



Belgrade Centre for Security Policy

Gundulićev venac 48
11000 Belgrade
Tel: 011 | 3287 226; 011 | 3287 334
Email: office@bezbednost.org
Web: www.bezbednost.org

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Author: Adel Abusara

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Editors: Miroslav Hadžić, Milorad Timotić and Predrag Petrović

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Comparative Analysis of the Strategic Documents of the Western Balkans

Adel Abusara

Introduction

One of the important tests of the achieved level of democratization for every country in transition is the state of affairs of its strategic-doctrinal framework. By analysing the number of main strategic documents of a country (in transition, but also in general), their hierarchy, main stakeholders that participate in their creation, the (non-)existence of the flow of information between the authorities and the public before these documents are adopted, and most importantly - their content, one can find out much more than mere security and defence aspirations of its political elite.

On the basic level, the sole existence of these documents tells us indirectly if the first generation of the security sector reform (SSR) is finished and if there is an effective (!) democratic oversight of the whole security sector and all the stakeholders in it. Also, they depict how political elite perceives the need for a comprehensive dialogue with the wider public (interested CSOs, academia, independent experts) on the country's essential issues, i.e. the real level of acquired democracy. The importance that is being given to the adoption of these documents according to democratic standards and following the right hierarchy shows if the need for their existence is really understood. For example, if they are being adopted at the same time, in a twisted and speeded up procedure, with wrong institutions to pass them, it is very likely that main stakeholders are just trying to have the "shell", the empty "form" of a democratic country, without making a real effort to create comprehensive security and defence systems as well as security policy. On the other hand, even if main strategic documents do not clearly state the aspirations of the country in transition on the international security scene (this is precisely what they should do, but it is not always the case), the model that is used for writing can be a clear indicator in this sense.

Despite all the benefits of making this kind of analysis for the Western Balkan countries, it is very difficult to do so. The Balkans (more or less) "successfully" defies any logical framework; the ongoing process of building economic and security community in the region and its (slow) integration in the most important international security and economic organizations is happening due to a strong push and influence coming from the international community. It is highly uncertain that all the countries of the region would remain on the same course without this pressure. The geopolitical status of the region is still a matter of concern and worries: ten years after the last conflict in the region, not all the boundaries are clear, the status of Kosovo is still somewhat disputable, the future of Bosnia-Herzegovina is still gloomy and Macedonia is not much closer to the solution of its dispute with Greece (although recent bankruptcy situation that Greece has been faced



with might seriously affect its capability to remain on the same course concerning the name dispute with its northern neighbour, as well as the non-recognition of Kosovo). Nevertheless, we will try to pursue the analysis believing that it will give us at least some insight into the dubious balance sheet of the region as well as in different security trends in its countries.

The efforts to detect and observe new trends in security sectors in the Western Balkans and their general level of democratization through methodological usage of comparative analysis of main strategic documents (the National Security Strategy, Defence Strategy and Strategic Defence Review) of the countries of the region is justified on several levels: firstly, the countries of the region had similar experience of instabilities and crises in the last decade of 20th century, as well as a slow stabilization process at the beginning of the new century; secondly, the timing for the creation of new strategies was again very similar – they have all adopted their first strategic documents in the last 10 years or so; finally, the countries' answer to the ultimate push from the international community (and especially the EU in this sense) for regional cooperation, their sincerity and willingness to cooperate clearly show how far they have moved from the "remnants" of their recent gloomy past. Naturally, the scope of our analysis needed to be narrowed down only to the *main* strategic security documents in order to be able to grasp the most important new trends in different security sectors in the region.

General Context

Twenty years after the demise of the Cold War system and the start of the wars for the heritage of socialist Yugoslavia, the Balkan region is consolidated in security sense, meaning that there is no immediate threat of another large-scale armed conflict in it. Security vacuum that was created by the dissolution of the previous system and socialist Yugoslavia as a remnant of that system has mostly been filled. Still, the region remains much more divided than connected: starting from purely political division, the term "Western Balkans" has been created by international community in order to exclude Slovenia (which is now perceived as a Central European country), Romania and Bulgaria, all members of the EU and NATO. Secondly, the problem of Kosovo has not been solved yet despite strong pressures and nobody can predict the final solution for it.¹ Thirdly, the heritage of the conflicts and different perceptions of the importance of regional cooperation is still apparent in the relations between the countries², although on the lower levels of interaction there are examples of good cooperation.³

Fourthly, the countries of the region are in the different stages of Euro-Atlantic integrations: Croatia will become a EU member in 2012 or 2013; Macedonia has been a candidate since 2005 (but it hasn't started the negotiations yet); Albania,

¹ Without any prejudices to its status, Kosovo is treated here apart from Serbia due to a complete differentiation from the Serbian security system and efforts of the international community and local actors to create its own strategic-doctrinal framework.

² For further information of regional cooperation: Delevic (2007), Regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans, Chaillot Papers no. 104, ISS, Paris.

³ Police cooperation between Croatia and Serbia can be one of those examples.

Montenegro and Serbia have submitted their candidacies and will probably become candidates this or next year, while Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to become a fully functional state before it gets to that point. Finally, Kosovo has been given strong European prospect, but its status needs to be resolved first once and for all. When speaking about purely security integrations, things are not much clearer here – Albania and Croatia are already NATO members, Macedonia was prevented from becoming a member by Greece on the 2009 Bucharest NATO summit, while the Serbian National Assembly has proclaimed military neutrality, which has not (yet) been recognized in the world. Bosnia Herzegovina and Montenegro have strong NATO ambitions (they have both been given Membership Action Plan), but weak democratic capabilities (at least BiH), while NATO is main security force on Kosovo.

