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Emil Mintchev

South Eastern Europe at the beginning of the 21st century

New dangers, new stategies, new perspectives

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Dr. Emil Mintchev, a Bulgarian Political Scientist and Economist, is a Senior Fellow at the Center for European Integration Studies at the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn since 1999 where he coordinates the Network for European Studies in South Eastern Europe. He was Director of the Institute for International Relations and Foreign Policy at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences from 1990 to 1993. He was visiting professor at Kiel University in Germany in 1991 and Jean Monnet Fellow at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy, in 1993/94. He then joined the Bulgarian Diplomatic Service and served as Counsellor and later as Deputy Chief of Mission at the Bulgarian Embassy in Bonn.

Among his recent publications: "Europe and the Stability Pact", in: Transatlantic Internationale Politik, Vol. 1, No. 4, December, 2000.

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The war in Kosovo marked the end of a turbulent century for the whole of South Eastern Europe. A century of perils, bloodsheds and suffering. The beginning of the new century was connected with the hope for peace at last, for a stable and prosperous region able to be integrated into the United Europe. But this kind of a peace has not come yet. The real peace, expected and even dreamed for in the region should be a new peace order, that will make future wars on the Balkans impossible, a peace order that will bring at last stability and prosperity in this impoverished and turbulent part of Europe. Such a peace is not achieved yet with the stationing of the KFOR and the establishing of the UNMIK administration in Kosovo, is even endangered with the new outbursts of fighting in South Serbia and Macedonia, but nevertheless for the first time in the long and tragic Balkan history is closer than ever. The dawn of a new future for the Balkans opening a bright perspective for all Balkan post-communist societies is glimmering already over the horizon. The intent of the international community, of the NATO and the EU to introduce the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe with its ultimate goal - the integration of the region into the EU structures are a strong guarantee, that this future will come into existence. However, this future is still a distant one. There is a long way until it could be reached and the politicians together with the experts should warn from overoptimistic expectations. Very often such expectations give way to bitter disappointments and such developments should be avoided in the region.

Because the legacy and the forces of the past, the inertia of the past are still very strong. Because the tasks for stabilising and transforming the Balkans are without a parallel in the region's history. The challenge is of such a proportion that the international community and Balkan societies should be prepared for long and difficult efforts and uneasy victories until the goal appears within reach.

Winning in Kosovo was just winning the first battle in the long war for the European future of the Balkans. Stopping after the first win and not trying to develop it further we start to face the danger of restoring the pre-war situation dominated by ethnic hatred and

ethnic cleansing, but with a role swap - the victims and the oppressors just change places. If the international community allows this to happen and to prevail, then all the efforts and all the suffering would be in vain. To go further means that we should try to break the vicious circle of ethnic animosity, means much more efforts, much more economic and financial burdens and may-be less spectacular victories. The already starting to appear "Balkan fatigue" may divert the attention of the world public opinion or make some projects politically unpopular. Some regional setbacks could have a negative impact on the Western readiness to pursue this costly strategy. One of the ways to counter this "Balkan fatigue" is to explore the possibility for such setbacks, to identify the probable traps and to suggest alternative solutions for the most acute regional problems, if a traditional approach could not bring the expected results.

1. Was the war in Kosovo inevitable?

The war in Kosovo came to the Balkans as a kind of a natural catastrophe. Everybody expected that it is going to happen, but very little was undertaken to prevent it. A kind of fatalistic mood, at least in the region, prevailed and the war started to be considered as something inevitable. This fatalism was a result of the "cold war" between the Serbs and the Kosovo Albanians already going on since 1989, but also of the reluctance of the international community to address seriously the conflict and the obvious failure of the preventive diplomacy since the Dayton peace accord. A lot of international experts and politicians hoped that in the end some miracle is going to happen and Milosevic could be won for a kind of a peace accord, forgetting or may be wishing to forget that the policy of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo was already under way. But the expulsion of whole ethnic groups is usually the final phase of such a policy, which started in the case of Kosovo with the elimination of the autonomy status of the province in 1989. This policy had passed the "point of no return" in the months after the Dayton peace accord and had inflicted so much irreparable damage on the interethnic relations in Kosovo that any international pressure, no matter how strong it could be, was in a position to change a lot.[1]

That is why the expectations that the Rambouillet I and the Rambouillet II peace talks are going to produce a kind of a temporary settlement that will stop the fighting in Kosovo and probably offer a sort of a local autonomy for the Kosovo Albanians, were farfetched. Because they would not be able to eliminate the main reason for the Kosovo conflict - the reluctance of both ethnic groups - the Serbs and the Kosovo Albanians to

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1   See Stefan Troebst: Conflict in Kosovo: Causes and Cures. In: Hans-Georg Ehrhart, Albrecht Schnabel (eds.): The Southeast European Challenge: Ethnic Conflict and the International Response. Baden-Baden 1999, pp. 85-116.

live together in a common state, consider this state their own and pursuing together a common future for it.

The animosity and the division lines between Serbs and Albanians became so deep that they make almost impossible any inner conviction that peace and cooperation are better than war and partition. But to negotiate a peace accord without the inner conviction of its necessity would for sure undermine its future and so the fate of a eventual peace accord in Rambouillet was easily to be predicted. Although every peace, even a bad one is preferable than a war of any kind, a peace accord with a lot of shortcomings and an uncertain future would for sure fail to achieve its main objective - to make the peace irreversible and lead to the final reconciliation of the warring parties. In 1995 in Dayton such a peace accord was produced after an extreme international pressure only for the International peace council for Bosnia to conclude three years later at its conference in Madrid in December 1998, that the peace process is stumbling due to the lack of self responsibility by the conflicting parties.[2]

For sure the presence of the SFOR-troops would continue to prevent any possible outburst of armed hostility, but what we witness is some kind of a truce-like, than peace-like atmosphere. In Rambouillet a kind of a repetition of the Dayton accord for Kosovo could be produced, most probably with the same shortcomings and dangers.[3]

Such an accord could lure the international community into the wishful thinking that through a sophisticated "stick and carrot" diplomacy peace could be achieved at any time and in any conflict on the Balkans. The war in Kosovo showed the futility of such thinking. Then by dealing with the enormous conflict potential in the Balkans apiece, concentrating on a conflict after it erupts with violence and bloodshed, the international community is like a fire-brigade extinguishing fires, but overlooking the need for their prevention. Conflict prevention is by any means preferable to a conflict resolution and a regional approach would be much promising than the attempt to bring under control a separate conflict usually when it is too late.

2. Understanding the Balkans

Such a regional approach already has its historic precedents. After the Russian-Turkish war in 1877-78 the Great Powers met in Berlin in August 1878 to review the Balkan situation after the San-Stefano peace treaty and rearrange the political map of the region. The Berlin Congress dealt with all hot issues in the peninsula and the redrawn

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2   International Herald Tribune, 15.12.1998.
3   See also Marc Weller: The Rambouillet Conference on Kosovo, in: International Affairs, 2/1999, pp. 163-203.

borders, although highly controversial and the offered guarantees, secured nevertheless the peace in the region for more than three decades.[4]

The Berlin Congress participants were almost the same as the present day Balkan Contact Group members, but they concentrated not on a single issue, be it Bosnia or Kosovo, preferring to address the whole region. The situation after the collapse of communism and the dissolution of ex-Yugoslavia made such an approach even more imminent and it was hardly understandable why the international community was reluctant to abandon the manner of dealing separately with the conflicts in the region one by one. The war in Kosovo has forced the international community to change the approach. The readiness to change the approach is to be accompanied by a change of the attitude toward the region. To pacify the Balkans follows the pattern to understand the Balkans and may-be this is the point where the international community has some shortcomings.

