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Dimitri A. Sotiropoulos

Non-governmental organizations and civic initiatives

in South Eastern Europe: Towards a transnational civil society?

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Centre for the Study of Global Governance
London School of Economics and Political Science
Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE
http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global

ABSTRACT This paper argues that there is an emerging transnational civil society in South Eastern Europe even though civil society in the region like elsewhere in the post-Communist context remains weak. By analyzing projects linking groups or organizations from at least two countries in the region, which participate in conferences and public discussions, joint social research projects, training in democratic state-building, voluntary work and local cross-border cooperation, it shows that transnational ties have by and large been created among pro-European elites and among the young with Western funding. The creation of transnational links in the non-state sphere has unfolded despite obstacles posed by political instability, economic hardship and the diffusion of negative stereotypes among the nations in South Eastern Europe.

Conceptual distinctions

The study of civil society has been cross-national and comparative historical. Comparative cross-national analysis contrasts strong and weak civil societies of different countries, while comparative historical analysis discusses the development or the underdevelopment of civil society, always within the boundaries of a particular country. In other words, the concept of civil society has been territorially bounded. Recent research on transnational social movements and advocacy groups (Keck and Kikkink 1998) and on global civil society (Anheier, Glasius, and Kaldor 2001, Kaldor 2003) has undermined this territorially bounded conception of civil society.

By "global civil society" we understand the socio-sphere "located between the family, state and market and operating beyond the confines of national societies, polities, and economies" (Anheier, Glasius, and Kaldor 2001: 17). Capitalist globalization has met some resistance in the form of anti-capitalist social movements and advocacy groups, which include activists and organizations coming from many different countries. Activists and organizations interact with one another other via the Internet, conduct periodic meetings and organize rallies where international summits of leaders take place (e.g., in Seattle, Genoa, Thessaloniki). "Transposed to a global level, civil society could be more or less equated to 'globalization from below'" (Kaldor 2003: 8).

However, when civil society mobilization overflows national boundaries, it may not automatically assume a global character. It may be confined to a certain region; and, while "global" and "transnational" are often used interchangeably when one refers to civil mobilization which surpasses national boundaries, it would seem useful to draw a conceptual distinction between mobilizations of wider and narrower

scope. For instance, the coordinated action of NGOs from only two countries is not an instance of territorially bounded civil society, but, obviously, does not amount to global mobilization either. This type of narrower civil society mobilization, which may include NGOs, voluntary associations, trade unions or professional associations from more than one countries, may be understood as an instance of transnational, rather than global, civil society. While we should not forget the normative importance of adopting "global civil society" as a counterweight, so to speak, to the globalization of capitalism (Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor 2001), in certain instances, such as in the area covered in this article, the term "global" may sound ambitious (Morrison 2003: 12). It is more meaningful to use "transnational civil society" for civic mobilization limited in parts of a region, such as South Eastern Europe (SEE), without forgetting that social movements and advocacy networks in SEE may partake in global civic mobilization.

Indeed, as Tables 1 and 2 show, between 1991 and 2001, global civil society reached SEE. In most SEE countries there were many more members of international NGOs in 2001 than in 1991, reflecting the opening up of the political system in the first decade after the transition from communism (Table 1). In the same period, the number of secretariats of international NGOs and national NGOs with an international orientation, which opened headquarters or local missions in SEE, also grew (Table 2). The exception to this trend was the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (now Serbia and Montenegro), where probably the authoritarian Milosevic regime and the implications of the Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo wars must have had a dampening effect on the penetration of global civil society into Yugoslav society.

Table 1

Membership in international non-governmental organizations (INGOS) - Comparative membership density per million population in SEE countries

	INGO membership density per million population		
	1991	2001	Change % 2001/1991
South Eastern Europe:			
Albania	28.8	243.9	+ 746.6
Bosnia-Herzegovina	___	140.6	___
Bulgaria	116.7	269.9	+ 131.2
Croatia	___	406.9	___
Macedonia[i]	___	318.0	___
Romania	40.5	105.3	+ 159.8
Yugoslavia	160.4	154.1	- 3.9
World average	28.9	43.2	+ 49.6

Source: Anheier and Stares 2002: 324-328, Record 17, on the basis of the *Yearbook of International Organizations: Guide to Civil Society Networks* Ed. Union of International Associations, Brussels 1991 and 2001. The first two columns do not show numbers of individuals. As the source explains, a count of 100 for a country means that 100 INGOs each have at least a member or member organization in that country. The density presented in this table is that count measured against the country's population.

