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**Bulgaria and the ESDP:  
Global Frames and Regional Perspectives**

The radical change of the strategic security environment and the establishment of a new multilateral system of international cooperation since the end of the bi-polar Cold War confrontation model provoked a vigorous flow of two parallel main streams within the regional European and Euro-Atlantic organizations. They can be concisely defined as *transformation* and *enlargement*. The concurrent dual process of transformation and enlargement both of NATO and the EU, attended by rising up of various new regional initiatives and agreements determine the actual international security architecture, challenged nowadays by new asymmetric risks and threats.

The new understanding of a more coherent global world with more dynamic interdependent and supra-regional Trans-European and Eurasian security cooperation, approaching the widening neighbouring areas logically led to the vision of both NATO and the EU as global peacekeepers and providers not only of regional but also of international cooperative security beyond the traditional spheres of their previous engagements. The contemporary European Union's approach to conflict prevention and crisis management, displayed in the *European Security Strategy*, is also a global one, using the whole range of foreign policy instruments available to the EU (political, diplomatic, economic, humanitarian, civilian and military).

Fifty years after the Rome treaties and ten years after the Amsterdam Treaty (where the fundamentals of the ESDP have been constructed in Article 17) the European political space is still di-

vided between the Euro-skeptics and Euro-optimists. For months, diplomats have labored to draft a formal common message that would highlight the historic accomplishments of the Union; however, finally a very moderate *Berlin Declaration* was announced on March 25, 2007, even derided by such a vigorous Euro-skeptic like the Czech President Vaclav Klaus as “Orwellian Eurospeak”.<sup>1</sup> Some others, like Loukas Tsoukalis, appealed for “going back to basics”.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the Euro-optimists are raising with a surprising enthusiasm the question *Quo Vadis EU in the next 50 years?* At least on June 26<sup>th</sup>, after 36 hours intensive talks and consultations, the EU Council agreed on a compromise German proposal for drawing up a *Reform Treaty*, where some new ideas and definitions to be complemented to the existing EU treaties without launching again a revised Constitutional project.<sup>3</sup>

Speaking about the ESDP, we can agree with the conclusion that it “is no longer a choice but a necessity”.<sup>4</sup> However, nobody can move forward successfully without bearing in mind the new changes and new challenges of the global and regional security environment. Within the European political space we meet now some new risks and threats to our civilization and our societies. The old bitter interstate, national, and ethnic clashes have been displaced by more global factors of instability of demographic, environmental, energy and technological character. Even in such ardent and divided religious-ethnic communities, like Kosovo, some current international examinations give us more arguments in favor of this

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<sup>1</sup> Cr. Whitlock, “On its 50<sup>th</sup>, E.U. Faces an Identity Crisis”, *Washington Post* (25 March 2007), A12; “Kafka’s Syndrome: Czechs’ pervasive gloom over EU reflects doubts on government”, *Europe’s World* (Summer 2007), 49. The proposal for adopting a new re-draft Constitutional project in 2009 coincides with the forthcoming Czech presidency of the European Union in the beginning of 2009.

<sup>2</sup> L. Tsoukalis, “Long on policies but short on Politics, the EU needs a breath of fresh air”, *Europe’s World* (Spring 2007).

<sup>3</sup> *Council of the European Union*, Brussels, “IGC Mandate” – 11218/07, POLGEN 74.

<sup>4</sup> *EU Security and Defence Policy. The First Five Years. 1999-2004*, European Union Institute for Security Studies, Paris 2004, p. 5.

conclusion. An Internal Security Sector Review (ISSR) in Kosovo, held between April and December 2006 under the auspices of the UNDP, discussed consequently Threat, Functional, Gap and Budget analysis, and security sector reforms (SSR) strategies. According to the Final ISSR report: “Most citizens placed the moribund economic situation in Kosovo in the centre of all threats. Most see other identified threats as linked in some way to the poor economic conditions”.<sup>5</sup> That’s why in the last few years the EU takes account of the “development-security nexus” with an ambitious aim to define its future “Policy Coherence to Development” (PCD).<sup>6</sup> After two years of comprehensive discussions among the member states, in May 2007 the first EU Biennial PCD Report was announced, where Security is a special thematic issue.