What we are dealing with - with an extremely high density of local problems due to the backwardness of the local people in their rural societies with deep roots in the past, or with one complex problem with many facets transgressing borders, inherited and in the same time born anew by the profound changes after 1989. To get the real answer means that we have to get rid of a lot of clichés and myths about the Balkans, of patterns nurtured with care by many regional, but also extra-regional politicians. These clichés and specific Balkan mythology rely on certain historic facts, a fact that makes them almost resistant to every critic. The facts include the belonging of the Balkan peoples to different cultures, the existence of a division line between the Western catholic and the Eastern orthodox churches and later between Christianity and Islam that also passes through the region, the centuries of old ethnic and confessional animosities.[5]

All these facts are irrefutable, but instead of explaining, they very often simplify or even distort the real reasons for the present day Balkan crisis. Than if we put history aside, we witness now a process of nations and nation states building on the territory of ex-Yugoslavia and the attempts by local politicians to use this process for their own purposes. The tools are different - to push it forward or to reverse it, but the aims - to gain or to stay in power are almost the same. Actually the process of nations and nation states building started on the Balkans much more later than in Western Europe and was stopped unfinished after the World War I with the emergence of the Versailles peace system. This stop was reinforced with the Yalta accords and only the end of the Yalta post-war peace order brought the process again into life. The result was the dissolution

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4   See about the Balkan history with accent on Kosovo the recent publications by Noel Malcolm, Kosovo: A Short History. London, New York , N.Y. 1998 and Miranda Vickers, Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosovo. London, New York, NY, 1998.
5   See also William Hagen: The Balkans' Lethal Nationalisms, in: Foreign Affairs, July/August 1999, pp. 52-65.

of ex-Yugoslavia and the establishment of five independent states on its former territory. The reluctance of the Serbian leadership to accept the new realities and the attempt to reverse the process initiated the violence which culminated with the war in Bosnia. The developments in the now Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which is a multiethnic state may indicate, that the process of nations and nation states building is far from over. This process will end when the separate ethnicities see their objectives reached, either as an independent state, or as a federation or confederation in which they can live together with the certain level of autonomy and cooperate for the sake of their common future. Up to the overthrough of President Milosevic the FRY has failed to guarantee the rights of its citizens of different ethnic origin, a fact which made it hardly a preferable home for all ethnic groups living on its territory. This situation endangers the territorial integrity of FRY, whose leadership could not for ever insist, that the attitude toward the non-Serbs is an internal matter of a sovereign state. Besides the Kosovo Albanians, the Hungarians in Voivodina, which autonomy status was also eliminated by Milosevic, the Muslims in Sandjak and even the majority of the Montenegrins, whose country enjoys the status of a republic in the FRY, were by far not fascinated with the realities in present day FRY, which under Milosevic was a federal republic only on paper and remained in fact a smaller version of a Great Serbia.[6]

All these ethnic groups to a great extent prefer a separate future for themselves and some of them may be persistent enough in their efforts to achieve it, a possibility which the government in Belgrade has to counter not by force, but by a reasonable, integrative policy based on European standards towards the non-Serbs. In the same time the international community should not dismiss such a possibility as something heretic, encouraging so indirectly the hard line in the Serbian policy.

Another often misinterpreted aspect of the Balkan crisis is the fact that its stems to a great extent from the isolation of the region from the mainstream of the European civilisation. First the centuries long Ottoman rule and then, after a short period of the nations and nation states building, the establishing of communist regimes almost all over the Balkans transferred the region into an almost forgotten European periphery, whose predominance of parochial archaic society structures made it a perfect home for some of the most brutal communist dictators.

The absence of a European perspective for the development of the region for long periods of time was an additional factor, that increased the negative impact of the social, cultural and industrial backwardness of the Balkan peoples. And they were already rivals in the run for the partition of the legacy of the Ottoman empire.

This rivalry took new dimensions when the European Great Powers ceased to be partners for the search of a common policy towards the Balkans and began to look for

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6   See also Robert Thomas: The Politics of Serbia in the 1990s, New York 1999.

spheres of influence and for client states in the region. so the period of a relative stability since the Berlin congress in 1878 ended abruptly with the series of Balkan crises in the beginning of the 20th Century, that led to two Balkan wars and to the start of World War I. The region remained an area for Great powers' competition for spheres of influence also in the years between the World Wars. The division of Europe after Yalta once more deprived the majority of the Balkan peoples from a certain European perspective. The end of the Cold war and the collapse of communism meant for the Balkan peoples not only a new chance for a nation's revival, but also for a new and more promising European perspective. The establishing of the new nation states in the region was not only the realisation of the century's old ideal, but also the hope for a quicker integration into the European family of democratic nations. Unfortunately the enormous conflict potential in the region delays this integration, but the fervent wish of the local societies for a clear European perspective could be used for the gradual elimination of this conflict potential.[7]

Some lessons from the past may be useful in the present day situation. The first is the interdependence between the isolation from the mainstream of the European development and the conflict potential in the region. The second is the interdependence between the rivalry for spheres of influence and for client states in the region on part of the Great powers and its conflict potential. The necessary conclusions seem to be, that if the trend towards isolation is reversed and the Great powers, i. e. the international community act in concert, the conflict potential may start to diminish. These considerations are not new, but quite a little has been done to implement them into the policy of the international community towards the Balkans. One of the reasons probably was, that such a policy until recently was non existent. The first attempts to elaborate such a policy were made within the framework of the Balkan contact group, but even here priority was given to the conflict zones and not to the region as a whole. The Kosovo crisis triggered a conceptual change on this subject and a long term strategy for the region starts to be considered more vital for the future peace order on the Balkans, than the often futile attempts to pacify conflicting parties already at war.[8]

The idea to start a "partnership for prosperity"-programme advocated by the then NATO General Secretary Solana was a very promising sign in this direction, but the war in Kosovo came ahead of any practical realisation of this idea. The "Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe" proposal appeared amidst the air strikes against FRY and brought new dimensions to this approach. The G-8 joint action that led to the UN Secu-

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7   See Ehrhart/Schnabel (eds.) op. cit.
8   See Timothy Garton Ash: Kosovo and Beyond, in: The New York Times Review of Books, 24.6.1999, pp 4-7.

rity Council resolution 1244 showed how vital the combined efforts and the involvement of Russia for any peace solution could be.[9]

But even on this stage one important lesson from the past should not be forgotten - only acting in concert the international community could succeed in its efforts to impose peace on the conflicting parties. Every division line, be it in the G-8, or the Balkan contact group, be it among the permanent members of the UN Security Council will for sure undermine the peace efforts and delay the implementation of the new conceptual approach. The Kosovo crisis helped the international community to reach the conclusion that this new conceptual approach has to lead to the emergence of a new integrative strategy for the Balkans, that should provide a clear European perspective for the region, a perspective so long denied by history, that it became almost an unfulfilled dream for the local population.[10]

3. Aftermath of the war

The war activities were limited to the territory of FRY, but their implications were felt throughout the whole region. The plight of the refugees, who almost paralysed the neighbouring Macedonia and Albania and created problems on a lesser scale for Montenegro and BiH, indicated to the world community in a very drastical way, that no country in the region could be safe or immune from the policy of extreme nationalism of Mr. Milosevic. Actually one of the aims of his policy was the further destabilisation of the whole region through the Kosovo conflict, the export of instability and deterioration with the forceful expulsion of almost 1 million Kosovo Albanians and the eventual collapse of the neighbouring Albania and Macedonia under the burden of the hundred thousands displaced Kosovars. Belgrade nearly succeeded with this policy, which was blocked thanks to the immense international efforts only and the victory of the "Allied force" operation. The other front line states, Croatia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria, had to swallow some quite heavy economic losses, a fact confirming the conclusion, that the whole region was a hostage of the insane policy of Mr. Milosevic.[11]

That is why, with a few exceptions, Belgrade was isolated during this war and countries like Bulgaria and Romania demonstrated even greater Atlantic solidarity, by offering their air space and logistic support for the "Allied force" operation, than some NATO-

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9 About the Russian interests on the Balkans, see Alexander Rah: Rußlands Interessen auf dem Balkan, in: Europäische Sicherheit , 7/1999.

10 About the response of the international community, see Strobe Talbot: The Balkan Question and the European Answer, Address at the Aspen Institute, 24.8.1999/http://www. state.gov/www/policy.

11 For the costs of the war, see the different publications of WIIW Current Analyses and Country Profiles by Vladimir Gligorov and Niclas Sundström, Wien.

members. Despite the economic losses countries like Bulgaria and Romania displayed a lot of mature and disciplined behaviour, what as they hope, could be helpful for their drive toward a NATO- and EU-membership. On the other hand, Albania and Macedonia demonstrated that for their stability they need a strong international support, combined with an international (NATO) military presence.

