Strategic Forum

No. 226
April 2007

Institute for National Strategic Studies
National Defense University
http://www.ndu.edu/inss

Preventing Balkan Conflict: The Role of Euroatlantic Institutions

by Jeffrey Simon

Key Points

Despite 15 years of international peacekeeping and security assistance, the West Balkans are still beset with major security challenges that will severely test the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) in 2007.

Bosnia-Herzegovina still requires the presence of NATO and EU police and peacekeepers and, along with newly independent Montenegro, needs help in building basic institutions. The same is true for Kosovo. As the United Nations addresses Kosovo's "final status," Kosovar and Serbian interethnic relations will likely grow more unstable, possibly with ripple effects in Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Among the instruments for enhancing Balkan stability today are NATO's Partnership for Peace and the EU's Stabilization and Association Agreements, along with an array of subregional organizations promoting cooperation.

NATO and EU members—Hungary, Slovenia, and Greece, along with Romania and Bulgaria, who joined the EU in January 2007—now provide a core for coordinating NATO *and* EU programs in promoting West Balkan security sector reform, encouraging regional collaboration, and providing a credible roadmap for Euro-Atlantic integration.

Expanding the Southeast European Defense Ministerial and Civil-Military Emergency Planning Council for Southeastern Europe membership to include all West Balkan states and broadening their coverage to include interior ministers (police and border guards) would create the necessary conditions for advancing Balkan regional cooperation in a Southeast European Homeland Defense Ministerial. Such a union of defense and interior ministers would work with the Southeast European Cooperation Initiative to provide opportunities for West Balkan states to move beyond stabilization toward integration.

These stabilization efforts and institutional developments are cause for optimism but no guarantee of success. A NATO–EU Balkan strategy that aims at effective and well-integrated national, regional, and subregional capacity-building efforts will be a vital ingredient in forestalling future conflict.

Balkans in Perspective

Since the end of the Cold War, the Balkan region has presented major security challenges to the United States and Europe. The instability and weak governance of the region remain an important concern in the post-9/11 period. Balkan regional tensions erupted in several wars resulting from the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia in 1991. After a slow initial response from Europe and confronted by an inadequate United Nations (UN) effort in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), the United States convinced the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to initiate a decade-long peacekeeping mission to safeguard implementation of the Dayton Accords. Then, in an effort to halt a humanitarian catastrophe stemming from ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, NATO engaged in an air campaign against Serbia and another major peacekeeping operation in Kosovo.[1]

The Yugoslav wars during the 1990s reinforced the view that Europe was unable to handle its own security challenges and that the European Union (EU) needed to improve its military capabilities and be able to deploy forces outside its borders. In 1999, the EU launched its European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) with a Helsinki Headline Goal that called for a European Union Force (EUFOR) of 60,000 troops to deploy within 60 days for up to 12 months to focus on the so-called Petersberg Tasks comprising humanitarian, peacekeeping, and crisis-management missions. EU governments also agreed to support major new efforts to better integrate their competencies in civil society, security sector reform, and military operations to enhance postconflict stabilization, security transition, and reconstruction operations.

Looming Challenges

Despite successful stabilization efforts and institutional advances of the past decade, Balkan regional conflicts and the risk of state failure, which receded into the background after 9/11, are likely to reemerge as challenges requiring renewed attention from the United States and Europe. Three major challenges are on the horizon:

- The future of Bosnia-Herzegovina in light of the recent constitutional setback and aftermath of the October 1, 2006, parliamentary elections will be challenged, raising questions about likely future requirements for EU Operation *Althea* (EUFOR) and the EU Police Mission (EUPM).

- With Montenegro opting for independence in the May 21, 2006, referendum, its small size

Report Documentation Page

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE **APR 2007**	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED **00-00-2007 to 00-00-2007**
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE **Preventing Balkan Conflict: The Role of Euroatlantic Institutions. Strategic Forum, Number 226.**		5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
		5b. GRANT NUMBER
		5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER
6. AUTHOR(S)		5d. PROJECT NUMBER
		5e. TASK NUMBER
		5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) **National Defense University,Institute for National Strategic Studies,Fort Lesley J. McNair,Washington,DC,20319-5066**		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
		11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT **Approved for public release; distribution unlimited**		
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES **The original document contains color images.**		
14. ABSTRACT		
15. SUBJECT TERMS		

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT **unclassified**	b. ABSTRACT **unclassified**	c. THIS PAGE **unclassified**		**8**	

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std Z39-18

(population 620,000) and embryonic state institutions may prove to be an impediment to achieving its Euro-Atlantic aspirations and could have an impact on governance in Belgrade and on regional stability and security.

■ With Kosovo final status negotiations moving toward conclusion without resolution by Belgrade, Pristina, and Kosovo Serbs, an "imposed" settlement could have significant implications on Kosovo's statehood prospects, Kosovo Force's (KFOR's) future, and Serbia. If Kosovo fails to remain a multi-ethnic entity, it could also have an impact on stability and security in the West Balkans, Southeast Europe, and beyond (for example, Transniestria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia).

In each case, NATO and the EU, along with subregional organizations, will play significant roles in preventing a backslide into conflict, but the character of these roles will vary. Bosnia and Montenegro need assistance in building their civilian and defense institutions, respectively, while Serbia and Kosovo will need help developing cooperative activities with each other and their neighbors, as well as advancing security sector reforms.