At the same time, the European Union will continue to face “turbulent neighborhood” processes. A cautious reconsideration of the latest developments in South Eastern Europe and wider Black Sea regions probably will confirm the advantages of the EU soft power approach of the *carrot of integration* than the US hard power stance for the *stick of military strokes*. However, according to a Long-Term Vision (LTV) Study Interim Report, sponsored by the European Defense Agency in 2006, “Globalism will become less Westernised, more plural, more regional, and more hybrid: cultural diversity is on the rise”.<sup>7</sup> In a twenty years perspective, the world is likely to be more diverse, more inter-dependence, and even more unequal. “Globalism will produce winners and losers, as between countries and regions, and within societies”.<sup>8</sup> Following the patterns of Globalism and Regionalism, the future world will search for a new balance between more global governance and

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<sup>5</sup> An. Welch, “A Security Sector Review in Kosovo – An Holistic Approach to SSR”, in *Security Sector Reform in South East Europe – From a Necessary Remedy to a Global Concept. Study Group Information*, Vienna and Geneva January 2007, pp. 43-56.

<sup>6</sup> *Council of the European Union*, Brussels 14076/06.

<sup>7</sup> *The New Global Puzzle. What World for the EU in 2025?*, EU ISS, Paris 2006, p. 194.

<sup>8</sup> *An Initial Long Term Vision for European Defense Capability and Capacity Needs*, EDA, Brussels 2006), p. 10.

multipolarity instead of former *Realpolitik* balance of powers or Cold War bipolar balance of terror. I would remind here also the words of Ricardo Hochleitner, the President of the Club of Rome for a “better attempt of *local thinking for global action* as a major input against the more simplistic traditional approach of *global thinking for local action*”.<sup>9</sup>

## II

The history of the Bulgarian accession to the EU has been object of careful and detailed discussions in Bulgarian political science & international relations publications during the last couple of years. A large amount of research studies was devoted to its legal and economic dimensions. The works on ESDP and Bulgaria occupy less space so far, though few volumes on the matter appeared as product of the efforts of small academic NGOs.<sup>10</sup> Still we are expecting more thorough research in the field from a contemporary history perspective; in particular, on the “lessons learned” model and an “immediate effects” pros and cons approach. We will try to reveal in brief here the most significant data about Bulgarian contribution to the build up of European defense capabilities after the treaties of Amsterdam and Nice.

The negotiations with Bulgaria on Chapter 27 “Common Foreign and Security Policy” within the frame of the country’s integration to the European Union started on March 28, 2000, and were closed successfully on June 14, 2000. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2001 Bulgaria presented a list of forces and capabilities from the Bul-

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<sup>9</sup> *How to Ride the Global Wave: Avoiding Crises and Wars, Building Common Projects. Millennium III: A Club of Rome Symposium*, Bucharest 1999, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> *България и нейното място в реализацията на европейската политика за сигурност и отбрана* (Bulgaria and its place in the realization of ESDP), Фондация „Мир, Стабилност, Просперитет”, Sofia 2005; *Европейската политика за сигурност и отбрана и Българската армия* (ESDP and Bulgarian Armed Forces), Фондация „Армия и гражданско общество”, Sofia 2005); *The European Union in 2005: Candidate Countries’ Perspectives*, Bulgarian European Community Studies Association, Sofia 2006.

garian Armed Forces available for EU-led crisis management operations. This contribution is one of the main components of the Bulgarian participation into the build-up of ESDP, and especially of the European Rapid Reaction Forces. The forces and capabilities, which Bulgaria has declared, are in accordance with its national capabilities and respective needs. They are a part of the forces and capabilities our country contributes to NATO-led operations. This guarantees their interoperability with the forces of NATO and EU countries both in the field of procedures and doctrines used, and concerning the level of their preparation and equipment. As of March 1, 2003, the list of forces and capabilities from the Bulgarian Armed Forces has been updated. It was later confirmed in March 2004. Responding to the newly updated EU *Catalogue of necessary operational capabilities '05*, in March 2006 Bulgaria declared its contribution with forces and defense capabilities. Bulgarian Army will participate in the common European defense forces with an infantry battalion (fully operational by the end of 2007), a staff of an engineering battalion, a bridge-construction company (fully operational by the end of 2008), and a sanitary and chemical treatment company (fully operational by July 2008). Bulgarian Air Forces will contribute with two battle helicopters MI-24, and two transport helicopters MI-17 (which will be changed in 2008 with *Coogar* helicopters); while the Navy will deliver a 1241 class *PAUK* corvette.

On June 16, 2003, a new format trilateral commission Bulgaria-EU-EUMS started. In the same year Bulgaria participated with its representatives at the first EU-led missions in the Balkans-EUPM in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and military operation *Concordia* in FYR of Macedonia. Since December 2, 2004, Bulgarian Army participates in a larger military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina *Althea* with a 162 servicemen company, a 36 servicemen platoon, and staff officers.

Since April 2005 Bulgaria has had a new status as it concerns European Union. The country is an active observer to the EU institutions and has more opportunities to be informed and to discuss ESDP issues with its EU partners. On a meeting, held in Brussels

on 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 2004, Bulgaria declared its readiness to participate in the evolution process of EU Battle group formation (in accordance with *Headline Goals 2010*) with an amount of light infantry company of 95 servicemen, 6 staff officers, and medical team. There were held consultations and discussions with Greece as a framework-nation and Romania as a contributor regarding our readiness to contribute to the Multinational battle formation which will be on EU disposal for its further plans in ESDP area from 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2007. Cyprus declared its readiness to join this Battle group. Some staff officers from the four Balkan countries started their training and short-term Orientation Courses in March 2007. The Battle group HELBROC is intended to be fully operational until December 31, 2007, with its staff located in Larissa, the capital city of Thessaly.

The Strategic Defense Review launched in July 2004 provided a vision for the development of defense and the armed forces by 2015. It is yet another step in harmonizing the national defense policy with the Alliance's policy, and with the aims and goals of the ESDP. According to the Strategic Defense Review, the new risks to the country's security stem from the international terrorism, the proliferation and the use of the WMD, the instability of democratization processes in the neighboring conflict zones, organized crime, illegal traffic of strategic raw materials, technologies, arms, drugs, and people, as well as from destructive impacts on information systems, economic instability, environmental disasters. The complex global and regional environment of dynamically changing opportunities and barely predictable challenges require the use of non-traditional, preventive and anticipatory approaches and solutions, complementary and coordinated efforts involving political, economic, technological and informational –both military and civil– measures. Within the frames of the *EU Civilian Headline Goal 2008* Bulgaria declared its readiness to contribute with police and civil protection experts to the Crisis Response Teams and Fact Finding missions. One of the national initiatives in the field is the organization of the joint training exercise *Dark Shadow* in October 2006, which principal aim was to coordinate the Security and Po-

lice services activity against the terrorist threats in accordance with the EU collective security system.

According to the Annual Program for the participation of the Republic of Bulgaria in the EU activity for 2007, the Bulgarian government has declared its ability to contribute further for the development of ESDP in different conflict areas. For instance, Bulgaria announced its readiness to join a possible EU Planning Team for Kosovo as a future EU operation in the field of rule of law, according to a Council of EU's decision of April 10, 2006. Following EU Neighborhood Policy, Bulgarian government supports as well the additional efforts for elaboration of strategy for Central Asia, for the development of the Barcelona process for the Mediterranean, for strengthening of the Stability and Association Process (SAP) of the Western Balkans, etc. The Bulgarian chairmanship in 2007 both of the SAP and CEI (Central European Initiative) was of crucial importance for the implementations of these goals.

Bulgarian Presidency of the Central European Initiative declared three main priorities for 2007: 1) Improvement and strategic orientation of CEI activity. 2) Cooperation within CEI in support of the European perspective of the organization member states based on the experience gained in the fifth EU enlargement. 3) Harmonizing the CEI Priorities with other regional organizations. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the CEI countries held their annual meeting under Bulgarian chairmanship on May 18, 2007 in Sofia in order to discuss the salient issues of regional cooperation taking into account the recent developments, in particular the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the European Union, the future of the EU integration and enlargement process, the arrangements following the phasing out of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and the appearing Black Sea synergy.

Upon assuming in the end of May 2007 the Presidency of the South East Europe Cooperation Process (SEEC) until May 2008, Bulgaria facilitated the effective interaction between the two institutions. Taking into account its role for the region as an EU member-state, Bulgaria submitted as well its application for Sofia to become the seat of the Secretariat for Parliamentary Cooperation of

SEECF; another initiative, supplemental to Zagreb Summit Final Act decision of May 11, 2007, for establishment until February 2008 of a Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat, located in Sarajevo. Together with the political and economic cooperation, the SEECF endorsed also some cultural initiatives, like Southeast European History Joint Project. Assessing the importance of such regional initiatives, ahead of the Zagreb Summit in May 2007, European Commission President José Manuel Barroso underlined: “Regional cooperation is a cornerstone of the EU’s policy for the Western Balkans. It is a key factor for ensuring lasting political stability, security and economic prosperity in a region whose future lies within the EU”.<sup>11</sup>

### III

Many authors claim today that in some sense “the Black Sea has been a civilization black hole in the Western historical consciousness” and a kind of Western “historical amnesia”. The same comments were distributed a decade ago for the Balkans compared with a constant sensible attention to the Central Europe during the Cold War years.

A valuable contribution to the revealing and exposing of a modern Western vision on the Black Sea area as a significant component within the global Euro-Atlantic security system was made in 2004 by a former US Assistant Secretary of State, Ronald Asmus, in collaboration with Dr. Bruce Jackson, President of the Project on Transitional Democracies. In their paper “The Black Sea and the Frontiers of Freedom”, which has been quoted so many times by various experts and politicians, the authors underlined: “The Black Sea region is at the epicentre in the grand strategic challenge of trying to project stability into a wider European space and beyond into the Greater Middle East. As NATO expands its role in Afghanistan and prepares for a long-term mission there and contemplates assuming added responsibilities in Iraq, the wider Black Sea region starts to be seen through a different lens: Instead of appear-

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<sup>11</sup> *European Commission*, Brussels – IP/07/622 (8 May 2007).

ing as a point on the periphery of the European landmass, it begins to look like a core component of the West's strategic hinterland".<sup>12</sup>

Speaking about a "wider Black Sea region", we have to describe more or less correctly its frames by definition, strategic links, existing and potential regional security risks and emerging multilateral initiatives. The Black Sea is the hub of a large number of transport corridors and pipelines connecting Europe to the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Middle East. One popular expression for this supra-regional interconnections and interdependency claims for the Euro-Atlantic system viewed as a provider of security, stability, and democratic values; and the wider Black Sea region as an energy and resources supplier. We should consider as well "a northeast arc and access to the great commercial rivers that flow into the Black Sea: the Danube, Dniester, and Dnieper". Furthermore, the region has been linked tight with some other conflict zones in the south-west direction –in the Mediterranean and the Balkans, or rather a 'wider' South East European-Mediterranean area.

There can be specified various principal security threats and challenges for the Euro-Atlantic community in the area: "frozen conflicts", "bad governance", terrorist led activity; organized crime; illegal traffic of arms, drugs, and human beings; money laundering, trans-border corruption, environmental disasters, etc. The primary security concern is that the organized crime channels which flourish through the region may provide support to terrorist organizations, providing illegal entry and exit for their activists, and trafficking conventional arms, dual use materials and even weapons of mass destruction on their behalf. Criminal conglomerates operate regionally and have international tentacles, reaching westwards, into NATO and the EU area. Security of the maritime domain is most affected in the last few years also by the increase of the shipping volumes –approximately 25 tankers each day pass along the Bosphorus.

The new threats cannot be detached from each other and dealt with piecemeal. NATO's outreach efforts include policies designed

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<sup>12</sup> R. Asmus–Br. Jackson, "The Black Sea and the Frontiers of Freedom", *Policy Review* 125 (June-July 2004).

to bring new nations closer to the Alliance. The Alliance and EU approaches encourage, in particular, both regional maritime security cooperation and civilian peacekeeping operations, such as police, border guards, customs, and unarmed civilian observers.

Within the last decade and half about 36 bilateral agreements were signed between the countries in the region. There are a lot of multilateral regional initiatives beyond the NATO, EU, and OSCE formal frames that can contribute to the development of an effective early warning and conflict prevention security network –Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), BLACKSEAFOR, Stability Pact for South-East Europe, Southeast European Initiative (SECI), SEEBRIG, GUUAM, Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO), etc. In the BSEC Foreign Ministers Council meeting on October 28, 2005, there were discussed the implementation of joint programs and infrastructure projects in cooperation with the EU.

Bulgaria should not be trying to impose solutions or positions in its relations with partners from the Western Balkans or the Caucasus. This would be beyond its powers and may well prove counterproductive. On the other hand, however, Bulgaria should not merely follow and react to events but initiate policies mutually beneficial for everyone involved. Viewing the Southeast European initiatives as a model of regional cooperation under NATO auspices, one of the major roles is to exert effort of mobilising the Balkan region for the task of embarking on supporting the further expansion of the civil and security space eastwards by involving the other states of the Black Sea basin and the Caspian area into stabilization efforts and building-up the prerequisites for future EU membership. In practical terms, certain South-East European formats of cooperation should be provided to such countries as Moldova, Ukraine and the Southern Caucasian states. The combination of ‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’ partnerships in the Balkans catalysed the tendencies of transformation towards an EU-compatible sub-region.

One of the long term foreign policy projects foresees the consolidation of the process of regional cooperation through active and many-sided contribution by institutionalization of the South-East-

ern Defense Ministerial Process (SEDM). Initiatives which are realized under the framework of SEDM process are the Multinational Peace Force in South-Eastern Europe; establishment of a Civil-Military Planning Council for actions under natural disasters; building of an information exchange system in the sphere of military reforms between the countries in South-Eastern Europe.

The Bulgarian Ministry of Defense participates in the multinational brigade (SEEBRIG) with one mechanized battalion which is prepared to fulfill peacekeeping tasks. In order to react to the necessity to broaden the regional cooperation in natural disasters and crisis response and planning measures there were taken for the practical realization of the initiatives to establish an engineering construction unit within the Multinational Peace Force in South-Eastern Europe, as well as to establish an information crisis response information system.

Other principal initiatives, which has been launched by SEDM in the last decade were Southeastern Europe Simulation Network (SEESIM), Satellite Interconnection of the Military Hospitals in SEE (SIMIHO), Defense/Military support to WMD counter-proliferation, border security, and counter-terrorism (CBSC), Cooperation on defense industries, research and technology among SEDM countries (SEEDIRET), Cooperation of SEE countries in the area of military education systems, etc. Bulgaria chaired SEDM Coordination Committee for the period 2009-2010. In 2007 started the preparation for the forth regional exercise SEESIM 08, which was hosted by Bulgaria in 2008. In 2007 Bulgaria assumed as well the chairmanship of CBSC joint project. The effective implementation of the principal SEDM initiatives play a significant role for enhancing the confidence building climate in the Balkans and for further development of the regional security and defense cooperation.

Bulgaria's principal contribution to the Black Sea security cooperation lies on four basic assets: political/diplomatic (by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs); naval (by the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff of Bulgarian Armed Forces); coastguard and special police forces (by the Ministry of the Interior); civilian emergency

and relief organizations (by the State Commission of Civil Protection). From the operational point of view, of particular significance is the establishment of bilateral and multilateral coordination and cooperation in the last three directions.