Albania, whose state administration and state control collapsed in 1997, remains highly vulnerable and is hardly in a position to cope alone with the situation in the aftermath of the Kosovo war. The influx of refugees from Kosovo, who belong to the so-called Geg community and the establishment of Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK) semilegal or clandestine structures in the Albanian North, where Gegs are living traditionally , could not but straighten the Geg side in the very delicate balance with the Tosks, who live in the Albanian South. The differences between the two parts of the Albanian people are not only ethnographic and linguistic, but have developed also a political context. The Albanian South, i. e. the majority of the Tosks, is the stronghold of the Socialist party, which is the governing party after the showdown in 1997-98 with the Democratic Party of Mr. Berisha, the former Albanian president, whose stronghold are the Geg regions. In a backward society, where belonging to a clan is much more important than belonging to a political party, the toppling of the Berisha government and the victory of the Socialists, was quite broadly understood as a Tosks' victory over the Gegs. The tension between them has never receded as the violent demonstrations in the fall of 1998 indicated. For Mr. Berisha and his clans the establishment of the UCK structures is a major boost, and he will probably attempt to use it for the sake of his own political ambitions. The transformation of the UCK into a Kosovo Defence Corps in Kosovo would increase the importance of these structures as military bases and weapon depots, if one day the demonstration of a military strength becomes a necessity. That is why a western military presence in Albania is so vital not only for internal political reasons, but also as a break against overambitious plans concerning Kosovo.

In Macedonia an analogical situation is observed in the Western part of the country, inhabited predominantly with Albanians from the Geg community. Despite the fact, that one local Albanian political party takes part in the coalition government in Skopje, the tensions between the Macedonian Slav majority and the Albanians have reached their peak during the influx of the Kosovo refugees, when the police tried several times to close the border, or to transfer the refugees to Albania without their consent. The anti-Albanian feelings could be sensed in the huge anti-war and anti-NATO demonstrations in Skopie, in which by far not only representatives of the Serb minority in Macedonia took part. The situation was also instrumentalised for internal political reasons in the policy of the parliamentary opposition, where the pro-Serb sentiments could be easily detected. All these developments mean, that if in Kosovo the UCK was forced to undergo a transformation, in Albania and in Western Macedonia the already existing clan-

destine UCK structures continued to operate secretly, creating so potential and real dangers for the legitimate state authority in both countries. This was actually the case with the recent activities of the UCK rebels around the Macedonian city of Tetovo. In Albania such developments would lead to the appearance of another power-oriented factor among the others already existing. But in Macedonia it endangers the very existence of the young nation state and may provoke new interethnic tensions escalating into a new Balkan war.

The international community has to counter such dangerous developments by securing a Western military presence both in Albania and in Macedonia for a certain period of time. This means, that the zone of the international military presence should encompass not only Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also Albania and Macedonia. It would be up to the experts in international law to decide, how they will call the different types of international military presence on the Balkan-protectorate proper like Kosovo, protectorate in fact, but not in name like BiH, or just stability enforcing military presence like in Albania and Macedonia. The reality will be, that the Western part of the Balkans, where the conflict potential is at its highest, is to remain under close international surveillance for a substantial period of time. This surveillance (and control) would take different forms, but it should be there in order to transform the most turbulent part of the region into a real or quasi protectorate with a different level of military and administrative control by the international community. It seems, that such an approach could be the only way to enforce peace and stability in the Western Balkans. The military presence there should have to be flanked by a strong political and economic presence of the Western democracies in the rest of the region. This presence, together with a real drive towards a strong regional cooperation, may facilitate the creation of the so-called "soft security" environment, which is vital also for the success of the grand strategy for transformation of the Balkans.

But what is this grand strategy going to be? The international community already has the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe at its disposal. The pact is designed as the tool for bringing peace and stability in the region, securing the post-war reconstruction, that would lead to economic prosperity, promoting democracy, creating so the best guarantees for turning the local post-communist societies into true civil societies, able to be integrated into the European and Euroatlantic structures.[12]

The Stability Pact is the boldest attempt so far for breaking the vicious circle of ethnic violence on the Balkans and removing the biggest obstacle for its integration into United Europe - the retarded development of the region and its backwardness stemming from the centuries of old isolation from the mainstream of the European civilisation.

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12 The text of the Stability Pact for South-eastern Europe in http://www. Auswaertiges-amt. De/stabpact. Htm

Because the only goal that could unite all ethnic and religious communities on the Balkans and possibly could make them to forget all divisions, all past and present animosities is undoubtedly the integration into United Europe. The full membership in the EU and for those who wish it - also in NATO remains the only future, that is a common future for all in the region, that could generate joint efforts and convert former and present foes into future partners.[13]

Just stability or prosperity could not become ultimate goals for the Balkans. Both stability and prosperity should be understood only as a precondition for being admitted into United Europe. How these preconditions could be met - with a pressure from outside and more or less indifferent societies, or with highly motivated ones? The answer is clear, but undoubtedly the only valuable motivation in the region now, are the incentives and chances to become part of United Europe. Probably the best way to achieve all the aims of the Stability Pact, is the region integration into the European structures as soon as possible. However the implications from such a kind of forced and premature integration would be unbearable for both - the EU and the region. Both are unprepared for such a step and will remain so for years ahead. But some well-designed steps like the so-called Stabilisation and Association Agreements between the EU and the countries from the Western Balkans may open new and promising opportunities.

4. The Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (SEE) - the first results

Almost two years after the inauguration of the Stability Pact there is ample evidence that SEE is no longer the Old World's completely forgotten periphery. The region shows a clear inclination to move towards Europe step by step, especially in response to the Stability Pact for SEE. The pact may not yet provide the desired level of stability and prosperity for the region, but it has already become a cornerstone for the progressive Europeanization of the Balkans and is almost a success story. The significance of what has already been achieved must always be viewed against the legacy of the past in order to understand the magnitude of what is being started.[14]

The victory of the democratic opposition in the presidential elections in FRY and later in the parliamentary elections in Serbia has initiated a new phase not only in the democratisation process in Yugoslavia, but also in the further implementation of the Stability

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13 For the critical evaluation of the European perspective for the Balkans, see Wolfgang Bruckmann: Der Balkan darf nicht in die EU, in: Die Welt, 28.7.1999.
14 For more information about the Stability Pact structure and goals, see Rafael Biermann: The Stability Pact for SEE - potential, problems and perspectives. ZEI Discussion Paper C 56, 1999.

Pact. The disappearance of the "black hole" - FRY with Milosevic as head of state, which endangered so often the future of the Pact, opened new perspectives for the whole of SEE. The downfall of Milosevic was enabled not only by the internal developments in FRY. A substantial part was played also by the alternative shown to the Yugoslav public by the neighbouring countries with their prospects for a European future, compared with the isolation from the international community offered by the old Belgrade regime.

Since the Sarajevo summit on July 31, 1999, at which the heads of state and government of more than 30 countries solemnly declared their wish to join the Stability Pact for SEE, the region has made a solid progress in the consolidation of peace, democratisation and reconstruction. Most dramatically, the Serbs themselves have deposed Slobodan Milosevic as their leader. Less spectacularly - but of enormous long-term significance - the Stability Pact has established itself as the international community's most comprehensive grand design for the region. At the international donors' conference on March 29 and 30, 2000 in Brussels 2,4 billion Euros were promised for a series of infrastructural projects, the so-called "quick-start package". With the adoption of the "Agenda for Stability" at the second meeting of the Regional Table on June 8, 2000 in Thessaloniki, the organisational phase gave way to the implementation phase. But the real end of the first phase of the Stability Pact was nevertheless the overthrough of Mr. Milosevic. With the FRY joining the Pact in November 2000 the actual implementation of the Stability Pact strategy could start at last.