Table 2

Number of Secretariats (Headquarters) of International NGOs and internationally-oriented national NGOs in SEE

	Organizational density per million population		
	1991	2001	Change % 2001/1991
South Eastern Europe:			
Albania	0.3	___	___
Bosnia-Herzegovina	0.0	0.2	___
Bulgaria	2.9	3.7	+ 27.7
Croatia	0.0	3.0	___
Macedonia	0.0	0.5	___
Romania	0.3	0.7	+ 106.9
Yugoslavia	3.5	1.0	- 70.3
World average	3.0	2.9	- 1.7

Source: Anheier and Stares 2002: 318-322, Record 16, on the basis of the *Yearbook of International Organizations: Guide to Civil Society Networks* Ed. Union of International Associations, Brussels 1991 and 2001. For each given country, the table indicates the number of secretariats of national NGOs (which are internationally oriented) and secretariats of international NGOs per 1 million population.

Owing to the lack of data, it is less easy to register the development of transnational civil society in SEE over time. Transnational civil society is not necessarily "multinational". First, not too many nations are involved: individuals or groups of only a few nationalities may participate in a civic initiative which transcends national boundaries. Second, the base or the source of a civil society initiative is almost never multinational: the origin of such an initiative may come from a civic association in a single country, which attempts to cooperate with other associations originating in other countries. In both cases, civil society is neither national nor multinational nor global, but transnational.

In fact, if for the purposes of this argument only, we equate nation with ethnicity, then we may find instances of transnationalism within the borders of a single country. Inter-ethnic cooperation among Bosniacs, Serbs and Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina or between Macedonians and Albanians in Macedonia would be relevant examples.

In what follows we will first make some empirical observations about transnational civil society in SEE. We will note four different instances of transnational civil society. We will then discuss the reasons of the relative underdevelopment of transnational civil society in that region. We will present some attitudinal data and we will suggest an explanation based on the prevailing political culture in post-communist SEE. We will then suggest possible ways for reinforcing tansnational civil society, before concluding with a summary of our argument.

Although there are several instances of transnational civil society in the region, one cannot speak of a fully developed phenomenon. It would be anyway hard to measure the strength of civil society at the transnational level. However, it is paradoxical that in a region such as SEE where (compared to tradition of strong civil

society in other European countries) national civil societies are admittedly weak, a transnational civil society is slowly emerging.

The purpose of the next section is to briefly sketch the range of different types of transnational civil society mobilization in post-communist SEE. While the emergence of a transnational civil society in this region is visible, for the moment it is still difficult to confirm the exact stage of development of transnational civil society.

Instances of transnational civil society in South Eastern Europe

The agenda of transnational activity in SEE is varied. Relevant issues include post-conflict reconciliation, women's issues, protection of human rights, aid to refugees and displaced people, the promotion of voluntarism among the youth of the region and education with an emphasis on training in the building of democratic institutions and cooperation in the writing of school textbooks.

The repertoire of ways for working on these issues is typical of civil society mobilization. It involves a) conferences and public discussions, b) common publications, c) training seminars, and d) voluntary work and local cross-border cooperation. Let us take these four ways of building transnational civil society linkages one by one.

i) Transnational conferences and public discussions

There are plenty of transnational public discussions and conferences in SEE. While academics and experts participate in specialized conferences, the composition of participants in public discussions is more mixed. Some of the discussions and

conferences are organized by local civic associations or think tanks which are funded by an individual foreign state or foreign donor. An example is a public discussion on the wars in ex-Jugoslavia and the maintenance of peace, which took place among young NGO activists in June 2002 in Belgrade. Participants in the event, which was funded by the Swiss foreign ministry, came from Belgrade, Zagreb, and Sarajevo.[ii]

Other conferences and debates are organized by the European Union (EU). An example of the second case is a conference on "civil society, democratization, participation and the Stability Pact in SEE", which was organized by the Economic and Social Committee of the EU in January 2000 in Athens. Participants included trade unionists and representatives of employers' associations from SEE countries, Ministers of Labour from the same region and EU officials.

