

**PERCEPTIONS**  
**JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

**December 1997-February 1998**

**Volume II - Number 4**

**EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND REGIONAL CO-OPERATION IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE**

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Multilateral co-operation in Southeast Europe is not a new process. Despite the unfavourable conditions of the Cold War, Ministers of Foreign Affairs of six Balkan countries came together in Belgrade in February 1988. This was then considered to be a constructive attempt at regional co-operation. One of the most important characteristics of Balkan Multilateral Co-operation was its success in bringing together all the Balkan countries which had different social, political and economic systems. Foreign ministers, when they met in Belgrade, believed that the problems of the region could only be overcome with a new approach to international and security relations; one based on the principles of the Helsinki Final Act. The division of Europe, however, was still a fact and it was unforeseeable whether or when such a division could be overcome by the emergence of common values which would then pave the way towards meaningful integration in Europe.

The second meeting of Balkan Foreign Ministers took place in Tirana in 1990. Thus, before the breakdown of the ideological barriers and the radical upheavals in Central and East European countries, the basis of regional co-operation in Southeast Europe had already been laid, establishing collaboration beneficial to all-European peace, security, progress and development.

**POST-COLD WAR DEVELOPMENTS**

Although the initiative of 1988 has been registered in the records of history as a product of Cold War conditions, Southeast Europe has nevertheless enjoyed the benefits, albeit for a limited period, of the post-Cold War environment. Recent history has witnessed a remarkable correlation between the growth of democratisation movements in the wider European stages and the proliferation of new ideas for multilateral co-operation. As the systemic differences have been reduced, new initiatives have appeared, namely the Central European Initiative and the Black Sea Economic Co-operation.

The Central European Initiative (CEI) dates back to November 1989. In its founding declaration, the main aims of the initiative were stated as to improve the political atmosphere in Europe, to strengthen the CSCE process and to promote the greater unity of Europe.<sup>1</sup> Today some Southeast European countries are either members of this initiative or have developed special relations with it. The chairman-in-office of the CEI is regularly invited to the meetings of other regional co-operation schemes. This has established a good overlapping structure between the different regional co-operation initiatives of Southeast Europe.

Another post-Cold War co-operation scheme which also involves countries from Southeast Europe is the Black Sea Economic Co-operation (BSEC). The first indications of launching such an initiative date back to the end of 1989, but the BSEC was formally established in 1992.<sup>2</sup> In the BSEC

Declaration, the participating States expressed their intention to develop economic co-operation and to take the necessary steps to enable co-operation among the members on areas such as transport, communications, informatics, energy, environment, tourism and many others. Today, after six years of implementation, the BSEC is on its way to becoming institutionalised as a regional organisation.<sup>3</sup>

The CEI and the BSEC, as products of the post-Cold War environment, are different from the Balkan Multilateral Co-operation. They were mainly guided by the developments which have occurred with unprecedented pace in recent European history. They are therefore mainly based on the broad European consensus on a market-oriented system. The purpose of these two post-Cold War co-operation schemes was gradual transformation of an older system into a new one whereas the initial aim of the Balkan Multilateral Co-operation was the search for reconciliation between different socio-political and socio-economic systems.

#### DAYTON PEACE ACCORDS AND THE NEW SPRIT OF CO-OPERATION

History has not been fair to Southeast Europe. The post-Cold War situation, although it rapidly introduced the conditions for sustained stability in Central Europe, has been interrupted by tragic developments in Southeast Europe, such as the disintegration of former Yugoslavia and the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. These developments have delayed the establishment of a stable environment in Southeast Europe which could have laid the ground for enhanced integration based on good-neighbourly relations and co-operation. As a result, the region has suffered considerably and has fallen back in its drive towards European integration.

The Dayton Peace Accords have defined a general framework agreement for peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This has also established the background for wider regional stabilisation. The post-Dayton environment in the region, therefore, has created the conditions for constructive co-operation and led to the introduction of new co-operation initiatives.

The first of these new initiatives is the Process of Stability and Good-neighbourliness in Southeast Europe (the Royaumont Process). The meeting, which led to the inception of the Royaumont Process, was held on the margins of the Peace Conference on Bosnia-Herzegovina held in Paris on 14-15 December 1995. Participants at the conference, in a meeting in Royaumont on 13 December, mainly tried to identify whether the ideas promoted by the European Stability Pact, which was being developed under the auspices of the OCSE, could be applied in the region of Southeast Europe. This would enable the integration of the region with European institutions and would establish dialogue between the countries of Southeast Europe which could further pave the way towards a Southeast European round table in the OSCE.<sup>4</sup>

The Royaumont Process was later transformed into a European Union initiative to promote regional co-operation among the countries of Southeast Europe by means of various projects aimed at enhancing good-neighbourly relations. Five follow-up meetings have been organised, the latest in Istanbul on 27 October 1997, where the participants decided to assign a co-ordinator to supervise the implementation of projects and who would also co-ordinate contacts with other regional co-operation schemes.

