

**THE FRAMEWORK OF NEW REGIONAL COOPERATION FORMS IN  
MEDITERANEAN AREA: SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO IN THE  
FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY**

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**Abstract**

*After the fall of the Berlin Wall we have witnessed new initiatives and common actions, oriented toward a better understanding and intensification of multilateral cooperation among all european peoples. The goal of these actions is to achieve a more efficient employment and distribution of natural resources, and trade liberalization. On the other hand, these new political trends can have positive effects on regional stability, security, economic cooperation, including resolution of conflicts*

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, in the geopolitical european constellation one could talk about the new european architecture and, objectively, new social and economic phenomena occurred on our continent. This new chapter in the contemporan history of Europe created different opportunities about democracy and transition to the market economy of all East European countries, including those in the Mediterranean area. These phenomena are an outcome of dividing blocks and disparition of bipolar separation, as well as the effect of the wish manifested by most members of the Warsaw Treaty to join militarily, political and economic the Western Europe.

Besides the change in the global policy, as well as the positive implications generated at the continental level, we have witnessed new initiatives and common actions, oriented toward a better understanding and intensification of multilateral cooperation among all european peoples. Within this framework, we must point out several new forms of regional and sub-regional cooperation outside the European Union: Alps-Adria, Adriatic cooperation, Balcanic cooperation, the Central and South-Eastern Black sea Initiative.

The development of different forms of regional and sub-regional cooperation, in the context of the crisis in former Yugoslavia, reflects the pragmatic interests of Southern, Eastern and Central Europe. The states of this region attempt to establish new forms of multilateral cooperation, with a view to fundamental economic objectives, in completely new conditions. The goal of these actions is to achieve a more efficient employment and distribution of natural

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resources, and trade liberalization. On the other hand, these new political trends can have positive effects on regional stability, security, economic cooperation, including resolution of conflicts. The crucial hypotheses of these new trends in the field of European international relations, especially when it comes about new alternatives, formal or informal models of regional and sub-regional cooperation point to the fact that, contrary to past experience, these regions will develop on new foundations and criteria. That is, we must replace past political and military criteria with an emphasis on those elements leading to the discovery of opportunities for participation to new variables in multilateral cooperation. In these circumstances, the word "region", which traditionally is related to a geographic entity, has to be completed through the discovery of productive, cultural and other type of relations. Reasons for regional expression can be manifold (political, economic, historical, ethnical, linguistic etc.) and they depend, in the first place, on the historical moment when inherent political relations within national or multinational states have been created.

When we speak about cooperation in the Mediterranean area we need to emphasize a number of important characteristics of the region. It is widely known the fact that Mediterranean Sea provided this region with an historical role in securing peace and security in Europe and even in the entire world. Geographic and geostrategic location is not only a relation among various civilizations, nations, cultures, religions, economic and political traditions, but also, draws borders between the Islamic and Christian world, between the developed and underdeveloped world, between democracy and authoritarianism.

Keeping in mind all these factors (of integration or disintegration), this region can be seen as a network of contradictions and divisions, a phenomenon with deep historical roots. Considerations about vulnerability and conflictual state expressed at the highest political level demonstrate a clear and direct interdependence between security in the Mediterranean area, and Europe, in general, and global security. Despite these difficulties, the main objectives of future development of international relations in the Mediterranean region have to be redefined and new ways for collaborations among different countries have to be discovered.

This is the reason for which scientists, experts in international relations will have to promote the idea of international cooperation as a fundamental condition for the future of Mediterranean area and the entire world.

Even given the process of a powerful globalization, at the worldwide level, when Europe becomes a complete and complex entity, all regions and especially Mediterranean region seem to recover what it was thought they lost as an entity. One can see that, in the last years, in Mediterranean area there are many efforts directed especially toward the valorification of resources in nonpolluting

conditions. Most states in the region have contributed to the so-called “Blue Plan”, as part of the attempt to save and preserve the environment.

The Catalan Institute for Mediterranean Studies in Barcelona has elaborated common strategies of action in the cultural field. Despite apparent discrepancies, cultural relations which maintain the identity of each culture continue to develop. Cultural dialogue will lead to an acceleration in the regional interactions.

When we speak about the new forms of regional and inter-regional cooperation it is important to emphasize that governments of Italy and Spain, the initiators of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean Area (CSCM), which was held in Palma de Mallorca on September 24, 1990, used the expression “Mediterranean” in a larger sense, to include countries in the Balkans, Black Sea and even Central Europe. Mediterranean multilateralism can be consistently defined as the amount of different forms of cooperation which occur on different fields associated with this phenomenon. In fact, we can identify the importance of the partenariat between European Union and the Mediterranean countries, and, simultaneously, we can analyze individual and subregional models of cooperation, such as cooperation in the Adriatic and Black Sea area.