The impact of such public discussions and conferences, even of the more formal ones in which governments are represented, is debatable. On the one hand, such meetings have assumed a periodic and ritual character. Funding agencies, such as international organizations, the EU and individual donors, require a ritual of periodic meetings and expect at least the diffusion of a report as an outcome. Most EU-funded research projects in SEE include such meetings throughout their course.

It is hard to say whether such rituals promote transnational civil society. On the one hand, on the side of the official programme of such meetings there is opportunity and time for informal discussion among nationals coming from formerly belligerent nations. On the other hand, further cooperation among participants depends more on opportunities for informal contacts than on formal meetings, which usually have a delimited agenda and are tailor-made to meet the specific requirements of the meeting's sponsor. However, one should not be dismissive of the time, effort

and funds devoted to bringing together nationals from neighbouring countries which have been at war more than once in the span of a century.

ii) Transnational social research and publications

Common publications are usually the result of research projects, undertaken by academics and researchers from the SEE region and funded by international organizations or the competent DGs of the European Commission (EC). Field work takes place prior to publication, and in the best of cases the data are collected through common research tools, such as questionnaire surveys conducted in more than one countries of the region. There are plenty of such projects.

Some examples are the following: first, research on civil society and social capital and on the informal sector in SEE, which was part of a larger project titled "IBEU: Integrating the Balkans in the European Union; functional borders and sustainable security". Partner institutions included think tanks from Athens, Sofia and Bucharest as well as the LSE and Oxford's Southeastern Europe Programme. Funding came from the EC. Questionnaire survey research and other collection of data, some of which is presented further on in this article, took place between 2002 and 2004 in Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro.

A second example is the project titled "The inflexibility trap: frustrated societies, weak states and democracy", published as an edited volume, titled *The Inflexibility Trap* (CLS and IME 2003). Partner institutions included think tanks from Beograd, Podgorica, Prishtina, Skopje, Sofia and Tirana. Funding was provided by the US National Endowment for Democracy. Research included the survey of constitutional provisions in Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Kosovo and Serbia and

Montenegro, electoral results as well as macroeconomic and fiscal indicators for each of these countries.

A third example is the publication of two collected volumes on the form and content of history textbooks distributed in the schools of different SEE countries (Koulouri 2001 and 2002). The aim of this collective effort was to unearth the underlying national stereotypes of SEE nations into which pupils are socialized and to improve on the level of historical accuracy of history textbooks. The project, which was financed by the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe (based in Thessaloniki) and initially inspired by Maria Todorova, started in 1998 and is still going on. Over forty professors and school teachers of history from eleven different SEE countries (plus Germany and Greece) have participated in periodic workshops and have conducted content analysis of school textbooks.

A fourth example is the cooperation among Croatian and Serbian, on the one hand, and Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian historians, on the other, under the initiative of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (Germany). The aim of this cooperation was to write texts on the recent history of SEE (Altmann 2003: 148).

Obviously, the publication and electronic diffusion of cooperative research projects do not help shaping anything more than a transnational community of scholars. With the exception of school textbooks, the diffusion of research results hardly ever reaches larger groups of people. In regard with its impact on public policies, academic research takes a long time to work on its own.