The first phase of activity within the framework of the Stability Pact prompted mixed feelings throughout the region. After the Sarajevo summit, one could observe a rising spiral of hope, of euphoric expectations that the Gordon knot of historical legacies and contemporary problems could be cut at last. When efforts failed to lead to a rapid reconciliation in Kosovo, or to eliminate the war-time damages, such as the blockade of Danube navigation, critical voices multiplied, both in number and volume. The donors' conference produced a lot of optimism, which was somehow diminished by the slow start of the "quick start package" projects. Another wave of optimism was generated by the downfall of Mr. Milosevic.

In the same time the Balkan societies show little understanding for the necessity of linking economic assistance with certain political developments aiming at a successful transformation of the postcommunist societies in the region. This impatience is a rather widespread phenomenon in the Balkans; people tend to see the causes for their problems outside of their own communities or ethnic groups, and very often they try to commission others, whether the Great Powers in the past, or the international community and the Stability Pact now, to solve them. And nevertheless, despite the mixed feelings, no one in the region doubts the significance of the Stability Pact.

The political situation in the region has indeed undergone positive changes, to some extent due to the mere existence of the Stability Pact. Democratisation in Serbia and in Croatia after the elections is making progress. Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia had local elections. Inter-ethnic tensions within Kosovo remain high, but the local elections that gave almost two-thirds of the Kosovar votes to moderate candidates should mark another step towards normality. Bulgaria and Romania have started negotiations for the EU accession, and Greece and Turkey also started to improve the bilateral relations. In fact regional cooperation is making startling progress. The heads of states and governments from the SEE countries are meeting regularly within the framework of the political cooperation process. At the meeting in Bucharest in February 2000 they agreed on a "Charter for Good Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in SEE". A year later in February 2001 in Skopje, this time with the new Yugoslav president Kostunica, new milestones in the cooperation process, especially in the economic field, were set. All these developments do not always take place under the aegis of the Stability Pact, but the Pact has contributed decisively to the emergence of an atmosphere of partnership that has made intensified regional cooperation possible.

The Stability Pact achievements include the secured financing of the so-called "quick start package" - 35 major infrastructure projects such as the Skopje-Pristina motorway and a new Danube bridge between Romania and Bulgaria. They also inched an initiative corruption, a charter to improve the investment climate, a charter for independent media support, and the initiation of the so-called Szeged Process. The latter probably contributed among other factors to Milosevic's downfall by sponsoring partnerships with Serbian cities and towns governed by the democratic opposition, thus delivering the message that the international community was isolating only the Milosevic's regime, not democratically-minded Serbs.

As the Pact was a German initiative and was realised during the Germany EU presidency, Berlin's role in helping to set up a new peace order in the region is of particular importance. This specifically German role is performed within the framework of a common EU strategy towards SEE, and one can therefore assert that the EU carries a special responsibility for the success of the Stability Pact.

A cornerstone of the EU strategy towards SEE are the Stabilisation and Association Agreements with the countries of the Western Balkan. These agreements are not only the juridical basis for the future relations between the EU and the Western Balkan states; they also provide the step by step inclusion of these states in the EU integration structures and the prospect of future EU membership. Macedonia already signed such an agreement on 24.11.2000 during the so-called EU-Western Balkans Summit in Zagreb. Croatia is in the midst of its negotiations with the EU Commission. Albania and possibly Bosnia-Herzegovina will follow soon. And since Bulgaria and Romania are already making progress in the EU accession negotiations and Slovenia is expected to

be among the first new EU members, one can speak of a whole series of important EU "outposts" in the region. The participants of the Zagreb summit, where the new Yugoslav president Kostunica was also presented, came to the conclusion that the victory of the democratic opposition in FRY will give new impetus to the Stability Pact for SEE. Stability in the region with Milosevic in Belgrade was almost impossible. The same was valid for the European perspectives for the region and for solving the task to make the region economically "fit for Europe". That is why the victory of the democratic opposition in FRY created new chances for the success of the Stability Pact and also for the quicker integration of the region into Europe. New perspectives appeared for a more effective conflict prevention and for diminishing the conflict potential in the Balkans. The chances for consolidating Bosnia-Herzegovina are better now, as far as the new leadership in Belgrade demonstrates that it will not support the ultranationalistic forces in Pale. Even the peace prospects for Kosovo are better now, despite the tension in the border districts with South Serbia. The outcome of the local elections in Kosovo is an indication that the majority of the Kosovo Albanians is against radicalism and terrorism. Although a lot of past memories and present day prejudices and tensions still overshadow the relations Belgrade-Pristina, and the process of healing the wounds and reconciliation will take years and even decades, Kostunica and Rugova are the best possible negotiating partners for the years to come.

The new chances for democracy prevailing in the region and for achieving the goals of the Stability Pact are nevertheless intertwined with a number of challenges. The young democracy in Serbia is still fragile and at least a few more years are needed to consolidate it. The democratic forces there have to overcome the traps of the old nomenclature around Milosevic, the nationalism indoctrinated for decades through the propaganda instruments of the old regime, the problems of the interethnic co-existence in the still multiethnic FRY. One of the greatest challenges is the future of the federation and the union with Montenegro. The political will of the Montenegrin government for independence supported by the majority of the population after a democratic and fair referendum should have to be respected whatever the mood in Belgrade is going to be. The international community is going to play a vital role for keeping the process of a new definition of the intrafederal relation, or an eventual partition within the framework of the democratic procedures, not allowing the emotions to prevail. Anyhow this seems much more possible now without Milosevic as the strongman in Belgrade. The challenge of the reconciliation in the Western Balkans gets also new dimensions with the changes in Belgrade. Here a bold Serbian initiative putting the war criminals on trial and co-operating with the war crime tribunal in Den Haag could be a breakthrough.

The reintegration of the FRY into the international community brings new challenges and new chances for the economic reconstruction for the region. Some Stability Pact projects should be redefined to include FRY in them. Some others designed to bypass

the Milosevic's Serbia might be reconsidered. The FRY reintegration brings also some fears throughout the region that Belgrade may become a new favourite of the West and such role might lead to certain negative impacts on the other Balkan countries. These fears should be addressed without hesitation with strong counterarguments in order not to endanger the fragile structure of the regional cooperation processes.

All the new challenges and chances might make a redefinition of the Stability Pact strategy necessary. Then up to now one of the main goals of the Stability Pact, although not defined, was the overthrough of Milosevic, thus paving the way for the democratic transformation of Serbia. The presence of Mr. Milosevic was always a very good excuse for the lacking of enough notable successes in bringing the region closer to Europe. This excuse is not valid anymore and a much more precisely defined strategy concerning the integration into the European structures is necessary. It could be based on the principle of conditionality, but include also a certain time horizon for the European perspectives of the region. Most probably the process of negotiation and conclusion of the Stabilisation and Association Agreements with the EU should be intensified and include the FRY. The region needs more selfresponsibility, which could be stimulated among other factors also by more solidarity on the part of the EU.

Gradually an island of stability is taking shape in traditionally unstable surroundings. It is changing the Balkans, step by step, into a region where European standards and principles of democracy are increasingly taking hold. To make this process irreversible, the EU should step up its engagement in SEE. In the region high hopes are being placed on the forthcoming Stabilisation and Association Agreements and on financial aid under the OBNOVA and PHARE programs, as well as on series of preferential trade agreements providing for asymmetrical liberalisation of trade between the EU and the states in SEE. All these expected steps represent an urgent necessity for the region's crisis-plagued economies. One welcomed development would be more active participation by the EU and its institutions in the mobilisation and coordination of the international community's aid to SEE, including smoother cooperation between the Commission and the Special Co-ordinator for the Stability Pact. The EU could play a leading role in formulating a strategy for the Stability Pact future activities. But such a strategy, with short-, middle-, and long-term goals and also a master plan for the infrastructure of the entire region has yet to emerge. Another important question is not only that of project financing but of project management, especially having in mind the region's rigid bureaucratic structures and corrupt administrations.

The EU should use the Stability Pact more effectively as an instrument of its own policy, to demonstrate the attractiveness of the European perspective to the people of the region. This prospect, with its chances for integration and transformation of the region into an integral part of the European family, is the strongest counter-argument to widespread concept of the nation-state in its 19th century variant that unfortunately has many

adherents in the Balkans. The EU must demonstrate sufficient vision and flexibility in working out a timetable for bringing SEE into the structures of an United Europe. Postponing the process indefinitely could only ruin this attractive prospect.