We must reconsider the traditional concept about security, which include economic, not only military, aspects. Undoubtedly, regional trends have become increasingly obvious: regional political strategy has to change into a pragmatic model of development, based on consensus, in order to reach a high pace of political and economic development.

Because of all these considerations, there is no reason for postponing the development and enhancement of cooperation relations between regional and subregional structures: Balkans – Adriatic Sea, Danube – Adriatic Sea, with a view to create the necessary conditions for a necessary resurrection of the expression “Adriatic”, for cooperation among countries with sea border. Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Yugoslavia and Albania are not only Adriatic countries, but also an integral component of civilization in this part of the world. Some of these countries have established secular relations with Central Europe, Balkan area and states in the Black Sea region. As an independent international forum, the Center for Mediterranean studies can organize scientific meetings in order to stimulate contacts among Adriatic states, which have been cut off as the former Yugoslavia disintegrated. There are many possibilities of cooperation in the Adriatic area: for example, the creation of the Adriatic Fund – through contributions from the states in the region – to promote and support the development of “Adriatic” expression in science, culture, ecology and tourism. The new Adriatic space will be open for different initiatives which will enhance the cooperation in the area; cooperation in the Adriatic area can be extended to professional organizations, businessmen association etc. Cooperation in mass-media, for cultivating and developing the

concept of “Adriatic” is equally important, because this will encourage peace and security and revitalize all the models of cooperation in Adriatic region.

According to the theoretical model of complex interdependency, Latin American regionalism has been profoundly redefined and modernized by introducing various models of formal and informal bilateral, sub-regional, regional, and inter-regional cooperation initiatives. This experience is based on the high degree of interaction at different levels (presidential, ministerial, experts, civil society, etc.) and intensification of political relations among these countries, especially in the context of the evident positive changes in their political orientation: process of democratization, economic stabilization, and further development of democratic institutions and human rights.<sup>1</sup> This means that in Latin American practice we can identify a phenomenon of intensive diversification of regional cooperation, which includes the possibility for individual states to combine at the same time bilateral and various multilateral forms of cooperation. All this is possible since there is a natural and logical connection, positive historical heritage in the form of shared regional identity, similarities in the political and economic sphere, as well as in those matters that are important for the international status of the region. Therefore, it seems that the most important results of these positive internal changes are the corresponding improvements at the international level, where we can detect a new and strengthened international status of Latin America in general and in particular in the relations with USA<sup>2</sup>. In short, the Latin American region represents a very good example for studying the phenomenon of globalization and its results. In the political area, democratically elected governments lead almost all Latin American countries - after many years. This has generated a strong will to undertake concrete actions and practical measures at the individual, bilateral, sub-regional, regional and interregional levels, and to coordinate different projects in the spheres of foreign affairs, economic development and integration, culture, education, science and technology, ecology, antidrug strategy, etc. The fact is that Latin American countries - unlike the Balkan ones - are involved individually but also as a regional bloc in the general context of opening up their economies and societies to the challenges of globalization.

Due to all these changes, we can say that starting with the 1990s; the traditional Latin American regionalism was successfully transformed into "open regionalism". This new form of regional cooperation represents an effort to achieve compatibility of regional economic and trading arrangements with others similar around the world and in accordance with the global trading system supervised by

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<sup>1</sup> Gerd Langguth, *Positive Signals after the Lost Decade: Change in Latin America*, Aussenpolitik III, 1997, p. 278-290.

<sup>2</sup> Alberto van Klaveren, *Integration Now: Option for Latin America*, Mirneo, Santiago de Chile, 1994.

World Trade Organization<sup>1</sup>. In fact, the principal idea of this new regional philosophy is to ensure that regional agreements will function in practice, with the following main objective: to build the bloc capable of further global liberalization and of increasing progress in the region. The concept of "Open regionalism" has been adopted as a fundamental principle of MERCOSUR, ALADI, MCCA, Association of Caribbean States (ACS), Community of Andean nations (CAN), North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA), the Group of Three (G 3), numerous bilateral arrangements, or the recently promoted South American Community of Nations<sup>2</sup>.