However, in times of political crisis and social frustration, politicians turn to experts for advice. If a consensus is gradually built within a transnational community of experts, it might find its way in policy-making. A relevant example is the insistence of the EU on administrative and judicial reform as a major policy priority for SEE

countries and prospective EU member-states. This priority is linked to the gradual realization that the drafting of democratic constitutions, the foundation of new institutions and the staging of elections may lead to "electocracies" rather than democracies (Dawisha and Parrot 1997) and to the accomplishment of formal rather than substantive democracy (Kaldor and Vejvoda 2002). Academic criticism has gradually drawn the attention of policy-makers. The literature on the weakness of post-communist states in SEE (for a summary see Sotiropoulos 2002) may - to a certain extent - be remotely related to the aforementioned shift in policy priorities. However small, civil society initiatives - including those of academic and research communities - may have an impact.

iii) Transnational training

Training seminars probably have a high impact on the promotion of civil society, either in individual nation-states or at the transnational level. The reason is that through training, the mindset and the skills, if not the actual behaviour, of participants are expected to change.

Some examples are the following: first, the successive seminars of a Greek foundation (ELIAMEP), targeted towards "young leaders", which took place in the Greek island of Halki and in Tirana in 2000. The seminars, in which young journalists, political activists and NGO employees from different SEE countries were invited, included training in conflict management and resolution. A second example is the regional training for judges on human rights, which has been organized by human rights organizations from Belgrade, Zagreb, Serajevo and Podgorica.

A third example is the “Balkan Dialogue Project” and the establishment of Nansen Dialogue Centres. Funded by Norwegians and the International Peace Research Institute of Oslo, the project started in 1995 and aimed at bringing together young people from SEE of different ethnic backgrounds. While initially the project focused on training in human rights, democracy and peaceful conflict resolution, along the way it assumed a different character. The project’s aim shifted to “opening up new lines of communication that unsettled the traditional outlook of the participants in quite dramatic ways” (Aarbakke 2002: vi). Further, participants in the dialogue tried to maintain inter-ethnic contacts after returning home from the meetings. By 2002, several thousand young people had participated in the Nansen Dialogue training, either in Norway or locally in one of the eight Nansen Dialogue Centres (in Belgrade, Osijek, Banja Luka, Sarajevo, Mostar, Podgorica, Pristina and Skopje).

iv) Voluntary work and local cross-border mobilization

Equally interesting were the cases of training volunteers and of cross-border cooperation in local areas, full of inter-ethnic tensions. An example of voluntary work is the exchange of volunteers between humanitarian organizations from Novi Sad (Serbia), Vukovar (Croatia) and Tuzla (Bosnia-Herzegovina).

An example of local mobilization is the cross-border cooperation in area of the borders of Kosovo, Southern Serbia and Macedonia. The project started in the spring of 2003, was facilitated by the Eastwest Institute (EWI) and aimed to sustain inter-ethnic and cross-border cooperation among the residents of the Kumanovo-Presevo-Gnjilane/Gnjilan area. Another relevant example is the project of periodic roundtable

discussions among international experts and local actors from Greece, Albania and Macedonia, who work in the Prespa/Ohrid lake district, an area spanning the borders of these three countries (Tamminen 2004: 412-413).

Finally, there has been an attempt to link the trade unions of SEE countries. The attempt took place in 2001 in Thessaloniki, under the auspices of the European Trade Union Federation (Altmann 2003: 148). Another similar attempt was made by the confederation of Greek workers (GSEE) in December 2004 in Athens, when EU and SEE trade unionists were invited in a conference on training union leaders.

Obviously, the development of a transnational civil society in SEE is not uniform across all countries of the region. This is shown by two examples. First, the Stability Pact with its "first working table" on democratization and human rights has focused on NGO activities. However, in the first year of the Pact's implementation (2000-2001), NGOs from Romania, Slovenia and Montenegro had received a larger share of the funds than NGOs from the rest of the Pact's recipient countries (Kondonis 2002: 51, Table 2). Second, in 2000, the European Commission provided for a new EU programme (CARDS) focusing exclusively on Western Balkans. This did not include Bulgaria and Romania, which, of course, as prospective EU member-states have been included in a host of other EU projects.