Bosnia-Herzegovina: Unresolved Issues. BiH continues to face the challenge of building state-level institutions. To begin moving toward its objective of joining Euro-Atlantic structures, BiH started negotiations in November 2003 and approved a feasibility study with the EU, but it still has outstanding issues of police reforms. Recent efforts to amend the constitution to strengthen the state over ethnic entities failed and had to be postponed until after the October 1, 2006, parliamentary elections, which were successfully convened. It remains to be seen if unity of the country will prevail and if state-level police institutions will make necessary progress.

Though BiH created a new state-level defense ministry in January 2006 and was invited to join Partnership for Peace (PFP) in November 2006, it is expected to cooperate fully with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and it faces remaining challenges to move other institutions from entity-level to state-level (such as the Ministry of Interior). As ethnic mistrust remains, it is unclear as to when this will happen, and the Republika Srpska (RS) prime minister continues to resist police reform under a state-level ministry of interior. As BiH constitutional amendments to do this failed to acquire the necessary two-thirds majority in both parliament houses in spring 2006, the new government that assumed office after the October 1, 2006, parliamentary and presidential elections will have to renew the constitutional debate.

NATO and the EU will play significant roles in preventing a backslide into conflict

But initial indications are not promising, as RS President Nebojsa Radmanovic and Prime Minister Milorad Dodik do not want a unified Bosnia.[2] Weak governance and a destroyed economic base have led to chronic unemployment, which official statistics put at roughly 40 percent but which is probably closer to 20 percent because of the gray economy.[3]

EUFOR's mission will be accomplished when BiH state-level institutions have been created and are functioning adequately. No one can predict when this will happen, however. Recognizing that local politicians must ultimately accept responsibility for the result, the EU Office of the High Representative believes it is still premature to shift to state-level institutions, preferring that the EU Special Representative remain in the country for at least another year.

Montenegro's New Start. Montenegro proclaimed its independence from Serbia and Montenegro (SaM) on June 3, 2006, following its May 21, 2006, referendum. On June 12, the EU recognized Montenegro as a sovereign and independent state. Given that Belgrade's efforts to seek EU association for SaM had been sidetracked by the failure to deliver Ratko Mladic to The Hague Tribunal, many Montenegrins believed, not unreasonably, that Euro-Atlantic accession would be faster if they could proceed independently. Yet Montenegro is also starting from a very weak institutional, human, and financial resource base.

Five shortcomings are most evident. First, the new country is only now in the midst of writing its constitution, which presumably will define the powers between the president and prime minister. Apparently operating under the Montenegrin Republic's constitution of 1992, the president has already decreed that the Montenegrin armed forces will abandon conscription and field an all-volunteer force. (Thus far, it is in the process of reducing from 6,300 troops to a goal of 2,500.) Second, although Montenegro has a newly appointed defense minister (the prime minister had previously been dual-hatted), it still does not have a defense ministry, nor does it have sufficient adequately trained personnel to provide necessary civilian (budget, defense policy and plans, personnel management, and logistics) oversight of the military. Third, members of parliament also need assistance in developing appropriate skills to perform necessary defense committee oversight of operations and budget. Fourth, of the planned 2,500 troops in the Montenegrin armed forces, only 13 speak English, and only 3 have observed or participated in UN peacekeeping operations.[4] Finally, Montenegrin financial resources will likely prove to be a major constraint. Montenegro's planned 2007 defense budget of €40 million (less than the 2006 budget) represents 2 percent of gross domestic product, is insufficient to meet its planned requirements, and likely will be difficult to sustain over time. Montenegro may find that its planned professional force is too large and expensive to sustain or maintain at operational levels and likely will require reassessment.

In sum, Montenegro's expectations about rapid Euro-Atlantic integration resulting from its independence from Serbia may prove to be overly optimistic and will need to be tempered by hard work that remains to be done on building institutions. Montenegrin independence also has consequences for regional security. Albanian views of the Montenegrin referendum are that since Belgrade accepts the results as legitimate, it should also accept a Kosovo independence referendum as legitimate. In contrast, Serbs disagree, claiming the two cases are entirely different.

Kosovo: The Next New State? The status talks led by UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari, which began in March 2006 and failed to reach any agreement among the Serbs and Kosovars, resulted in a "mandated" Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo

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Status Settlement that satisfied neither Belgrade nor Pristina when presented on February 2, 2007. While the plan does *not* mention independence, its provisions describe de facto statehood for Kosovo—providing for an army, constitution, and flag—although it foresees the need for an International Civilian Representative and a continued NATO presence to support Kosovo's fledgling government.[5] In Belgrade, Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica refused to meet with Ahtisaari, and the parliament overwhelmingly rejected the plan by a vote of 225 to 15. In Pristina, demonstrations supporting full independence resulted in violent clashes that left 2 dead and 70 injured when a Romanian contingent of UN civilian police fired on the crowd.[6]