Having all this in mind, it can be hardly said that the Western Balkans is a genuinely unified security-policy region. This all comes from the sole fact that political elites, but also societies that they represent, still do not interpret the fundamentals of the security in a similar manner even on the common, regional level (of course, with different content stemming from one country to another). As we will show, there is no notion of security as a more general structure that involves the whole region. Finally, political elites in the region are not yet capable of defining, structuring and prioritising the basics of their security policies.

Creation and the State of Affairs of Strategic Documents

The strategic and doctrinal documents of the countries of the Western Balkans have all been created in the first decade of 21st century. The first ten years after the breakup of the Socialist Yugoslavia were marked by the wars for its heritage and creation of new states. These states were too preoccupied with their war plans, increased poverty and sanctions imposed by the international community to pay attention to the needed consolidation and creation of security framework. On the other hand, its mostly authoritarian leaders did not have the security framework as a priority on their agenda: they thought they knew much better than anybody else how to answer the main security questions or they did not even want this issue to be raised, because it could bring to an unwanted debate on the status of their countries or their own, mostly authoritarian rule. The same goes for Albania which was faced with major poverty and political insurgency in 1997, followed by the break-down of state and security institutions. This is why the first serious efforts for writing strategic documents did not happen before 1999 by the then Macedonian government.

After 2000 and until 2006, practically all the countries of the region had their first strategic documents. Albania passed its first strategic document, the Security Strategy Document in 2000, whilst the first document labelled as National Security Strategy was adopted in 2004 and revised in 2007. The National Defence Strategy was adopted in 2000 and revised several times afterwards, the last revision dating to 2007. Finally, the Military Strategy was adopted in 2002 and revised in 2005, while the White Paper on Defence was published in 2005. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the so-called Defence Policy was adopted in 2001, the Military Doctrine was endorsed in 2003, and the Security Policy of BiH in 2006. The Defence Review is in the drafting stage and is expected to be submitted before the



October elections in BiH. Croatian case saw the National Security Strategy and Defence Strategy being passed at the same day in 2002. A year later, the Military Strategy was approved, while the Strategic Defence Review was adopted in 2005. Macedonia adopted the Strategy of Defence in 1999 (it was amended in February 2010), then approved the National Security and Defence Concept and Strategic Defence Review in 2003 and the White Paper on Defence in 2005. Finally, the National Security Strategy was adopted in 2008. In this case though, there is another document that needs to be taken into account as part of strategic documents of Macedonia – it is the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which was signed in August 2001 and which set a frame that ended the hostilities between the ethnic Albanian minority and Slavic majority in the country. This document “...has included number of provisions on the issue of security and defence...which have guided overall security policies in the country” (Yusufi, 2010).

The case of Serbia and Montenegro is somewhat peculiar, because of the efforts to keep alive firstly the federation (after the fall of Milosevic), and then the State Union consisted of those two republics, despite the evident lack of interest for this at least from one side. This caused both countries to finish their strategic framework just after the “velvet break-up” of the State Union and acquired independence. Montenegro had its first versions of the National Security Strategy and the Defence Strategy adopted only few months after independence in 2006, whilst upgraded versions were adopted two years later, at the end of 2008. Serbia, on the other hand, had even bigger delay in adopting its security and doctrinal documents due to political turmoil caused by the self-proclaimed independence of its outbreak province, Kosovo and Metohija, and due to different perceptions of security that then main political parties had. This is why it took three years for the National Security Strategy and Defence Strategy to be adopted at the end of 2009. The Strategic Defence Review from 2006 (relevant for the period 2006 - 2010) was revised in 2009 as well.

Finally, the National Security Strategy of Kosovo is at this moment under development. Its strategic and doctrinal framework has been up to now constrained by the uncertainty of its political status and, to some extent, the unwillingness of the international community to hand over the ownership over important political and strategic decisions to local structures. Lastly, the defence of Kosovo is still in the hands of NATO forces, and will remain so in the foreseeable future⁴.

⁴ For all these reasons, Kosovo is not present a lot in this analysis, since it still doesn't have its own strategic-doctrinal framework.

Albania	BiH	Croatia	Kosovo	Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia
National Security Strategy (2004)	Security Policy (2006)	National Security Strategy (2002)	/	National Security Strategy (2008)	National Security Strategy (2008)	National Security Strategy (2009)
National Defence Strategy (2007)	Defence Policy (2008)	Defence Strategy (2002)	/	Strategy of Defence (2010)	Defence Strategy (2008)	National Defence Strategy (2009)
/	Defence Review (to be submitted in mid-2010)	Strategic Defence Review (2005)	/	Strategic Defence Review – Political Framework (2003)	/	Strategic Defence Review (2009)

Table 9: Review of all the relevant security and defence strategies in the Western Balkans, and years of the adoption of latest versions

Starting from their names, the strategic documents of the countries of the Western Balkans do show some similarity. The highest document in the hierarchy of strategic documents in all countries is the National Security Strategy, although this was not the case everywhere at the very beginning (Macedonian National Security and Defence Concept which was replaced with the National Security Strategy). The exception is BiH which has the Security Policy of BiH. Apart from this cover document, all the countries possess another two types of documents: one is military or defence strategies and the other is white papers or strategic defence reviews.

Some of these documents are either revisions of previously adopted documents, or are soon to be replaced by new versions. Although the fast and ongoing changes in the political and security sectors of the Western Balkans can present pertinent explanation for this trend, it is much more likely that, at least at the beginning, the political elites of the countries were faced with the “unknown” when trying to copy from developed Western democracies and create their own security framework. The times of wandering might have ended quite recently, with second or even third generation of the revised strategic documents. On the other hand, the similarity of the names of strategic documents (after the inconsistencies that existed at the beginning) could indicate that most of the countries, despite internal differences, have eventually chosen the same or at least similar model of strategic documents to copy and re-shape to their particular needs. This premise is going to be challenged when we start analysing the structure of the documents.

