

Strengthening of the Balkan Civil Society: The Role of the NGOs in International Negotiations

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Preface

Civil society building-up in Bulgaria as well as in the other countries of the Balkans is a process of adapting their social life and organisation to the changed economic, political and cultural environment at the beginning of the 90s of this century in Eastern and Central Europe and in the world in general. The construction and stabilization of the Bulgarian civil society cannot be separated from the broader and encompassing process of extending the European and Euroatlantic Civic Space eastwards. This holds true also for the other Balkan countries.

These developments can hardly be treated out of the context of a changing security environment. Global, regional, sub-regional, national and societal security is influenced and strongly influences the processes of civil society building-up and of the eastward extension of the Civic Space in Europe. Existing security communities in Europe and the Euroatlantic area create strong incentives of converging an expected stability zone as Central and Southeastern Europe is going to be and the local civil societies. The very progress of the civil societies in the region, including the Balkans, will strongly shape the security environment of Europe at the end of the present and the beginning of the next centuries.

If civil societies are not developed and the Civil Space – not widened in Central/Eastern Europe, a complex and volatile security situation may develop and unpredictability eventually get the upper hand with more and greater risks and threats endangering the area.

In these circumstances the non-governmental organisations (the NGOs) and their potential for international negotiations turn to be useful factors of diminishing the entropy and unpredictability of the regional security situation. Of course many other positive factors could influence these processes. This Research Study aims at displaying the role NGOs dealing with security and international studies in the Balkans and about the Balkans may have in creating the prerequisites of a Southeastern European security community - a complex indicator of the progress of the construction of the national and regional civil societies. A specific instrument of developing these prerequisites is the participation of NGOs, specialized in security and international issues in the international negotiation processes that may lead to a stronger Balkan security community and civil society.

The Institute for Security and International Studies in Sofia is persistent in its efforts to find out and formulate post-Cold War sources of improving the security of Bulgaria, the Balkans, Europe and the world. The correlation of civil societies, security communities, NGOs and their participation in international negotiations in the field of security and international relations is certainly one of these sources and one of the research ambitions of the present Study.

Motivating NGOs, dealing with security and international studies in becoming more active in their expert efforts of improving the Balkan security situation is another practical aim of this Study. The construction of a Balkan security community and civil society is a realistic target of cooperation of NGOs in and outside the region, especially those making researches in the field of security and international relations.

Outlining the specific impacts the processes of international negotiations get by participating NGOs as actors in the Balkan civil society and security community building-up is the third aim of the Research Study.

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I BALKAN CIVIL SOCIETY: THE ASPECT OF SECURITY

1. Civil Society: the Notion and the Geographic Structural Levels

"Civil society" is a broadly used term with not yet precisely and commonly fixed contents. It seems an acceptable notion can be the understanding of civil society as a pacified community of human beings, organised and regulated by the norms of civility, civilization, tolerance and to a varying and historically developing degree – of justness. Modernity, culture and diversity are both highly appreciated and stimulated in civil societies and democracy evolves both in procedural, formal sense, and substantively.

Civil society is the non-political-power part of society in general. It is characterized by its free citizens, private property and its subjects, free market that does not deviate neither to central planning nor to unrestrained economic adventurousness. Social and political pluralism, a measured state regulation of social affairs, freedom of the press and the other media, respect and guarantee of the "rules of the game" of the democratic society,

dominated by the rule of the law, nourishing diversity of opinion in an effort to optimize evolution of society are also basic features of what is used to be called "civil society".

Experts dealing with the issues of "civil society" underline the non-contradictory nature of the relationship between civil society and the state. Both of them are indispensable prerequisites of the modern civilized society. They channel the realization of the private and the public interests respectively. The principles of democracy apply simultaneously on the individual citizen, on civil society and on the state. Civil society reflects the existence of certain values that are basic for democracy and freedom.

Thanks to the rule of law civil society bears the potential of practical realization and overcoming the danger of being politicized. The democratic state guarantees a legal approach and solution of every social conflict in the ultimate resort. A broad range of peaceful regulating tools short of being legal are at the disposal of the civil society. Unlike it the legal state tends to develop legal solutions to as broad range of social issues as possible.

