

# PROMOTING DEMOCRACY IN THE BALKANS

When it comes to the Balkans, democratization is seldom a topic. In a region plagued by ethnic conflict and state-building problems, often in some combination with one another, the usual paradigm of democratic transformation may seem far-fetched at best. For a polity to democratize, it should first be acknowledged as one by its entire population and granted the same recognition by the international 'powers', the historical contributors, due to their conflicting interests and relentless intervention, to what we call today 'Balkans'. To meet these two conditions simultaneously was proved an exceptional historical occurrence in South-Eastern Europe. As Barrington-Moore jr. once put it, small Eastern European countries should not even be included in discussions on social and political change, as 'the decisive causes of their politics lie outside their own boundaries.' In one form or another, and despite occasional years of respite, it is fair to say that Romania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia became finally able to decide on their own course only after 1990, and then only carrying essential legacies which were not altogether their own doing, such as borders. What we have witnessed ever since is an attempt to reshape the basic foundations these states are built upon, namely their political identities and cultures, so considerably more than just 'democratization'.

To assist this twofold transformation is no simple business. Many theories and preconceptions had to be revised in the process. Some conclusions of the first decade in democracy promotion in South-Eastern Europe can be read in this collection of papers. They were presented at SAR's international conference co-organized with New Europe College on May 6, 2002. The conference was supported by many generous sponsors, listed below. We thank them and all the participants for making this event happen. Special thanks are owed to editor of Journal of Democracy, Larry Diamond, who chose Romania as his first East European stop.

*Editors*

SAR's conference on democratization of the Balkans and the role of think-tanks was supported by :

**Freedom House**  
**US Embassy Romania**  
**British Council Romania**  
**Goethe Institute**  
**German Marshall Fund of the United States**  
**MATRA and UNDP RBEC (Bluebird program)**