Drafting and Adoption of the Documents

As we have already stated, even the way that strategies and doctrines were drafted and passed, thus creating the strategic system of the Balkan countries, is very indicative of the countries’ level of democracy. Firstly, the extent to which the in-



ternational actors are included into the drafting of these documents is a certain indicator of a country's capability to independently make the important decisions on its own future. Also, a more sophisticated analysis can give us an insight in the general relations between the main stakeholders involved in writing and passing of these documents: the relations between the President, the Government (specifically the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of the Interior) and the Parliament of a country. Another important insight stemming from the analysis of the drafting of these documents is the political elite's attitude towards the media, academic community, and civil society organizations – if the latter are included in the drafting process, or at least if their opinion is heard, we can assume healthy and partner relations between the sides. In contrast to that, the lack of any public discussion and preparation of the documents "behind the closed doors" signifies poor communication and lack of mutual trust between the two (sometimes confronting) sides.

Countries of the region, with no exception, had a difficult task in showing their democratic abilities during this process. A striking example for the first step, the drafting of the strategies, would be the only country that will definitely enter the EU in 2012 or 2013 – Croatia. An excellent idea of creating an independent body tasked to write the National Security Strategy which spent a year and a half drafting this document was neglected in a matter of days and a small group of people from several state ministries wrote the Strategy within few weeks. Serbian case shows that there is a need for a wide consensus at least among the elite and proper procedures in order for a strategy to be written and adopted. During the period of "cohabitation" between the then Prime Minister and the President in 2006-2007 there were two teams, two Working Groups which produced as many proposals. The proposal of the Presidency's cabinet and the Government's one reflected somewhat different and even (in certain cases) contradicting ideas of the two main political actors in Serbia at that time on the important strategic decisions related to the approaching self-proclamation of Kosovo's independence and other security issues. This problem could have been avoided if the need for a strategic framework had been clearly stated in the supreme legal document of the country, its Constitution, and consequently, if the procedure of their drafting and adoption had existed. Since none of this was the case, politicians found themselves in some sort of a limbo – a situation that even might have been favourable for them at the moment, leaving them without obligation to draft strategies, thus raising controversial issues. It was only when it was clearly stated that the Ministry of Defence was in charge of drafting the document and the National Parliament of adopting it⁵, that this problem was sorted out in a proper way (with significant and a hardly acceptable delay, though).

It is very important to observe to what extent the international community, which has been in various forms and constellations present in the area since the very beginning of the conflicts twenty years ago, participated/pushed for drafting and adoption of the documents. This situation is most apparent in Kosovo, whose provisional authorities are not yet in charge of its defence. It is still a task carried out by the International Military Presence, i.e. NATO. Also, due to the lack of local base of knowledge, Kosovo (as well as BiH) has become some sort of a "playground"

⁵ Of course, we should not underestimate the importance of the fact that the co-habitation government has changed after the elections, thus easing the agreement within the institutional structures.

for various attempts of drafting strategic documents. Different consultancies and international organizations brought their own experience from various post-conflict regions in a new “laboratory” and tried to implement it, although it might have been somewhat inappropriate for the situation in Kosovo. The same (or similar) thing happened in Bosnia Herzegovina after the end of the war, but also in Albania after the 1997 fall of state structures and, to some extent in 2001 after the insurgency in Macedonia. Dayton agreement, Ohrid agreement and Ahtisaari plan for Kosovo are today not only known as the documents that ended a war, a hostility or gave a solution for a deadlock situation – they are also first provisional strategic documents of BiH, Macedonia and Kosovo. The problem with this kind of approach, which is persistently used in the Balkans (but not there exclusively), is that it gives solutions in the form of various strategic documents without building capacities for local ownership and their implementation. A positive exception (that does confirm the rule, though) is the international involvement in Macedonia which focused from the very beginning on capacity building and education, thus creating a solid base of knowledge, and after 2001, a full local ownership of the process.

Speaking of the positive, one should not get an impression that the involvement of the international community brought no good to the region. The driving force for the creation of the strategic-doctrinal framework of all the countries of the region is undoubtedly the prospect of EU and NATO membership. The possibility to become a part of one of those organizations, or both, is pushing countries to make necessary reforms of their societies, economies, even to some extent to acquire completely different values. Therefore, the “open door” policy of NATO and a clear commitment of the EU that all the countries of this region do have membership prospect, providing that they fulfil the necessary standards, have been of utmost importance up to now for the security sector as well and will be essential in the following years⁶.

When it is about adopting the strategic document, it is all about *who* does that (which state institution), since it increases or decreases its legitimacy and might seriously affect longevity. Since all the countries of the Western Balkans are proclaimed parliamentary or semi-presidential democracies, if it is not the legislative body who gives the final word – the Parliament, it means that the people of the country, through their elected representatives (all of them, not just the ruling nomenclature) did not have a say and that a document was (usually) prepared, drafted and adopted by the executive branch, the government. This doesn't make it the document of the country and for it, but to some extent a paper expressing the views and wishes solely of the party/parties in power at the particular moment. This was the case with the first set of strategic documents of Montenegro (2006), where the Ministry of Defence was in charge of drafting the document that was later passed in the session of the Government. This grave mistake that

⁶ The role of the EU in this matter is very dubious. Although stating from 2000 that the region has a prospect of membership and despite the clear commitment from Thessaloniki summit in 2003, the EU and its leading politicians have doubted a lot whether it is necessary to accept all the Balkan countries. These doubts are still present, and make the case of Balkan accession still not fait accompli, mostly due to internal problems of the functioning of the Union itself. Still, mixed signals that were being sent during the last decade gave a lot of maneuvering space to local politicians and ultimately, slowed down the reform pace.



significantly reduced the relevance of the documents was corrected in a second attempt with the National Security Strategy and Defence Strategy of 2008. Still, this is, apart from Bosnian case⁷, rather an exception than a rule. The other countries allow, for instance the Ministry of Defence, to draft *and* issue defence and security policy without consulting the rest of the Government or the Parliament only in special cases (e.g. Macedonia has this provision, but without clearly stating which are the cases when this exception can be applied).

Still, not everybody shares this opinion on the importance of the adoption procedure to end up precisely in the Parliament. The author of the analysis of Croatian strategic documents questioned this right of the Parliament, considering it “illogical”. The explanation is in line with the idea that the “content of the fundamental policy documents of the executive branch” should not be decided upon in the Parliament, because it “takes away its credibility and dignity” (of the executive branch), “and makes the Parliament impotent should any issue with the content of the strategic documents occur in the future” (Mahecic, 2010). Therefore, the author proposes that the Parliament should only give its opinion on the drafts of strategic documents, and that either the President or the Prime Minister should adopt them.

If the Parliament’s powers in this issue are reduced only to giving opinion, the problem that might arise is that executive institutions would be able to shape strategic documents of the country without any consent of its people represented by the Parliament. As we have seen from the example of the European Parliament, giving an opinion does allow some space for a manoeuvre, but is simply not enough for a legislative institution. It is not elaborated, for instance, what the Parliament’s “no” would mean? Would it be binding for the executive branch? Would it mean the creation of some joint committee that would seek for a mutually acceptable solution? It is our opinion that the main strategic, but not doctrinal (!) documents need to be adopted in the Parliament. Their significance and ranking in the hierarchy of documents of a country go right after the Constitution; they show the future course of a country’s security philosophy and therefore need to be approved right in the Parliament.

One of the most important challenges in creating a strategic-doctrinal framework that the countries of the Western Balkans have not yet managed to deal with is the competence of those who are drafting them. As already explained, the international community did engage itself in building local capacities for ownership over the process of drafting the documents and creating an overall favourable environment in the countries that were torn by the conflicts. Still, there is a significant lack of this local basis in many of them, except for, to some extent, in Serbia and Croatia. Another problem with trained and educated staff is that they are very often highly politicized and, being parts of public administration, subject to frequent changes following the changes in the government. None of the countries of the region has acquired the necessary level of understanding that drafting of the country’s most important documents is not a matter of daily political (mis)understandings, but a work that goes beyond that. On the other hand, it is doubtful whether the governments themselves are anywhere in the Balkans competent to

⁷ The peculiarity of the ethnic-based political system of BiH defies any serious analyses of the relations among different authorities.

decide on and implement the security policy or to change the pace or direction of security reforms.

The last, but by far not the least important issue is the level of involvement of the media, academic circles, and civil society organizations in drafting strategic documents. Again, the best example is set in Macedonia, with the so-called "Process 2002" initiated by the then President of Macedonia, and consisting of a series of roundtables that brought together the "relevant national and international governmental and non-governmental authorities to discuss security issues...that later served as basis...in the design of the strategy documents" (Yusufi, 2010). This is actually the only case in the Western Balkans when official structures initiated and conducted a series of (in)formal meetings with representatives of non-governmental organisations *before* the drafting process has even begun! Somewhat similar process happened in Croatia, as previously explained⁸, but with poor final results. None of the governments of the countries in the region have showed any intention up to now to include the public in the drafting process. As a matter of fact, they even gave their best, in a more or less subtle way, to keep everybody away from giving any insights even when the documents were drafted. The most striking example happened in Serbia when the government published the draft proposal of the National Security Strategy and the Defence Strategy and offered it for public discussion during Christmas and New Year's holidays. It was hardly an administrative mistake, but rather an intention of the makers to avoid any public criticism or serious discussion. Nevertheless, the pressure from several dozens of NGOs forced them to extend this period for one month, which did eventually result in a fruitful discussion. On the other side of the coin is the interested public of Montenegro, Albania and Kosovo which was never consulted during the process of drafting and adoption of the strategies. One, although lame explanation, might be that there is not enough expertise in those countries for a quality evaluation of the strategy proposals to be carried out. Still, a much more convenient one is that the governments of these countries did not want anybody else to be involved in the process, which delegitimizes the process itself to some extent, but also speaks a lot of the democratic culture of a country.

Hierarchy of Adoption of the Strategic Documents

The adoption of strategic and doctrinal documents in the right order shows the maturity of political elite and their understanding of the importance of encompassing a strategic doctrinal framework in a proper way. At the top end and first to be developed should be the National Security Strategy and all the other documents should be subordinated to and in line with it. The necessity of adopting this overarching strategy first lies in the fact that it would give the framework for all the others. In this sense, politicians of the Western Balkans countries have shown that, at least at the beginning of this process, they just wanted to gain democratic "credentials" by the mere adoption of strategies, so they were pushing to finish the process as quickly as possible without paying attention to the right order and to the fact that the strategies need to follow this basic hierarchy. This is why most of the strategic documents do overlap in their content in the manner that the same expressions and wordings are used, which is not that problematic,

⁸ See page 6.



or simply by copying the content (especially challenges, risks and threats) which is much worse.

None of the observed countries followed the right order of drafting and adoption, i.e. the lack of transition from general documents to more specific ones is a rule. For instance, Croatia adopted its first National Security Strategy and Defence Strategy at the same day, 19th March 2002. Serbia did the same with its own documents of the same importance, adopting them in October 2009. Again, this resulted in certain overlapping – some segments in the Defence Strategy have not been elaborated enough, but entirely “imported” from the National Security Strategy (NSS). Further on, the Serbian Strategic Defence Review was adopted 7 months prior to these two documents, contributing to somewhat chaotic situation. Montenegro, albeit being among the last ones to adopt strategic documents, has already “had a chance” to make the same mistake, and afterwards to avoid repeating it. The NSS and Defence strategy were firstly adopted within 20 days in 2006 – the NSS on November 27th and the Defence Strategy on December 17th, not giving enough time for the latter to be made in line with the NSS. Still when these documents were revised in 2008, there was enough time left between their adoptions to conclude that the process was sound enough (in theory).