The results of regional economic and trade integration are impressive and provide optimism for the future. The Latin American experience demonstrates two possibilities for developing countries to join globalization:

- Searching for a increasingly competitive place in the world market, which means me dynamic modernization of production and society;
- Further strengthening of regional identity in the form of political, economic, and cultural integration and cooperation.

In addition, we have to mention the successful integration of certain Latin American countries in global trade models of trade liberalization, such as North American Free Trade Association (Mexico, Chile or Central American countries); full membership of several Latin American countries to Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)<sup>3</sup> or successful institutionalization of cooperation of some Latin American countries with the European Union (Mexico and Chile, bilaterally). Finally, current negotiations between EU and MERCOSUR will lead to the new partnership with the most representative South American economic and political bloc.

To sum up, the Latin American experiences demonstrate that besides regional integrations, there are also a large number of existing regional institutions that are coordinating the cooperation in other fields, especially in the field of information, culture, science and education. There is no doubt that regional changes stemmed

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<sup>1</sup> <http://iie.co.in/publications/wp/1997/#notel>

<sup>2</sup> «Comunidad Sudamericana de Naciones» was inaugurated at the Summit of South American Presidents that was held in Cusco (Peru) on December 8, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Peru are Latin American countries that institutionalized their relations with APEC. Nevertheless, all countries of this region are very interested in strengthening cooperation with the Asian region. In this respect, a special kind of interaction JS realized with East Asian countries. This Forum (Ealaf) was institutionalised in 1999 and its members are: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Cívile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela, Singapore, Brunei, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, Laos, Indonesia, Burma, Japan, China, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand.

from the opinion that it is necessary to encourage further strengthening of regional identity because it represents the basis of the process of formation of an economic bloc that could participate successfully in the globalizing trends of cooperation in the contemporary world.

### **3. Serbia and Montenegro-Latin America: present-day relations**

When speaking about the foreign policy of the recently established State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, we have to underline the following priorities:

- Negotiations with the European Union as the main foreign policy strategic objective;
- Normalization of the relations with USA after the NATO attacks against former Yugoslavia;
- Normalization of relations with NATO and negotiations oriented towards the integration into NATO structures (firstly, "Partnership for Peace");
- Negotiations concerning the future status of the Serbian province of Kosovo and Metohija, currently under UN Protectorate;
- Normalization and development of political, economic and all other forms of cooperation with the West Balkan countries;
- Further intensification of the regional Balkan cooperation;
- Development and diversification of the relations with other regions and regional organizations in the world.

The so-called "European potential of Serbia-Montenegro" could be important, having in mind its strategic position as the bridge between Europe ~ and Asia, between the Balkans and Russia. Furthermore, we have to take into consideration its special significance for the reconciliation in the Western Balkans area. According to the current internal and external situation of the State Union, it is evident that foreign policy is subordinated to the fulfillment of the conditions for access to the EU, especially the cooperation with The Hague (ICTY) as the essential requirement for further movement towards EU integration.

Internally, the political and economic situation is quite unstable, due not only to the aspiration of the current Montenegrin government, which by insisting on a referendum and on the full independence of this Republic obstructs the process of political and economic transition. All this has a direct influence over the capacity and functionality of the foreign policy strategy of Belgrade. We are underlining in the first place the existing low level of coincidence and consensus in the process of formulation of the state union's common strategy of foreign policy.

If we bear in mind all these facts, it seems quite difficult to promote new foreign policy concepts and activities outside the mentioned EU and North Atlantic priorities. Anyway, Belgrade must be aware that it is not positive for the future of the country and its international position to neglect the potential of cooperation with other non-European partners. Serbia and Montenegro, or in the future, Serbia individually, have quite promising perspectives to develop different kinds of cooperation with other countries and regions in the world as the only way to diminish the high level of dependency on EU and USA. We should like to demonstrate this hypothesis by analyzing the potential of relations with Latin American countries at individual or sub-regional and regional levels.

#### **4. The historical heritage with Latin America and perspectives for the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

Well-known Mexican economist Victor L. Urquidi, former president of the reputable El Colegio de Mexico, the International Economic Association (1980-1983) and member of many scientific institutions worldwide, stated, in his study "New Economic Relations between Europe and Latin America," that former Yugoslavia was the only socialist country that managed to establish and develop significantly - as distinguished from other socialist countries - trading cooperation and investments in the Latin American region, excluding naturally the special relations between Cuba and the former USSR<sup>1</sup>. This opinion is quoted in order to demonstrate that Serbia and Montenegro have a positive historical heritage and some comparative advantage compared to some other Balkan countries, including those that originated after their separation from ex-Yugoslavia.

A very good example is represented by the case of Serbian *Energoprojekt. Company*, which has a 35 year-long experience of activity in the Andean region. The company has its regional headquarters in Lima (Peru) and its reputation is great due to successful business activities realized in that part of the world. We should especially stress the construction of many capital development projects, including the construction of the irrigation system Chira-Piura in north Peru that stalled in 1971 and was finished a few years ago. This and other developing projects were co-financed by World Bank, Energoprojekt and the Peruvian government. The Energoprojekt experience shows the advantage of our country compared to other Balkan countries, since according to our research results (Lima, July-September 1997), not a single other Balkan company was significantly present in that part of Latin America.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Victor L. Urquidi: *Hacia una nueva relacion entre Europa y America Latino.*, Sintesis. No.4, January-April 1987.

<sup>2</sup> For further information on Chira-Piura and the presence of Energoprojekt in Peru, see: Mil anos atras, Caretas, October 19, 1996.

In fact, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this historically important heritage must be used functionally as the basis for the new conceptualization for Latin American strategy of our Ministry for Foreign Affairs, oriented to revitalizing cooperation with this part of the world. Regardless of the changed international constellation, including the changes on the geo-political map of the South Slave region and those surrounding Serbia and Montenegro, we think that it is very convenient to start defining the priorities in our relations with Latin America, but with utmost pragmatism. The policy of Belgrade towards Latin America must be based on clear economic and political interests and projections. Documentation on the achieved level of cooperation in the past shows that the territory, economic capacity and potential of today's Serbia-Montenegrin State Union represented the nucleus of the relations of former Yugoslavia with these countries. But today, this new political, economic and cultural strategy must take into consideration that some important countries of that region - primarily Chile and Argentina - would develop intensive relations with Croatia (due to a numerous Croat emigration to these countries), in spite of the limited economic potential of this country<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand, the emigration factor offers a certain lead to our country compared to other Balkan states, except Greece, which has a numerous and influential emigration in Argentina, Chile and Brazil.

The first task should be the urgent study of our interests in Latin America within the redefined foreign policy platform of the new state union. It requires the identification of new priorities, with special emphasis on economic and commercial cooperation. To achieve it, we have to reconsider seriously the new political and economic reality in Latin America and accept the fact that, in addition to the government sector, the private one would be one of the main protagonists of this relation, due to the changed circumstances for business in this region and the world. Better said, the private sector is the most agile social and market factor: corporations, foundations, private financial institutions, specialized agencies, universities and specialized research institutes, nongovernmental organizations, etc.

The new strategy for the development of the Serbian-Montenegrin-Latin American relations must benefit from all the advantages of double communication channels: bilateral and multilateral. In practice, this would mean that the strategy

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<sup>1</sup> It was a great mistake of the Ministry' of Foreign Affairs to close our Embassy in Santiago de Chile three years ago, which led to the same decision of the Chilean government a year later. The potential of our relations with Chile is quite promising, having in mind (he cooper industry, die high level of compatibility in agricultural production and the possibility<sup>7</sup> to common access to the globalizing world market. In addition, some Chilean experiences in political and economic transition are very important from the perspective of the Serbian internal policy.

of Serbia and Montenegro towards this part of the world would rely upon the combination of individual and compatible regional Balkan interests. In addition to the existing bilateral cooperation, this would also open possibilities to initiate contacts with one or several existing models of regional or sub-regional integration in Latin America - for instance with the MERCOSUR countries, the Andean Pact, the Amazon pact or the Central American Common Market. At the same time, this strategy would promote the idea of establishing interregional cooperation between the Balkans and some of stated groups.

The most important question is related to the capability and readiness of the political elite and diplomacy of Serbia and Montenegro to coordinate certain aims of our Balkan policy in very pragmatic and professional manner with a new and still unformed Latin American political platform in those segments where there are certain parallel characteristics and correspondence of our interests with the interests of some other Balkan states. Accordingly, after certain verifications, Belgrade would be capable to introduce gradually in its Balkan policy compatible interregional aims from its Latin American strategy.

It is very important to point that nearly all the Balkan states reduced their political, economic, and commercial relations with Latin America starting from the 1990s, when the priority of negotiating the insertion to EU was clearly the dominant foreign policy objective. Taking into consideration all these elements, it is recommendable for Belgrade to reinitiate the new form of dialogue with our regional partners promptly, because none of them is attractive individually as a partner for the majority of Latin American countries or regional bodies. These efforts have to develop systematically and gradually a new Balkan regional strategy towards Latin America, based on a wider Balkan consensus and a higher level of regional cooperation. At the same time, this strategy would depend on the consolidation and development of the economy of Serbia and Montenegro, as well as on the overall political situation in the union.

