

Lidija Čehulić Vukadinović (ed.)

YEARBOOK ŠIPAN 2015

The Atlantic Council of Croatia
Center for International Studies

Zagreb, 2016

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Preface

In summer 2002 the Center for International Studies of the Croatian Association for International Studies and The Atlantic Council of Croatia have organized the first International Summer School on the island of Šipan, Luka Šipanska, hotel Šipan.

The first year the school was consisting of the two separate, one-week scientific seminars intended for young leaders: attendants of post graduate and doctorate studies, diplomats, journalists, military officials, foreign affairs officials, civil servants, teachers, NGO members and all those who are, or will be, professionally involved with some aspects of the complex issue of international relations. After that till now we are organizing every year the four events in the framework of the International School.

The content of the summer school seminars and conferences is primarily focusing on topics relating to South East Europe and Euro-Atlantic integrations, which is understandable having in mind the venue of the summer school (the Republic of Croatia) and the significance of the South East Europe and the Euro-Atlantism within the emerging new European and world order.

The Šipan Yearbook 2015 is the thirteenth publication of this school. This year also the Šipan Yearbook is published in English language only, which fact further affirms the international character of the school, its participants, and messages being conveyed. Papers published in Šipan Yearbook 2015 are illustrating some of the issues and topics discussed in two scientific conferences during the summer school 2015.

- June 22 – 26, 2015: "*The New Role of Euro-Atlantism*" in cooperation with Hanns Seidel Stiftung in Zagreb
- June 26 – 30, 2015: "*NATO and Mediterranean*" in cooperation with NATO Public Diplomacy Division, Brussels

During the last fifteen years our summer school gathered more than 1900 speakers and participants from the following countries: Albania, Austria, Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iran, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Serbia, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine and USA; as well as representatives of various international organizations, such as NATO, EU, Atlantic Treaty Association – ATA, Council of Europe, RACVIAC and relevant NGOs from the region.

The aim of the International Summer School is to reflect upon and analyze the complexities present in South East Europe, to provide a forum for exchange of thoughts and perceptions between the members of younger generation, and to foster independent approaches to these issues through workshops and case simulations, constantly seeking for new suggestions on how to solve the numerous and complex problems of this part of Europe in a most efficient manner. On a small Mediterranean island, in a relaxed and informal atmosphere, young leaders are given the opportunity not only to contemplate

on these issues together with the lecturers from academic circles, international organizations, NGOs as well as high ranking political officials and diplomats (president of state, ministers, ambassadors, military leaders), but also to meet their colleagues and establish professional and private contacts needed in their future professional development.

The interest for these courses so far bears witness to the fact that our International Summer School has found its place among the similar international summer schools, that it has proven its value and reputation and that by entering into its 16th year of existence the summer school is gaining on its institutional value.

Publication of the Yearbook Šipan certainly contributes to this fact, thus Šipan Yearbook 2015 contains ten presentations from the last year's summer school.

Publication of the Yearbook Šipan 2015 is financially supported by the Hanns Seidel Stiftung and the Atlantic Council of Croatia. This organization have recognized our summer school and the whole project as a valuable and useful effort.

Activities of the International Summer School would not be possible without the assistance of the co-sponsors: NATO Public Diplomacy Division, Brussels and Hanns Seidel Stiftung, Zagreb. It must be accented that valuable and active support is provided by the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Croatia.

Yearbook Šipan 2015 is intended for domestic and foreign public and should serve as useful and interesting reading for all those who are actively and practically involved in the international relations, as well as those who are studying international relations from more theoretical aspects. Time of crisis that is being felt in all countries has not stopped our activities. Again it was proven that even in toughest times, with strong will on organizer's side and interest for certain topics, it is possible to continue the work in spite of all the difficulties. The so called Western Balkans continues to be an area of special interest, with plenty of room for discussion and education within all pending strategic processes. And this is exactly the primary goal of the International Summer School: to continue supporting this spirit of a democratic and free dialogue that represents the only road towards new relations in this region. Contrary to some predicaments saying that The Atlantic Council of Croatia's activities will subdue, or even become obsolete in times when Croatia has become a full NATO member and EU member, The Atlantic Council of Croatia is proving them wrong, notably through the work of this summer school – the work that has been recognized internationally and at home. This motivates us further to continue with this work and to become a center of promotion of Euro – Atlantic idea in this part of Europe. In this we hope that we can count on full support of our existing friends and partners, as well as new ones that are yet to join us.

Editor

Lidija Čehulić Vukadinović¹
Monika Begović²

**EU and NATO as Inevitable Security Guarantors
to the Western Balkan Countries**

Abstract

Seeking to play a more active role in global affairs, the EU has developed Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). Nevertheless, NATO remains the dominant institutional foundation for transatlantic security affairs, but the European Union manages to start playing an important security role in a global world. United States, as a leading country in NATO, have supported efforts for development of EU security policies, knowing it will make NATO's role stronger and influential in the European continent, despite the overlapping membership. Importance of the EU to the South East European countries is constantly growing, and therefore the integration of the Western Balkan countries into EU presents their common foreign policy purpose, a goal that will provide new members benefits in economic, political but mostly security aspects. Euroatlantic integrations have, therefore, been recognized as the key strategy for achieving peace, stability and prosperity in this part of Europe, especially after recent events that disturbed the picture of calm and safe Europe. The aim of the article is to examine security cooperation model among Western Balkan countries from the perspective of their efforts to join the European Union and NATO.

Key words: *security cooperation, security threats and challenges, Western Balkan, NATO, EU, CFSP, CSDP*

Introduction

America is increasing its military spending for Europe, and slowly, but surely, American foreign policy is returning its focus to Europe, as a response to a changed environment in Europe, in which Russia became a difficult actor, a threat to European, but also American security. 'Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 is forcing America to think again about decades of cuts to its troop and equipment levels in Europe and rebuild a deterrent against Russia.'³ As the main actor within NATO Alliance, America

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³ Farmer Ben, Cold War returns as US increases Europe military spending, The Telegraph, 2 Feb 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/defence/12137018/Cold-War-returns-as-US-increases-Europe-military-spending.html>, accessed 10 February 2016

shows that Russian threat to the safety of NATO Eastern European countries is becoming bigger, and therefore NATO welcomes this decision of the United States to strengthen their military presence in Europe, which shows their commitment to European security. But, European security is still fragile, judging by the crisis it faces, such as economic and refugee crisis with an unprecedented number of asylum seekers and refugees. This crisis is only reflecting unpreparedness of the Western Balkan countries to face new crisis, after the '90s, lack of their cooperation, but also it shows how Europe is not ready enough to face the new security challenges that are constantly emerging. Once again, in a short period of recent history, it is proven that Western Balkan countries have very important geopolitical positions and they could make a big influence with the decisions they make. Economic crisis is not contributing difficult situation, actually, it just makes it deeper and enables for more stakeholders to be involved and express their (not always positive) interests. Although regional cooperation could serve as practicing and learning ground for individual states about the models of behaviour they will be expected to practice once they become EU members, it is important to stress that without NATO and the EU, that are security guarantors to the, in this context, Western Balkan countries, the stability in the region would be rather fragile. However, Western Balkan countries should always have in mind that regional security cooperation is one of the most important geo-political interests.

Common Foreign and Security Policy and its Approach to the Western Balkan

Since the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of Yugoslavia, countries that became independent going through the conflicts and wars, were given a name: Western Balkan, marking a part of the South-East European region,⁴ region in which many countries still hope for EU integration. European Union, although widely recognized as an international actor, hasn't played an imperative role in calming down the situation that arose during the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the '90s, which resulted with the need for NATO to become involved in calming the crisis, importing NATO values, as preconditions for needed reforms. Even today, going through a long and demanding process of reforms, that some Balkan countries are still not performing easily, the European Union, through its Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), sees the region as a challenge, as it needs democracy building and rule of law strengthening, which made the EU to, besides CFSP, implement other mechanisms, such as the Stabilization and Association Process, that consists of stabilisation and association agreements, with the central part of the process – Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA), in order to be actually involved in the region. Stability was restored with the help of NATO, however it could be said that the full stability is still being built, facing territorial and ethnic conflicts, while regional cooperation is still not at the desired level. European Union is contributing in peace building processes in the Western Balkan region, using enlargement policy, and crisis management policies after NATO operations.