Even more confusing situation occurred in Bosnia though, where the first strategic and doctrinal documents defining BiH’s strategic security goals were the Defence Policy and Military Doctrine. Nearly three years later, the Security Policy (the most general security document, counterpart of the NSS) was adopted, although logic presumes the reverse order. It is only in Kosovo where the current situation justifies the so-called “*bottom-up approach*”, meaning drafting and adoption of sector-based strategies instead of development of a national security strategy.

Finally, at first glance, Macedonia seems to make the same case as all other countries. Not only the first Defence Strategy and White Paper on Defence were adopted before the NSS (or National and Security Concept, as the first version of the NSS was called), but all other documents (apart from Ohrid Framework Agreement, whose adoption was dictated by the conflict and efforts for its resolution) were adopted in the same year, 2003 (with White Paper on Defence and Strategy for the Police Reforms amended in 2005 and 2004, respectively), although not at the same time. Such a tight schedule does not leave a lot of faith in the capabilities of the authors to make a sound coordination and right hierarchy. Still, despite these disturbances, in principle the strategic framework of Macedonia is by far the most harmonized in the region. For instance, the Strategic Defence Review and the revised White Paper on Defence explicitly state their subordination to the National Security and Defence Concept and explain that they follow the views, positions and guidance set out in it. On the other hand, “the Defence Strategy refers mainly to the National Security Strategy” (Yusufi, 2010).

Content Analysis, Part One: the Differentiation and Place of Challenges, Risks and Threats in Strategic Documents

The analysis of the content of security and doctrinal documents existing in the region confirms what was previously stated – the countries mostly dealt with the creation of these documents without a real and thorough understanding of *why*

it had to be done. Very often the idea behind their creation was either to please domestic public (fulfilling the form that implies the democratization of the security sector) or to be in line with the international standards, and to show to foreign “evaluators” of domestic reforms (coming either from the EU or from NATO) the maturity of the political leadership and the country by a mere existence of strategic and/or doctrinal framework.

This statement is easily confirmed by the lack of any prevailing model upon which the strategies were based. If the strategies had been made with the only intention of mapping the security sector of respective countries, it would have implied a thorough analysis of the various security and doctrinal frameworks, including those of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as Western models. Eventually, some model would have been taken and, since the countries, despite their peculiarities, belong to a common security environment, there would be a possibility to detect the prevailing one. Still, this is not the case. The strategic documents have completely diverse structure one from another, making a comparative analysis somewhat complicating and challenging. Even the documents that succeeded the old ones do not resemble them too much. Still, this can be perceived in a positive manner, that each revision of a strategic document is a step in the right direction (if the change in the respective document is positive, of course). More realistically, it means the countries are still toying with various ideas.

It is very likely that new revisions of strategic documents in the region will start resembling each other, taking NATO standards as a model. The trend has already started to be applied, with Montenegro making its NSS and Strategic Defence Review challenges, risks and threats (CRT) completely in line with NATO ones, as well as with Croatia waiting first to become a NATO member (which happened in 2009), then for the new NATO Strategic Concept to be adopted (fall 2010, most probably) and then finally to adopt its new, revised set of strategic documents. This new line has already, in the case of Montenegro, led to somewhat grotesque formulations in their NSS, where it is, for instance, stated that the regions that could “spill over” challenges, risks and threats to Montenegro security system are the Middle East, North Caucasus and North Africa. While these regions are potential risk and threat “exporters” for NATO countries (and even then, not for all of NATO members, despite globalization), making this kind of statement is at least in ignorance of the geopolitical position of Montenegro in international relations and ultimately, of its geographic position. Eventually, due to this urge to be fully in line with NATO position, the creators of the NSS of Montenegro have basically completely “ruled out” the very country from its own Strategy.

The second observation stemming from the reading of the documents is that none of them makes a clear and overall distinction between challenges, risks and threats. This makes a proper risk analysis of various documents even more complicated, leaving the researchers to make their own conclusions and interpretations from the reading and general ideas of the texts. For instance, Serbian NSS clearly states that “non-legal, unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo and Metohija represents the biggest *threat* to the security of the Republic of Serbia” (NSS of Serbia, 2009), whilst the other enumerated challenges, risks or threats are not always clearly put into one of the categories. The negative side of this lack of lucidity is, of course, not due to the problems they raise for researchers to read



them, but in the fact that they do not fulfil their primary purpose then – the main stakeholders in security sector do not get a clear vision on how to react to a certain problem and how to be prepared to overcome it in advance.

The third important part of the analysis that stands for most of the countries is the lack of hierarchy between challenges, risks and threats enumerated in the documents. This serious problem means that again the readers of the documents cannot anticipate immediately what is perceived as the biggest threat for the country. For some of the documents, we can assume that the order of presentation in the strategies actually represents a certain level of prioritization, but we cannot be certain about it. Other documents do state what the biggest threat to their country is, but leave the other CRTs out of any hierarchy. This is the case with Serbia: “non-legal, unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo and Metohija represents the *biggest* threat to the security of the Republic of Serbia”. Then again, unless this threat is put as first on the list, which is not the case in Serbian NSS (it is on the third place), we can then exclude the possibility to perceive the very order of presentation as a sort of hierarchy. Croatian NSS makes the problem even worse by dividing the enumeration of the CRTs in two chapters. The first chapter mentions some of the CRTs, whilst they are being enumerated and rephrased in the third chapter. The only presumption that can be made is that those CRTs mentioned in the first chapter have a higher “ranking” in the prioritization than the others. Still, this does not fully solve the problem of the necessary prioritization, because even among the two groups of CRTs there is again no differentiation by importance.