By all indications, the international presence in SEE will last for decades to come. The military presence of KFOR troops in Kosovo and SFOR troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina remains indispensable for the consolidation of the still fragile peace. The same is valid for the international community's presence in form of the International High Representative for Bosnia-Herzegovina and UNMIK in Kosovo. The international community's task cannot be regarded as finished until the region's postcommunist societies have become open societies that accept the rule of law, provide European-style social welfare, and thus show their ability to preserve and nurture multiethnicity. Until then the international community will need to use the Stability Pact as an instrument for preventing conflict, promoting democracy, and bolstering economic development in SEE. This is why the current phase of the Stability Pact activity, is so important. The Pact must now substantially improve its capacity to take decisions and to act. The EU should play a leading role in working out a successful strategy and coordinating it with the G-8 countries and the NATO. The formulation of priorities should not, as is now the case, lead to a preference for the infrastructure economic projects, which currently consume nearly 80% of all approved funding. No doubt new motorways and bridges are important for the region's future. Even more important however are the new, European-minded men and women who will someday take this future into their own hands. The projects and initiatives of the Stability Pact's first working table-on democratisation and human rights therefore deserve special attention, with the emphasis on higher education and professional training of the future intellectual and professional elites. This is the only way to encourage personal responsibility in society, an essential condition for the success of any integrative strategy for the region. Unfortunately, passive attitudes still dominate in the region. Counteracting them requires the active and equal participation of the countries and societies in SEE in the design and implementation of all initiatives by the international community in the region. Just as important is the creation of a consciousness in which every individual citizen accepts the problems and the challenges of the society and the country as his own. The Stability Pact may encourage such responsibility among societies and individuals in the region thus enabling the truly grand achievement - making SEE an integral part of the European family.

5. The new dangers and the possible answers

The first two years after the Kosovo war were unfortunately not only a success story in bringing the region closer to Europe. A lot of unfulfilled expectations that led to many disillusionments and disappointments throughout the region and a lot of inadequate reaction on the part of the local governments and the international community created a

climate favourable to some crisis elements to appear again showing that every omission in dealing persistently with the regional crisis potential could have grave consequences.

The approach of the KFOR troops – in not a very persistent way - in disarming the UCK formations and dismantling its military structures made possible the accumulation of huge weapons depots in the hands of the most radical UCK commanders. The quite often absence of persecution in case of committed acts of violence against the Serb, or Roma minority nurtured the wrong belief that NATO and KFOR are UCK or Albanian allies. The passive and very reluctant mode of conduct of the KFOR troops, their insufficient numbers in the border areas and the power vacuum in the buffer zone around the Kosovo borders, which remained almost without any KFOR control, allowed a free movement of weapons and military formations into South Serbia and Northern Macedonia. In such a way, UCK created a huge space for military and clandestine (including smuggling) operations covering Kosovo, the areas in South Serbia and Northern and Western Macedonia inhabited by Albanians and the northern part of Albania proper inhabited by Albanian Gegs. In a rural clan society with different parallel structures the strongest influence always gets the organisation with a clear hierarchical military structure and not any loose political party. And this was undoubtedly the UCK and its numerous spin-offs. Within the above mentioned operational space the different UCK formations had a free hand to decide what kind of a strategy to undertake for achieving their goals. Weapons were in abundance, recruits also - due to the huge unemployment rate among the young Albanians and the financial support could be secured through illegal or semilegal deals in the region including the smuggling of goods and people, drug traffic and through the operations of the Albanian Mafia abroad. The short term goals were more or less to retain the influence over the Albanian population and to continue to play a key role in every future negotiation about the status of Kosovo and the neighbouring areas inhabited with Albanians. The middle- and long-term goals were not only the creation of an independent Kosovo, but a design of a much greater scale-Great Kosovo including the Presevo valley with the towns of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja in South Serbia and Northern and Western Macedonia with the city of Tetovo as economic and cultural center of the Albanians living in Macedonia. Not Greater Albania, but Greater Kosovo was the ultimate goal because of the pivotal role played by the Kosovars for the realisation of the Albanian national idea. This situation was misunderstood by the international community, which expected the nationalistic signals to come from Tirana and not from Pristina or Prizren, where actually the Albanian revival started more then a century ago.

The lack of a clear future status for Kosovo could only strengthen the idea that through insurgents' pressure and destabilisation in the areas around Kosovo the international community could be forced to take decisions favourable to the Albanian cause. The instruments for this kind of pressure were two UCK inspired structures the UCPBM (Lib-

eration Army for Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja) in the Presevo valley in South Serbia and UCK(National Liberation Army), which intentionally has the same abbreviation as the Kosovo Liberation Army. The insurgents' actions started on a large scale after the local elections in Kosovo, where the moderates around Ibrachim Rugova achieved a clear victory, indicating that the majority of the Kosovo Albanians is weary from the interethnic hatred and violence and prefer normality. The radicals within the UCK have decided obviously to regain their influence by radicalising the society anew through spectacular actions pretending to defend the rights of the Albanians in South Serbia and Macedonia. The actions were first localised in the Presevo valley alone and moved to Macedonia only after the agreement between NATO and the Yugoslav government, allowing the entry of the Serbian army into the buffer zone, was signed. On a large scale the actions in Macedonia started after the governments in Skopje and Belgrade signed the agreement for the delimitation of the state border between FRY and Macedonia, of which almost 80% make the border between Kosovo and Macedonia. All these developments should have to be understood that the Albanian radicals are not ready to tolerate any move of the international community in direction closer to Belgrade and to the FRY position on the future status of Kosovo. The targets of the policy of radicalisation are twofold. First, the Kosovo Albanian society with the aim to regain the dominant role UCK already had in the aftermath of the war in order to get a better position on the eve of the parliamentary elections in Kosovo. Second, the international community EU and NATO by giving the signal that any policy other then leading to the Kosovo independence and bringing somehow FRY back on the stage could provoke a proliferation of the insurgency involving areas outside Kosovo.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina in the sixth year after the Dayton peace accord was marked with a very dangerous discord within the Muslim-Croatian Federation, which may lead to a grave consequences for the future of the Bosnian state. The firm wish of the Bosnian Croats to leave the Federation structures and of their leader Mr. Jelavic to resign from his post to the Presidency throws the extreme fragile state into a severe political crisis, which endangers its mere existence.

The continuing dispute between Serbia and Montenegro on their eventual separation adds to the somehow gloomy picture of the region in the third year after the Kosovo war. The independence of Montenegro would not surprise anybody and for sure would not provoke any violence or retaliatory measures from Belgrade. The process of nation- and nationstate building on the territory of ex-Yugoslavia should not be reversed just for Montenegro, after all the other former Yugoslav republics realised their national ideas. What annoys the international community are the repercussions that will follow such an act. The Montenegrin independence means the official death of the Yugoslav Federation and will bring for sure a political crisis in Serbia, where the Federal institutions, including the Federal president Kostunica will become obsolete overnight. Serbia will became

a land-locked country and the federal navy might remain docked for indefinite time in the Kotor bay. Montenegro might also go through some convulsions due to the polarisation within the Montenegrin society on the issue of independence. At the end the two parties may define a new federation or confederation where Podgorica and Belgrade shall enjoy equal status. In the meantime the disappearance of the FRY may put the future of Kosovo and probably of Voivodina in a completely different light, and this is what annoys the international community.