Looking from the point of not so far history, the European Union was unable to

⁴ Western Balkan region consists of countries that aim to be part of the future enlargement of the EU (ex-Yugoslavia minus Slovenia plus Albania), while performing their connection within the pre-EU waiting program CEFTA (Central European Free Trade Agreement). Since Croatia became EU member country, it is not within Western Balkan countries.

deal with the security challenges in crisis actually made the European Union within itself to start with the process of numerous reforms, especially since the European institutions were not able to intervene due to unpreparedness of military capabilities and lack of united policy stands among member states. Going through a crisis itself, the EU had a lack of political unity to seek for a unique solution in addressing the crisis⁵, and at the end of the '90s the Kosovo crisis additionally showed that the region is still unstable, but also that the EU is still not fully prepared to react, which resulted with the NATO operation. Actually, the Western Balkan crisis stressed the weakness of European partners to end conflicts on the territory of Europe. These challenges formed a policy framework among EU partners, known as the EU 'regional approach' towards the Western Balkan countries with the goal to reconcile relations between countries by introducing European values and standards. Regional cooperation was being viewed as a principle of the highest importance for the political stability, security and economic development. The European Union decided to offer incentives that will politically and economically draw countries closer to the EU. That was the part of the enlargement policy, that was presented as one of the most effective tools that 'reinforces peace, democracy and stability in Europe [and] serves as a key driver for political and economic reform' to the applicant countries.⁶

According to the words of the former European Commissioner for Enlargement Olli Rehn, enlargement has proven to be one of the most important instruments for European security. 'It reflects the essence of the EU as a civilian power; by extending the area of peace and stability, democracy and the rule of law, the EU has achieved far more through its gravitational pull than it could ever have done with a stick or a sword'.⁷ Today, all Western Balkan countries, except Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, which are on a 'waiting list' due to unresolved sovereignty issues, have achieved the candidate status. Croatia became the 28th member of the Union; Montenegro and Serbia have begun the accession negotiations; Albania has become a candidate country and it is waiting to open accession negotiations; and FYROM has been granted the candidate status since 2005 but has been blocked by Greece due to the name dispute.

Western Balkan Countries and their Way towards EU and NATO

Both approaches that the European Union is implementing to keep the security

⁵ Saint-Malo Summit between France and Great Britain held in December 1998 paved the political path for the establishment of the necessary tools to deal with crises management operations. Both presidents agreed on 'the need of the EU to be in position to play an important role in international stage' and to develop 'the capacity for autonomous action [...] in order to respond to international crises' *Joint Declaration Issued at the British-French Summit*, Saint-Malo, France, 3 - 4 December 1998. This meeting resulted with the decision that was reached at the Cologne European Council meeting held in 1999, on which the EU heads of state and government decided to develop military capabilities as an integral part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, which was actually the birth of Common Security and Defence Policy, through which the EU intended to assume more responsibility in security matters backed up by military capabilities and appropriate instruments in order to undertake full range of 'Petersberg tasks' which were incorporated in the Amsterdam Treaty. See more in: Vukadinović Radovan; Čehulić Lidiya, *Politika europskih integracija*, Naklada Ljevak, Zagreb, 2011.

⁶ Council of the European Union, 'Council conclusions on enlargement/stabilisation and association process', 3060th General Affairs Council meeting Brussels, 14 December 2010, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/genaff/118487.pdf, accessed 15 March 2016

⁷ Rehn Olli, 'Europe's Next Frontiers', European Policy Center, Brussels, 10 October 2006, file:///C:/Users/BIZimpact%20II/Downloads/SPEECH-06-586_EN.pdf, accessed 15 March 2016

and stability in the Western Balkan region: CSDP missions - EU crisis management and enlargement policy create favourable conditions for lasting peace in the region through political and institutional reform, economic reforms and regional cooperation among the Western Balkan countries, and can be considered as peace building instruments. Nonetheless, the establishment of the CSDP also shows that EU moved away from “soft power” to the use of military power, or “hard power”. On 1 January 2003, the EU launched the European Union Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUPM) as its first-ever civilian crisis management operation within the framework of the ESDP. Two months later, the EU finally deployed Operation Concordia, its inaugural military mission, to follow up on NATO’s efforts to contribute to a stable and secure environment in FYROM.⁸ Since January 2003, the EU has been involved in joint disarmament operations, humanitarian and rescue tasks, military advice and assistance tasks, conflict prevention and peace-keeping tasks, combat force tasks in crisis management, including peace-making and post-conflict stabilisation.

However, the EU has never acted in the capacity of enforcer of the peace (like NATO in Kosovo in 1999) nor in defence against an armed attack on its territory.

The area of Western Balkans is only one spot in post Cold War international arena where European Union and NATO have to act together. The relationship between EU and NATO in many aspects has not been always the most harmonious one. But their cooperation in the security field has never been as important as it is today. Technically they are sharing many things: twentytwo EU members are at the same time a members of NATO and nine out of every ten people in the EU enjoy the protection of the NATO. And what is even more important this two international organizations are sharing the same values of democracy, freedom, respect and protection of human rights and the role of law. The whole euroatlantic community is going to be stronger, safer and more prosperous if NATO and EU members will stay united. Because today we are facing the most challenging security environment that Europe and the whole euroatlantic community have faced since the height of the Cold War. The area of the Western Balkan is somehow the collateral victim of the growing instability across North Africa, Middle East, the war in Syria and of course, the rise of the terrorist organization ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant). The so cold *Western Balkans Route* was the most important logistical route through which millions of displaced people have fled in search for safety somewhere in Europe. That humanitarian catastrophe has happened in the time when some Western Balkans countries has managed to went out from the economic recession and NATO and European Union have started to show their interests for that region again. Bosnia and Herzegovina and even Kosovo (which is not fully recognized by all EU /NATO members) have started with their Stabilization and Association Agreement, Serbia has started its negotiation talks for the full fledge membership to the EU, Montenegro got the invitation to NATO.....But the refugees crisis and especially the problems with the Western Balkans migration route have spoiled and stopped that positive direction of the Western Balkans countries towards building some new institutional ties with both, EU and NATO. In the nineteen of the last century in the area of the Western Balkans NATO has shown its technical and

⁸ See Council Decision 2002/968/CFSP of 10 December 2002 concerning the implementation of Joint Action 2002/210/CFSP on the European Union Police Mission, OJ 2002 L 335/1, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32002D0968&from=EN>, accessed 15 March 2016, and Council Decision 2003/202/CFSP of 18 March 2003 relating to the launch of the EU military operation in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, OJ 2003 L 76/43, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32003D0202&from=EN>, accessed 15 March 2016

operational new values (out-of-area operations, crisis management) and has demonstrated its new way of doing business in post Cold War era. The onadays instabilities in the area of Western Balkans have helped NATO to survive in post-bipolar international community. On the other side, with its policy of enlargement NATO has tried not only to stabilize the region but to create the euroatlantic security community by accepting that turbulent region in the democratic, free, prosperous, safe and united Europe, enhancing thus the euroatlantic space. Albania and Croatia become the full fledged members of NATO in 2009, and all others Western Balkans countries, except Kosovo, are members of NATO's programme Partnership for Peace or Membership Action Plan. The latest refugee crisis has shown that again NATO and EU have to work together in that part of Europe. The General Secretary of NATO, Rasmussen said that the direct response to the refugee crisis is primarily for national governments and the EU, but NATO is also playing a role. In February 2016 NATO Defence Ministers agreed to send ships to the Aegean Sea to assist with the refugees and migrant crisis. They were deployed immediately and are now supporting the Greek and Turkish authorities as well as FRONTEX through the provision of maritime surveillance aimed

At helping to halt illegal smuggling of migrants and refugees. NATO is also working to address the roots of that refugees and migrant crisis. Every NATO member is part of the US-led Coalition against ISIL and contributes in politically, military, economically, humanitarian way in the fight against ISIL. NATO believes that putting an end to the civil war in Syria will enable the international community to focus all its energies on destroying ISIL and discrediting its extremist ideology. In that sense the area of Western Balkans is not any more in the core focus of NATO's interests. Today NATO has been assisting its southern neighbours, members of NATO's programme Mediterranean Dialogue as well as its partners in the Gulf, members of the Istanbul Cooperative Initiative. Also, in the framework of Defence Capability Building Initiative, ambitious programme launched during NATO's summit in Wales in 2014, NATO is now implementing a special support package for the countries in the vicinity of Syria crisis, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia.....Even in that new kind of crisis management activities far away from the area of the Western Balkans, and Europe as a whole, NATO would like to coordinate its and EU capacity-building efforts in order to have great success in halting the spread of violent extremism and stabilizing Europe's southern neighbourhood.