Finally, the only country whose documents (only one of them, actually) do have some sort of hierarchy of perceived CRTs is Macedonia, where they are put in *time dimension* (*currently, mid-term, long-term*) and sorted by the *level of intensity* (*high, medium, low, very low*). In this hierarchical structure, the top place (the most significant CRT) goes for “possible manifestations of extreme nationalism, racial and religious intolerance, international terrorism, organized crime, illegal migration, illegal trade with all types including trade with strategic and dual use of materials, insufficiently secure and efficient borders etc.” As we have already stated, this prioritization exists only in Macedonia’s Strategic Defence Review of 2003. Since none of the other documents repeats this prioritization, thus not making coherent overall strategic framework, it loses a lot from its relevance.

Both this and previous issue, as well as the very language of the Strategies refer to a problem that needs quite some time to be solved in the Western Balkans – most of the countries have not yet fully acquired the logic and the very new language of the post-cold world. Therefore, they are circling around the modern threats, risks and challenges, usually using the so-called “copy-paste” method to take CRTs from various other strategic documents and trying (unsuccessfully) to apply them in their own strategies unable to grasp the real differences and thus make the proper hierarchy.

Content Analysis, Part Two: Internal, Regional and Global Threats

The major similarity of nearly all countries of the region and their strategic documents is the way they structured the perception of threats for their country. The

division into internal, regional and global threats is appropriate, allowing a reader to move easier through the document and to distinguish the intentions of the writer when referring to certain threats. It is only the Montenegrin strategic documents that are not structured this way, yet they can be put in the same frame and analyzed in the same way as the other ones due to a small number of threats (only seven) that they presume. Although the documents generally do not leave a lot of space for the analysis of CRT we will dedicate sufficient space for observing the differences, similarities and peculiarities among them, because it will help us gain important insight into their logic and strategic philosophy.

Internal Threats

Two CRTs emerging at the national level for nearly all the countries are *disasters* and *transitional problems*, whilst other two of them, *organized crime* and *terrorism* exist as perceived internal threats in all the countries except BiH and Montenegro. Organized crime remains a chronic problem for the whole Balkans that none of the governments of the region has yet managed to deal with. It is rooted deeply even in the institutional structures of the state, knows no borders and has no ethnic, nationalistic or any other obstacles for a "joint action". This is by far "the most successful" aspect of regional cooperation. Organized crime networks have been very active throughout the region in illegal trafficking of narcotics and people, illegal migrations, proliferation of conventional weapons etc. It is therefore very interesting, and to some extent indicative, why this very threat has not been listed in Bosnian and Montenegrin documents as internal, although EC Progress Reports for both countries state that despite some progress regarding the fight against it, "organized crime remains a matter of serious concern" (Progress Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina, European Commission 2009). As much as the creators of Montenegrin strategic documents might have intentionally done that in order to "avoid" emphasizing organized crime as an internal threat, it is unclear why it is not a part of internal threats in Bosnian document.

The usage of terrorism as an internal threat is somewhat ambiguous – it is very hard to prove the existence of terrorist "cells" in the region and since the conflicts in the southern part of the Western Balkans – Kosovo, southern Serbia and Macedonia have ended, there were no real terrorist threats in the region. On the other hand, the countries of the region, although most of them do send troops to Afghanistan and Iraq to help American "fight against terrorism", have rather insignificant number of troops on the spot, which renders it unlikely to provoke any sort of reaction from terrorists. The only explanation for the inclusion of terrorism as a threat is a possible "transitory position" of the countries of the Western Balkans for terrorists whose final destination would be the EU.

Transitional problems are thoroughly described in the documents as problems of "political transition which result in a slow development of effective and efficient executive, legislative and judicial authorities; problems of the transition to *market economy*, which result in a low level of domestic and foreign investment and are favourable for grey economy and black market; slow pace, difficulties and irregularities in implementation of privatization process...technological regression and deterioration of production capacities...unemployment..." (Bosnian Defence Review – not yet published). Macedonian documents add to this list some peculiar threats – "urban terrorism, serious crime including blackmail, racketeering,



murders and attacks on the property of citizens, economic crime, tax evasion..." (The National Security and Defence Concept, Macedonia). Inclusion of disasters (ecological, technological and epidemics) as internal threats shows that the countries of the region do follow at least a minimum of standards regarding contemporary security issues.

Apart from threats that are, more or less, part of the documents in all of the countries, there are some that are connected to very particular internal security milieus and perceptions. Serbian strategies, as already mentioned⁹, perceive the declared independence of Kosovo as the biggest threat to Serbia's security. In line with this claim, separatist aspirations are also enumerated as a strong factor of instability for Serbia, possibly for the region as well. Macedonian strategy (most probably) refers to the consequences of its long-lasting dispute with one of the neighbours when, using very "cold-war-phraseology", it states that one of its internal threats are "activities of foreign special services directed towards worsening of the security situation and thus down the democratic and integrative processes, specially those toward NATO and the EU" (The National Security Defence Concept of Macedonia, 2003). Also, while the other documents only mention the notion of energy interdependency, Macedonian ones openly state that one of the threats for the country's security are "the consequences of clashes of interests for the use of the sources and the routes of strategic energy materials, as well as blocking their importation into the Republic of Macedonia." Having in mind that the whole region is highly dependent on the imports of gas from Russia, it is very strange why at least this level of attention was not paid to this very relevant problem elsewhere in the region.

Bosnia defines several threats that are direct consequences of the war held on its soil, some of them in a very interesting way: firstly, there is an "incomplete and selective implementation of the Dayton Peace Accord". The wording here is probably the lowest common denominator that was agreed upon, since the two confronted sides have firm, stubborn and completely opposite stances on the issue. One view stipulates that Dayton Accord and the "monster" that has been created with its provisions should be dismantled, thus giving way to functional state, while the other considers Dayton Peace Accord as the "Holy Bible" that cannot be touched upon. The "Legacy of political and social animosity advocating various kinds of nationalistic extremism" is another threat inherent only for BiH, as well as the "weapons and ammunition stored in inadequate storage sites and illegally held in individual possession".