We also have to stress that the Argentinean Council for International Relations (Cones Argentina Para lass Relations Internationals - CARI), together with the Romanian Association for International Law and International Relations (ADIRI) and the Ukrainian National Institute of Strategic Studies (NISS), organized two very important seminars - in 1996 and 1997 - precisely on the subject of the cooperation between MERCOSUR and the countries of the Black Sea region. In 2000, there was another important conference in Sofia on a similar topic, but it was organized by the Bulgarian Center for Development Studies (CDS), which tried to include the Balkan region into the relations of MERCOSUR with these parts of Europe. Finally, our Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized a conference dedicated to the business relations between South-Eastern Europe and Latin America (November, 2003).

## 5. Some concluding remarks

There is quite a strong pessimism in our state union concerning the relations with Latin America. This attitude is the result of primarily obsolete traditional knowledge and approach that is clearly limited by outdated geographical criteria and ignorance regarding the contemporary Latin American economic, commercial, and technological potentials. Despite this fact, we think that the situation is now much more favorable for the evaluation of the new contemporary' criteria of cooperation with that part of the world. Namely, the process of political and economic reforms, which is in progress or is, completed in both regions, offers a number of topics of common interests: trade liberalization, establishing of free trade areas, market economy, joint venture projects, etc. It is also possible to formulate common interests towards some other region - for instance, towards the market of the former USSR, including the Black Sea region.

At inter-regional level, we should speak in favour of the idea of establishing the General Balkan Deposit in one of Latin American states. The intention would be to boost expansion of our exports and of the exports of those Balkan counties that would support the strategy of connection and cooperation development with that region. Elaboration of this strategy requires a very careful and well-measured assessment, based on extremely expert research and analysis. Parallel to this, it would be very useful to suggest to our Latin American partners to open a Latin American Information Center in one of the Balkan capitals. This could be logically Bucharest as the centre of the only Latin origin culture in our region. A relevant Balkan Information Center in the capital of one of Latin American countries should also be founded, in the country that shows the greatest interest, and is willing to be the main co-initiator of such conceived strategy of inter-regional model of cooperation. In addition to the cultural, educational, and scientific promotion, the interdisciplinary concepts of these centers would enable them to grow into entities that would thoroughly support various forms of cooperation between the Balkans and Latin America<sup>1</sup>.

Finally, according to our assessment, the future bilateral relations between Serbia and Montenegro and countries of Latin America must be based on the following elements:

- Re-establishing regular political dialogues with the most important countries in the region (Argentina, " Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Cuba, Peru, and Venezuela), considering the fact that in the course of the Yugoslav

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<sup>1</sup> This idea was also verified during the author's stay in Lima (1997). Peruvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed then considerable interests in strengthening of Peruvian-Yugoslav and Balkan cultural and scientific relations.

crisis the official contacts were reduced or ceased. This measure would imply full normalization of our diplomatic relations with Latin American countries, not closing our embassies, as was the case of Chile in 2002. We would note here that in October 2003, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Peru, Mr. Alan Wagner Tizon, officially visited Belgrade, after seventeen years since the interruption of the political dialogue with that country.

- Urgent introduction of new forms of cooperation at a bilateral and inter-regional level. Priority should be given to the cooperation in the field of science and technology, taking into account that the achievements of our country, but also of the Balkans, and the level of development in these fields are still attractive enough and financially more accessible to some Latin American countries. We are suggesting systematic exports of knowledge and technology, especially in the fields of construction, chemical and pharmaceutical industry, and metallurgy. This would also include training of personnel capable of maintaining and improving certain technological processes based on domestic scientific and technological knowledge and equipment.

- Further intensification of agriculture and food production, which have particularly good perspectives regarding cooperation. Serbia and Montenegro, as well as the rest of Balkan countries, would have to use to the maximum their biotechnological potentials and knowledge.

- Reaffirmation of cultural, educational and scientific cooperation, as the most appropriate instrument for a systematic approach and better understanding between the countries of the Balkans and Latin America. The existence of huge cultural ethnic wealth in both regions influences this segment also the fact that there is a great interest in Latin American civilization in Serbia and Montenegro. As for Belgrade, we should point out that it is necessary to start restoring all forms of cultural, educational, and scientific cooperation, especially in the segment referring to the reciprocal award of scholarships for post-graduate studies.