This event was reminiscent of the violence that erupted unexpectedly in Kosovo on March 17–18, 2004, which left 19 dead and had nearly disastrous consequences for regional stability because of the inability of KFOR, UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), and the local Kosovo Police Service (KPS) to protect Kosovo's minority communities. National caveats and rules of engagement prevented KFOR from responding expeditiously. Although KFOR ultimately proved effective, it had no crowd control capacity. NATO learned from the experience; as a result, KFOR underwent a transformation—from four multinational bases to five multinational task forces that are more mobile and flexible and operate with fewer national caveats—that was completed in fall 2006. Presumably now prepared for riot control operations, KFOR continues to provide presence, supervision, and deterrence, and to direct support to authorities—KPS and UNMIK—and the population.

many European NATO members and partners see Kosovo, *not* Afghanistan, as a priority

Many in the region are concerned about the lack of progress in Kosovo's final status negotiations. General consensus exists on Kosovo's need to adhere to "standards" in the status negotiations and to conclude the negotiations this year to fend off frustration and stagnation. Kosovo's economic conditions remain poor, with unemployment in the 50 percent range, inadequate infrastructure to sustain economic growth, and a lack of foreign direct investment. Of the 200,000 Serbs who have left Kosovo since 1999, only 14,300 (slightly more than 7 percent) have returned. For economic reasons and security concerns about radical Kosovars, particularly after the March 2004 violence, Serbs have not returned to Kosovo. Even Norwegian Ambassador Kai Eide claims that his October 2005 Kosovo report provided a sober assessment of the situation but that the international community was "sugar coating" the results and was *not* paying adequate attention to "standards" in the status negotiations.[7] The NATO Riga Summit has also attached "great importance to standards implementation, especially regarding the safeguarding of minority and community rights and the protection of historical and heritage sites, and to combating crime and corruption."[8]

NATO's credibility is tied to the future of Kosovo, where its commitment has been substantial and remains real. The 78-day air campaign represented the first time that NATO actually went to war, and its present KFOR commitment of roughly 16,000 troops (down from 46,000 in 1999) is still sizeable compared to its commitment of 32,000 troops to Afghanistan (a country 60 times the size of Kosovo).[9] Despite the size of the force, however, challenges remain.

Though NATO is heavily engaged in demanding operations in Afghanistan and is fatigued by the ongoing Balkans issues, many European NATO members and partners see Kosovo, which is closer to home, *not* Afghanistan, as a priority. There is no consensus among NATO members and partners on the Kosovo "status" negotiations. A major concern about Kosovo's future direction is the possibility that it will encourage other demands for ethnic self-determination in Europe. For example, although Albania wants Kosovo independence, Macedonia will support an agreement only if *both* Belgrade and Pristina recognize existing borders and if the future Kosovo remains multi-ethnic as an example for Macedonia. Furthermore, a mono-ethnic Kosovo could trigger Bosnian Serbs in the RS to pry away from BiH. On the other hand, Slovakia and Romania (concerned about an independent Kosovo becoming a model for Transniestria secession) would prefer "autonomy" for Kosovo. Ukraine and Georgia see potential for spillover in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but Poland does not because Kosovo is not part of Russia. Bulgarians perceive potential disintegrative pressures resulting in Macedonia, while Hungarians harbor concerns about the status of ethnic Hungarians in the Serbian province of Vojvodina. Hence, if Kosovo achieves independence through a "forced" decision, there will likely be a price to pay within NATO (among members and partners) and with Serbia and possibly Russia. In addition to these problems, Kosovo will present further challenges after its final status is mandated.

The International Role

International and regional organizations have come to play a significant role in West Balkans stability, though it was not always that way. Initially, when the Balkan wars began in 1991, the best that NATO and the EU could muster was half-hearted support for a humanitarian aid effort led, weakly, by the United Nations. That changed in late 1995, when a combination of developments on the ground and U.S.-led coercive diplomacy produced the Dayton Accords that ended the Bosnian war and ushered in a major ramp-up of NATO and EU activities. Ever since, NATO and the EU have engaged in stabilization, cooperation, and integration activities in the region. Over the past decade, NATO and EU ranks have swelled with new members and partners so that both institutions now bound the West Balkans geographically and create conditions for building cooperative security by fulfilling NATO and EU membership aspirations through a variety of techniques. Dual enlargement and integration incentives have played, and continue to play, a vital role in enhancing West Balkan stability and security.

Along with Greece and Turkey (NATO members since 1952), the addition of Hungary in 1999, and Slovenia, Bulgaria, and Romania in 2004 has formed a stable security boundary around the six states presently comprising the West Balkans. NATO's PFP and Membership Action Plan (MAP) program keep Albania, Macedonia, and Croatia (the so-called Adriatic Three) constructively focused and engaged in cooperative security activities consistent with NATO principles and will continue to do so as long as NATO's "Open Door" policy remains credible. Albania and Macedonia joined PFP

in 1994 and 1995, respectively, and MAP in 1999, while Croatia joined PFP in 2000 and MAP in 2002.

The incentive of PFP also keeps the remaining three West Balkan states—Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina (which could easily become four with Kosovo or potentially five with an independent Republika Srpska)—focused on reform because they perceive PFP as their initial pathway to Euro-Atlantic structures and legitimacy. The continuing engagement of the Adriatic Three in MAP and of BiH, Serbia, and Montenegro in PFP has become increasingly important because of NATO's continuing need to coordinate its Sarajevo headquarters with EUFOR Operation *Althea* since NATO's Stabilization Force (SFOR) transfer in December 2004 in BiH; to deploy KFOR in Kosovo; and to deal with unresolved Serbia status issues in Kosovo, which create counterproductive temptations.