Finally, the authors of Albanian and Serbian NSS have paid special attention to demography problems, i.e. illegal migration that leads to "brain drain" effect, as well as "uncontrolled population movement" (Albanian NSS), a phenomenon present in all Western Balkan countries, but specifically emphasized only in these two strategies. The Serbian NSS had just a bit different wording, stating that the problem is the "non-proportional economic and demographic development of the RS and neighbouring countries" leading to migrations from underdeveloped regions to the more developed ones (NSS Serbia, 2009). Apart from that, the last two internal threats in Albanian NSS are very confusing, possibly misleading and barely understandable. The first is connected to "misinformation of the public opinion"

⁹ Check page 14

that “favours destabilization”, while the second refers to “inadequate development of education, science and culture”, because “...fundamental condition for the development, prosperity and protection of the national identity are specialized human resources, scientific capacities and a realistic presentation of our culture and tradition.” The last sentence can have dangerous implications, because it can give to the state apparatus the role of the final arbiter in deciding what is a *realistic* presentation of Albanian culture and tradition, the role that it should not have, by all means.

Regional Threats

Before we elaborate a bit more on regional threats in strategic documents, it would be very indicative and compatible with the analysis to see how the countries explain their own role in the security structures in the region. It would also give us an insight on how these states perceive themselves, first and foremost in the regional context. Despite the recent conflict and deadlock in ethnic relations in nearly all multinational communities, basically all the countries of the region use similar wordings when trying to position themselves: the idea that a country has “evolved” from the position of a “security consumer” into a provider of stability, contributor to peace and good neighbour relations is the *motif* of all strategies. To what extent is this realistic or just a wishful thinking is another issue.

The most controversial in this sense is without any doubt the Albanian National Security Strategy and the concept of the so-called “Albanian national issue” that it raises. This “issue” is set among the Strategy’s most important mid-term and long-term objectives contributing to the regional stability: “Albania aspires to be an active partner in the regional policy. In this context, the *Albanian national issue* will be achieved through the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the countries of the region and also solutions that will provide a long-term and acceptable guarantee for the international community” (National Security Strategy, Albania). The authors of the analysis of Albanian security documents emphasize the focus on European and Euro-Atlantic integrations (calling them wrongly “Europeanization”¹⁰), which is, in their opinion, a clear sign of avoiding the “nationalistic approach” in seeking the “solution for the Albanian issue” (Kamperi, 2010). The real question though is how to explain the raising of this issue as one of the top Security Strategy objectives. Hidden behind an innocent name and overall Euro-Atlantic integrations goal, it actually states that there are still existing nationalistic aspirations of Albanian political elite to gather all ethnic Albanians scattered in different Balkan countries in one state, or at least one political entity. One might ask then what would happen if the convenient possibility for the integration into the EU were not there anymore, or even worse, if some of the Balkan countries with ethnic Albanian minority did not make it to the EU? How would Albania then seek to solve the “the Albanian national issue”? The sole existence of this kind of idea in a high ranked official document can raise a lot of doubts in the sincerity of all other statements that reconfirm Albania’s commitment to good

¹⁰ This term is used in the literature meaning “downloading” of the EU policy into the national polity, but sometimes also “uploading” of national preferences to the EU level (Borzel, 1999). It is very rarely, and only with huge simplifications implying the process of joining the EU, instead it almost always signifies adopting EU norms and values. For more on the issue of Europeanization check the works of Grabbe, Schimelfennig and Sedelmeier and other authors.



regional cooperation.

Still, when reflecting on regional threats, the countries of the region show the highest degree of similarity in their documents. This comes from the notion that the legacy of the wars for socialist Yugoslavia's heritage and historical factors are still present and constitute a significant burden for creating a favourable security environment, which is acknowledged throughout the region. Therefore, the documents in different variations state that, although the possibility of an *armed conflict* is reduced, "...it can never be entirely ruled out" (NSS of Montenegro). The degree of certainty that there is no possibility for another regional "chaos" does differ though – Albania is neutral in this sense, whilst only Macedonian documents speak of the "realistic risks and dangers" coming from the regional "national, religious, greater-state and territorial confrontation". BiH finally, in the scope of its own fears, emphasizes the "aspiration for secession, autonomy and independence of certain ethnic groups" and armed conflicts that can arise from these aspirations as a serious regional (let alone national) problem.

A careful reading of the documents shows that the articulation of regional threats stems from internal problems that the countries have. Naturally, a lot of these problems have their roots in the fact that the region is still labelled as a post-conflict area, burdened with serious social, political and economic problems. On the other hand, the perception of regional threats gives us, even between the lines, the picture of very complicated relations among different countries in the region. Unfortunately, first neighbours are still in most cases perceived as "the others" that are not an imminent threat, but might be a destabilizing factor in the (near) future.

Due to this fact and a lot of other unresolved issues, the *regional instability and crises* are one of common regional threats for all the countries. It seems that, although peace, some sort of fragile stability and technical democracy have been achieved, even the countries themselves (let alone the EU and the rest of the international community) are not yet certain if all the problems and troubles are way behind, or likely to happen again. Specific in this sense is the case of BiH and Serbia which emphasize "secessionist tendencies", each of the two burdened with their own problems.