The dialectics of civil society and the democratic state display two peculiarities at the end of this and the beginning of the next centuries: first, accentuating the social security aspects of human life and, second, adapting to the requirements of the information age, including to the need of greater transparency, confidence and utilizing various sources of knowledge for the purposes of regional security.

Civil society is not an ideal, which once reached may be treated as achieved for ever. It needs to be developed and even fought for persistently and constantly. There is no such real society that has constructed and guaranteed the eternity of its civil society if sufficient efforts are not invested to preserve and develop its achievements.

Part of the very civil societies and a source of their "life-support system" is the multitude of voluntary, non-governmental associations and organisations. They help shaping much of the life of society with little or no participation of the government. They are specialized in various activities and ways of solving the hard issues of the society and the state. Certainly one of these hot areas of NGOs' support has become the security one: national, sub-regional, regional and global.

While the historic evolution has led to the appearance of islands of civil societies all over the globe, the issue bears a tendency of regionalization as well as of globalization. Though not framed in short historic periods the tendency is persistently making its difficult way through a lot of problems.

For example, the Balkans today are characterized by the drive to civil society building-up in all the countries of the peninsula on a national basis – some with a longer record, others – just beginning, each with a specific culture, religion, language and history. Despite the various differences in the Balkan countries the future of the region is already shaped greatly because of the similarities in the civil society ideal and present efforts of its realization.

Because of the interconnectedness of the Balkan history the present developments also tend to be influenced on a neighbour-to-neighbour and on a regional bases. Obviously the national and the regional tendencies may be either mutually reinforcing or interblocking. Due to the specific way the transformation of the international system was reflected on the Balkans the security factor turned to be crucial for the further national and regional progress of the civil society building-up. For this very reason the broader geographic influences of the civil society evolution also assumed the feature of a key factor in the stabilization or destruction of the national and the regional tendencies.

Very much like the other countries of Central Europe the civil society building-up in the Balkans needs a positive interaction with the Civic Space of Western Europe and the Euroatlantic region in general, involving with the Russian space that moves in the same direction. This necessity is an important factor of understanding the peculiarities of the security relations in the area too. For example, democratic values, their genuine social interpretation by the newly developing civil societies have turned to be as important for regional security as the evolution of the national security concepts, military doctrines and their regional interactions.

The individual initiative and participative energy the NGOs in the Balkan region embody are becoming more important in the efforts of overcoming apathy, weariness, social fatigue, disillusionment of the prolonged conflicts and the social and economic crises. No doubt, this is a practical contribution to the improvement of regional security.

2. The Balkan Civil Society and the Construction of a Regional Security Community

The specific case of the Balkan civil society building-up is stemming from its dual dependence: first, on the national civil societies' inputs into the regional one and, second, on the peaceful evolution of the regional security situation and the formation of a Balkan security community of nations.

The first, internal, national societal source of building-up the Balkan civil society is certainly a basic feature of the democratic evolution of each country in the region.

The second, international source of the process of constructing the civil society is a reflection of the state of the progress in the security interrelationships in the area and their impact on the more general regional social developments. One should admit that it is not easy to attract social attention with abstract ideas as future Balkan civil society and Balkan security community are, especially in a region, burdened with national, ethnic and religious prejudices. Nevertheless it is worth working for their gradual realization. The alternative will be intensified instability, continued fragmentation and renewed violence.

In the beginning of the 60s Karl Deutsch defined the security community as "a group which has become integrated, where integration is defined as a sense of community, accompanied by formal or informal institutions or practices, sufficiently strong and widespread to assure peaceful change among members of a group with reasonable certainty over a long period of time" [1]. There is not too much literature on this issue [2], though there is an agreement among the experts that the Atlantic Alliance, the European Union and the group of Scandinavian countries in the Nordic Council form security communities.

Most characteristic of the member countries of the security community is that the use of military force is unthinkable and inapplicable in case of a dispute among them [3]. In the Spring of 1991 a group of Bulgarian and Danish scholars discussed the experience of the Nordic Council, however, the idea there might exist the possibility of building-up a security community in the Balkans seemed either remote or a political fiction. The years after showed the construction of an all-European security community is a political goal of leading powers and security institutions in Europe and the world, and its Balkan aspect is becoming a clearer political task for those that are already integrated or would join the EU, WEU and NATO.

The security community is a realistic political concept, giving brighter perspectives, though requiring the realization of many pre-conditions if to be successful [4]. The very process of adaptation and realization of the requirements assures the individual actors having interests in the Balkan region with a common practical political programme for action. Each of the pre-conditions is necessary, but the goal of creating the security community can be reached only in the case that they interact with all the others. The pre-conditions seem to be the following:

First, compatibility of the values of the societies and states in the group. Compatibility of values has a special meaning when shared by the politicians, who take the most responsible political decisions. There can hardly be any doubts the progress of democracy and freedom, including the evolution and activity of the free associations and non-governmental organizations is an important indicator of the development of the process.

Second, acquiring mutual predictability in the behaviour of the decision-makers of the individual countries. A factor that might positively influence confidence and predictability in the political field is the promotion of the role and implementing the principles of international negotiations. The very approach towards hard regional issues through dialogue, negotiations, involving existing governmental and non-governmental expertise to improve stability and the security situation in general would practically stimulate the process of building-up a Balkan civil society.

Third, democratization of the societies of the member states of the community. Strong civil societies are an essential pre-condition of the community's efficiency. The national criteria for attaining democracy and developing civil societies do not differ from R. Dahl's "procedural minimal conditions": inclusive citizenship; rule of law; separation of powers; elected power-holders; free and fair elections; freedom of expression and alternative sources of information; associational autonomy, and civilian control over the security forces [5].

Fourth, good communication. It brings mutual understanding of the countries. Free movement of people, goods, capital and services and limiting illegal migration are significant requirements for the countries of the community. A specific aspect of the issue is upgrading the degree of responsiveness among the governments, which should react to all acts of cooperation with readiness to communicate. Another important factor for improving the communication is the development of a qualitatively different information environment, including on security issues. The good-neighbourly relations, stability, security and cooperation as stated in the Sofia Declaration of the Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Countries of South Eastern Europe [6] need to be supported by a permanently functioning system of information exchange on defence and national security issues.

Confidence-building measures may be strongly improved if new and active regional players as the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) dealing with international and security studies contribute to diminishing the level of unpredictability in the regional interrelationships through their expertise.

Fifth, economic growth. The economic guarantees of security in the framework of the community are the solid foundation of all the other aspects. The area, especially Bulgaria, strongly needs fair compensations by the international community for the heavy losses suffered from the UN embargo regime imposed on new Yugoslavia during the conflict in Bosnia and Hertzegovina.

Sixth, existence of core areas for the community. The question is about well-developed politico-administrative systems, consisting of a country or a group of countries, playing a key role in the developing integration processes. Developed civil societies in the countries of the core area of the community may give a strong impetus to the process of security community building-up.

Seventh, the expectation of mutual benefits for the countries in the community in the economic, military and environmental areas. This is quite a natural expectation, that can be satisfied only by proving the higher degree of cost-effectiveness of the security regime, compared to the one that existed out of the security community.

Eighth, a higher level of political efficacy, that would provide the needed public support for building-up the security community. The very political systems in each country and their efficiency are very much dependent on the implementation of the Dahl's criteria for democracy.

Ninth, a constructive management of ethnic and national conflicts. One can hardly doubt the obstacles in this field, but they are not insurmountable in the context of an upgraded civilization scheme for political and economic answers to society's needs.

Tenth, successful arms control and disarmament. The realization of this requirement is facilitated by the improved European strategic environment. The CFE Treaty, the agreements for the disarmament of the warring parties in the Bosnian conflict, the new round of negotiations for the conventional forces in Europe with participation of the countries on an individual basis "frames" the process in a positive way.

Eleventh, a similar perception of the risks, challenges, threats and dangers of the broader international environment. A settled institutional membership of the Balkan countries, regulated details of their interlocking mechanisms for security may rationalize the threat perception system in the Balkans.

Twelfth, shaping of common regional interests and their realization by the political elites of the countries of the security community. NGOs may be

quite helpful in supporting and influencing the governmental attitudes on these issues.

Thirteenth, realization of the necessity of compatible and consistent national security strategies of the member countries of the community. The military defence aspect of the issue is of a particular importance.

Despite the various problems, the time of launching the policy of building-up a security community in the peninsula is ripe. The Pact of Stability in Europe, the implementation of the Dayton Agreement brought the start of this active policy closer. The analysis of the pre-conditions shows the Balkans have already many important pieces of the mosaic that form an essential part of the whole picture. The success of this policy would depend on the effective interaction of three eventual levels of its formation, targeted at Balkan security community building-up:

First, the national level. Parallel to the official governmental policies in the region is the growth of the role of the so called "third sector" – the non-governmental organisations. They are assuming the capability, together with the leading intellectuals in the area and forward-minded representatives of the media, of shaping public opinion in the direction of advising or supporting the governments in building up a security community.

Second, the regional level. One of the prerequisites, though not yet finished, exists in the region: the core area for the security community, capable of playing the role of an integration nucleus for the others. This is the territory, comprised by Greece – a member of EU, Bulgaria and Romania, that are about to begin negotiations for full membership in EU. Despite the challenges of extremist religious and political trends prerequisites for a post-Kemalist policy of the state are accumulating in Turkey and this may bring the country closer to the requirements of the modern Euroatlantic civilization and make it a more acceptable international partner. An influential non- governmental, "third sector" in Turkey, if developed, may play a significant role.

There is a certain experience of a multilateral Balkan cooperation; of functioning of the Black Sea economic cooperation (BSEC), used occasionally as a forum of declaring positions to the conflict in ex-Yugoslavia and linking strategically and economically the Balkans with the countries in the Black Sea basin, including Russia, Ukraine and Turkey.

The region interacts with Central and Western Europe by the participation of certain Balkan countries in the Central European Free Trade Area (CEFTA), the Central European Initiative (CEI) and in the cooperation along the line

of the Danube Convention. The peninsula adds significantly to the shaping of the processes in the Eastern Mediterranean.

In the area of arms control and disarmament Bulgaria, Greece, Romania and Turkey have the opportunity to develop their mutual CBMs and the process of arms control beyond the levels, agreed in the CFE Treaty and related documents.

A lot of regional measures in the economic, energy, environmental, transport, cultural and sports spheres may help in getting rid of the destructive factors influencing the regional relationships. The degree of economic development of the Balkans, their belated modernization require an intensified interaction with the third level of shaping and conducting the policy of security community building-up – the one of EU and its CFSP, closely related to the policy of NATO, OSCE, USA and Russia.

The active support of the prerequisites of developing a security community by EU may importantly add to the Stability Pact ideas and lead to their transformation with time into functioning stabilizing factors of the region. Point XII of the Strategy for the Integration of the ACCEE provides EU's support for the intra-regional cooperation [7] – an opportunity, that should be fully utilized by the Balkan states.

The cooperation of the countries in the region with NATO and WEU should be focused on full clarification of their intentions, requirements and actions that could lead to optimal utilization of the potential of these institutions for reaching the goal of building up a security community in the Balkans. This broader political goal in the region would add contents and sense in the activities of these same respected organisations, as well as of other powerful and influential factors.

3. Non-Governmental Think-Tanks for Security and International Issues in the Balkans and Their Role in Building-Up Security Community

A functioning and developing Balkan civil society needs appropriate domestic and regional political, legal, social, psychological and financial conditions. A vibrant non-governmental sector is an important prerequisite for promoting regional projects, including in the security field.

The Balkan countries have a special need of a manageable relationship between the individual and the state and NGOs may successfully serve in certain cases the role of the "third party" – the mediator.

This is why a project, coordinated by the Union of Bulgarian Foundations and Associations (UBFA) and called "Balkan NGO Empowering

Programme" may prove to have positive effect beyond the scope of civil society building-up in the region. The objective of the programme is to foster the development of a vital and powerful NGO sector in the Balkan region with the capacity to activate citizens in identifying problems crucial for the progress of the region through enhancing NGO communication and exchange; to influence and cooperate with government, business, and the media; to help overcome the burden of historical legacies and prejudices, and, lastly, to facilitate development of modern democratic and pluralistic societies in the region.

A promising trend in the Balkan NGO empowering efforts is the development of a potential of NGOs, including of think-tanks for security and foreign-political issues, for monitoring, analysing and assessing important regional problems, recommend preventive or alternative solutions and influence the policy-making process in the individual countries and on a multilateral basis.

The establishment of topical networks in a national and regional framework, placed in a European and Euroatlantic context may be an appropriate approach of strengthening the Balkan NGOs. In this way governmental and independent think-tanks and institutes, studying security, foreign policy and international relations in the region, may become more synergetic in their professional area and stimulate civil society's positive output and interaction with the national states. International team work for making research on important regional security problems for example will very probably serve as a useful agent in balancing the national and the multilateral (regional and international) approaches to the issues. This may prove for the Balkan environment crucial in implementing the "conflict preventive approach" to security issues.

The ideas of working out and implementing a comprehensive regional plan for the Balkans is dominating the minds of European politicians that have been involved in the issues of the region in the last few years [8]. Their vision may be broadened and include the role of local and out-of-area NGOs. A practical task for think-tanks on security and international issues may be the improvement of the perceptual system in and about the region. What does that mean?

Very often in the learning process we fail to see or understand something because we do not expect it. In the case of the Balkans we do not always detect positive facts and trends because we are either unprepared or unwilling to do so. This deviation from normal perception may be corrected. A greater effort to study facts and developments, and their roots and causes, is needed. Think-tanks in the field of security may be very helpful in the adequate formulation of the facts, in the adjustment of the local political and

social environments' values, beliefs, cognitions and perceptions in general by breaking through the limits of old models of thinking. On this basis a more complicated task may be devoted to governmental and non-governmental think-tanks – supporting the effort of a gradual transformation of the present "Balkan conflict clinic" approach to a "regional security community building-up" one.

The practical interrelationships during the last four-five years have demonstrated that complex, multi-national and permanently functioning joint organisations are not an appropriate solution to the problem. A more flexible organisational solution is needed. Three basic requirements should be met:

First, NGOs dealing with security and international studies must be professionally competent enough if they have the ambition to be involved in the solution of practical regional issues. Independence, intellectual freedom and objectivity are indispensable for fulfilling an all-regional task.

Second, at the initial stage of working together the local think-tanks should rely on the project method. The regional efforts are supposed to be placed within a European and Euroatlantic context.

Third, in certain cases the NGOs, including those conducting research, should be involved in the practical implementation of the ideas they suggest or support.

II. INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS, NGOs AND THE BALKAN SECURITY DIALOGUE

1. Negotiations and Civil Society Building-Up

One of the major deficiencies of the civil society construction in the region is the persistent presence of tens of conflicts, the domination of conflict attitudes and inadequate application of the culture of compromise. Consensual attitudes, tolerance and solidarity are important features of a mature civil society.

Part of the clue to this issue is developing a culture of a tolerant dialogue, learning the science and the art of negotiating. The achievement of a substantive discourse within the societies of the individual Balkan countries, developing and stabilizing the pattern of dialogue on a bilateral and multilateral basis in the region while discarding outmoded stereotypes and images about regional international relations are goals that would require the mobilization of the potential for negotiations of local and outer international actors.

There can hardly be any progress in that area if the pattern of zero-sum assessments of the internal and the external conflicts in the Balkans continues to obsess the minds of the political leaders and social activists. Tolerance is not an easy task in the region. This is why the education of the culture of negotiating turns to be a priority problem for the evolving national and the regional civil societies. For example, obligatory courses and seminars of the theory and practice of international negotiations are already part of the higher education system of future experts in international relations in Bulgaria. Similar experience is developing within the Bulgarian military education system. Broader educational programmes with a massive support of the established training centres for negotiating in the European Union and in the United States may importantly contribute to the efforts of building-up a Balkan civil society and developing its ability for dialogue.

The negotiation potential accumulated for the purposes of the peace-making, humanitarian and peace-monitoring missions and for the convening of democratic elections needs to be developed and implemented for larger and more perspective objectives. This activity has been supported by many NGOs out of the region and from local countries. A parallel network of negotiation efforts should be concentrated to cope with a multitude of problems of civil society and security community building-up. The experience of NGOs may importantly add to the potential of the governments involved in the stabilization and further political emancipation of the Balkan region.

2. NGOs' Experience in the Processes of International Negotiations

It is quite widely acknowledged that during the last decade NGOs have grown both in numbers and in influence in their own countries as well as internationally. The opinions and the voice of NGOs are more and more listened to and heard.

The growing importance of NGOs at the international level is very much connected with the complexity of the present social, political, security, environmental and economic issues and the need for ideas, instruments and mechanisms of coping with them in the world. For example, a conservative institution as the World Bank is, has also opened up to NGOs' views and approaches to development [9].

A similar evolution and sharing of the objectives may be traced in the interrelationship of NGOs and the UN system [10].

The international agency very importantly interacts with both governments and NGOs on such issues as education, science, culture, environment, children, refugees and human rights.

The United Nations actively invite and consult the views and materials of academics and NGO analysts on security [11] and environmental [12] issues.

According to A. Doherty [13] NGOs have been given free access to the interstate negotiation process at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). NGOs participated in both formal as well as in informal sessions. The conclusion is that this contributed to the implementation effectiveness of the agreements of the Conference.

There is also another important conclusion: participating NGOs need to be more relevant to the issues under discussion. This means, first, that NGOs should present ideas that are relevant to the context of the on-going currently dialogue and, second, there should be a differentiated position of the NGOs at the initial stages of the negotiation process when the agenda is set and issues need clarification, and at the so called "hard bargaining period" when concessions are exchanged and deals are made.

Some NGOs prove to be capable for a constructive role from the beginning to the end of the negotiation process. Most often NGOs do have real strength at certain stages of the process: some research and scientific ones, for example – at the beginning, when issue clarification is going on. Other NGOs prove to be really helpful at the implementation phase, when communication to the public on the issues of the agreements reached during the negotiations is needed.

The experience of the UNCED gives grounds for drawing certain distinctions as part of the access rules formulated for NGOs. Though selection may create some political problems it is absolutely necessary to elaborate selection criteria for facilitating future negotiations.

It can be hardly doubted that hundreds of NGOs should not be given free access to international negotiations because of the risk of overloading the process. But similarly reasonable argument is the necessity of participation of competent private organizations in the negotiation processes. Such a necessity stems from the continuing relationships of complex interdependencies on the global arena. This holds true for one of the aspects of the social life supporting systems in the present world – international security and its regional features.

3. Specific Roles of NGOs during the Balkan Security Dialogue

An important factor that may influence positively the building-up of a regional security community in the Balkans is the rapprochement and reconciliation of the people and states on the peninsula. Local conflicts of all

kinds need to be approached with a constructive concept designed to deal with historical stereotypes and syndromes, and psychological traumas. The structure and substance of rapprochement plans must be tailored to the needs of the individual countries concerned, with the ultimate aim of eliminating the 'yoke' syndrome and the ethnic minority 'fifth-column' syndrome, and smoothing the way for constructive working relationships in a favourable political and psychological environment. National NGOs dealing with security and foreign-political studies may be instrumental in stimulating this process.

The build-up of the will and consensus for rapprochement and reconciliation through the think-tanks on security and international issues may be both a short-term and a long-term task. The short-term one concerns the roles these NGOs may play as third party mediators in an on-going negotiation process of a practical case. NGOs may serve as catalysts of developing consensus among diverging positions. Playing the traditional role of the mediator NGOs may help settle disputes, uncover common interests and facilitate reaching an agreement.

The long-term task of the NGOs is to develop and coordinate an educational programme for the people of the Balkan region that can support and facilitate the efforts towards rapprochement and reconciliation. This task very much corresponds with the general direction of the NGOs' behaviour as agents of civil society building-up. In the context of the broader task of civil society construction the NGOs' involvement in practical international negotiations becomes easier. Very important contribution of the think-tanks in the field of security and international relations, apart of the role of the "go-between", may turn to be their role of fact-finders and providers of information for the participants in the negotiation processes.