What are the answers to the new dangers that started to appear in 2001? If we try to analyse their origin, we should discover surprisingly the same reason that was behind every failure of the international community dealing with the Balkans up to now - the lack of a well-defined common long-term strategy towards the whole region. The war in Kosovo made such a strategy imminent. The Stability Pact is a result of such an approach. But this approach remained predominantly within the EU and concerned mainly the issues of reconstruction and democratisation. NATO took the responsibility for the security dimension and here the regional approach somehow was subordinated to command structures like SFOR and KFOR, territorially restricted with very little coordination with all the other activities outside their activity areas[15]. Almost nothing was done to formulate a new peace order for the region. Hot issues like the future status of Kosovo were postponed for better times. Wrong signals were given like the eventual withdrawal of American troops from Bosnia and Kosovo. False impressions were created among some ethnic groups that they may use the West and NATO against their adversaries for the fulfilment of their nationalistic dreams. The discrepancy between the civic and the military elements of the international community's strategy were not so fatal as far as the power in Belgrade was in the hands of Mr. Milosevic. His presence legitimized the isolation of FRY and the hopes for independent Kosovo and independent Montenegro. But now with the reintegration of Belgrade in the international community there are no evil regimes left. Every issue about the future status of disputed areas like Kosovo should have to be negotiated in a fair and democratic way and not dictated or imposed from above. This is a completely new situation in which there is no more clear division between allies and enemies and some radicals are not willing to accept this new reality. Here the international community, the UN, the NATO and the EU should act with resolute determination in reinstituting law and order, peace and stability in the region. This should be achieved in close cooperation with the countries from the region and the local authorities, but only with the legitimate ones and not the self-imposed or self-proclaimed. All the ethnicities should have to be represented, but with their moderates and not with their radicals. A UN sponsored conference should try to determine the future of Kosovo and provide a solid guarantee for a peaceful ethnic coexistence every-

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15 See also Bodo Hombach: Violence in the Balkans Demands Swifter Response by NATO. in: International Herald Tribune, 13. 3. 2001.

where in the region. A redefined strategy for the new peace order, for stability and for integration in the United Europe, bringing together the civic and the military components, i. e. the Stability Pact with the international military presence, has to be designed by all the countries in the region under the aegis of the EU and NATO with a clear timetable for the European perspective. The implementation of this strategy has to be reviewed every year on an suitable international forum. This is the only framework for a peaceful, stable and prosperous region able to undergo a successful transformation into an integral part of United Europe.

6. The challenges of the transformation

To transform the Balkans into a region fit for EU integration would be a task unparalleled in history. Every comparison with the Marshall plan for Western Europe could only lead to simplification and hardly corresponds to reality.

The Marshall plan aimed at healing the war wounds, combining the post war reconstruction with the society cure, where it was poisoned with the Nazi and fascist ideas, like in Germany or in Italy. But the societies, they are part of the Western civilisations, with developed market economies and thus able to get rid of their social retardation quite successfully. On the Balkans due to the centuries of old isolation from the mainstream of the European civilisation, especially in some parts of the Western Balkans, due to the heritage of some of the most brutal communist regimes in the world and the period of anarchy after the collapse of the communist state structures, and last but not least due to the several bloody wars, that followed the collapse of ex-Yugoslavia, the West is facing a completely different situation. A region, or at least a part of it , has to be catapulted into the 21st century after having remained predominantly in an everlasting 19th century. And the appropriate terminology for some of the tasks laying ahead is not aid but therapy. Therapy for the evils of nationalism, ethnic and religious intolerance and hatred, therapy for the evils of the social retardation, of the mentality of Balkan provincialism, therapy for the poverty and the precapitalistic economic structures. But all this means that the Stability Pact, in order to succeed, has to be not predominantly a stabilisation strategy, but a definitive integration strategy, for bringing the whole region step by step into the mainstream of the European civilisation, i. e. into the United Europe. Anything short of a full integration strategy is doomed to fail, with catastrophic consequences not only for the region, but also for the whole of Europe.

The period of time after the war in Kosovo has indicated already how difficult getting closer to all indicated aims is going to be. The typical change of roles between the victim and oppressor seems to repeat itself again with the dreadful logic, everybody expected to be eliminated forever with this final war - as many thought in the Balkans. But even the impressive KFOR presence could not succeed to break for now this vicious

circle, endangering the very essence of the concept for establishing a multiethnic, peaceful and democratic Kosovo. Under the present circumstances such a Kosovo where Albanians, Serbs, Roma and all other ethnic groups were supposed to live in harmony and cooperation under the UN rule, setting an example for the whole of South Eastern Europe, seems to be almost as far from realisation, as in Kosovo under Serbian rule. This situation brings some experts to suggest, that probably an ethnic separation until the emotions cool, is preferable, than the actual development, by which a monoethnic Kosovo will inevitably come into existence. A temporary ethnic partition may lead to a de facto partition of the province, but will preserve its multiethnic character, leaving open the chance, that at a later moment after enough time for the healing of the war wounds has passed, an attempt for an ethnic reconciliation could be made again, this time probably with more success, is the line of thinking of these experts.

Such an approach will be a pragmatic one, resembling very much the present Bosnian situation and having in mind, that ethnic hatred just after an interethnic war is so dominant, that only a temporary separation of the warring parties could prevent revenge and thus further bloodsheds. But pragmatism is hardly the only answer to the initial setbacks seeming to be inevitable in this unique post-war peace process. Because there is a possibility, that it could lead to another setback connected with the beneficiaries from the partition of the Kosovo - the radicals within both ethnic groups. The radical fraction in the UCK retains its influence despite the fact that the UCK was transformed in the so-called Kosovo Defence Corps (KDC). Its influence is substantial also within UCK-established parallel power structures all over Kosovo. Thus the UNMIK administration has hardly any other choices, but to cooperate or to relay on these structures, even after the local elections where the moderate Albanian politicians were victorious, remained nevertheless with a limited power leverage. In the foreseeable future the UCK structures may transform themselves into a predominantly political party structure. However, the temptations of the power may lead quite well into their transformation into a parallel administration with its own legal and police functions. If the UN administration tries to curtail these functions with the help of the KFOR, then the UCK or its successor may go into semilegality, preserving its authority over the fate of its fellow citizens, beyond any external control. Such a development would inevitably strengthen the radical fraction. Its power and influence leverage would be even greater, if the ethnic separation has already occurred. In such a case the UNMIK and KFOR will have the extremely difficult task to tame a much more radicalised UCK. With this possibility as an option, than the chances for UCK to transform itself into a normal political organisation, trying to achieve its political goals through political means, are may-be greater under the situation of Kosovo ethnically unpartitioned. Otherwise the UCK or KDC could mutate into a very dangerous enemy, who is going to try to get rid of a foreign impostor blocking the way towards the Kosovo independence.

7. A difficult peace

The developments since the end of the war in Kosovo indicate, that the international community has failed so far to achieve the main goal for going into war at all - the emergence of a peaceful, democratic and multiethnic Kosovo and a peaceful and stable region. But was it realistic to expect in a matter of a few years ethnic tolerance to prevail there, where for the last decade nothing besides the ethnic conflict has dominated the relations between Serbs and Albanians? Hardly any expert from the region has expected a miracle to occur. For the region a matter of concern is not the continuation for some time of the interethnic violence - it was more or less expected, but the level of the Western engagement. Many local experts and politicians fear, that a disappointed West may abandon the great design of the Stability Pact and minimise its efforts only to preserve a kind of truce in the province. Disappointment usually comes from too high expectations. And high expectations are more or less a product of a false evaluation and unfounded optimism based on an inadequate expertise about the region.

Kosovo may become such a case. Here the task is to avoid the mistakes made in Bosnia, to avoid the ethnic separation at any price and to press for multiethnic Kosovo. But there are few parallels and many more differences between Bosnia and Kosovo. One should not forget, that Bosnia-Herzegovina(BiH) was already a multiethnic entity, especially the big cities like Sarajevo. In Bosnia-Herzegovina the language barrier did not exist at all. Serbo-Croat was the common language and the confessional differences seemed almost suppressed in the communist society of pre-1991 Yugoslavia. The war showed how fragile that sort of a multiethnic society is. Nothing similar ever existed in Kosovo. There were two parallel monoethnic societies, with different languages, confessions and cultures and almost without any contact besides the unavoidable due to the coexistence in a common administrative unit. One ethnic group - the Serbs were dominant, although only a minority in terms of a population. The other - the Kosovo Albanians were driven at the periphery of the social life, encapsulated themselves, setting up even their own education system. Downgraded to the role of a second rate population, the Kosovo Albanians step by step alienated themselves from the state, whose citizens they were.