The Southeast European Co-operation Initiative (SECI) is a second attempt to develop co-operative relations in the region. The first meeting of SECI was held in Geneva on 6 December 1996. The participants immediately called for the establishment of an agenda committee which, under the

chairmanship of SECI's co-ordinator, Dr. Erhard Busek, was able to adopt a working document at its first meeting in Geneva on 29 January 1997. At this meeting the European Economic Commission also introduced an 'Outline of Projects' to facilitate the further work of SECI and participants identified the following six priority projects to work on:

- "Identification of Bottlenecks Along Main International Corridors in the SECI Region and Short-term Measures to Remove Them"
  - "Energy Efficiency Demonstration Zones Network in Southeastern Europe"
  - "Interconnection of Natural Gas Networks, Diversification of Gas Supply and Improvement of Security of Supply in Southeast Europe"
  - "Financial Policies to Promote Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) Through Microcredit and Credit Guarantee Schemes"
  - "Danube Recovery Programme"
  - "Trade Facilitation: Actions to Overcome Operational Difficulties".
- The SECI agenda committee has held three further meetings and the work of the working groups which have been established to implement the above mentioned projects is well in progress. The core of regional co-operation in Southeast Europe

As integration with European and Euro-Atlantic institutions appear high on the European agenda, Southeast European co-operation gains momentum. The meeting of the Southeast Europe Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Sofia on 6-7 July 1996 was a crucial turning point in this evolution. Having recognised that multilateral co-operation in the region has its own history and traditions, the ministers at the Sofia meeting committed themselves to making every effort to transform the region into an area of stability, security and co-operation in line with the general developments throughout Europe.<sup>5</sup>

This meeting was followed by another in Salonika on 9-10 June 1997 of the region's Ministers of Foreign Affairs. This time, in addition to a strong reaffirmation of their determination to promote good-neighbourly relations, stability, security and co-operation in the region, the ministers also underlined their commitment to work together to ensure rapid economic development of the area, with particular emphasis on the liberalisation of trade and infrastructure projects, which would secure the prosperity of the peoples in the region. They also reiterated that "the European orientation of the states of the region is an integral part of their political, economic and social development."<sup>6</sup>

After the two conferences of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the Heads of State or Government of Southeast European countries met in Crete on 3-4 November 1997. This summit meeting represents a firm starting point in the evolutionary process of co-operation in the region. Being the first of its kind in the history of Southeast European co-operation, the summit has identified the main actors of this process.<sup>7</sup> The leaders of the participating countries agreed that they should work together to create in their region conditions for the prosperity of their nations in a framework of peace, security, good neighbourliness and stability.<sup>8</sup> With this strong commitment, the Crete summit forms the core of regional co-operation in Southeast Europe around which other various wider co-operation schemes such as the CEI, the BSEC, the Royaumont Process and SECI expand in overlapping and mutually-reinforcing circles.

#### Southeast Europe and European Integration

With the Madrid Summit of NATO and the Luxembourg Summit of the European Union, the drive

for European integration has emerged into a new phase and has gained new momentum. The ultimate target of the new European architecture is to create a united, prosperous Europe, without new dividing lines and rich with a multitude of cultures. Southeast Europe is also expected to contribute to this evolving architecture. Yet, with its still fragile stability, the region deserves particular attention and needs a careful implementation of the following for a successful, coherent and peaceful transition in this evolutionary process:

### Integration with Europe

For the first time in recent history, the countries of Southeast Europe have been able to identify a common goal around which they feel to be united and come closer to one another. The main achievement for them now is integration with and membership in the European and Euro-Atlantic institutions and organisations. This was clearly identified as the target of these countries at the Crete summit.

“We consider that the European orientation of our countries is an integral part of their political, economic and social development.

We aspire to transform our region in an area of co-operation and economic prosperity and, to that effect, we decided to promote good neighbourly relations and respect for International Law.

We believe that Europe can not be complete without our countries and our peoples representing civilisations and historical traditions which are essential to the establishment of a contemporary European identity.

European and Euro-Atlantic integration are essential in promoting the aforementioned objectives.”<sup>9</sup>

Integration with Europe is not an easy process and all the countries of the region will probably not achieve these goals at the same time. Democratisation, enhanced good-neighbourly relations and political and economic reforms seem to form the key elements in this endeavour.

### Enhanced Regional Co-Operation

On the way to integration with Europe, however, countries of the region should also develop regional co-operation. Firstly, regional co-operation will prove more beneficial to these countries because it is easier to achieve than integration with Europe due to the advantages of geographical proximity, and it would create better opportunities through enhanced communications, energy and transport networks. Secondly, regional co-operation will also promote increased trade and economic contacts. Participants at the Crete summit agreed to intensify their efforts for the establishment of favourable conditions for investments. Thirdly, all these efforts will create a more favourable environment which will contribute to the promotion of good-neighbourly relations between these countries. It will not only bring them closer to each other but will also help to resolve certain bilateral problems which appear to be the vestiges of the Cold War environment.