On the other hand, most of the countries refer to organized crime and extremism as regional problems. *Organized crime* has been already proven as a real threat with a potential to seriously undermine the efforts to "drag" the region into the EU. The murder of the famous Croatian journalist Ivo Pukanic showed in its worst how these informal networks work. It is being verbalized everywhere in the region by the statement that organized crime in the Balkans knows not for ethnic or nationalistic problems, sees no borders and has no visa issues. *Extremism* is being referred to as a problem throughout the region, mostly connected to its nationalistic, ethnic and religious side and has arisen as a consequence of the brutal clashes in the 90s. Whether it has existed before in the minds, collective memory and narrative of the peoples who were very often and throughout history on the opposite sides in very bloody conflicts is a very serious issue with a lot of pro's and con's, but beyond the scope of this analysis. Although extremism is specially emphasized in ethnically polarized countries (e.g. Macedonia), because of their imminent fear of destabilization, it exists everywhere. Macedonia therefore has

as a regional threat a “possible manifestation of extreme nationalism, racial and religious intolerance”, while Serbia states that “national, religious and political extremism, and destruction of cultural heritage” characterize the state of affairs of security in the region, thus “burdening the process of democratic transition” in its countries. *Transition* is also being mapped as the regional and not just an isolated country problem. Actually, the strategies stipulate that transition causes various political, social and economic cleavages that, they themselves can be source of regional instability.

Apart from the regional threats that are being put in the documents by all the countries, other (important) issues are also being raised by only some of them. Among the most interesting is certainly the issue of energy routes and a possible instability if energy imports are stopped. Although none of the documents states clearly what the impetus for putting this as a possible regional and national threat is, it is obvious that the trigger for it were two gas crises caused by the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Their effect was both devastating for the economies of the Balkan countries (but not only for them!) and showed the level of their dependence on these imports. Macedonian documents therefore point to the “consequences of clashes of interests for the use of the sources and the routes of strategic energy materials, as well as blocking their importation into the Republic of Macedonia”. This is a threat on both national and regional levels as perceived in the Macedonian National and Security Defence Concept. Strangely enough, it is only Macedonia who put it as a threat, although the recent crisis have shown that the countries of the Balkans are among the most dependent ones in all Europe, with numbers that go up to 90% of gas imports from Russia. This applies especially to Serbia and Montenegro, whose strategic documents were the last ones to be adopted or revised, leaving the two enough space after the last winter’s crisis to reconsider this specific problem as a possible challenge, threat or risk.

The last but not the least important, there are issues that have been tackled very briefly and without a lot of explanations, but that do complete the overall picture of how regional threats are perceived from a country’s perspective. Serbia, for instance, elaborates a bit on a tough position of the refugees and IDPs and their unresolved status in the region. This is normal, if we bear in mind that Serbia has the biggest number of people with that status in Europe. On the other hand, BiH and Croatia rightfully point to a huge number of anti-personnel mines and unexploded ordinance on their territory and the territories of the neighbouring countries.

Generally speaking, this part of the CRT analysis tends to be the most important one – if the countries are capable of understanding what the main obstacles on the regional level are, thus showing at least a certain level of maturity and mutual understanding, their Euro-Atlantic (or European, in case of Serbia) prospects are much brighter. Unfortunately, as we have shown in the analysis, there is a long way ahead before the creation of some sort of community or at least “regional” sensitivity can occur.

Global Threats

This is the least elaborated category of all. The world’s “usual suspect” in the last nine years – terrorism - is elaborated on in every strategy as the biggest threat of



the modern humanity, with possible (“spill-over”?) effects for the Balkans as well. The same goes for organized crime, which (as we have already stated) works as well in the Balkans as in the other parts of the world. Every document does also mention the possibility of interstate armed conflicts, but emphasizes that there is a low probability for this to happen. The Macedonian Defence Review even gives an estimation that, in the long-term (10 years and beyond), this probability will further decrease, as well as the probability of the “non-conventional and asymmetric threats, risks and dangers”. Still, the Review does not explain the basis for this estimation and especially the source of optimism for the latter, since none of the indicators points to a decrease in the possibility of asymmetric threats.

Environmental challenges are mentioned in all the countries as a problem that can have a serious effect on the security. Among the most mentioned environmental problems are: pollution, degradation, climate change, but also the scarcity of natural resources and the potential for future clashes arising from the possibility of having the monopoly over their use.

The enumeration of global threats in the regional strategic and doctrinal documents clearly shows signs of copying from other documents of that kind, or using documents of other countries as models. As we have already mentioned, this is not strange for the region – the countries that have become part of NATO are either using this organization’s documents to show that they are in line with its perception of the CRT, or waiting for new strategic documents to be adopted to do the same. On the other hand, several countries in the region were (or still are) to some extent the protectorates of the international community, meaning that the first versions of their strategic documents were written by the members of the international community and simply adopted by (selected) local stakeholders. Finally, even the countries that don’t fall into the two mentioned categories (yet), do try to comply with the ideas and standards of the Euro-Atlantic community, perceiving it as their natural surroundings.

Conclusion

Despite all deficiencies, the very existence of the strategic-doctrinal framework for (nearly) all the countries of the Western Balkans is a serious breakthrough towards the stability in the region. What must be understood now across the region is that this is just the first step. Strategies and doctrines are to some extent like living organisms – they need to be changed, shaped and re-shaped according to the change in their country’s security philosophy, along with security sector reforms and changes in regional and international security perceptions. The security community in the Balkans has not been made yet, despite the efforts coming from the region. On the other hand, it is obvious that the reconfiguration within the region is not over yet, and this will inevitably influence the future strategic perceptions and be a cause of their constant change.

Still, ten years after the last regional conflict, the first, but significant steps have already been made. The next steps will be much harder, though. The countries will have to move from the very technical perception of the need for a strategic-doctrinal framework to acquiring necessary values that will place the very idea of the existence of these documents in a more normative perception. Once this is

acquired, the main preconditions for a quality revision of the documents will be in place, thus pushing all the stakeholders to participate and correct the anomalies that now exist and that were explained in this analysis in a more or less detailed manner. Of course, as we have already said, this requires a clear political situation in the region, which is at this moment not really in sight.

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