The war and the ethnic cleansing criss-crossed finally any hope for a common future of Serbs and Albanians within the FRY. To establish a multiethnic society based on democratic principles in Kosovo after the war will be an enormous task, for which not only a strong commitment on part of the international community will be needed, but also a great deal of responsibility, repentance and forgiveness on the part of both ethnic groups. Having in mind the failure up to now to move decisively forward on the same task in Bosnia, where compared to Kosovo, as it seemed, much more factors in favour were present, we have to look closer at the reasons for it. The de facto partition of BiH

in the Muslim-Croat federation and in Republika Srpska actually undermined the future of the united and multiethnic BiH. In the partitioned BiH, it was easier for SFOR to secure the peace, but the political elites in the respective parts of the country, become reluctant to share power and financial assistance otherwise but on ethnical bases. The creation of two separate administrations additionally deepened the ethnic partition, adding new obstacles for its elimination.

Obviously the same might happen with Kosovo. Here the stake is even greater, because the war was fought for a democratic and multiethnic alternative to the Serbian dominated province. A failure would be hardly justified, because it would be the equivalent of a defeat. That is why any partition on ethnic bases, any creation of ethnic enclaves, how seductive it is going to appear for easing the interethnic tensions, would diminish substantially the chances for achieving the goal, for which the operation "Allied Force" started.

But is the present situation so desperate, that an ethnic separation in the form of establishing militarily protected enclaves for the local Serbs, looks unavoidable? In the power vacuum after the pull-out of the Serbian forces and the return of the Albanian refugees, some increase of the violence based on revenge seemed unavoidable. The majority of the Serbs living in Kosovo fled fearing the wrath of their Albanian neighbours, because they knew quite well, what was done to them after 1989 and especially after the beginning of the "Allied Force" operation. We should also take into account the intention on the part of the radicals within the KLA to create a more or less Serb-free Kosovo. The engagements of the international community in Kosovo, the effective role of the UN administration, the KFOR military presence and the post-war reconstruction will for sure create a totally new atmosphere in which the interethnic cooperation should become a necessity for the sake of the common future of all ethnic groups and may-be a norm of interethnic behaviour. In such a case the fears of the ethnic Serbs would be eliminated and there would be no obstacles for them to return back to their homes in Kosovo. The process of ethnic reconciliation may even become easier for the smaller numbers of other ethnic groups. Thus Kosovo, where the prerequisites for the creation of a multiethnic society were on a lesser scale then in BiH, might move quicker towards the proclaimed goal and even become an example for BiH.

Again lessons should be learnt from the situation in Bosnia and may be the passage of the legislative and executive powers to the local administration, should be linked to the success in the interethnic understanding. The transfer of some functions to the local political elites is desirable, but one should not forget, that this transfer, without outside control, increases the prospects for corruption and misuse of international funds, as the case of BiH has shown. Probably all vital elements of the local governance should remain in the hands of UNMIK as long as a normal environment free of excessive corruption is created. Priority in the initial stages should be given to the healing of the war

wounds, bringing those, who committed war crimes before the International War Crimes Tribunal and rehabilitation of all war victims. Bringing the Kosovo Albanians and the Kosovo Serbs together in the different tasks concerning the return of the province to normality, making them to feel, that sharing responsibilities for the future of Kosovo is better and reasonable, than fighting each other forever, letting them to understand, that this possible future is the only alternative to the present day mess, and last but not least to support and engage the moderates and try to isolate and marginalize the radicals and the extremists would be a major contribution to the emergence of a democratic, multiethnic Kosovo.

The same is valid also for Macedonia. Being the success story in the transition from a Yugoslav republic to an independent state, Macedonia was given as an example for a multiethnic society, offering participation in power on the local and the government level to its large Albanian minority (about 30% of the population). The crisis from spring 2001 in which Albanian insurgents attacked the second largest Macedonian city Tetovo came as a surprise for many who took the statistical data for a sufficient proof for a well functioning multiethnic state and interpreted the UCK actions as an outside attempt to destabilise the country. For sure in Macedonia the interethnic coexistence was advanced to a level unprecedented else in the Western Balkans. But even there in a country with five ministers from Albanian origin, the Albanians considered themselves as discriminated and raised unanimously the demand for constitutional changes allowing them to become the second state-constituting nation. With a huge unemployment rate and few chances for a state servant or a military career, the young Albanians in Macedonia became an easy target for the radical slogans of the UCK. The traditional political parties of the Albanian minority were already considered as corrupt and they lost almost every influence especially among the young. So the radicalisation was not unexpected and to reverse it, the whole Macedonian society needs a sober review of its record of minority integration and interethnic tolerance, a redefinition of the framework for ethnic coexistence and a lot of help from the international community.

8. Beyond the ethnic partition

Multiethnic Kosovo is the optimistic version of the possible provincial development. But if the interethnic violence could not be stopped, if it increases in the case the remaining Serbs start to retaliate, then it could be quite realistic not to exclude the implementation of some form of ethnic separation. The ethnic partition is always presented at the beginning as a temporary solution. It actually diminishes the interethnic violence and becomes the preferable outcome for the outside trouble-shooters. At the end the ground for the interethnic violence is more or less eliminated, but what about the conflict potential?

Following the patterns of the ethnic partition, we could expect to get Kosovo predominantly controlled by the Kosovo Albanians with some Serbian inhabited enclaves under the protection of the KFOR troops. Very few interethnic contacts are possible under such circumstances and a monoethnic Albanian entity would become a reality quite soon, aspiring to get all the necessary attributes of an independent state. An independent Kosovo will come into existence hardly waiting for the consent of the international community. With such a precedent, keeping the Republika Srpska within BiH would be hardly possible, keeping in mind, that Pale even now is under the jurisdiction of BiH only on paper.

The fragmentation under the slogan of the temporary ethnic partition might go further, then how the further existence of Montenegro as part of the FRY could be argumented. In case of a quite possible interethnic conflict in Sandjak, or in Voivodina, again the interethnic partition could become the easier solution. And again, a successful development in Kosovo - from the Albanian point of view - could trigger similar attempts on the part of the Albanians living in Macedonia. An interethnic partition could be pursued in Western Macedonia, where the ethnic Albanians are a majority. Even the Eastern part of the Balkans, less endangered by ethnic tension now, might be infected by the partition virus. Ethnic Turks in North East and South Bulgaria, ethnic Hungarians in Transsilvania, Romania might also prefer the ethnic partition instead of the interethnic co-existence. The fragmentation based on ethnic lines is a known phenomenon in the region and is called with a term loaded with a very negative meaning - i. e. balkanisation.

Thus ethnic partition, even as a temporary measure might lead to a new spiral of balkanisation, creating no ethnic peace, but a new ground for revenge and interethnic wars. Because hardly anybody could imagine that the nation-states in which the process of ethnic self-determination is going to start, would remain passive in front of a possible fragmentation and dismemberment. And how the international community is going to take the role of the arbitrator, deciding which ethnic group has the right to secede. Of course Kosovo is a special case with unique characteristics and an eventual development there towards independence does not mean automatically that the same is going to happen all over the Balkans, where ethnic minorities exist. Nevertheless the international community should not give up prematurely, before every alternative at hand is not explored in order to avoid the creation of a quite dangerous precedent. It would be interesting to look, who is the most fervent advocate of the ethnic partition in Kosovo. This is the regime in Belgrade, which could benefit a lot from any step diminishing the chance for the emergence of a multiethnic Kosovo.

It could be concluded, that the option of the ethnic separation, how safe and pragmatical it seems to be, is not the solution for the region, that could lead to interethnic peace and integrity. Very tempting with its chances for initial success by keeping the adversaries apart, it would become counterproductive in the middle- and in the long-term. The

great dangers are connected not only with the possible trend of a further balkanisation, but also with the almost impossible task to reverse the process of ethnic partition once started. To avoid the expected retaliation steps and a new surge of interethnic animosity, a substantial increase in the international military presence should become a necessity, so that the even more fragile peace in the region will be preserved.