To help maintain this course, NATO's Riga Summit in November 2006 sent a strong signal to the Adriatic Three regarding membership invitation prospects for 2008 and offered invitations to join PFP and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council to BiH, Montenegro, and Serbia to temper nationalistic tendencies and to enhance long-term stability in the West Balkans.[10]

Although the six West Balkan aspirants see EU accession as a longer-term process than entry into NATO, the benefits reaped by the former are more tangible. As it is, the EU has played a critical stabilizing role, particularly since the June 2003 Thessaloniki Summit opened up prospects for their ultimate inclusion.[11] Along with support from EU members Greece, Hungary, and Slovenia (and Romania and Bulgaria in January 2007), the EU's Stabilization and Association Agreements (SAAs) with the West Balkans contain provisions for future membership. Nonetheless, recent events have raised some questions. Following the failed referenda in France and the Netherlands on the EU constitution in May and June 2005, respectively, the EU foreign ministers meeting in Salzburg on March 11, 2006, conveyed the message to the West Balkans that their integration prospects are slipping into the distant future. While the EU has been struggling with its enlargement to 25 (from 15) members and facing concerns about the addition of Bulgaria and Romania in January 2007, it is having difficulty grappling with the thought of possibly adding another 6 weak Balkan states to the fold.

The West Balkan aspirants have made some, albeit halting, progress with the EU. Macedonia and Croatia signed SAAs on April 21, 2004, and February 1, 2005, respectively, that entered into force in 2005. Albania signed an agreement on June 12, 2006, although corruption continues to undermine respect for rule of law. The EU Report on BiH progress made between October 1, 2005, and September 30, 2006, noted that the SAA signing depends primarily on police reform in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which RS authorities are obstructing (for example, by refusing to abolish the interior ministry and creating police districts that cross entity lines), along with lack of cooperation with The Hague Tribunal.[12] In April 2005, the EU Commission concluded that SaM was sufficiently prepared to negotiate an SAA but decided on May 3, 2006, to suspend negotiations because of its failure to arrest Ratko Mladic. Then Montenegro proclaimed independence from SaM on June 3, 2006, following its May 21, 2006, referendum.

the West Balkan aspirants have made some progress with the EU

How might the EU and NATO collaborate in the interests of Balkan stability? As discussed below, Macedonia and Bosnia illustrate some positive practices, while Serbia and, separately, Montenegro, pose new challenges.

Macedonia: A Good Model. One example of successful cooperation involved the Ohrid Agreement to prevent war in Macedonia. In February 2001, when interethnic strife between Macedonian security forces and armed Albanian extremists made war look likely, NATO and the EU coordinated negotiations that led to the August 13, 2001, Ohrid Framework Agreement, which opened the door to numerous amendments to the Macedonian constitution and far-reaching legislative changes.[13] NATO launched the 30-day Operation *Essential Harvest* on August 27, 2001, with 3,500 troops and logistical support to disarm ethnic Albanian groups and destroy their weapons. This was followed by the 3-month Operation *Amber Fox* with the mandate to protect the international monitors overseeing implementation of the peace settlement in Macedonia.

But the stabilization process did not stop there. To minimize the potential for backsliding, NATO agreed to continue support with Operation *Allied Harmony* conducted from December 2002 to March 2003, when it was handed over to the EU.[14] Operating under a Berlin-Plus Agreement, the EU maintained Operation *Concordia* from March through December 2003; this was followed by an EU civilian police mission, Operation *Proxima*, comprising 200 personnel, which continued through December 2005.[15] EU police authorities cooperated with Macedonian police and assisted in the implementation of the comprehensive reform of the interior ministry and the operational transition toward a border police as part of a broader EU effort to promote integrated border management.[16] Following irregularities and problems in Macedonia's local elections in March 2005, the parliamentary elections of July 2006 were seen as a key test in meeting its NATO–EU objectives. While the campaign was marked by confrontations sometimes resulting in violence between not only the two ethnic Albanian parties, but also the two ethnic Macedonian parties, the election itself was greatly improved compared with past elections and gained the approval of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and Council of Europe.

Bosnia-Herzegovina: Tangible Progress. Another example of successful NATO–EU Berlin-Plus cooperation involved the transfer of NATO's Implementation Force (IFOR) follow-on Stabilization Force to EUFOR's Operation *Althea* in BiH. After 9 years of IFOR/SFOR stabilization operations (ranging from an initial 60,000 troops in January 1996 to 7,000 troops in December 2004), EUFOR's 6,000-troop Operation *Althea* assumed responsibility for shifting "from stabilization to integration" operations throughout BiH, which is four times the size of Kosovo. Operating under the same mandate as SFOR (Dayton annex 1, chapter 7), EUFOR coordinates with NATO headquarters in Sarajevo (which assists BiH in defense reform as well as counterterrorism and intelligence-gathering),[17] provides deterrence, and supports the police because peace

is still fragile. EUFOR is different from SFOR not only because of its more flexible organization, being broken into 3 multinational task forces with 45 Liaison and Observation Teams, but also because it fights organized crime and is connected to the police. In addition, since January 1, 2003, the EU Special Representative has guided the EUPM in Sarajevo with the goal to mentor and monitor middle/senior police and to inspect the creation of a professional, multi-ethnic police service in BiH. As of January 1, 2006, EUPM had been scaled back and focused on police restructuring to more effectively fight organized crime.[18]

Another result of the Balkan wars has been the explosion of organized crime involving human, drug, and arms trafficking. NATO and the EU now need to focus and coordinate their programs and activities to combat organized crime and counter terrorism. Hence, the MAP that NATO developed for Central and Eastern Europe in 1999 needs to be revised to accommodate the peculiarities of Southeast Europe and coordinated with the EU's support to state institutions.