Regarding the prospective development in our region, we would agree with the “cautious optimistic” view of Prof. Theodore Coulombis for a “Debalkanization of the Balkans”, expressed in March 2007. Based on the Kantian Democratic Peace theory and the so called ‘transitionist’ school, Prof. Coulombis stressed of the interrelationship of democracy, development, and international organizations role as a Security Triangular model, and argued: “We can cautiously conclude that the gap separating the Balkans from the EU... will be gradually closing. We have also seen that the prospect for membership in the EU and NATO has functioned as a powerful engine generating self-restraint in Southeastern Europe”.<sup>13</sup> This conclusion can be supported by other empirical research studies, like the long term *Economist Intelligence Unit* report of March 2006, which analyzed “EU’s asymmetrical approach to the Western Balkans” and the eventual process of EU enlargement in the area until 2020.<sup>14</sup> Looking forward in a global perspective, we can quote also another indicative example –a new research study of Harvard University in cooperation with University of Miami, Florida. It discussed European Union as a model of regional integration for other sub-regions, like Latin America.<sup>15</sup>

According to the cited above European Defense Agency’s LTV interim report, “ESDP operations will be expeditionary, multinational and multi-instrument, directed at achieving security and stability more than victory”.<sup>16</sup> Among the key priorities for the European Union within its neighborhood in the forthcoming period, no

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<sup>13</sup> Th. Coulombis, “Debalkanizing the Balkans with the Kantian Theory of Democratic Peace”, *WWICS* (March 2007).

<sup>14</sup> *Europe’s World* (Summer 2006), 124.

<sup>15</sup> J. Roy–R. Dominguez (eds.), *The European Union and Regional Integration. A Comparative Perspective and Lessons for the Americas*, University of Miami 2006.

<sup>16</sup> *An Initial Long Term Vision for European Defense Capability and Capacity Needs*, EDA, Brussels 2006, p. 6.

doubts will be the settlement of the political status and post-conflict reconstruction of Kosovo. Fundamentally, Kosovo is a great concern for the European security as a whole. To leave the Western Balkans as a troubled enclave, it will be “against the historical logic” of the European integration process. That’s why the EU is preparing to be a principal actor and a driving force of the future international presence in Kosovo. The EU Planning Team for Kosovo (EUPT Kosovo) is prepared for the biggest EU civilian crisis management operation under a possible UN mandate. The eventual ESDP engagement in Kosovo, scheduled for 2008-2009, is based on two main components –International civilian office (ICO), and a Rule of Law mission, focused on justice and police, with about 1,800 international staff and 120 million EURO annual budgets.<sup>17</sup>

The second principal dimension of the ESDP actual problematique is linked with the ongoing debate on European identity at the external borders of Europe and the perspectives for next continuation of the enlargement process. Geographically, the debate was focused once again on the Balkans, in particular, with the last internal political crisis in Turkey, which had its specific civilization signs. As some European political analysts claim, Turkish society has no alternative other than “to continue its pro-European course and to recommence implementing reforms”.<sup>18</sup> The broader context and meanings of the debate, however, refers to the historical vision of Europe as a traditional Christian community and to its formal political frames as a peculiar entity within the vast Eurasian area. In such particular geo-strategic environment with a special presence of regional powers like Russia and Turkey, the role and contribution of the smaller EU countries in the Balkans (Greece, Bulgaria, Romania) will be of crucial significance for the following development of the European integration and maintaining of more

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<sup>17</sup> “The EU prepares for resolution to Kosovo’s political status”, *ESDP Newsletter* 3 (January 2007), 13-14; “Future EU presence in Kosovo”, *ESDP Newsletter* 4 (July 2007), 12-13.

<sup>18</sup> W. Posch, *Crisis in Turkey: Just another bump on the road to Europe?*, EU ISS, No. 67 (June 2007), p. 47.

stable and secure political climate and multilateral cooperation in the region.