A glance at the eventual new political map drawn on ethnic lines might produce a geopolitical nightmare - several protectorates kept from becoming independent states, or joining their neighbours only by force - Kosovo, Western Macedonia, Montenegro, Republika Srpska, minority inhabited regions with ethnic tension - Sandjak, Voivodina in FRY, potentially unstable regions with mixed populations - Transsilvania in Romania, Northeast and South Bulgaria, Northern Greece. Such a possible development could initiate the end of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and the beginning of an extremely turbulent phase, in which the West should be compelled to keep a substantial military force on the Balkans for an indefinite period of time.

The other option - preserving the multiethnic character of the region by encouraging the interethnic understanding especially there where the conflict potential is at its highest - in the Western Balkans, has inevitably experienced initial setbacks. The drive for revenge fuels even more the interethnic tensions. It seems, that there will be no end of the vicious circle of the everlasting change of roles between victims and oppressors. That is why the ethnic partition seems to be the logical escape from this mess. But the lessons of history are teaching us, that ethnic separation has created no stability on the Balkans. Actually the drive to create more or less ethnic homogeneous states by expelling ethnic minority groups, like the expatriation of the Greek population from Asia minor in Turkey, or by the so-called exchange of population, like the agreement between Bulgaria and Greece, have contributed to a lesser interethnic tension inside the respective countries, but unfortunately have not eliminated the hostility among them. The desired stability was never reached and the memory of the repatriation was kept alive to nourish revenge feelings. such feelings might bring states quite close to war, as the Greek-Turkish relationship has proved. Additionally ethnic partition created a fait accompli ready to be defended with every means by the winning side, thus making every attempt for a reversal an extremely risky adventure.

If we are going to learn something from the sad Balkan history, we should try to avoid the repetition of the old mistakes and stop looking for easy solutions. There are no easy solutions for the Balkans and one of the most difficult ones for the local peoples, but also for the international community, is the urge to preserve the multiethnic character in the conflict-torn parts of the region. It is almost an enormous task for places like Kosovo, where the memories of the ethnic cleansing are so fresh and vivid and the wish for revenge so almighty. But retreating from this task the international community retreats from the principles for which the war was fought.

The end of the vicious circle of ethnic hatred is to be achieved for sure not by separating the main protagonists and then guarding this separation, but by helping them to undergo the long and difficult process of healing the wounds, reconciliate and rediscover each other as participants of a common strategy to rebuild their common home. Aiming at a common future and sharing this common future is may-be the best antidote against the poison of the ethnic hatred. And this common future should be designed by the different ethnic groups in close cooperation with each other under the aegis of the international community institutions engaged with the post-war reconstruction. Certainly not an easy venture, that would meet a lot of obstacles, mobilise a lot of enemies and undergo a lot of setbacks. But the only venture with a chance to create a completely new environment for interethnic coexistence Kosovo, able to serve as a model for the other parts of the conflict-torn Western Balkans. To be successful this venture should have as a final goal a perspective, that could be acceptable to all ethnic groups and is in a position to moti-vate them strongly enough so they could ignore all old and present arguments in their interethnic disputes.

It is clear, that an independent Albanian dominated Kosovo, or a Kosovo partitioned on ethnic lines, or a partition in Macedonia could not be such goal, because they will be considered as a victory for the one or for the other side. Victories in an interethnic con-flict are always preludes for revenge pursued by the losing side.

Undisputedly the only goal, the only perspective, that could be common for all ethnic groups on the Balkans is the integration into the EU. And the new model for interethnic coexistence could be presented to all ethnic groups there, as one of the preliminary stages, as "conditio sine qua non" for reaching this goal. In the case of Kosovo this aim only could bring the Kosovo Albanians and the Kosovo Serbs together, by having stronger attraction to both of them, than the different aspects of the interethnic hatred and belligerence. The European perspective is the only one having also a civilizatory effect, by imposing certain norms of behaviour, as a precondition for moving closer to the EU. In this aspect Kosovo is the greatest challenge for the international community, but also its greatest chance.

The emergence of democratic and multiethnic Kosovo will take years, even decades and would not be safe from failures and setbacks. No decisive breakthrough is going to hap-pen until both ethnic communities do not discover a common goal, that might bring them together around the idea of a common future for them within multiethnic Kosovo. Such a goal and such an idea are absent now, most probably they will remain absent also in the next few years. But they have the chance to emerge along with the successes in the post-war reconstruction, in the infrastructural reshaping of the whole region, in the maturing of the young democracies. The feeling of belonging to a society built ac-cording to the European standards and the improving chances to become one day an integral part of the United Europe might get stronger and stronger than the ethnic hatred

stemming from the past. And the rational calculation, that only as a democratic and multiethnic society, rather than as a monoethnic second Albanian state, or an ethically partitioned protectorate, the Kosovo inhabitants could one day become EU citizens, could turn into a major boost behind the idea of Kosovo united, multiethnic and democratic.

9. Selfresponsibility is the key

The international military presence in the Western Balkans, i. e. in BiH, Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia, the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe with its perspectives for economic reconstruction and European integration, the stronger and permanent engagement of the international community create a totally new, favourable environment for a peaceful and prosperous future development. However it would be hardly unrealistic to expect, that the Western presence and engagements could lead to some kind of a social engineering, that might create miracles and transform in a matter of several years the Balkans into a multiethnic paradise. The Western presence would most probably succeed to divert the most dangerous trends in the multiethnic relations, would help decisively in the economic reconstruction, support democracy to catch hold in the region. But it could not stop or drastically alter the nation- and nationstate building process in the Western Balkans already gaining strength. What could be done, is to make it much more civilised and less painful for the different ethnic groups. To expect that the West could once more impose any solution on the Balkans, without the consent of the local peoples, by using some modern version of the stick and carrot policy, would be a grave miscalculation with no less grave consequences. What the international community might do, is to try to bring this process under control, to try to block the already traditional excesses of the region and to propose some alternatives, impossible and unthinkable under the previous circumstances. The final decision will be taken however by the citizens themselves, adhering this time, hopefully, to the principles of the liberal democracy. It would be a long time until liberal democracy could emerge in this region, but only at such a stage free citizens might decide freely and with responsibility on their own future. And only the awakening of the selfresponsibility together with the maturity of the young democracies could turn the local societies into equal partners of the international community.

So it should not be a surprise, if the Kosovo Albanians refuse to be citizens of the FRY anymore, be it the FRY under the present regime, or in the post-Milosevic stage, being already alienated from this state in the most brutal way. The world should respect their preference, if it is expressed according to the democratic rules and provides full guarantees for all the other ethnic groups living in Kosovo. And vice versa, countries, which provide all rights and liberties for their citizens, including the ethnic minorities, should be encouraged in their endeavour and protected against any secession threats, coming

from ethnic parties, clans, or organisations operating in the grey zone between legality and crime.

This should be the case with Macedonia, where the ethnic balance between the Christian and the Muslim population is already subject for concern for the Macedonian Slavs, but the model of interethnic co-existence provides for the full participation and integration of all ethnic groups, including the Albanians, in the country's political and economic life.

The same would be valid also for BiH, if the establishment of the multiethnic and ho-mogeneous state is going to succeed and the majority of the local population belonging to the three different ethnic groups favours such trends, with the exception of some ultra radicals. Because further fragmentation means further balkanisation, the appearance of smaller and smaller entities, which could hardly survive economically and politically, but are in a position to add additional conflict potential in the already turbulent region.

The post-war months on the Balkans have once more demonstrated how difficult it is to break the vicious circle of the legacy of the past and to divert the huge inertia of centu-ries of retarded development and of isolation from the mainstream of the European civi-lisation. But for the first time in the long and tragic Balkan history the strategy for bringing peace and stability, for reaching prosperity and interethnic understanding, for establishing civil societies and turning the region into an integral part of United Europe is at hand. And the steering mechanism for this strategy - the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe is also at hand. The final success of this unparalleled endeavour depend on many factors. But two of them would play the key role. The resolution of the interna-tional community to go on with the implementation of the Stability Pact, despite all the hardships and traps and the responsibility on the part of the regional societies by taking the integrative strategy of the Stability Pact as their own priority. Only acting hand in hand the international community and the new regional democracies are in a position to secure the new, bright future for the region – its European future.

Zentrum für Europäische Integrationsforschung
Center for European Integration Studies
Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn