

7. The Harmonisation Tendency towards NATO in Southeast Europe - the Bulgarian Point of View

I Introduction

I will draw the attention to the fact that Southeast Europe needs a comprehensive approach in order to overcome the problems and to achieve long-lasting stability to ensure peace, security, prosperity and development of the region as an indivisible part of the European continent.

The promotion of security and stability and the improvement of its crisis management capabilities are the main goals of the countries in Southeast Europe. Facing the new requirements to operate and co-operate effectively and to be better prepared for the future security challenges, the countries from this region have set new patterns of partnership fostering the process of Euro-Atlantic integration. An effective stimulating and practical tool to achieve regional stability and closer co-operation could become the development of readiness and capability to prevent crises and co-operate in regional crisis management.

A common Partnership Goal, with the support and expertise of NATO, is to be established and an adequate network to “warn” in due time, co ordinate and in case of emergency Pool and focus the needed forces and resources has to be built.

II Euro-Atlantic Values

The Southeast European Co-operation Process (accepted at the last NATO Summit in Washington as contributing to the Alliance’s effort to enhance regional security) can be viewed as one of the main existing high level regional crisis management forums. It proves and gives the backbone to implement in practice the determination of the leaders in the SEECF to further consolidate the co-operation so that the Euro-Atlantic values of peace, democracy, prosperity and respect for Human rights take root in Southeast Europe.

In that respect NATO deserves high appreciation in providing the general security framework for peace and stability-building activities in the region. Particular importance should be attached to the increased co-operation with NATO on security matters in the region, by participating in its specific mechanisms such as the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the Partnership for Peace Program and the Consultative Forum on Security Matters launched by the Alliance following its Washington Summit.

I would like to underline the importance of the dialogue on the ways and means to improve co-ordination and synergy of activities and resources dedicated to regional defence and security co-operation with a view to enhancing the contribution of participating states to security and stability in Southeast Europe.

New opportunities for the region have emerged with the important and timely NATO SEE Initiative and the development of the Stability Pact process. Without doubt, implementation of the Pact’s objectives will rely on already existing frameworks for co-operation avoiding unnecessary duplication of efforts. Valuable and highly commended is the role of the Southeast European Defence Ministerial for the security dimension of our countries’ co-operation.

Taking into consideration the commonality of the security challenges in our region, the necessity of finding flexible common mechanisms for their neutralisation has emerged as a leading priority. The establishment of the Multinational Peace Force in South Eastern Europe (MPFSEE) is a bench mark in this respect. The political grounds, incentives and goals of the States-Parties to the Agreement on the MPFSEE are clearly stated by themselves in the preamble of the Agreement. It is explicitly declared that political-military co-operation is a key element in strengthening the European capabilities in the fields of security and defence. It is important to bear in mind that the states as well as the parties have declared their commitment to enhance interoperability based on NATO standards and to the regional security and stability, and commitment to foster good neighbourly relations among the countries of Southeast Europe in the context of the Southeast Europe Defence Ministerial (SEDM) process and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) in the spirit of Partnership for Peace (PfP). The role and the significance of the MPFSEE in the political decision making process in Southeast Europe is probably most clearly revealed by the mechanism for political and military consultations, exchange information and decision making, provided for in the Agreement itself.

III Priority Interest

An important area of priority interest which should be pointed out is the regional co-operation in the field of civil-military emergency planning and disaster relief. The development of an integrated approach to crisis management and the improvement of awareness of potential problems are key issues of crisis prevention.

We need more harmonised efforts to:

- Develop a maximum degree of publicity and public knowledge on civil military activities related to crisis management.
- Institutionalise information exchange within Southeast Europe on military reform issues.
- Harmonise education - prepare the required manpower to accomplish both Alliance's new missions and collective defence, as well as be able to operate in multinational staffs following NATO procedures. Special emphasis should be given to professional and language training for the needs of the Services, and for working a multinational environment.
- Establish a crisis management information network system and develop mechanisms and procedures for action in possible crises situations.
- An important and essential area for the co-operating countries could be meeting NATO standards in the field of security through legislative adaptation and institutional development of mechanisms for the protection of classified information.

Some of the key considerations in weighing these options are their burden-sharing implications. And burden-sharing should be understood broadly to comprise not only direct costs but also benefits.

A major contribution to the stability is to identify together the risks and challenges, streamline the assessments, create the necessary regional and partnership objective awareness of problems, ensure common understanding, use and implement unified doctrines and terms, promote and back up co Operation efforts and foster a co-operative attitude by the International organisations and NGOs.

IV Conclusion

For Bulgaria membership in NATO is a strategic priority and a definite choice. In regional terms the priorities of Bulgaria's policy focus on enhancing relations with all countries in Southeast Europe with a view to further security and confidence building, and envisage active involvement in the processes of SEE integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

To conclude my remarks, I would like to stress and underline that the new European security architecture cannot be successfully established without laying proper grounds in the Southeast part of the continent.

Avgustina TZVETKOVA
Secretary General
Atlantic Association of Young Political Leaders