

## The positive side

The new trends in the Balkans, have both positive and negative side. On *the positive side*, we consider the Stabilization Trends and Perspectives for Cooperation, such as:

a. Initially, the Establishment of Democratic Institutions. The whole area of the Balkans, since the early 90's, is in the process of a continuous effort to establish and reinforce the democratic institutions, so that "Democracy could function there, in the way it functions in the countries of the West".

b. Furthermore, the Transformation to a Market Economy. Nearly all of the Balkan countries, after the collapse of the Eastern Pact, are under the process towards transformation to a market economy. Their target is to modernize their economies, in order to make them antagonistic.

c. Also, the Accession to the European Union.

(1) Almost all the Balkan countries have an impressively positive attitude towards the European Union right from the beginning. They consider the Union as the broader organization that they wish to join, in order to ensure their economic prosperity.

(2) The EU encourages these efforts and has proceeded in undertaking initiatives. Their main target is the reconstruction of these countries, the strengthening of their democratic institutions, and the support of the cooperation in the area. As an example, I would mention:

a/ The Royammont initiative With the aim to improve and restore the dialogue among member-states of former Yugoslavia.

b/ The Stabilization and Association Process Aiming to enhance the political dialogue at a regional level and promote the economic and trade relationships.

c/ The Stabilization Pact for Southeastern Europe The European Union thus approaches the general spectrum of the problems in the area, since it covers matters of democratization and human rights, economic reform, development, and cooperation.

d. Another positive action is the Accession to NATO

(1) The disintegration of the Warsaw Pact resulted in a security gap. The Balkan countries realized that there was no longer a defensive mechanism to protect them. Additionally, the new countries that derived from the disintegration of former Yugoslavia express their will to join the North Atlantic Alliance, in order to consolidate their national sovereignty.

(2) NATO responded to this request and created the NACC (North Atlantic Cooperation Council) and the program Partnership for Peace (PfP), aiming at

establishing contact with the former enemies and at supporting the countries wishing to join NATO. Nearly all the Balkan countries joined the NACC and PfP programs, declaring their positive will to share the common principles and values of NATO.

(3) In this spirit, the SEDM (South-Eastern Europe Defense Ministerial) was established in 1996. Its target is to bring together the Defense Ministers of the four NATO countries (US, Greece, Italy, Turkey), and the ministers of six Balkan countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYROM, Romania, and Slovenia).

All these resulted to the establishment of the MPFSEE (Multinational Peace Force South Eastern Europe).



At the same time, all the Balkan countries wish to prove that they can cooperate and contribute to the stability of the area. They are also willing to participate in all regional initiatives, such as the BSEC (Black Sea Cooperation), the Balkan Conference on Stability, Security and Cooperation in South Eastern Europe, and the Central European Initiative (CEI).