Macedonia and BiH have evidenced progress in the defense sector. Despite more than a decade of independence, interethnic issues still challenge Macedonia and the BiH constitution, requiring further amendments and/or substantial adjustments to critical institutions. West Balkan challenges can easily upset these fragile states' fabric and create an ever greater need to develop a common EU–NATO strategy and to move beyond "stabilization" to improve coordinated "cooperation and integration" activities on the ground.

Serbia: The Challenge of Integration. However the Kosovo question is finally resolved, the integration of Serbia into the Euro-Atlantic mainstream will be a major challenge. The country's politics are still roiled by bitterness and resentment over the wars of secession that split apart the old Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. NATO and the EU will need to reach out to Serbia to help build democratic structures there and in its Balkan neighbors to ensure that its surrounding environment is secure and stable. While the EU told Serbia on September 29, 2006, that it would not resume suspended talks because of failure to turn over Ratko Mladic, NATO, in a bold and significant move at the Riga Summit, invited Serbia to join PFP. Providing assistance to the Serbian defense establishment, which has made significant progress in reform efforts since Zoran Stankovic became defense minister in October 2005, and building military ties and cooperation with neighboring NATO partners (Croatia, BiH, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Albania, which could lose its shared border if Kosovo becomes independent) and members (Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary) will be critical to building West Balkan regional stability and security.

But this may prove difficult in light of hardening positions on Kosovo. On September 30, 2006, the Serbian parliament unanimously approved a new draft constitution that defined Serbia as an independent state for the first time since 1919, strengthened parliament's control over Vojvodina, and declared Kosovo to be an integral part of Serbia. A referendum held on October 28–29 ratified the constitution, and the Serbian parliamentary elections of January 21, 2007, returned Tomislav Nikolic's Serbian Radical Party, which is staunchly opposed to Kosovo independence, as the largest parliamentary party (with 81 of 250 seats). President Boris Tadic's pro-European Democratic Party increased its share by 30 seats to 64. How Tadic will form a coalition and what concessions on Kosovo will be necessary with Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica's Democratic Party of Serbia (47 seats), Mladan Dinkic's G17 Plus (10 seats), and the Liberal Democratic Party (15 seats) remain to be seen.[19]

If Kosovo obtains independence and seeks to join PFP also, NATO will need to assist in building Kosovo's defense establishment. In order to build West Balkan regional stability and security, NATO will need to ensure that Kosovo's military be adapted to enhance NATO interoperability and contribute to regional security. Kosovo autonomy will require that the core of its future military will need to be truly multi-ethnic and to be tightly entwined in a coordinated PFP combined exercise program with neighboring Serbian and Montenegrin PFP partners. Because the Kosovo Protection Corps will likely find it difficult, if not impossible, to overcome its Kosovo Liberation Army past, Martti Ahtisaari called for its disbandment and the establishment of a new professional and multi-ethnic Kosovo Security Force.[20] NATO should discourage Kosovo's new military from procuring offensive weapons, which Serbia would see as provocative.[21] KFOR will need to become more efficient, borrowing from the experiences and lessons of EUFOR in

BiH. NATO and the EU will need to coordinate PFP and SAA activities and programs to enhance regional cooperation and keep integration prospects, which have proven essential for institutional reform, credible. NATO's KFOR and the EU must plan for the possibility of protecting Kosovo Serbs (particularly from the enclaves), many of whom have memories of March 2004 and may attempt to seek passage to safe refuge.

Montenegro: Starting Small. NATO and the EU will need to assess their responses to Montenegro. While the EU has recognized Montenegro's independence, it has kept its options open and will likely commence separate negotiations with it. NATO decided at the Riga Summit to extend PFP to Montenegro (and Serbia and BiH) while recognizing that it would need "advice and assistance [to] build its defense capabilities."[22] NATO decided to extend PFP even though Montenegro's constitution has not yet been approved; nor are its defense and other state institutions in place or functioning. In November 2006, Montenegro had a general staff and plans for a small professional military of 2,500 troops but had no defense ministry. NATO will need to develop a plan and establish combined PFP programs/exercises with MAP neighbors Albania and Croatia and with Serbia.

New PFP members Montenegro and Serbia will face significant challenges in the defense sector, having missed years of reform experience enjoyed by their neighbors. Compared to their Macedonian neighbors, constitutional and institutional challenges are just beginning, and the EU SAA process needs jump-starting. The impending Kosovo final status issue will put enormous stress on interethnic relations, can easily upset the fabric of West Balkan stability, and will likely create further NATO–EU challenges.

Can Regional Organizations Help?

