THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE REGION: BETWEEN TRADITIONAL ROLE AND CRIME PREVENTION

Bojan Dobovšek, Bernarda Tominc

Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Maribor[1]

Keywords

International Security Organisations, Contemporary Security Threats, Crime Prevention, Balkans

Abstract

The aim of the article is to highlight the role of international organizations in the fight against contemporary security threats. The stability of the Europe and the occurrences in South Eastern Europe in last two decades are tightly interrelated. Beside intensive movements in international relations at the end of the cold war era the international integrations has contributed to peace and stability in the Balkans as its strategic responsibility. And *vice versa,* the conflicts in this region have been contributing to the development of the security policies of international security organisations.

Democratisation of the region is strongly connected with the fight against contemporary security threats (organised crime, terrorism). Not only national security is threatened by contemporary security threats, it has also economic impact, and impact on the rule of law. The Authors analyses the situation in the Region and indentifies the problems that reduce effort to curb the threats. Regional and international cooperation in solving new security issues in SEE Europe are crucial.

In post-conflicts period those states are caught between the reform and establishment of institutions of social control and crime, in their effort to achieve lasting stability and development, so the foreign engagement of EU, NATO, CoE, OSCE, UN to assist in the transformation of the security systems is just as important as it was the their military role during the conflict.

In conclusions authors focus on the fact that organised crime poses most serious threat to this region and the whole Europe. Drug-smuggling, smuggling of weapons and other military hardware (conflict in ex Yugoslavia countries left immense quantities of weapons outside of effective government control), human trafficking, illegal immigration, fraud, and corruption (relationship between crime, business and politics) are criminal activities with a substantial profit. Also terrorism, financed by illicit drug money, poses the threat to local and global stability and security.

South-Eastern Europe, which consists of small nation states and numerous ethnic groups, and has long been regarded as the most volatile region in Europe, is a region in a rapid process of post-communist transition. Soon after the end of the cold war also this region faced the crucial

---

[1] Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Maribor, Slovenia, Kotnikova 8, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia
phone +386 1 300 83 43/ +386 1 300 83 39, fax. +386 1 2302 687, E-mails: bojan.dobovsek@fvv.uni-mb.si; bernarda.tominc@fvv.uni-mb.si.

geopolitical changes. The region was affected by armed conflict in the former Yugoslav republics, by economic crises, political changes and social turbulence. Nowadays it faces range of challenges from economic development, post conflict reconstruction, inefficient governance, weak rule of law, new security threats, poor public security, institutional corruption, and organized crime, etc.

At the very beginning of the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia the lack of action of the international community failed to solve the problem and failed to prevent the escalation of the conflict. At first the perception was that those conflicts are of the internal nature and should be managed by local governments. Some European states were afraid that the disintegration of the Yugoslavia and the claim of the ethnic groups for independence would have been followed as dominos in other European multi ethnic states. Not only in the respond to the ethnic conflicts in this region also in the conflicts in the states of former Soviet Union it become clear that the international community (intergovernmental organizations – IGOs) had very limited or no operational conflict prevention capacities and inadequate mechanisms. The mediation and other efforts were too late and insufficient (Friberg & Nasić, 2008), some attempts at resolution were not always successful.

Notwithstanding, in the process of conflict settlement and conflict resolution in South-eastern Europe the need to integrate the international community was necessary. The regional armed conflicts and ethnic hatred in South-Eastern Europe posed to the Europe the greatest threat to stability, peace and security. At that time main aim of intergovernmental organizations was to preserve peace and stability through conflict management. Although this is not the subject under discussion in this article the involvement of nongovernmental organisations in this endeavour should not be ignored.

The international community experiences (success and failures) from the region and form elsewhere were valuable lessons learned for the future activities. To build long-term stability in Europe generally and throughout South-eastern Europe in particular is at the present time one of the objectives of international organisations that forms new security architecture in the Europe. Important part of new of the process of European integration is also intensive engagement of intergovernmental organizations within the region. It has become even more important in the stage of post conflict transformation of the war torn states to help to get them through the state reform.

Weakened political and legal structures are good starting-point for the rapid development of international organised crime. According to experts, drug traffickers and terrorists tend to flourish in failed states with ineffective governments that have been destabilized by war and internal conflicts. Nevertheless, even transitional countries are used as traffic routes for illegal drugs, and once they are established, these networks tend to become increasingly well organized and hard to detect. Some authors (Pečar, 1993) state that organized crime could create even more riots, damage, and distrust to the government which is in recession. Because of the infiltration in legal affairs, organised crime weakens political and economic stability of the state and undermines democracy.