NGOs can be supportive also after the outcome of the international negotiations, during the post-negotiation period. A lot of additional adjustments evolve after the agreement is reached. The management of a purposeful process of rapprochement and reconciliation requires the additional support of NGOs in tackling post-agreement issues.

Another major role of the NGOs is their inclusion as direct participants in the negotiation processes. Usually the foreign ministries compose the national delegations for the international negotiations from officials of various relevant ministries. The experience of the UNCED as well as other similar cases show that NGO representatives are also included in the formal membership of the delegations.

A fourth role could be the counsellor's one, formed by national and international expert NGOs. They can help in that capacity for seeking an

early agreement on easier issues, encourage the so called "fair" proposals, educate on cultural differences and generally stimulate the negotiation processes.

NGOs may also be very helpful at the pre-negotiation stage of the negotiation processes. Dependent on the expertise of the national foreign-policy and the international organisations' decision-makers is their effective involvement at this phase of the international negotiations.

The hard dynamics of the negotiations is traditionally dependent on the level of communication of the parties involved. NGOs dealing with security and international studies in and out of the Balkan region may facilitate the solution of the communication problem by designing and implementing a permanent electronic information network on international relations and Balkan studies.

III. NGOs' INITIATIVE OF DEVELOPING A BALKAN INFORMATION NETWORK ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND AREA STUDIES

A major implication of modern information technology is that formal state boundaries have become porous – different kinds of data move across borders as if they do not exist. If improperly used information technology can compromise national and international security. But if decentralized knowledge – one of the effects of information technology, is organized in a more imaginative way by the policy-makers – not necessarily for political but for intellectual and economic reasons, then much can be achieved for the political process and security itself.

Talking in terms of the Balkans, regional security may be strengthened if new information technologies are used for promoting the formation of an information community of the people on the peninsula as a needed confidence ingredient of the future security community. Information and security go hand by hand and NGOs, dealing with security and international studies may prove to be very instrumental in stimulating the processes of international negotiations by developing their security information background within the broader European context.

This idea is neither novel, nor without practical progress [14].

Information dissemination through Internet has made real achievements within the Partnership for Peace Programme. Governmental agencies, international organizations, research institutes, schools and universities, scientists and the media have come together to share electronically

knowledge and experience in an effort to improve security in the Euroatlantic area.

There is a need for guidance of the information overflow on security issues within the Internet. The Center for Security Studies and Conflict Research of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich is already operating the virtual library as one of the main services of the International Relations and Security Network (ISN).

European research institutes cooperating within a common information framework are in a position to achieve valuable synergetic effects. The European Information Network on International Relations and Area Studies (EINIRAS) is a functioning instrument of the European academic community in the field of international relations for stimulating comprehensive public discussions on these topics. This is considered an important prerequisite for the internal interactions of the Europeans, their partner relations with other world actors and for the promotion of political solutions according to European values.

An eventual consortium of Balkan think-tanks in the field of security and international affairs – governmental and non-governmental, are very much suited to initiate the formation of a Balkan information network on international relations and area studies. They have the needed experience in access, selection and evaluation of specialized information and in the distribution of various information products to consumers. The steps taken within the EINIRAS show that probably the Balkan Information Network on International Relations and Area Studies (BINIRAS) should start with the integration of their information referral tools and reference systems of relevant information into one common database.

This consortium of institutes will be in a position to provide valuable information, for example, to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the countries that participated in the Sofia Forum of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs in July, 1996. Similar events that are now in preparation for the Ministers of Defence (in Sofia), for the Heads of States (in Skopje), etc. will inevitably profit from a professional and solid academic database on international relations and security.

Obviously BINIRAS will mostly profit if it starts as a regional chapter of EINIRAS and is linked to ISN: both the experience and the technical support from them will inevitably come with the political agreement of the Balkan countries to join a common information pool on international relations and area studies.

Furthermore, the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), Athens is a Full Member of the Network of 31 national and international institutes (EINIRAS), while the Institute for Security and International Studies (ISIS), Sofia is participating in the International Relations and Security Network (ISN) of countries in the Euroatlantic area for two years and is an Associate Member of EINIRAS. The two institutes are significant pillars of knowledge and experience and can facilitate the starting of the project for BINIRAS. ISIS as a Bulgarian NGO in the field of security and international studies, closely cooperating with the Union of Bulgarian Foundations and Associations (UBFA) is ready to organize the Bulgarian NGO potential and utilize its contacts with the other Balkan partners, INS and EINIRAS. ELIAMEP is a leading organization in that area for years and can back importantly the BINIRAS project.