An interpretation of transnational civil society in South Eastern Europe

Since the mid-1990s, civil society has developed transnationally in SEE. However, its development has been varied and uneven. International organizations and foreign governments have promoted linkages among pro-European elites in SEE. The latter have benefited from ample funding particularly from the EC, various organizations

linked with the UN, particular foreign governments and individual donors. Obviously, projects for the development of civil society have mainly targeted the young educated urban strata. Except for the elites and the young, other social groups which have participated in the development of civil society are civic activists who live close to the borders of their country and who have proceeded with cross-border cooperation.

Without diminishing the accomplishments of the elites, the young and the civil activists at the local level, it is clear that the development of civil society has not affected the general population. Obstacles to wider participation in inter-ethnic cooperation and more generally in transnational civic activism differ from one SEE country to the other.

Beyond the obvious reason for this trend, which is the underdevelopment of civil society at the national level, i.e. within each country, there are additional reasons which may explain why individuals and groups refrain from transnational civic activism. The reasons refer to the prevalent political culture which includes attitudes of political distrust, cynicism and alienation among the citizens of post-communist societies of SEE.

There is empirical research confirming such elements of political culture in this region. We will limit ourselves to the presentation of some data from research carried out in the context of a research project titled “Integrating the Balkans in the European Union” (IBEU). In the context of this project, a particular “Working Package” (WP2) was devoted to the study of civil society and social capital in SEE. Research on civil society was organized by a Bulgarian and a Romanian research center (CLS and SAR) and coordinated by a Greek foundation (ELIAMEP).[iii]

The partner institutions conducted empirical research on social capital and civil society through questionnaire surveys, which took place in Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro in 2002-2004. In Romania the survey was carried out by the Center for Regional and Urban Sociology and was supervised by SAR (Bucharest). In the rest of SEE countries it was carried out by BSS Gallup International and was supervised by CLS (Sofia). The samples were stratified random samples of the general population. In Bulgaria the sample included 1,021 respondents, in Macedonia also 1,021, in Romania 1,600, in Serbia 816 and in Montenegro 402. (Serbia and Montenegro constitute a single independent state; however, for analytical purposes Serbs and Montenegrins were sampled separately.) In all cases the same research design was used.

The research was based on a common questionnaire. Most of the questions were "closed", and the main themes were various forms and measures of trust. Typical questions included inquiries about trusting most other people as opposed to trusting only one's own kin; trusting the government, the parliament and the president of the republic and trusting the rest of the institutions such as, for instance, the justice system and the local government; participating in formal and informal collective activities, such being a member of an association or taking part in a community activity.

While the general picture emerging from these surveys is, as could be expected, that of a general distrust towards other people and towards institutions, other findings are interesting because they indicate a more precise and differentiated image of stereotypes of the "other" in post-communist SEE societies.

The distrust shown by citizens of SEE countries varies by country. Mutual distrust may by understood in two ways. First, in an implicit fashion, as a factor of

ethnocentrism; and secondly, explicitly, as the level of distrust expressed by citizens of one country towards citizens of other countries of the region.

Table 3
Interpersonal trust
Agreements with the statements:

	Romania (%)	**Bulgaria (%)**	**Serbia (%)**	**Montenegro (%)**	**Macedonia (%)**
Only your kin can be trusted	47.6	65.2	47.4	37.9	71.9
Our people can be trusted more than foreigners	56.6	47.5	35.6	43.9	64.7

Source: Sample survey research carried out by Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, Romanian Academic Society (SAR), Bucharest and Georgi Ganev and Yana Papazova, Centre for Liberal Strategies (CLS), Sofia, in 2002-2004, in the context of the "IBEU" project.

Table 4.
Nationalism
Agreements with the statements:

	Romania (%)	**Bulgaria (%)**	**Serbia (%)**	**Montenegro (%)**	**Macedonia (%)**
There are ethnic groups within our borders which pose a threat to our sovereignty	35.6	24.0	54.8	25.6	77.3
There are parts of other countries which belong to us	58.9	47.2	35.5	14.5	63.8

Source: Sample survey research carried out by Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, Romanian Academic Society (SAR), Bucharest and Georgi Ganev and Yana Papazova, Centre for Liberal Strategies (CLS), Sofia, in 2002-2004, in the context of the "IBEU" project.