ORGANIZED CRIME IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

While the security challenges in the form of armed conflicts in the region are not an issue nowadays, the biggest threat to the regional security is posed by organized crime activities. Just as at the world level also South-Eastern Europe is facing the growing danger of terrorism and the spread of the weapons of mass destruction.

South-eastern Europe is a very complex region that has experienced conflict and political instability since the beginning of 1990s, which created the necessary conditions for the establishment of criminal networks as well as for the development of criminal activities, including drug trafficking. Although the involvement of the international community has helped the region to become more closely integrated with the rest of Europe and resolve most of its ethnic conflicts, the threats for regional security coming from this area are now mainly

related to organized crime (Vreja, 2005: 94) that has international character and in is threatening especially the states where the national interests in security matters and in economy independence are less expressed. (Petrović, Dobovšek, 2007). Positive changes in the European political space such as integration, free movement of people, services, capital etc, gave the possibility to criminal organizations to spread more easily.

Besides drug-smuggling, that is one of the most important activities of organised crime groups in Europe, the smuggling of weapons and other military hardware (conflict in ex Yugoslavia countries left massive quantities of weapons outside of effective government control), human trafficking and corruption are criminal activities with a substantial profit. It would be absurd to persist in opinion that terrorist groups would not make use of the networks of criminal activity that already exist in the region (Vreja, 2005: 91). The Western Balkans (including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Albania and, to a certain degree, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) is considered "the gateway of organized crime to Europe," which raises the spectre of the potential of terrorist activities in, or emanating from, the area. Aside from the scope of organized crime in south-eastern Europe, there are many voices concerned about the presence in Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Albania of individuals and groups linked to terrorist networks, including Al Qaeda. Moreover, organized crime activities in the entire region are assumed to support terrorist groups, especially via financial assistance (Vreja, 2005: 94). South-eastern Europe is a bridge between the Middle Eastern and Central Asian drug producers and the Western European drug consumer market. Via the Balkan route, heroin travels through Turkey, FYRO Macedonia, Kosovo, and Albania to the Western European markets (Vreja, 2005: 95).

Terrorism[2], financed by illicit drug money, poses the threat to local and global stability and security. It directly affects EU countries. Considerable amount of drugs comes into EU via one of three Balkan routes. Increase in supply of illicit drugs could be the evidence that the terrorist organizations funding themselves from drug sales is on the rise. The traditional Balkan route from Turkey via Western Balkans, Slovenia, Austria, Germany and the Netherlands has re-emerged and gained in importance, while trafficking via the more eastern Balkan route (Hungary) that was main route during the conflict in Western Balkan, has decreased in importance.

Drug trafficking has become so crucial to the cause of Albanian separatism that certain towns populated by Albanians (such as Veliki Trnovac and Blastica in Serbia, Vratnica and Gostivar in FYRO Macedonia, and Shkoder and Durres in Albania) have become known as the "new Medellins" of the Balkans. The so-called "Albanian Mafia," consisting largely of ethnic Albanians from Kosovo, has for several years been a feature of the criminal underworld in a number of cities in Europe and North America, being particularly prominent in the trade in illegal narcotics. Since the mid 1990's, "Albanian nationalists in ethnically tense Macedonia and the Serbian province of Kosovo have built a vast heroin network, leading from the opium fields of Pakistan to black-market arms dealers in Switzerland, which used to transport up to $2 billion worth of the drug annually into the heart of Europe." In 1995, more than 500 Kosovar or Macedonian Albanians were in prison in Switzerland for drug or arms trafficking offences, and more than 1,000 others were under indictment.

---

[2] Even though organized crime and terrorism are often seen as separate phenomena, raising disputes over the best methods of countering them, the link between the two is undeniable. It is true that terrorists and drug traffickers have different long-term objectives (e.g., political goals for terrorists, and economic ones for drug traffickers), yet they often share some short-term goals; nearly every terrorist group raises some money from the drug trade. "Narco-terrorism" can be referred to terrorist acts carried out by groups that are directly or indirectly involved in cultivating, manufacturing, transporting, or distributing illicit drugs. Therefore, the term refers to groups that use drug trafficking to fund terrorist activities. Usually, this cooperation between terrorist groups or networks and organized crime networks will assure the former the financial and logistical support. Moreover, the terrorist groups and the illegal criminal networks provide support for each other, so it can be said that it is useless to discuss terrorism separate from organized crime.

