation issue. We are talking here about the transit services for the landlocked countries in the region, as well as for all other countries that might have a vested interest in it. The importance of this issue is evident in case of Macedonia. After the disintegration of Yugoslavia, it was left surrounded by not so friendly states. Croatia is able to provide many Stability Pact participants with transit services (for example, Hungary, B&H and others that might find an economic interest in that kind of activities). This is rather important for Croatia in two areas – economic and security – because involving states in the region in common transportation and other projects will increase their co-operation, and lead them to search for mutual agreements in different areas, including the security issues.

Croatia has a strong political interest in the normalization of the situation in FR Yugoslavia. Democratization of Yugoslavia will create the conditions for improving the relations between the two countries. Eventually, this improvement would be beneficial for the security and stability of the whole region.

But, the relationship with Bosnia and Herzegovina is of an even bigger importance for Croatia. If Croatia successfully creates the political, economical and security partnership with Bosnia and Herzegovina, most of Croatia's security problems will be solved. The recent political changes in Bosnia and Herzegovina have significantly improved the chances for the creation of a partnership. In both cases, the framework of the Stability Pact could significantly improve Croatian relations with both countries, especially in the field of security.

Croatia views the Stability Pact as an opportunity and a good future prospect. Naturally, there are different opinions as well; in sum, they claim that the Pact limits Croatian sovereignty and pushes it more towards the Balkans than Central Europe. But these opinions are not politically dominant, not any more, and the new Croatian government considers the Stability Pact to be the economic, security and political support on our way to the EU and NATO.

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