By developing part of the information background on security and international issues NGOs in the Balkans will become much more effective in their support and involvement in international negotiations, security community and regional civil society building-up.

Notes

1. Karl W. Deutsch, *Security Communities*, in: Rosenau (ed.), *International Politics and Foreign Policy*, 1961, p. 98.

2. See: Joseph S. Nye, *Peace in Parts. Integration and Conflict in Regional Organization*, Boston, Little Brown, 1971; Luc Reyhler, *A Pan-European Security Community: Utopia or Realistic Perspective ?*, in: Armand Clesse and Lothar Rühl(eds.), *Beyond East-West Confrontation: Searching for a New Security Structure in Europe*, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden, 1990, p. 202-210; John Roper, "Security Community" Between Concept and Reality, in: *Revue Roumaine d'Etudes Internationales*, XXV, 5-6(115-116) 1991, p. 315-316; *The Vulnerable Content: Western European Security in the 21st Century*, in: *Eurobalkans*, No 22-23, Spring-Summer 1996, p. 27-28; Plamen Pantev, "Security Community" in the Balkans: Prerequisites, Factors, Contents, the Role of Bulgaria, IIR Research Paper, Sofia, 1993; *Coping with Conflicts in the Central and Southern Balkans*, St. Kliment Ohridsky University Press, 1995, 40 pp., etc.

3. See: Karl W. Deutsch et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1957, etc.

4. See: Luc Reyhler, *Op. cit.*, p. 203; Plamen Pantev, *Bulgaria and the European Union. The Security Aspect*, in: *The Southeast European Yearbook 1993*, ELIAMEP, Athens, 1994, pp. 55-63.

5. R. Dahl, *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1982, p. 11.

6. Sofia Declaration on Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Co-operation in the Balkans, Sofia, 6-7 July, 1996, Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Countries of South Eastern Europe, in: *Eurobalkans*, Op. cit., p. i-xxiv.

7. Strategy for the Integration of the Associated Countries in Central and Eastern Europe, Union Européenne Le Conseil, Bruxelles, le 28 novembre 1994, 11329/94 EN, p. 18.

8. See: Carl Bildt, A regional plan for the Balkans, in: *The European*, 24 October, 1996.

9. See: Paul J. Nelson, *The World Bank and non-governmental organizations: the limits of apolitical development*, London, Macmillan, 1995, 235 pp.

10. See: Peter Willetts (ed.), *'The conscience of the world': the influence of non-governmental organizations in the UN system*, London, Hurst, 1996, 333 pp.

11. See, for example: Natalie J. Goldring, UN Experts' Panel On Small Arms Faces obstacles, in: *BASIC Reports*, 28 October, Number 54, p. 2-4.

12. See: A. Doherty, *The Role of Nongovernmental Organizations in UNCED, etc.*, in: G. Sjöstedt, et al., eds., *Lessons Learned from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development*, Laxenburg, Graham & Trotman/Martinus Nijhoff, 1994, 288 pp.

13. A. Doherty, Op. cit., Chapter 13.

14. See: Anthony Antoine, Paul Magis & Chris Scheurweghs, *The Role of Internet in NATO's Partnership for Peace Initiative: Prognoses and Prospects*, in: *UNIDIR Newsletter*, Number 30/95, p. 61-64; Thomas Köppel & Andreas Wenger, *A Virtual Library for International Relations and Security Studies*, in: *UNIDIR Newsletter*, Number 30/95, pp. 64-67; Dietrich Seydel, *Reflections on Future Conditions of Specialized Information Provision*, in: *UNIDIR Newsletter*, Number 30/95, p. 67-71; Gerd Hagemeyer-Gaverus, *Fast Information Retrieval in International Relations Research: the Internet Database Approach*, in: *UNIDIR Newsletter*, Number 30/95, p. 71-74, etc.

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