

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The issue of transforming the national armed forces is a theme, which is on the agenda of nearly every European country, regardless whether it belongs to the EU/NATO-zone or is still outside. In the last 15 years the far-reaching geopolitical changes in Europe and the new threat perceptions like failed states and terrorism in the military field have caused a shift from the classical homeland defence tasks to peace support operations, crisis management and security networking. This development demands among others new up to date security and defence strategies, an effective management of human, infrastructural and financial resources and new structures for decision making to achieve security arrangements, not only on the national level but also on the EU and NATO level.

Although the transformation of armed forces is not an issue, which detects only the transformation states in South East Europe, this region has to cope also with some additional challenges as military matters are concerned. Especially the social aspects of the transformation of armed forces in South East Europe seem to play a much bigger role than it is the case for instance in Western Europe. Unlike the established democracies and market economies in Western and Central Europe, where the security institutions are highly accepted by the citizens, in some South East European countries the people have a lack of confidence in their own security forces. The reasons for that are obvious: The misuse of the security forces for political aims during the authoritarian communist regimes and especially during the Balkan wars in the 1990s.

To build confidence among the Balkan people in regard of their security forces is only possible if every Western Balkan country as a state makes progress in the transformation process: that means, if democratic

institutions and the rule of law as well as social market economy develop. In the case that the transformation of the armed forces in South East Europe will not be closely linked to the other sectors of state transformation it could even affect negatively the military engagement of single Balkan countries in international peace support operations. Transparency, networking and democratic control are some of the key words, which should characterize successful Peace Support Operations. It is clear, armed forces, which see themselves as a kind of corpus separatum in their own societies will not be able to fulfil these criteria.

Only if the transformation process of the armed forces will be brought in line with the transformation of the economy and the political institutions the negative social consequences caused by measures of personal reorganisation can be minimized. Especially in the former Yugoslav Republics the veterans, who have been demobilized in a greater number after the end of the latest wars represent a very explosive factor for their societies. Without a clear vision for their life this group of people could endanger the process of democratization in their countries. If you see it this way the reorganisation of the armed forces in South East Europe, which is usually connected with a big and painful reduction of personnel, becomes an important issue for the regional stabilisation process and does not represent only a matter for the single state. Therefore the social and political implications of the transformation of armed forces in South East Europe should be stronger put on the agenda of international aid programmes. One opportunity would be to support such projects in working table 3 of the Stability Pact for South East Europe.

A conclusion that can be drawn from this publication is that there could be much more lessons learned between the SEE countries in the field of security sector reform. For example the countries of the Western Balkans could profit from the experience of Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary that had successfully passed through the NATO accession process with all the far-reaching consequences for their armed forces, described for instance in the Bulgarian contributions. But there could be also a joined effort of lessons learned in the Western Balkans itself. For instance Serbia-Montenegro now faces a very huge troop reduction,

which will cause social problems. Bosnia-Herzegovina has already gone through this painful process, therefore Belgrade could profit from the Bosnian experience in developing social and economic aid programmes for the retired military personnel.

Beside all the good proposals for a well done army reform in South East Europe, which are presented in this publication, one should stay realistic in regard of what can be achieved in a short and medium term in the field of security policy in this region:

South East Europe today is still far away from having a common system of co-operative security. In terms of security policy we can differentiate between three groups of countries: One group consists of Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria as integrated members of NATO, the second group Croatia, Macedonia and Albania is on the way to be integrated in the euro-atlantic structures maybe in some years and the third group, which consists of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia-Montenegro is not even accepted in the NATO-Partnership for Peace. Having this differentiation in mind one important goal of NATO and EU in South East Europe should be to harmonize the armed forces of the Balkan countries by establishing the same values in order to make co-operative security easier. But this harmonization process can't mean unified and imposed solutions for the transformation of armed forces in South East Europe, which do not take into consideration especially the different economic opportunities and social conditions of every Balkan country.

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