The role of regional organizations has greatly expanded over the past decade in the West Balkans. These institutions also have encouraged military, border guard/police, and intelligence cooperation and enhanced broader security sector reform—contributions that are in great demand.

Southeast European Defense Ministerial. With strong U.S. backing, the Southeast Europe Defense Ministerial (SEDM) commenced annual meetings in 1996 to enhance transparency and build regional cooperation in Southeastern Europe. SEDM's membership includes Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, along with the Adriatic Three—Albania, Macedonia, and Croatia since October 2000—with the United States, Italy, and more recently Ukraine and Moldova as observers. At the November 5, 2004, SEDM in Ljubljana, Slovenia, Serbia-Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina were "guests," and Ukraine requested to become a full SEDM member, which took place in December 2005.

In 1999, the SEDM approved the creation of the Southeast European Brigade (SEEBRIG), with headquarters now in Constanta, Romania, that comprises a 25,000-troop force that can be assembled and employed in conflict prevention or peace support operations under NATO or EU leadership. Once the U.S. Joint Forces Command in Naples certified SEEBRIG with full operational capability in October 2004, it deployed a brigade of 350 troops to Afghanistan ISAF on February 6, 2006. Adhering to the SEEBRIG motto—"One team, one mission, no matter what nationality or religion"—the brigade operated successfully under NATO command for its 6-month rotation.[23] In addition to peace support operations, SEEBRIG has also begun focusing on developing disaster relief capabilities within the framework of a Political Military Steering Committee project called Employment of SEEBRIG in Disaster Relief Operations (SEDRO).

the role of regional organizations has greatly expanded over the past decade

As SEEBRIG moves into emergency planning, SEDRO, although embryonic, provides a great opportunity for NATO–EU cooperation to promote security sector reforms among those partner-members with weak institutional capacities (for example, interior ministries). It could encourage broadening SEDM to include civil emergency planning and interior minister participation to create a new Southeast European Homeland Defense Ministerial.

Southeast European Cooperation Initiative. The Southeast European Cooperation Initiative (SECI) was launched with U.S. support in December 1996 to encourage cooperation among the states of Southeastern Europe on economic, transportation, and environmental matters as a way to facilitate their European integration. Now linked with Europol, the SECI Center in Bucharest, Romania, currently comprises 12 members (all 10 Balkan countries from Slovenia to Turkey, plus Hungary and Moldova) and 16 permanent observers.[24] All 12 members, including BiH and Serbia (without Montenegro),[25] maintain 24 police and customs officers at the SECI Center. In October 2000, SECI broadened its activities to combat transborder crime involving trafficking of drugs, weapons, and humans, and money laundering. In 2003, it added task forces on antismuggling, antifraud, and antiterrorism, to include small arms and light weapons and weapons of mass destruction.

While SECI has demonstrated some impressive successes, many limitations remain. For example, of 500 human traffickers arrested as a result of SECI cooperation by the end of 2004, only 50 went to trial, and only 5 were convicted.[26] This experience clearly demonstrates the "limited institutional capacities and weaknesses" among some of its member nations, demonstrating why SECI in cooperation with its members' judicial authorities (for example, its Prosecutor's Advisory Group) adopted general guidelines for activities and competence in December 2004. Also, it demonstrates the importance of coordinating NATO's Partnership Action Plan on Defense Institution Building adopted at the June 2004 Istanbul Summit, the extension of PFP to BiH, Serbia, and Montenegro at the Riga Summit, and the EU's SAA process.

Civil-Military Emergency Planning. The Civil-Military Emergency Planning Council for Southeastern Europe (CMEPCSEE) was formalized in April 2001 among Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, and Slovenia. Romania joined in 2002, Turkey in 2003, and BiH in 2005. The council's role is to facilitate regional cooperation in disaster management through consulting and coordinating among its members. The members have agreed to develop

common standards for planning and responding to regional disasters or emergencies; create emergency response databases and digital maps of SEE countries' roads, rails, pipelines, and airports; establish emergency operating centers in each country with common communication procedures; and conduct national and multinational exercises. The council, while still rather new, has sponsored many tabletop exercises; Bulgaria, for example, in 2004 hosted a civil-military emergency planning field exercise comprising 968 personnel from all council members (with observers and visitors from Moldova, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro, and the United States) with the aim of improving the collective ability to respond to disaster.

All three organizations—SEDM/SEEBRIG, SECI, and CMEPCSEE—provide opportunities for promoting movement in the West Balkans beyond stabilization by further advancing and reinforcing regional cooperation of all six countries and facilitating each country's integration objectives.

The Way Ahead

Although the West Balkans have been pushed to the background in recent years, serious security challenges are likely to resurface in 2007. NATO and the EU, albeit in different ways, can help to provide sufficient ballast to weather the storm. To do this effectively, NATO PFP and EU SAA programs should develop and coordinate a West Balkan strategy to enhance integration prospects, coordinate security sector reforms to tackle the security threats prevalent to the region, and link PFP and SAA efforts to regional organizations to facilitate cooperation.

If integration prospects were to lose credibility among the West Balkan states, security in the Balkans could be severely undermined. Some nations (in particular, the Adriatic Three) might be tempted to move in unhelpful directions. With this in mind, NATO's 2006 Riga Summit established more precise goals and timelines for keeping its "Open Door" credible for the three remaining MAP members by establishing the *prospect* of membership for the following summit, possibly in 2008. Similarly, the EU, which counted Bulgaria and Romania among its members in January 2007, needs to reiterate and make credible its 2003 Thessaloniki Summit's commitment to remain open to the new and possible future states of the West Balkans.