### Complementarity and Congruence

Regional co-operation and integration with Europe, however, are neither alternative nor supplementary processes. These two are mutually-reinforcing and complementary. Parallel to the globalisation of world economic activity, regional co-operation and regional trade agreements have

recently appeared as favourable developments in international relations. Such developments have been explicitly encouraged by the officials of the European Union in the past. The regional approach of the European Union is a good example of this policy. In fact, global and regional approaches, particularly in trade and economy, are two sides of the same coin which could not only coexist but reinforce each other. The Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) experience of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, for example, has not pushed these countries away from the European Union, but has brought them closer to it. Enhanced regional co-operation in Southeast Europe, therefore, should be in congruence with increased integration with Europe.

### Equality

Integration with Europe as well as enhanced regional co-operation are common projects for all the countries of the Southeast European region. Countries in the region believe that destructive competition should be replaced by co-operation. All the countries have an equal chance to contribute to the process of regional co-operation. In fact, this was confirmed at the summit meeting in Crete by the Heads of State and Government of Southeast European countries:

“We are determined to pursue the South Eastern Europe co-operation, on a mutual and equal basis, in the firm belief that each of us has much to learn from the other.”<sup>10</sup>

### All-Inclusiveness

Regional co-operation in Southeast Europe should be an all-embracing process. Europe, after the end of the Cold War, has now the unique chance of integration. The purpose of integration is to create the conditions for all the European countries to take their respective places in the evolving new architecture. In this new European architecture, steps which could lead to the formation of new dividing lines should be avoided. Southeast Europe, with the new conditions of stability created by the implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords, should also take advantage of this unique opportunity. Former hostilities will have to be buried in the waste basket of history and all the countries of the region, without discrimination, should come together to participate in all the activities of regional co-operation initiatives in order to establish the common foundation of a prosperous and co-operative future. In this context efforts to re-integrate the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia into the international community will have to be intensified.

### Security

Southeast Europe has a long-standing reputation as a region of turmoil and instability. This has been confirmed once again with the tragic events in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords has opened a new chapter of hope for stability and security in the region. It is important, therefore, to implement the provisions of the peace agreement to the full. Preservation of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a multi-ethnic, multicultural, independent and sovereign state within its internationally recognised boundaries, is one of the key elements for peace and stability in the region. Post-SFOR security requirements need to be carefully considered. Also, there is a need to start consultations, as soon as possible, on issues related to regional arms control as stipulated in Article V of Annex I B of the Dayton Agreement.

The problems on the territory of former Yugoslavia, however, are not the sole challenges to security and stability in Southeast Europe. The developments in Albania in Spring 1997 have shown that risks and challenges to security and stability in the region could appear at any time. Development of

Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs) are of particular importance for enhancing peace and stability in the region. Ways of developing CSBMs with a regional scope should be explored. The meeting of Ministers of Defence held in Sofia on 3 October 1997 set up a good framework in this respect. Negotiations related to Article V of the Dayton Agreement could also consider CSBMs and other appropriate measures designed for the specific security needs of the region.

#### The way ahead

After a considerable loss of time due to the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina the process of Southeast Europe's integration with European and Euro-Atlantic institutions and organisations has entered a new phase. Countries of the region, while increasing their efforts to be integrated with those institutions and organisations, will also enhance their regional co-operation. The dynamic inter-relationship between these two complementary processes will define the main parameters of the new phase ahead for Southeast Europe. Turkey will host in 1998 the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs as well as the summit of the Heads of State and Government of Southeast Europe. These meetings will contribute to the evolution of the future European architecture in which Southeast European peoples will also acquire their dignified places, without discrimination.

1 Joint declaration of the Quadrilateral Initiative, Budapest, 11 November 1989.

2 Declaration on Black Sea Economic Co-operation, Istanbul, 25 June 1992.

3 At the meeting of BSEC foreign ministers in Kiev on 22 October 1997, the decision was adopted to transform the initiative into a regional organisation.

4 Declaration of the Process of Stability and Good Neighbourliness, Royaumont, Paris, 13 December 1995.

5 Sofia Declaration on Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Co-operation in the Balkans, Sofia, 7 July 1996.

6 Salonika Declaration on Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Co-operation in the Balkans, Salonika, 10 June 1997.

7 The main participants of the Crete Summit were Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Romania, Turkey and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Bosnia-Herzegovina participated as an observer whose status as a full member will be clarified soon. Croatia and Slovenia are members of the CEI and do not have a particular enthusiasm for Southeast European co-operation.

8 Joint statement by the Heads of State and Government of the countries of South Eastern Europe, Crete, 4 November 1997.

9 Joint statement, Crete, 4 November 1997.

10 Joint statement, Crete, 4 November 1997.