In collaboration with proper organs of member countries, Europol significantly contributes to European Union's active movement against drug trafficking. In 2003, Europol issued support and coordination to police organs of member countries, with discovering criminal organisations, especially Turkish criminal groups, which are primarily responsible for smuggling and distribution of heroin within the European Union. Although these groups are usually autonomous, they were noticed importing larger quantities of heroin in cooperation with Albanian criminal groups. Turkish groups are also getting more involved in ecstasy and cocaine smuggling, which enables them to maintain their relations with other ethnic groups, such as Columbians, Moroccans, and Surinamese. To protect their own part of the market, Albanian and Turkish groups often use force toward other groups in drug-selling areas. Cooperation between national investigation teams, which deal in same types of crime, is extremely welcome since it gives useful flow of information (Dobovšek, 2007: 169).

THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN FIGHTING CONTEMPORARY SECURITY THREATS

The mandates differ from one to other organization and institution as well as their ambitions and aspirations. Some of them are more appropriate to act directly with the force, some play leading role in founding the activities, some are specialists in conflict prevention and conflict managemet, humanitarian activity is advantage of others etc.

Main tasks of international community in fighting contemporary security threats in South-eastern Europe are: establishing and consolidating the rule of law, maintaining institutional proficiency, developing police capabilities and police professionalism, and political control over the subjects of national security system.

The nature of contemporary conflicts dictates well coordinated actions. The escalation of conflicts in Yugoslavia and the perception of the conflicts as potentiality far more dangerous for stability of the region and Europe in the short and as well in long term period prompted the EU to adopt a much more proactive policy of managing ethno political conflicts outside its boundaries. (Peen Rodt & Wolf, 2008)

European Union became more involved in the South Eastern Europe primarily in the post conflict reconstruction (after Dayton agreement in 1995) in the stabilisation and economic recovery process. As Javier Solana (Solana, 2000) pointed out the European Union is the only institution capable of comprehensive action, ranging from trade, economic reform, and infrastructure, humanitarian assistance, human rights and democratisation, justice and police to crisis management and military security. The Stabilization and Association Process in the Western Balkans is the part of the EU Common foreign and security policy and the enlargement process, through which the EU provides potential member states with political advocacy, financial support, technical and expert support.

To the peace and stability in the Western Balkans European Union contributed mostly by civil management operations (EUFOR Concordia, EUFOR Althea, EUPM Bosnia and Herzegovina, EUPM Proxima, EUPAT, EULEX Kosovo), with humanitarian aid, through promoting European policing standards (rule of law, democracy, human rights), monitoring, mentoring, advising, assisting and training of local law enforcement institutions (police and others that maintain the rule of law) to deal with contemporary security issues etc. The two operations, EUPAT and EULEX, are most important in the sense of fighting organised crime and corruption.

Today facing new security challenges EU is most important international actor in the region. This is not about military capabilities and about the establishment of civilian police capability; EU is the main actor in promoting economic development, reforms, and political changes. European Council supported the programmes for the consolidation of law and order, including the fight against organised crime, reform of the police and the whole Ministry of the interior, programmes for the creation of the border police, programmes for building

confidence within the population, programs to supporting trans-border policing. (European Council, 2003)

NATO, the most powerful military and political alliance, had the main role during the conflict resolution, its involvement in the Balkans dates back to 1992. The region is developing cooperation with NATO through the Partnership for Peace Programme (PfP). In 2006 Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia joined the programme that is focused on democratic, institutional and defence reforms. The alliance is currently leading a peace support operation in Kosovo. Its presence in the region is being justified mainly by the fight against the terrorism, by intelligence gathering, and by providing assistance in defence reform and reform of armed forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. NATO together with other international players puts a lot of efforts in stimulating states to meet democratic standards; as well it supports them in their endeavour for reducing corruption and fighting organized crime. NATO plays significant role in the development of the legal framework of the civil emergency and disaster-management (includes a range of tasks and actions in the case of disasters caused by nature (floods, fires, earthquakes) or by technological incidents, and actions against humanitarian disasters etc). The alliance has no capabilities for the further economic reconstruction and development, but NATO supports research and development through Science for Peace and Security Programme.

Council of Europe played in the era of confilct a partner role and was not involved directly and it was never its intention to play front role in conflict settlement. Primarily what it does is to assist in postconflict reconstruction and state reform. Main task is to protect human rights, to support and advice the states in political and security matters.

Council of Europe and United Nations are main actors in protecting human rights and human trafficking is grave violation of fundamental human rights. Human trafficking can be equalized to contemporary slavery and according to the US Office to monitor and combat trafficking in persons (2004) is the third largest criminal enterprise in the world after drug and arms trafficking. The success of United Nations in recent endeavours has been handicapped by cumbersome mandates.