The first of the above two ways refers to the percentage of respondents who agree ("definitely agree" or "rather agree") with the statement that only their co-patriots can be trusted more than foreigners. For instance, respondents in Serbia were asked whether they agree or disagree with the statement "Our people can be trusted

more than foreigners". While only *one-third* of the Serbian respondents agreed with that statement, *two-thirds* of the respondents from Macedonia agreed with the corresponding statement about Macedonia (Table 3). The percentage of agreement was extremely high for Albanians who are residents of Macedonia and were asked about their own ethnic group (85 per cent of Macedonian Albanians agreed with the statement, while 56 per cent of Slav Macedonians did so). Montenegrins, Bulgarians and Romanians fell in between the above two extremes, represented by Serbs and Macedonians: between 44 and 57 per cent of the respondents from Romania, Montenegro and Bulgaria agreed with the corresponding statement. However, it should be noted that more Romanians and Montenegrins identified with their nation ("our people") than with their kin.

The second of the aforementioned ways of measuring inter-ethnic distrust was about distrust among people from different countries of the same region. For instance, among Bulgarians, 33 per cent distrust Romanians and 31 per cent distrust Serbs. These are low percentages, if one considers that among Macedonians, 41 per cent distrust Serbs and 58 per cent distrust Bulgarians; whereas 78 per cent of the Macedonians of non-Albanian origin, distrust Albanians. In Serbia-Montenegro, among Serbs, one-third distrusts Romanians and an equal share distrusts Bulgarians. However, two thirds of the Serbian respondents distrust Albanians. Finally, among Montenegrins, 42 per cent distrust Albanians, while only 10 per cent distrust Serbs.[iv]

The symbolic weight of recent national and inter-ethnic conflict in South Eastern Europe is reflected in the above attitudinal data, which show, among other things, that Albanians are rather isolated from the rest of the people of Western Balkans and that Macedonians feel excluded.

Another indirect measure, indicating the context of transnational civil activism, is the frequency with which people travel to neighbouring countries. Generally, there is little such travel. Among Bulgarians, 75 per cent claim that they never travel to neighbouring countries. The corresponding figure for Macedonians is 41 per cent, for Montenegrins 68 per cent and for Serbs 60 per cent.[v] Similar ethnocentric, if not outwardly nationalist, profiles come out of the responses obtained to the statement "there are parts of other countries which belong to us" (Table 4). In respect with that statement, Macedonians and Romanians, for different historical reasons, appear more aggressive than Bulgarians, Serbians and Montenegrins.

Finally, an obstacle to inter-ethnic cooperation within a single country has to do with the perception that the territorial integrity of one's own homeland is threatened by an ethnic minority (Table 4). Among Serbs, 55 per cent consider minorities such a threat. The figure is even higher for Macedonians (77 per cent). Only one-fourth (about 24-26 per cent) of Bulgarians and Montenegrins believe so, while Romanians (with 36 per cent) fall in between these extremes.

To sum up this section, an array of ethnocentric and xenophobic attitudes, which are quite widespread particularly in Western Balkans, probably create obstacles to the further development of transnational civil society in SEE.

Strengthening transnational civil society

Attitudes change with difficulty and stereotypes, which are the sources of attitudes, are even harder to change. Attitudes and stereotypes become crystallized in sets of mentalities. Corruption, political cynicism and poverty notwithstanding, the transitions to democracy and the market in SEE have made some progress over the

past fifteen years. Transition in mentalities will take much longer, particularly if the goal is to modify age-old perceptions of the "other" in SEE, such as those sketched in the previous section. The prospect of joining the EU, which itself may be moving to a type of governance privileging transnational and sub-national forms of governance, may contribute to the reinforcement of transnational civil society.