While the United States and NATO have demonstrated that they have the comparative advantage in utilizing defense instruments to resolve security challenges, the EU has shown its ability to integrate civilian programs in development, judicial, and police assistance.

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The United States and several European governments have developed effective bilateral training programs and operational cooperation with Southeast European law enforcement officials over the past decade. A new NATO–EU Balkan strategy would build on this and provide the necessary conditions for nurturing military cooperation and coordination with border troops, police, and intelligence agencies to enhance West Balkan security and stability. PFP programs should place new and greater emphasis on combating organized crime, which is prevalent in Southeast Europe, and the EU focus on furthering West Balkan cooperative regional security sector reforms. PFP's mandate, consistent with the Prague Summit's Partnership Action Plan against Terrorism, ought to be broadened to include partnership goals with police activities to combat organized crime.

NATO must think about how to specifically craft PFP to enhance regional cooperation among its three (and possibly two future) new partners. NATO PFP should focus on building more transparent and accountable defense and military establishments, and the EU should concentrate on civilian agencies. As has been demonstrated in the successful Berlin-Plus handoff from SFOR to EUFOR in moving from stabilization to cooperation and integration, the EU's West Balkan SAA process can similarly be coordinated with NATO at the regional level. The objective is to improve interagency coordination and cooperation *within* and *among* Balkan states.

PFP's emphasis should focus on furthering West Balkan cooperative regional security sector reforms. These are the necessary conditions for nurturing military cooperation and coordination with border troops/police/intelligence interoperability to enhance Balkan stability and security. NATO PFP has already assisted the SEDM, which counts Serbia and Montenegro and BiH as observers, through its support of individual defense establishments and SEEBRIG's deployment to Afghanistan.

A fertile area for EU–NATO cooperation would emerge if SEDM were broadened to include interior minister participation as SEEBRIG and CMEPCSEE begin to focus on regional emergency planning. The recent evolution of CMEPCSEE is a positive and important development in that it not only incorporates military *and* civil institutions fostering necessary coordination and cooperation at the national level, but also pushes planning to the regional level. In addition, if SEDM were broadened to include interior ministers to form a Southeast European Homeland Defense Ministerial (SEHDM), it could be linked to the SECI, which counts BiH and Serbia (but not yet Montenegro) as members, to combat transborder crime in the Balkans. Hence, SEDM–SECI could become the organizational locus for implementing a coordinated EU–NATO West Balkan strategy.

It is of utmost importance that KFOR in Kosovo (and EUFOR in Bosnia) succeed in preventing violence from erupting in the first place. If interethnic conflict occurs in the Balkans and NATO fails to contain it quickly, the Alliance's prestige and perceived utility could suffer a great setback particularly among those European states whose security is already stressed by large Muslim minorities and strained interethnic relations. Assuming stability prevails, the EU and NATO need to build further upon SEDM, SEEBRIG, SECI, and CMEPCSEE successes to deal with the new West Balkan risk environment and prevent future conflict from emerging.

Southeast Europe's dual NATO/EU member states Hungary, Slovenia, and Greece, along with Romania and Bulgaria who joined the EU in 2007, provide a core for coordinating and integrating EU *and* NATO programs in promoting West Balkan security sector reforms

and Southeast European Homeland Defense regional planning. Additionally, the Balkans dual-member states can help NATO and the EU to expand upon earlier successes in Macedonia and BiH and to develop a coordinated NATO/EU strategy to resolve existing challenges to Southeast European security and stability in Kosovo and Serbia.

For this effort to succeed, regional collaboration could be strengthened along several lines:

- Expanding the SEEBRIG, SEDM, and CMEPCSEE to include Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina would be an important step in building West Balkan confidence and security.

- CMEPCSEE might broaden its membership to West Balkan PFP members Albania, Serbia, and Montenegro and consider merging with SEDM.

- SEDM should be broadened to include civil emergency planning and interior ministers, creating a new annual Southeast European Homeland Defense Ministerial. This new SEHDM should be encouraged to further coordinate its work with SECI which, among other things, combats transborder crime involving trafficking of drugs and weapons, prostitution, and money laundering.

- SEHDM should create a regional civil protection coordination center to harmonize training procedures, establish a regional training plan, and explore, with SEEBRIG (SEDRO) in Constanta, Romania, ways in which that organization might address issues of civil protection. Such a union of interior and defense ministers would formalize the necessary conditions for further advancing Balkan regional cooperation.

By successfully implementing an EU–NATO Balkan strategy, renewed conflict might be avoided in the West Balkans and transatlantic relations strengthened.

Notes

[1] See Jeffrey Simon, *NATO Expeditionary Operations: Impacts Upon New NATO Members and Partners*, Occasional Paper 1 (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, March 2005), 1–14.

[2] Haris Silajdzic, who won the Bosniak (Muslim) seat (with 62.8 percent) in the collective state presidency, wants to eliminate the entities and build a stronger centralized state. But Republika Srpska President Nebojsa Radmanovic, with 53.2 percent (and Prime Minister Milorad Dodik), does not want a unified Bosnia. See Steven E. Meyer, "Borders, Ethnicity, and Globalization in the Western Balkans," *Politika* (Belgrade), December 26, 2006, 5. Also, "Final results of BiH 1 October elections announced," October 18, 2006, available at <www.europeanforum.net/news/281>.

[3] Huib Poot, *Labour Force, Employment and Unemployment in BiH* (Economic Policy Planning Unit, Working Paper No. 1, March 2006.

[4] Montenegrin General Staff briefings, Podgorica, Montenegro, November 6, 2006.

[5] See Articles 1.3 and 1.7, 11.1, and 13.1–13.2, Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement, February 2, 2007, 2, 7, 8, available at <www.b92.net/eng/insight/reports.php?yyyy=2007&mm=02&nav_id=39411>.

[6] Barry Wood, "Serbian Parliament Rejects UN Plan for Kosovo's Autonomy," available at <http://www.voanews.com/english/2007-02-14-voa50.cfm>; and Nicholas Wood, "U.S. Criticized After Deaths in Protests Over Kosovo," *The New York Times*, February 14, 2007, A8.

[7] Kai Eide noted that:

> The standards implementation process . . . so far is uneven. . . . The development of new institutions is undermined by a strong tendency among politicians to see themselves accountable to their political parties rather than to the public they serve. . . . the Kosovo Serbs have chosen to stay outside the central political institutions . . . . Organized crime and corruption have been characterized as the biggest threats to the stability of Kosovo . . . [but] The Kosovo police and judiciary are fragile institutions. . . . With regard to the foundation for a multi-ethnic society, the situation is grim.

See Kai Eide, *A Comprehensive Review of the Situation in Kosovo*, United Nations Security Council, S2005/635, October 7, 2005, 2–3.

[8] NATO Press Release (2006) 150, "Riga Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council," November 29, 2006, paragraph 9.

[9] NATO's 26 members and 11 non-Alliance partners have committed 32,000 troops to Afghanistan, with 12,000 Americans assigned to NATO's International Security Assistance Force. Another 8,000 U.S. troops are in Afghanistan carrying out counterterrorism operations under U.S. command in Operation *Enduring Freedom.* Thom Shanker, "Rift Over Afghan Mission Looms for NATO," *The New York Times*, November 27, 2006. Kosovo is 10,887 square kilometers, compared to Afghanistan, which is 652,000 square kilometers.

[10] Riga Summit Declaration, November 29, 2006, paragraph 30, "welcome(d) the efforts of Albania, Croatia, and . . . Macedonia to prepare themselves for the responsibilities and obligations of membership. . . . [adding] At our next summit in 2008, the Alliance intends to extend further invitations to those countries who meet NATO's performance based standards and are able to contribute to Euro-Atlantic security and stability." NATO Press Release (2006) 150.

[11] Just ahead of the EU–West Balkans Thessaloniki Summit, Commissioner for External Relations Chris Patten said: "The prospect of membership in the EU is real, and we will not regard the map of the Union as complete until you have joined us. . . . But membership must be earned." See "The Thessaloniki Summit: A Milestone in the European Union's Relations with the West Balkans," Brussels, June 18, 2003, IP/03/860.

[12] Vlatko Vukotic, *Southeast European Times* (Banja Luka), November 14, 2006.

[13] See Council of Europe, Ohrid Framework Agreement, annexes A and B, August 13, 2001, available at <www.coe.int>.

[14] See NATO's Role in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, available at <http://www.nato.int/fyrom/home.htm>.

[15] In June 2000, at the European Council in Feira, the European Union committed to create a civilian international peacekeeping force comprising 1,400 police forces with military status, available for rapid deployment within 30 days.

[16] EU Council Joint Action (2003/681/CFSP), September 29, 2003, available at <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/Council%20Joint%20Action%202003%20681%20CFSP.pdf>.

[17] "Defence Reform in Bosnia-Herzegovina on Track," NATO Update, October 13, 2006, available at <http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2006/10-october/e1001a.htm>.

[18] European Union Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mission Statement, available at <http://www.eupm.org/MissionOverview.asp>.

[19] "Serbia's Chance," *The Financial Times*, January 23, 2007; Aleksandar Antic, *The New Federalist* (Belgrade), January 28, 2007.

[20] See Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement, February 2, 2007, articles 9.4 and 9.6, 6.

[21] A defense weapon would be an 82mm mortar, and an offensive weapon would be a 155mm howitzer.

[22] Riga Summit Declaration, paragraph 35.

[23] "NATO Aligns Command Structure to Adapt to Expanded Mission in Afghanistan," August 8, 2006, available at <www.nato.int/shape/2006/08/060808a.htm>.

[24] At SECI's Joint Cooperative meeting in Bucharest on October 26–27, 2006, Georgia applied to become a full member, and Slovakia and the European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine became permanent observers.

[25] Serbia assumed membership responsibility for Serbia-Montenegro. It remains to be seen if, and when, Montenegro will participate.

[26] John F. Markey, Director of the Office of Law Enforcement, U.S. Department of State, at Center for Strategic and International Studies Conference on Romania, October 19, 2004.

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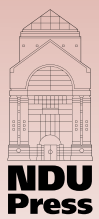

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