Sometimes international institutions are interlocking and also in competition. Therefore, the need for the creation of international investigating analytical group is expressed. It would be urgent need of kind of Central European Office, which would not only gathering and use the information, but would also have special powers for criminal prosecution. (Petrović, Dobovšek, 2007: 73)

Nongovernmental Organisations' role is also very significant but this is the topic for another research. They were active in awaking population to danger of trafficking in person, drugs, weapons and other criminal activities of organised crime groups. Numerous public campaigns were organised and founded by NGOs as well as meetings, conferences, training courses etc.

Credible attention must be paid to a predictable national legal framework, the training and re-training of subjects and actors of the national security system (government, police, private security, military...), and the diminution of corruption in the system. The international community play(ed) significant role in countering contemporary security threats through assisting advising monitoring founding preparing national governments and administration to deal with those threats. But still because of the nature of crime the action has to be mutual and coordinated and local institutions should also not be lagged behind.

Conclusions

The conflicts that those societies went through have immediate consequences on the socioeconomic stability and this is narrow connected with the security on the local and regional level.

Who is winning this battle? Organized criminal groups or national governments or international community or NGO's that are trying to suppress the criminal activities? Instead of fighting organised crime, contemporary society has to control and manage the crime. It is essential to collect and analyse information and experiences about organised crime systematically.

The involvement of the international community in the fight against contemporary security challenges must be seen in the larger context. International community remain committed to building long-term stability throughout South-eastern Europe and the regional and international cooperation in solving new security issues in South-eastern Europe are crucial. Solution to problems in this region is economic development. Intergovernmental organisations played a vital role in the process of institutions building, that are very important in protecting human rights and pace and security in the region and in whole Europe.

Although EU alone will prove insufficient to capture the nuances of the contemporary security challenges, it remains the biggest organisation and donor that set some policies that enable to become failed states as it is now the case in Mexico, where are local authorities unable to cope with drug cartels.

With regard to all this it appears safe to say that the security anxiety of international community is quite similar from one to other. Regional conflicts, terrorism, organized crime, WMD are the main concerns in the development of crisis management tools.

References

Dobovšek, Bojan (2007). Organizirana kriminaliteta in prepovedane droge. In: Poročilo s področja prepovedanih drog v Republiki Sloveniji Mercedes Lovrečič (ed). Inštitut za varovanje zdravja Republike Slovenije, pp. 167-174.

Friberg Erik, Nasic Halida (2008) 'The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities' in: Institutions for the management of ethno political conflicts in Central and Eastern Europe (Strasbourg/Council of Europe publishing).

Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, Trafficking in Person Report 2004 http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/105501.pdf

Pečar, Janez (1993), Omejevanje in zatiranje organiziranega kriminala. In: Revija Policija. Vol. 13, No 4-5, pp.375-388. Ljubljana: Ministrstvo za notranje zadeve.

Peen Rodt, Annemarie and Wolff, Stefan (2008) The EU and the management of ethnic conflict. in: Institutions for the management of ethno political conflicts in Central and Eastern Europe (Strasbourg/Council of Europe publishing).

Petrović, Borislav, Dobovšek, Bojan (2007). Mreže organiziranog kriminaliteta. Sarajevo: Pravni fakultet.

Solana, Javier (2000) Report on the Western Balkans presented to the Lisbon European Council by the Secretary- General/High Representative together with the Commission, Brussels.

Vreja, Lucia Ovidia. (2005). Narcoterrorism in Southeastern Europe. The Quarterly Journal. http://cms.isn.ch/public/docs/doc_10712_290_en.pdf

Authors Biography

Bojan Dobovšek, Ph.D., Vice - Dean at the Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Maribor, Slovenia, Assistant Professor in Criminology and Criminal Investigation. He is a member of Commission for the Prevention of Corruption as representative of Judiciary branch of power. He is trustee of ARCA (Association for Research into Crimes against Art). He is the author of a book on organised crime and editor of several publications on corruption and organised crime. Ongoing research projects: Corruption networks; Organised crime and terrorism; Methodological obstacles in measuring corruption and organised crime; Art Crime.

Bernarda Tominc received the BA degree from the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. Currently she is a Teaching Assistant at the University of Maribor, Faculty of Criminal Justice and security. She has been working as a teaching assistant in field of security system and intelligence services. Her research interest includes security threats in contemporary society, international security integrations and intelligence services.