Obviously, the decline of nationalist attitudes may be negatively correlated with the rise of pro-European attitudes. A hypothesis that needs further exploration over time is that the more people identify with European identity, the more they will be willing to shed their national identity. This tendency will differ across nations, as the following piece of data shows: in a political culture survey in Eastern Europe, which took place in 2002, 45 per cent of Romanians declared that they definitely saw themselves as European, while only 12 per cent of Bulgarians did so ("Political Culture in New Democracies Project" in Kakepaki 2005). Another external, "pulling" factor, able to make SEE nationals to start thinking in less ethnocentric terms, is the groundwork done by international NGOs (INGOs), which was presented in the beginning of this article, with reference to Tables 1 and 2. The insistence of INGOs in fostering cooperation among students, academics, and volunteers from different SEE countries may bear fruits.

External, "pull" factors, such as EU- and INGO-driven transnational cooperation, would need to be complemented by internal, "push" factors, such as the influence of schooling, training and the mass media. The change of the content of school curricula (on top of the effort to change history textbooks) and the openness of mass media to the emergence of identities other than purely national ones are two goals which seem unrealistic. In the not so distant future, however, deepening European integration and the increasing flow of ideas, goods and services across

borders may make these goals realistic, if not indispensable, for any SEE nation-states aspiring to join the EU.

Conclusion

This article has shown that some significant aspects of the development of civil society in SEE are overlooked when describing the civil society in this post-communist region as being weak. The most important development concerns the transnationalization of civil society in SEE. This process involves collective actors from more than one ethnic groups and/or countries, while they do not necessarily either link up with global advocacy networks or aspire to cover the SEE region as a whole.

First, since the mid-1990s and, more precisely, since the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina there have been many different EU programmes and other projects funded by individual foreign countries and donors, aimed at fostering linkages among non-state actors from different post-communist countries of SEE. Academics, researchers, experts, civil servants, NGO activists and students have participated in such programmes and projects.

Second, there have been some local initiatives which have not obtained support by particular governments and which have been able to attract the interest of other local groups or organizations, often from neighbouring SEE countries. Sometimes these have been grassroots rather than elite-level initiatives.

Third, there is a political and intellectual elite in post-communist South Eastern Europe, which shares a pro-European profile. The members of this elite are technocrats, researchers and academics. They have already created ties amongst

themselves and among representatives of international organizations and donors. The aforementioned ties have been created on the basis of their political and professional profile and through their periodic cooperation in internationally funded projects.

The NGOs in South Eastern Europe seem to have attracted a lot of international publicity and EU's attention to the development of civil society. Nonetheless, cooperation among individuals and groups of different ethnic origin encounters a number of obstacles. The political culture in which collective actors function in the post-communist states coming out of the disintegration of Yugoslavia constitutes a barrier to the development of civil society both at the national and the transnational level. Authoritarian historical legacies and a political culture of distrust, alienation and cynicism do not facilitate civil society initiatives either.

The strengthening of transnational civil society will require time and parallel interventions at multiple regional, national and subnational levels. EU institutions, international and local NGOs, local mass media and schools may have a role in gradually altering dominant stereotypes, such as those indicated in the middle section of this article, and in reinforcing wider transnational ties and local cross-border linkages. Overall, one cannot claim that there is a fully developed transnational civil society in SEE. This is related to the comparatively long periods of insecurity and political instability in the region, to economic hardship, which has hit large segments of the local populations, and to the persistence of negative stereotypes among peoples of the region, which do not facilitate the forging of transnational ties. However, despite the persistence of weak civil societies in individual post-communist states, the SEE has seen an interesting paradox of an emerging transnational civil society.

Dimitri A. Sotiropoulos is assistant professor of political science at the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of Athens. Address for correspondence: University of Athens, 19, Omirou Street, GR-10672, Athens Greece. E-mail: dsotirop@hol.gr

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[i] Macedonia is an abbreviated form of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
[ii] I owe this piece of information and some of the information in sections iii and iv (below) to research made by Eva Grigoriou in the summer of 2004.
[iii] See details on the Website of ELIAMEP, www. eliamep.gr/3/4/wp.asp?projectid=1&wpid=6.
[iv] Data supplied by Georgi Ganev, Yana Papazova and Rashko Dorosiev, from CLS, Sofia, on the basis of their on-going work for the IBEU project.
[v] Research by CLS noted in the previous endnote.