The situation in Europe's north is not stabile, too. Two years ago, when NATO was thinking to enhance its cooperation with the Western Balkans countries, the Ukraine crisis has occurred. The Russian annexation of Crimea NATO Allies are seeing as Moscow's refuse to respect the sovereignty of its neighbours or the fundamental right of all nations to choose their own path toward european and euroatlantic integrations. Russia was accused for the further political and military destabilization of the Eastern Ukraine and NATO has stated that with such behaviour Moscow is showing that it wants to re-establish its spheres of influence, does not respect the model of European security based on Final Helsinki Act, rejects the values and principles of democratic development in post bipolar Europe. In the last twenty years NATO has consistently worked for closer cooperation and trust with Russia. Russia has first occupied territory in Georgia and Moldova, then it has annexed Crimea and now Russian planes and ships continue to test the resolve of NATO by approaching NATO sovereign territory. Thus Russia has, more than ones, violated international law

and has acted in contradiction with the principles and commitments in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council Basic Document, the NATO-Russia Founding Act and the Rome Declaration.⁹ Finally, NATO has decided to suspend all practical civilian and military cooperation between NATO and Russia. At its Wales summit NATO has, through its Readiness Action Plan, tripled the strength of NATO Response Force (NRF) to over 40.000 troops, with a rapid reaction Spearhead force at its centre, able to deploy within 48 hours. Strengthening its defence posture NATO, moving from the strategy of assurance to the strategy of deterrence, and with an enhanced forward presence on the territory of the eastern members of the Alliance (based on rotational deployments of capable, multinational forces), NATO wants to ensure that any Russian incursion into NATO's territory would be countered by force from the whole Alliance. Having that in mind, the United States, as the richest, the strongest and military and technologically the most advanced member of the NATO, has announced that it intends to quadruple its commitment to European security in the 2017. In the framework of the European Reassurance Initiative the United States will deploy with more troops on continuous rotation in eastern European NATO members. Also it will organize more military exercises and training programmes in that part of the Europe. Further more, the United States has promised to put more pre-positioned equipment on European soil.¹⁰

But, despite that new military posture of NATO in its eastern borders (towards Russia) the main challenge from Russia is not a straightforward military confrontation. NATO officials are saying that Russia is using a hybrid tactics; a wide range of tactics; from propaganda and cyber warfare to energy cut-offs, to achieve its political goals. Neither organization has all the tools on its own to prepare for, deter and defend against that kind of hybrid warfare. Today, we are facing that the European and international security and long-term prosperity are exposed to all kind of that hybrid warfare, coming both from the European south and European north. So again NATO and the European Union have to work together. Despite of all their internal problems and different views of the structure of the international community, they have to enhance their cooperation, to support each other and to achieve more together to protect their member states against different kind of hybrid aggression and instabilities. In that framework it is important that all Western Balkans countries have some kind of institutional ties with both, NATO and EU, so they can contribute in maintaining the peace and stability, not only in Europe, but in wider international arena.

Contemporary Challenges for EU Crisis Management

New security challenges that tackle security and stability in the Western Balkan region, and wider, are mostly related to the new role of the Russian Federation in the international security, refugee (migrant) crisis and terrorism. Western Balkan region is related with Russia in many ways, and countries such as Serbia, Republic Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and even Montenegro and Macedonia FYROM reconsidered their foreign policies to some extent after the European Union restrictive measures or 'sanctions' against Russian Federation, after its annexation of Crimea. Reactions of the

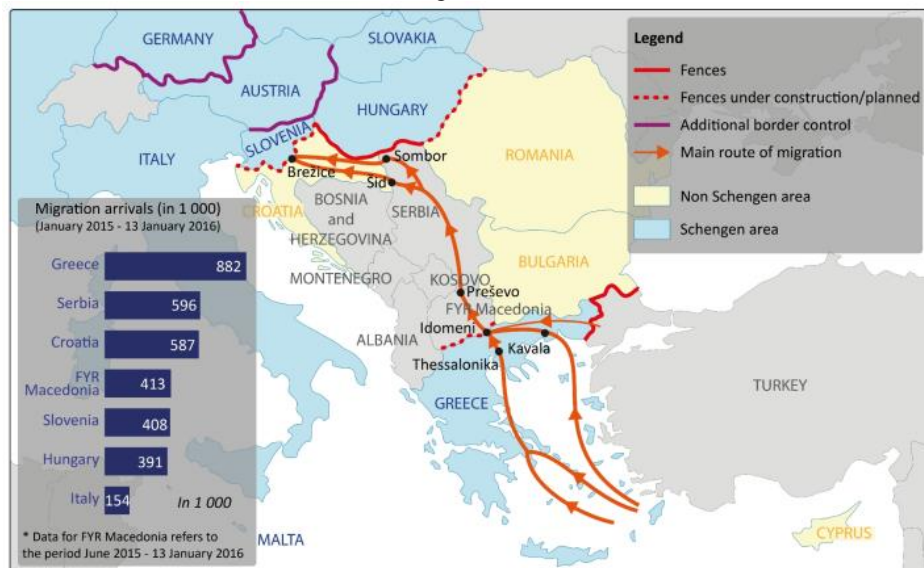
⁹ Statement by NATO Foreign Ministers, Press Release (2014)062, http://www.nato.int/en/nato/hq/news_108501.hr, approached April 18 2016.

¹⁰ Meeting Today's Security Challenges: The Importance of NATO-EU Cooperation. Remarks by NATO Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow to the EU Inter-parliamentary Conference on the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy, The Hague, 18 April 2016, http://www.nato.int/eps/en/natohq/opinions_129808.html, accessed 19 April 2016.

international community to the Russian involvement in the Ukrainian crisis are very important foreign policy challenges for some Western Balkan countries, their mutual relations but also their commitment to the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union.

The Western Balkan region is hit with the refugee or migrant crisis. 'By the end of October (2015), nearly 700,000 people had travelled along the Western Balkans route from Greece to Central Europe.'¹¹

Picture 1: The Western Balkans Migration Route



*European Parliament, Lilyanova Velina, The Western Balkans: Frontline of the migrant crisis, 26 January 2016¹²

The Western Balkan countries are therefore going through the emergency situation, while still having their own internal problems. The intention is to work more on improving mutual cooperation, while the flow of migrants is constantly increasing, already causing security challenge for the European Union and its neighbourhood. This puts in relation EU enlargement politics more into perspective as a tool of keeping the Western Balkan countries taking pragmatic operational measures to tackle the refugee crisis.

This crisis, that can easily turn into a geopolitical issue, which could first destabilize unstable Western Balkan countries, made NATO to start its mission in Aegean Sea, and again it made EU to look unprepared to solve challenges. The refugee crisis forced EU member states to reintroduce border controls, some with fences, which represents in a way violation of Schengen area of free movement. This approach will not prevent deepening further crisis in the region, that faces with new security

¹¹ European Commission, Managing the Refugee Crisis - Western Balkans Route: State of Play Report, October 2015, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/western_balkans_route_state_of_play_report_en.pdf

¹² [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/573949/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)573949_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/573949/EPRS_BRI(2016)573949_EN.pdf)

challenges. European Union is desperate for NATO assistance however NATO is still rethinking on the basis of its future involvement – could it be through Civil Emergency Planning Committee or Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre.

Conclusion

Western Balkan countries should take more into consideration being seriously engaged in regional cooperation, besides keeping good connections with the EU and NATO, especially taking into consideration of being defined as small countries. 'In the European region at least, new and widening security challenges have been a factor pushing most small states towards the deepest available forms of regional integration'.¹³ The ever-changing security challenges in the region, those affected by the international security status, but also those affected by the unresolved and very often bilateral disputes, require constant rethinking of policy approaches in the Western Balkan region. European Union can tackle new security challenges only through cooperative and collective actions, especially in cooperation with NATO and its neighbourhood, while overcoming differences of interests and viewpoints among member states. European Union shows during the refugee crisis that there's a need for coordination between different levels of governance.

NATO can use that all kind of above mentioned challenges to security and prosperity of the Western Balkans region to strengthen not only its relations with the European Union but to repair its own motors.¹⁴ The Western Balkan can be again the *lakmus paper* for the main NATO's principles of purpose and NATO's principles of function.

Firstly; the process of enlargement became a means to extent NATO's democratic security community to the former communist states. But geopolitics presents a limit to that NATO's activity. The support for further NATO's enlargement has evaporated mostly because of the resetting NATO's relations towards Russia. Russia is present in some parts of the Western Balkans (politically, economically, financially and even military) so if the West wants to reduce its influence in that part of the Europe, NATO can open its doors to the countries of the Western Balkans. All of them, except Serbia still want to join the Alliance. Before the full fledged membership, NATO can offer to them a different kind of individual programmes in the framework of the existing partnership programmes (Partnership for peace, Membership action plan).

Secondly; helping the potential candidate countries from the Western Balkans region to full fledged membership to NATO, NATO can continue to do its own military reforms

Thirdly; the euroatlantic character of NATO is one of its fundamental principle of purpose. The global international order is in the process of reinvention, the new powers (not only the states) and the new networks are present. In globalised international relations NATO is still the only institutional form of security and political cooperation between the two sides of the Atlantic. So many states and actors are

¹³ Bailes Alyson J.K., Rickli Jean-Marc, Thorhallson Baldur, Small States, survival and strategy in: Archer Clive, Bailes Alyson J.K., Wivel Anders, 2014, Small States and International Security – Europe and Beyond, Routledge, New York

¹⁴ Mark Webber, Ellen Hallams & Martin A Smith; „Reparing NATO's motors“, *International Affairs*, 90(4)2014 pp.773-793.

present in the area of the Western Balkans but only the spread of the euroatlantic values is the base for the further reforms and democratic changes of the societies in that region.

Fourthly; showing its interest for the region of the Western Balkans and with the continuation of its policy of further enlargement NATO can help the EU to realise its Common Foreign and Defence Policy in that part of the Europe.

Fifthly; trying to help to stabilize the region of the Western Balkans NATO can show that it is till the organization where policy of cohesion, trust and solidarity prevails.

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Miloš Šolaja¹

The Balkans – Searching for Identity

Abstract

The main Balkans identity identification through terms "balkanisation", "balkanism" and similar gifted to a world political sciences terminology using them as a pejorative meaning describing main regional type of political relations and political culture. Roots of these pejorative identity are in traditional Balkans ethnic, national, political, religious, cultural and others division. Main cause of conflicts has been lasting since the beginning of human history. How to overcome numerous diveristies in the proces of accession to contemporary multinational and multilateral integrations in order to make region more stabile and secure and by and large acceptable in wider multilateral frameworks. The first step should be provding of democracy legitimacy as a basement for interior political and social stability and precondition for strengtheniong intenrational relations. Regional cooperation is added as the one of the most important criteria for faster EU accessment and to overcome and enforce economy and political weakness. In order to reach regional goles South East Europe is closely connected with neighboring regions such are on the one hand, Central and East Eurpe, Adriatic-Ionian Region or Danube river regiona but on the other hand with Wider Black Sea Region, Wider Middle East, Mediterenanean Basin -partcularly Eastern, with some similrities the traditionally have and new similarities asfter recent unrests have been emerging. The region of Balkans is more identifie with pos Cold War integration processes in areas of sceurity and economy as well as in a regional cooperation regardles the last was posed as the fourth and very important Copenhagen criteria for acession of regional countries to EU. Although some sort of regional identity is rqured majority of South East European countries prefer direct joining either to european or Euro-Atlantic integrations. This political philosophy is not a good ground for wider cooperation with someother 'greater' regions *de facto* individual cou tries or a subregional associations. On the other hand many security challenges are shared by oveall regional aglomerations.

Key words: *region, Balkans, Middle East, democracy, legitimacy*

Introduction

State and nation has become crucial topic of discussion in international post Cold War changes ad reshaping of international relations. Process of globalization and changes in a modern world has been influencing global processes such are state framework and security paradigm; ethnicity and nation; multiculturalism and national identity. Those processes marked changes in approach to national state redistributing

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main social and political cleavages in order to establish independent national state through exclusively territorial redesign of the region of South East Europe and building pluralistic liberal democracies at the same time. Impact of changes started on the soil of East Europe reflected also on the region of South East Europe where two countries, Bulgarian and Romania, sharing the Warsaw Pact values of “hard Soviet type socialism”. Two some sort of neutral countries which did not belong to this Soviet socialist block, Yugoslavia and Albania, since 1985. by decision of former USA President Ronald Reagan has been considered as social countries. Both, and later on all emerged in the framework of former Yugoslavia, where treated as countries in a state of necessity of transition to liberal democracy. Our consciousness is consciousness of a “Westphalian state” based on the acceptance of a state as a supreme political power for individuals as well as collectivity. National state emerged during eighteen and predominantly nineteenth century in Northern and Western Europe, partly in South, Central and East Europe. The last area started with forming of “national states” was the Balkans or South East Europe which started in the beginning of 19. century (the First Serbian Rebellion and Greek rebellion) even has been continuing till today particularly by finishing the process of breaking up of former Yugoslavia.

Although these processes in the region of South East Europe (or the Balkans) are somehow comparable either with Central European countries as well as the disintegration of the former Soviet Union and divorcing Czechs and Slovaks from the unified federation, the Balkans new independent state philosophy was basically posed on territorial sovereignty of a state, nation centric governance and strong ethno-centric nationalism. The post socialist transition wave started at the end of the Cold War as a process of transformation institutions of strong bureaucratic centralized political system based on psychology of collectivism managed by one party to pluralistic society based on individual values and democracy constitution accepted as result of broad social discussion and expression as a common value at the beginning of the overall process of transition. There is widely accepted conviction about “three six” – six months for democratic constitution, six years for fixing a democratic political system and sixty years for establishing a developed civil society. Western countries paid main attention to transitional process in the former Warsaw Treaty Central European countries which had been bordering with NATO for decades – from the beginning of the Cold War till the destruction of the Berlin Wall. In the 90-ies it was the most important strategic question because of fierce of reviving authoritarian Russia but not only Russia because all other post socialist states possessed potential for come back of authoritarian rulers. The Balkans remained neglected by Western countries as periphery of post Cold War transition process as it was strategic periphery during years of War Cold. The Balkans carried some differences because of two types of states in transition: first so called “old national states” which remained unified faced with “clean” democracy changes reflected as usual internal political and social diversities and conflicts challenged only by “system changes” and “new national states” narrowly connected with secession and strong political even very militant conflicts. Transition on ex-Yu countries started by Western support national policies as democracy policies, particularly in Slovenia and Croatia, by which was initiated the process of transformation of state sovereignty from federal to newly emerged national states – former Yugoslav republics. Emerging of new national states was consequence of center – periphery as the main cleavage at that time end big ethnic cleavage between core nations in a process of state building versus Serbs as a national minority in new emerged countries. (Kasapović, 1996. 156). In the

short period between ending of the Cold War and emerging and firming of a “New World Order”, based on neo-liberalism, showed up a state centric thinking and revived idea of a state sovereignty in the background of self-declaring of new sovereign states.

In a building of statehood of the Balkans countries laid something called “unfinished state” which relates to pre-modern socialist statehood. Newly established states do not have characteristics of modern constitutional statehoods and constitutional democracies as a main core of political integrations of contemporary political societies. (Podunavac 2003. 13.) As post communist countries they did not finished a real political autonomy and civil society and remained themselves more as a communities then modern accomplished societies. It reflected in basic social cleavages which were remained as ethnic predominantly national which reflected as a very limited political pluralism and building of political organizations including political parties. These countries were unable to “build basements of a social agreement, foundations of a basic social consensus about a collective identity” (Podunavac, 2003. 14.) Identity and ethnicity became significant criteria in a building structure of public social space and predominantly were directed “top-down” as a product of monoculture elites which sustained themselves a right for a ‘visions’ ob behalf of their compatriots. “Diversities more coexisted then they really saturated. Disappearing marks inside numerous social groups, clearly is one of the main reasons in order to recognition of identity and multiculturalism”. (Semprini, 1999. 31.) That means that missing of group marks guide them to catch only roadmap they have, before all groups they belong to. At these point there is necessary to raise an essential question: either national identity enforce conflict or diminish it. A crucial question is legitimacy of a national statehood.

Missing a collective identity was followed by tradition insufficiency of a strong and consequent state legalism. “Founding autonomous and independent countries on the Balkans did not mean dissolution only of a political past as well as rejecting of that past ... For difference from Turkey, Balkans societies raised some mistrust to state as an institution which emerged form the fact they considered Ottoman state as foreign and enemy institution because of its identification with Islam as implicit identification as Ottoman as well as Turkey ethnicity (Todrova, 1999. 292 – 293).

Bosnia and Herzegovina emerged as a specific state on the Balkans after wars in the first half of nineteen’s years of the 20th century. Based on the Dayton Peace Accord (DPA) as the international settle down has become some sort of paradigm for similar multinational societies composed due to “power sharing” model of governance such is Iraq today.

As other five countries showed up after the breakup of socialist Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina is the product of huge geopolitical, geostrategic and geo-economics changes in the Balkans initiated by changes in the post Cold War world.

Transition of former Yugoslav republics passed three stages (Šolaja, 2010. 55.):

- (1) forming national political movements as big political organizations named as political parties as the representatives of national policies as a type of populist, conglomerate, forum or ‘umbrella’ political organizations which strengthen and extend ethnical cleavages;
- (2) ethnically based war which had frozen and slowed a phase of liberalization;
- (3) influence of international community which took on itself managing of democracy transition in BiH through (1) ending the war; (2) building constitution, institutionalization of political system and democratization as a basement and (3) building civil society, its institutions, social

(4) environment and procedures as well as posing a goals.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is quasi-legitimate and quasi-sovereign country after 1995. and adopting of Dayton Peace Accord achieved November 21st 1995. in the USA military base Wright-Patterson, Dayton, Ohio (official title General Framework for Peace – GFAP signed in Paris December 14th 1995. in Paris, France) legitimized by “silent agreement” of three nations in BiH – Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats. In the meantime, 1992. to 1995. BiH was internationally recognized but without internally recognized sovereignty representing *de facto* only on nation – Bosniaks regardless intention to show they are Serbs and Croats together. But Serbs and Croats clearly proved they have different intentions forming ‘phantom states’ on the soil of ‘Republic Bosnia and Herzegovina’ – “The Republic of Srpska” (RS) and “Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosna” (HRHB). Both had internally sovereignty but without international recognition. Peace process in 90-ies reconcile this opposite characteristics: in the first phase the Washington agreement between Bosniaks and Croats was settled down March 1994. and together with Constitution of the Republic of Srpska became a part of institutional structure of BiH upon DPA. The second phase was Dayton peace negotiations.

From the very beginning of the BiH crisis the focus of political process were categories such are territory and territorial integrity and sovereignty as main characteristics of Westphalian state. Although global processes have been underpinning erosion of a Westphalian state taken in the classic way of thinking this erosion was temporarily stopped in the process of establishing and firming new states emerged on the broken up European Federations: Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czech-Slovakia. Particularly armed conflicts between new states got back and enforced a certain declining from global processes: state security based upon a numerous and strong army and armed conflict between states, territorial disputes, visible national unification and self-declaration as a basement of sovereignty, renovating and emphasizing founding myths, centralization of a governance and leadership, transitional and quasi-legitimate political leadership, questionable political domination. A model of social transition and transformation in former Yugoslav republics is similar – combination of old communist political elite which did not have enough finances for maintaining stability with a new ‘tycoon’ economy elite courage enough to brake old socialist economy rules and to get a money. This combination provided them ‘Balkans type of legitimacy’ as an expression of violent and improvised governance as a result of quasi legitimate sort of political domination. That type of (quasi) legitimacy in a Balkans experience understands personalized ruling, massive populous mobilization, and fear as an initiating principle, institutions without authority, humility of individuals and neglecting institutions of a political system.

In such an environment the question is usually posed are of values and identity. The Balkans is historically determined as an unstable region, very diverse considering ethnic, religious, national, political, state, economy and other differences which created stereotypes and pejorative, negative identity focused on phrases ‘balkanize’, ‘balkanization’ or ‘Euro-Asian Balkans’ (Brzezinski). These diversities as the consequence have negative identity of the Balkan peoples to capability for dialogue and democracy. Hegel thought Balkan people could not have been subjects of a world History, Marx claimed Slavic peoples do not have capacities for building modern democracy. “Incapability of creating a stable democratic society was imputed especially to Orthodox peoples in the Balkans. It was argument with rejection of values

of civil society as permanent conflicts as their basic experience in relations with other confessions. There is one more naive, but successful, story on genetic predetermination and social immaturity." (Vujadinović, 52.)

Political society in Bosnia and Herzegovina, twenty years after break up of former Yugoslavia and beginning of post socialism transition into a liberal democracy is still in state of missing any basic social agreement as a foundation for any social and political consensus which should have shaped collective identity of community not only towards state as institutional framework but as well as towards citizen-mates through horizontal links between them. The question is – who are citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and what they really are. "Modern state needs to have common convenience her citizens are mutually recognized each other as members of political community and at the same time recognizing a state as their own political community". (Podunavac, 2008. 53.) International relations system is created as the system of national states and nation is the first formative principle of modern state including also citizenship and sovereignty. Nation is a key element of shaping identity of modern societies. Creating a type of political community known as a 'national state'. Speaking of a modern state in the Balkans we must say there are few states with very low level of a national homogeneity, percentages in next table estimations 2009.

Bosnia and Herzegovina	48
Macedonia	64
Montenegro	43
EU new members average	82
www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html	

Not only these three countries but as well as Serbia and Kosovo faced with serious problems of legitimacy. Montenegro recently is in the state of political disputes in the question of language – due to 2011 population census results Serb language is predominantly used in Montenegro although expelled from schools and there is strong request for getting back it into schools. Montenegro is in deep controversies between state declaration as a 'citizen country' on itself and self-declaration and self-identity of few national communities such are Serbs, Albanians, Bosniaks, even Croats. Immediately after gaining Montenegrin independence Albanian and Serb community did not support a new Montenegrin constitution in October 2007. Ten years ago (2001) Macedonia was on the eve of civil war after Albanians insurrection requesting more rights and broader national autonomy. Summer crisis 2011 in Northern Kosovo revealed huge gap between Albanian and Serb community in establishing independent Kosovo state self-declared only by Albanians. Some recent public opinion polls (2006) in Bosnia and Herzegovina expressed that vast majority of Serbs in the Republic of Srpska are in favor either independent of RS or unification it with Serbia. A broad consciousness of ethnically Croat people independency or joining to Croatia is still alive in parts of BiH they mainly inhabited. These national diversities are asserted in approach of particular national communities to a common state as the main type of political authority. As the highest values in this framework they are territory dedication, centralization and direct relations to citizens. These societies so face with series structural problems because of the multiethnic structure of their populations. As previously stated, successful liberal revolution should have finished by adoption of a democracy constitution. But in the Balkans 'democracy constitution' means a basic

consensus between national communities as collectivities, not exclusively citizens as individuals. It is clear that in particular Balkans countries there are different national views on basic social consensus making visible clear distinctions of national communities and relations to constitutional possibilities as expression of a social consensus. A democracy, pluralism, sovereignty and citizenship as main values are remained as a constitutional elements of nation but understanding territorial basement of national governance. Mixing of ethnicities, nations and frontiers even stressed necessity of particular nations for territorial dedication. Actually there are few national unfinished questions in the Balkans – Serb, Albanian even Macedonian.

Not only interior democracy legitimacy is an en element of forming statehood in the Balkans. As internal procedures as strong international environment is of utmost importance for legitimacy of political system of South East Europe countries in transition. These influence goes in two directions: the first one is direct interfering in interior situation through so called *ad hoc* international organizations such are Office of the High Representative (OHR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina or UNMIK in Kosovo. Although a lot of money has been investing in these projects the final result is not implementation of democracy and creating an internal situation in terms of achieving full legitimacy and self-regulation. “Instead to promote that Bosnia is deeply divided multiethnic country and to promote its stability through establishing political structure due to its reality, we spent the biggest portion of last twenty years intending to build centralized state based upon wrong understanding of country and against wishes at least a half of population. If we had surrendered to such a fantasies we would probably have dealt with same questions in next twenty years“. (Bardos) The second one is a process of ‘europeization’ of the region as an important factor of stabilization and interior modernization of entire regional space. The raising of political and economics standards is important precondition for import European values of modern constitutional democracies and catalyst of democratization and modernization processes.

Regionalism

Stable democracy, democracy legitimacy and state sovereignty showed up as the main foundation for efficient and progressive regional cooperation. In the process of accession to European Union are in parallel of three the most important Copenhagen criteria a regional cooperation is posed as the fourth very important. It is argued that strengthened regional Balkans cooperation ought to serve for forming South East Europe into a block where integration into EU structures will then be determined either as a regatta or a convoy which would somehow have been determined by the slowest country in the region. Some of South East Countries (Western Balkans) feel themselves on the one hand the preferentially aspired EU rapprochement and neglecting regional cooperation. Although in the very beginning some regional cooperation initiatives were achieved by some countries as a ‘Trojan Horse’ as a renewing possibility of former Yugoslavia, actually regional cooperation is focused on EU-led programs and projects, mainly through Stabilization and Association Process (SAP). Meantime some regional initiatives were launched and disappeared (Royaumont, SECI) or have been changed (Stability Pact into Regional Cooperation Council, Central European Free Trade Area - CEFTA). Some of them survived such is Central European Initiative (CEI) and South East Cooperation process – SEECP.

The region of the Balkans has always been disintegrated and not prepared for any sort of cooperation neither in politics nor in economy. The break up of former socialist Yugoslavia sparked a series of inter-ethnic and inter-national wars after which emerged a certain number of new transitional states. Thus was increased a number of new actors on the soil traditionally without prerequisites for regional multilateral cooperation. Some attempts between two world wars as well as before Cold War ending failed and stay in a rudimentary shapes. After signing Dayton Peace Accord and ending the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina flourished many initiatives for regional cooperation on order to speed up political and economy development and raise standards in order to faster access to European Union. But there are still too many frontiers which mean legal impediments expressed through border controls and different tariffs and duties as well as many non-duty barriers. All obstacles are in dimensions presenting threats to maintaining and surviving some governments particularly if the threat comes from political-criminal syndicates. The creating of institutions in the course of transitional transformation does not only need a time but before all political will and political stability which both usually miss in the South East European countries. State and local authorities are very weak; economy is influenced by corruption, organized crime, black market. Process of privatization is too slow in some countries and even reversed by returning some companies in 'state' hands or dismissing of some miss targeted and failed privatization programs.

Linking with contemporary crisis and problems initiated there are two things weight the Balkans Region. Firstly, transport infrastructure in all countries of the region is insufficient and at the same time in a bad shape, they are regionally not linked with a bottle-necked on the cross border check points as the main characteristic. The another huge question for the Balkans is energy supply: first, energy insufficiency; second, lack of resources and bad quality of energy suppliers such as coal etc; third, low level of usage of energy capacities as well as lack of energy grids and closure in national networks; fourth, high energy costs. Both transportation and energy networks and resources impede economic recovery and development in the region. Addition obstacles are also striking environmental policy particularly growing with economy recovery of the Balkans pre-war industries which suffer of high environmental pollution which can not lead to effective economic solutions.

Economically speaking countries in the South East Europe region are small, undeveloped and unimportant weighted with high unemployment rates and power purchasing power. Regional cooperation, including higher level of economic cooperation, can speed up economic growth of small economies and their accommodation to European Union market, contributing to future common integrated European market with 60 million people, with improved division of labor than can attract more foreign investors. Although integrations to European structures, finally European Union, has been many times stressed by many regional politicians and has become a "realistic vision when they credibly prove their will to integrative behavior". (Altmann, 144.). Lack of democracy legitimacy in majority of regional countries does not lead always to sincere approach to processes of Euro-Atlantic and European integrations. Some group leaders formally represented in political parties and executive duties still intend to avoid stabilization of democratic institutions and democracy political legitimacy even legal legitimacy in order to maintain their positions firmly provided for future as much more paid than they could have been in future in EU. National divisions and national lines show up as a good approval for hesitating and

lagging of processes of integration as well as just formal approach to a regional cooperation which seems to be more insisted by EU than from regional countries. One can even hear that European Union's pressure to the countries of South East Europe to intensify regional cooperation is a defense posture of the EU intending to put the respective countries on a shunt truck during the enlargement rally. In opposite, the South Eastern European countries argue that after a completed integration into EU regional cooperation will automatically develop.

European Union has focused its recent regional policy on 'Western Balkans' as a European 'black hole' in terms of rapprochement of the part of the Western Balkans. Actually there are not new plans for new regional cooperation under the European roof but the experience of Nordic Council and Visegrad Group speaks some sort of that would be continued. It is uncertain in which capacity would it happen – either form the classic 'pure Balkans' which means ten or eleven countries or 'Western Balkans' or former socialist countries until 15 countries which could include Slovenia, Hungary, Cyprus even Malta! In some definitions *Great South East Europe* could be defined "by as some experts, the region that stretches from Adriatic Sea, through the Black Sea, to the Western shores of Caspian Sea, including Balkans and South Caucasus, but not Russia. There are also other names for approximately same space, as the Wider Black Sea Area (which includes Russia) or the Black Sea Area, which comprises the units bordering sea". ("Greater Middle East and Wider Black Sea Region: Security Connections and Cooperative Perspectives", NATO Studies Center, Bucharest, Romania, 2005)

In order to redefine classical concept of regionalization in order to equalize regional assessments a concept of 'greater regions' had been implemented in practice. A final idea was to figure out similarities between different regions in order to harmonize accession and policies considering different areas. Not only such narrow regions have become 'greater' but much wider as well. It has become a part of a global policy of the United States and Western Countries not only because of easier analyses and harmonizing policies but also because of taking on specific actions. 'Regionalism' in the USA Foreign Policy has a special approach. Separate regional as well as sub-regions policies make easier strategic position of global hegemony by easier defining and controlling problems and managing regional policies as part of usage global and particularly regional opportunities in order to easier realize more efficient American global leadership. The Post Col War American regional approach has been dedicated by the global unipolar international position of the United States; geopolitical changes initiated by dismissing of opposite military treaty as well as the disintegration of Soviet Union as the biggest country and political, economical and military axis of entire socialist block and changed preferences by its former allies. This new geopolitical and inter-regional design has been coming off redefinition of regional policies on case-by-case principle in the framework of United States Post Cold War foreign policy. George H. W. Bush defined the policy of "new regionalism" which allows USA to act either due to an estimation of its own interests as well due to other interests or considering other interests they hold it is necessary as the only one remained global super-power giving themselves right to act due their will. The "Greater Middle East" was a United States led concept developed analysts of Pentagon. Institute for National strategic studies, affiliated with Pentagon, decided to replace the individual approach such as Israeli-Palestinian conflict of security or security in Palestinian Gulf, with regional approach, proposing that entire area including Northern Africa, Levant, the Persian

Gulf plus Turkey, Iran Afghanistan to be defined by the concept of the Greater Middle East. Although this concept of Greater Middle East has not been absolutely internationally recognized, the G-8 summit 2004 launched a program “Greater Middle East Partnership”. Although neither this program nor its European modification even to say approval was not accepted by countries of wider region main lanes of view on approach to ‘Greater Middle East’ has been becoming very visible last months. There are few for a region very specific points a security challenges: succession of rulers and new kind of transition, social disorder, growth of population, weak economies, terrorism, Islamic radicalism, proliferation of WMD,

The biggest problems for many of these countries now is legitimization of recent changes in Middle East and Northern Africa including higher and higher social tensions new regimes are or they will face too. Until recent changes many of regional authoritarian regimes were not flexible enough in handling the problems they were confronted with. After abandoning the well established tradition of succession of regimes until recent changes reflected through basic consensus of the members of same family, at least agreement of some groups or clans after rulers passed away, new regimes today are in front of dilemma what next! Although many of old and new rulers are promising democracy elections as soon as possible they will be challenged by mass populist requests to avoid any type of elitist ruling system which were untransparent and not accessible for other social categories and in most of cases extremely corrupt. A big challenge after taking a power is also finding out a way to harmonize requests of different groups of interests such are the army, religious institutions, different tribes. Many of these regimes have been confused by globalization, particularly by fact they have been becoming poorer and poorer and due to demographic growth and growingly frustrated. In this framework Islamic religion is used as explanation and as a remedy. Some religious groups have a political agenda, requests for reforms which pose a political representation a decision making even entire political power, request a change of distribution of economic benefits and asking foreigners to leave and for halt the Western influence using Islam religion as a justification for their actions. Sometime they afforded itself to encourage violent activities ultimately by extremist groups believing only in holy war of ‘jihad’ developing their political programs with economic and social objectives. Regardless changed political environment some of their mainstream policies should have been remained such is support to Islam communities in other regions such are Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kashmir, Caucasus or Central Asia through assistance in building mosques, trying to impose Islamic law and judiciary. That means religious factor either openly politically realized or in the social background has huge influence on public opinion and decision-making process in the Wider Middle East Region.

Conclusions

Recent populist protests and unrest changes in the Middle East as well as in Northern Africa and Arab World not has only assigned a new approach to particular political processes and policies consequently to single actors by other actors predominantly big power including United States Western Europe and new-emerging powers as well as some other aspiring countries including neighboring and regional. At the same time the concept of regionalism including inter-regional overlapping is preparing to be re-conceptualized and revived after some blackout period since the end

of the last century.

It is possible to excerpt some similarities in the new geopolitical light.

Firstly, there are on the agenda defining of a new grand scale of redefined geopolitical units different from the past ones changing entire Mediterranean and forecast of future international relations in *Mare nostrum* (Mediterranean Sea) either big Western Powers including USA and big emerging powers such are BRIC and Turkey or other regional players many of which pretend to regional leadership. A discussion of a new regional geopolitical order has just started still expecting rescheduling of different political actors. A new geopolitical reality will be tried to shape the near and long term future trends in international relations.

Secondly, there are many open space for a new transition wave which might be assigned as “fifth” after ‘three Huntington’s waves’ relates the first transitional Post Second World War wave in Europe, the second one in Latin America 70-ies in XX century and the third in South Europe 80-ies (Greece, Portugal, Spain) and fourth in Eastern Europe which is still ongoing particularly in the Balkans, we are expecting a next transitional wave of changing a traditional, authoritarian based, dictatorship ruling political system to pluralist political democracies based on elementary liberal democracy values. There are still some projects posed on such a track like power-sharing models implemented in Lebanon, later on in Bosnia and Herzegovina and now in Iraq. Should Libya have become a next example? Or even Egypt?

Thirdly, any old and particularly new case has to answer on a question of apprehension of legitimacy which stress and includes democracy legitimacy. This question is of utmost importance for any type of revolution even if is a mass populist protests like we have had this year in the Mediterranean region. This means legitimization of new and modified political systems and how they fit in international order, legitimization of internal political actors and their capacities, legitimization of international relations and readiness to join to multilateral activities and international. In this frame of utmost benefit is exchange of views between regions in terms of enterprise of necessary political activities which have to initiate change of values, change of economy including accession to liberalized markets and dealing with numerous social problems.

Fourthly, religion has a huge influence in all of these countries. In some Balkans countries it is more traditional comprehension of religion even more politicized and politically used religion regarding traditional secular societies and certain tradition of liberal democracy for difference of Middle East and Northern Africa where the religion is a main pillar of society and strong political actor. But anyway, interconnecting is not strong only principally but practically too considering strong links between more Islamic bridges as well as Christian. If any, in Jerusalem is dawn of all big religious as in the entire region are sites and traditionally and contemporary the biggest portions of all of three main global religions.

Fifthly, these regions are connected by many similar threats and security challenges including similar international responses such are NATO intervention to the Republic of Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1995, Yugoslavia and Kosovo 1999. Afghanistan 2002. Libya 2011. Many of these threats are almost the same in all countries in all regions such is organized crime, energy security, ethnic, religious and national conflicts, regional territorial disputes.

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The Western Balkans and Security Challenges

Abstract

The Balkan Peninsula is a Region which is well known to the international community for many reasons, such as history, wars, conflicts, disputes, different processes, clashes etc. Many academics and analysts share the opinion that Balkans as a region is very characteristic and challenged by its own self. Some of them decide to call it a “crossroad” which is a well-deserved title in many aspects. This notion of a crossroad does not root in terms of crossing corridors, highways, routes or so, but more of a place where routes of religions, faiths, ideologies, nations, and civilizations cross. This is part of the reason why this region is a favorite one among analysts not only from the region but also beyond. We should probably leave both the answer and the truth about this preposition to be confirmed by the events and developments that would follow in Balkans. Without going so deeply into history I would like to express my own opinion about this region and its security challenges, based on many facts. Namely, all European main events and developments, accidentally or deliberately, were triggered or influenced by this very region and its time actors.

Key words: *Western Balkan, security challenges, Euro – Atlantic integration, Macedonia, etc.*

Macedonia as a Part of Western Balkan Challenges

The Balkan Peninsula is a region which is well knownto the international community for many reasons, such as history, wars, conflicts, disputes, different processes, clashes ect. Many academics and analysts share the opinion that Balkans as a region is very characteristic and challenged by its own self. Some of them decide to call it a “crossroad” which is a well deserved title in many aspects.³This notion of a crossroad does not root in terms of crossing corridors, highways, routes or so, but more of a place where routes of religions, faiths, ideologies, nations, and civilizations cross. This is part of the reason why this region is a favorite one among analysts not only from the region but also beyond. We should probably leave both the answer and the truth about this preposition to be confirmed by the events and developments that would

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³ Many scholars describe Balkan or Western Balkan as a region where crossed East and West, civilizations, religions and cultures. Also its geopolitical position where many conflicts have been triggered.

follow in Balkans. Without going so deeply into history I would like to express my own opinion about this region and its security challenges, based on many facts. Namely, all European main events and developments, accidentally or deliberately, were triggered or influenced by this very region and its time actors.

The Balkans is and should be a challenge to every serious diplomat and negotiator. This goes even more so to NATO and the European Union. It is quite natural and normal that every person is region-centric and tends that the region he or she comes from is the most important in the world. But going beyond that personal and even regional constraint, and looking at the bigger picture and in a wider context, the Balkans is a critical spot. A spot that could very easily become a problem or a solution to many security challenges, well beyond its territory.

The first reason for it is geography. The crossroad theme could very easily stray between blessing and a curse. In face of all the, fancy called, new emerging security challenges, people tend to forget the security challenges that have been right there in front of their eyes for decades, and yet still remain unsolved. The Balkans was “fancy”⁴ in the 90s, for good or bad, and then the overall world context after 9/11 took over the spotlight to so many other regions in the world. But the Balkans and its unsolved challenges remained behind.

The second reason for it is history. Although many analysts argue over the importance of history and its relation to our today, one cannot deny that Balkans has been a battlefield of the big world powers through history. This has been partly due to geography and mostly because of its mixture of nations, religions, world-views and ambitions. In case of such a broth, it has proven to be very easy to light the first sparkle and then guide the battle. Long resisting between the West and the East, and yet somehow mixing the very best of them both in itself and its independence, the Balkans finally gave in after the fall of the Berlin wall. And when the walls of former Yugoslavia had fallen, the integration danced with disintegration.⁵

It is at this stage that we arrive in the present and try to reverse the processes. Integration versus disintegration is what needs to be done today, and even yesterday. The Balkan region is pretty much aware that it has to re-integrate, but this time within the NATO and the European Union. It is not only a security issue but also it is an issue of shared values, vision and hope, and right to fit in where you belong.

The security vacuum has long been rightfully recognized as a major security challenge. My theory is that unfinished business can also represent a security challenge of its own. That surely goes true for the Balkan region. The region felt important once when under the world’s spotlights, but then it remained pretty much on its own, forgotten and forced to undo the “guardian knot” that was knotted in a much bigger game than itself.

The people of the Balkans are fully aware that membership in NATO and the European Union are not a pill that sends all the problems away. They know it should be and will be yet only a beginning of further and even more painful reforms that need to be done. But at the same time, it is more than obvious that this is the only way out of

⁴ For more see at: Ismail Kadare, PredragSimic, LjubomirFrckovski, YlberHysaj, “BallkaniiJugut”, Onufri, 2001. pp. 17-39

⁵ Balkan Monitor 2010, “Insights and Perceptions: Voices of the Balkans – Summary of Findings”, Gallup, available online at: www.balkan-monitor.eu/files/BalkanMonitor-2010_Summary_of_Findings.pdf (accessed 19 November 2012).

the quagmire.

Therefore, fast and determined decisions need to be made over the future of the Balkans region. And this cannot be done by the Balkans region on its own. NATO and the European Union should have the courage to be able to lead too.

What does it mean in real terms? Integration, integration, integration. All that with eyes much widely open to the factor of time, and much more tolerant to the required standards and even to the need of mandatory consensus. Incorporating the Balkans in the European Union, if not NATO (respecting the will of each country), will be the true test of the highly advertised adaptation of NATO and the EU to the new security challenges.⁶

While pursuing bigger and more complex issues, in this age of globalization and technology, we have forgotten the importance of a picture and of stories. Let me therefore try and bring to you two different pictures and two different stories about the Balkans, wider security and its future.

The first one is of course the one that we, people from the Balkans, prefer and aim to. Integration. In the case of my country, Republic of Macedonia, that would translate to immediate gain of the long awaited date of negotiations with the European Union and immediate full-fledged membership in NATO. While it might sound like a story indeed, let me just remind you that Macedonia was one of the first countries in the region that signed the Partnership for Peace initiative. It has been cycling the MAP towards NATO for 16 years already. It has been the first country in the Region that signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU back in 2001. It was a country that received the EU candidate status back in 2005. It was the country that received an acknowledgement that it has fulfilled all the required criteria for NATO membership back in 2008.

When we compare the picture of where Macedonia was back then and where it is today then we have the answer to security challenges of the region. We often underestimate the power of collective memory in trade of catchy trends and initiatives. For example, Macedonia was part and often the leader of regional cooperation aimed at integration. Once we knew that A3, then A5 was the path to NATO. Today, instead, we face a trend of merit-based approach. If anything, Macedonia has always been truly unselfish in its approach to the countries in the region when it comes to integration to NATO and the EU. It has always unselfishly shared its vast experience with all of them, very often promoting regional leadership and mentorship. Instead, today it is faced with the fact that it can and will be over-ridden on its path, only because of the unsolved name issue.

Now let me remind you of the second picture, as opposed to the first one which is desired and is aimed at integration. Isolation, or postponed integration, has already proved its devastating danger. Let us see the bigger picture and admit that Macedonia on its own, is not the only actor in its present crises. Europe and NATO would prove their capacity and leadership if they could only admit that, by postponing the solution of the Macedonian case, they themselves bear a huge part of the bundle of guilt for what is going on right now in the country and in the region in general. Same approach

⁶ MATOVSKI, Aleksander, "View from Macedonia - Study on the Assessment of Regional Security Threats and Challenges in the Western Balkans", Study on the Assessment of Regional Security Threats and Challenges in the Western Balkans, Istvan Gyarmati and Darko Stancic ed., (Geneva: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), 2007), pp.99-114.

is applicable to Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is stumbling on its way to finally get even the promising light of the MAP process.⁷

I truly believe that the bright future of our region demands reshaping the culture, the discipline and the standards of the Region. But I also know that it is only possible if you integrate the region itself into NATO and the EU, incorporate its values, inform them of your own values, and then arrive to more advanced, shared values.

This region could then very easily transform from a problem to a solution. Maybe now it's the time that NATO and the EU remember the forgotten formula of the initial round of NATO and EU enlargement. It did bring some challenges within both institutions but it was certainly the strongest catalyst of reforms, democracy and well-being of the people that became part of NATO and the EU. In similar way, the Western Balkans needs to be offered the card *blanch* to become part of NATO and the EU. Both institutions could find a way to incorporate all the willing countries inside, and then harden and maintain the required conditions. That is the only way both for NATO and the EU to enhance their internal strength, in order to then be able to refocus their energy elsewhere in the world where it is most needed.

Today is the age of new security challenges. But, while pursuing solutions for the new security challenges, we should and must not forget the challenges that we have left behind unsettled. The unsolved mystery of the Balkans could and might challenge the capacity of Europe and NATO to face the challenges of their own. But settling the remaining challenges of this region could make both NATO and the EU stronger, more credible and capable to face the challenges in its area and certainly face those beyond it.

It is dangerous to underestimate the importance of the security challenge of the Balkans – because it could and would backfire exactly when the world would need the most of its attention and energy to face security challenges elsewhere. In this unpredictable and dangerous world one thing is predictable – globalization can easily export Ukraine, the Middle East, ISIL, security vacuums and fights for spheres of influence, and migration crisis just about anywhere in the world and make it everyone's headache. It is therefore of utmost importance to try and settle those unsettled security challenges before we rush in settling the new ones.

When facing a security challenge, we also have to be aware of the context and the timing. The context of today's world is very much in line with the need to settle the security id card of the Western Balkans once and for all. And the time for it is now. Let us only remember that security challenges arise and we all bear the consequences, not only of what we have done, but also, of what we have not. This region has recognized the importance of trading history to future. It is time for NATO and the EU to offer the Western Balkans this chance and make it happen.

Most of the Countries in the Balkan Peninsula have shown undisputable intentions to become a part of the Euro Atlantic Community. While some are already members, other still struggle on the path of reforms. However, no matter the current status, the political leadership continuously publicly declares sharing of the mutual European values. The Europe, prosperous whole and at peace seems to be the end goal, the mission and the vision. However, is Europe safe, prosperous and at peace? Will the

⁷ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, - TALAT XHAFERI, ON THE TOPIC "PERSPECTIVE OF THE WESTERN BALKANS COUNTRIES ON ADRIATIC AND IONIAN SECURITY CHALLENGES" Republic of Albania, Tirana, 29 May 2013.

peace and prosperity last? Can the Balkan countries count on European umbrella? Can we do more? The Questions should be on our minds, since the shake of the bipolar world has very recently shown that peace is not a constant value. Our values may not be shared globally.⁸

The question of security challenges is voluminous and may even rise above the capacity of individual thinking. However recent developments have pointed out the major issues that both the European Allies and we, the countries aspirants must follow closely. The economic instability, the recent developments in Ukraine, the migration and the foreign fighters, currently pose the major challenge.

Many believe that the world is recovering from the recent European Crisis. It is true that the large economies relying on know-how and technology are better off trading their goods and services. However, the market is global and interconnected. Smaller countries do have an impact. Balkan Countries as well. The developments in Greece create economic uncertainty and social inequalities. However, not only Greece is facing economic issues; the unemployment and the lower standard of living in comparison to the European ideal do pressure the social peace in almost all countries of the Region. It is difficult to promote values such human rights and freedom of speech when the basis of the Maslow hierarchy of needs is missing for a large portion of the society. Social inequality therefore is among the greatest risk factors to this part of the World.⁹

It is to our great benefit that our societies are comprised of a mixture of ethnicities, each following its own culture and religion. However, the bonds among the groups have always been strong, since there was a consistency within. The globalization and the social media brought a trend of a global exchange of ideas. Liberal Peace is not everyone's first choice on this world; many choose to follow radical means to convey cultural beliefs. Such trends cause differences within the ethnic groups. Many consider the foreign fighters which are a byproduct of this process the greatest challenge to our security. Foreign Fighters and their opinions do influence the security. However, it is the gap in beliefs that is emerging within the groups that should be feared the most.

Conclusions

For long we have lived in a unipolar world with relative certainty of possible threats. For long we have been relying on the good will of nations to invest in defense capacities. Although many have been devoting long speeches to the need of greater investment, no one could have imagined that the ghosts of the Cold War may reemerge. Many even argued that NATO is obsolete as an organization. The recent developments in Ukraine have shown that security should not be underestimated. Three groups emerged among allied nations, one fearing Russian aggression, second aiming not to lose economic ties with Russia and third voting for strengthening of the Euro-Atlantic bond. Many can argue that there is different place for small versus large countries within an alliance but none can deny that belonging to an alliance increases greatly the chances to preserve peace in times of uncertainty. Almost all Balkan countries are

⁸Arta Ibraimi” Integriteti i Ballkinit Perendmorë në UE”, Logos-A, Shkup, 2009.

⁹Ylber Sela, Bekim Maksuti, Driton Kuçi, “Western Europe and its Historical Engagement in the Balkans”, Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, MICSER Publishing Rome, Italy, 2015.

relatively small. The defense capacities are limited, therefore potential change in the European security architecture may negatively affect all countries in the Region, but especially those outside an alliance.

The reason that the Migration is left last on the list of security challenges to the Region, it is not since I believe that is the least important. The reason that migration is left last is since I believe that it interconnects all before mentioned risks and presents them as a product or a worst case scenario of not coping the security challenges. Migration, the worst fear of the western world is a product of social injustice, economic instability, war of interests among great powers and discrepancies in values and beliefs among groups within a society. The Balkan countries for many years have been witnessing their own population migrating to European democracies in a search of a better standard of living. Today sadly, we are a witness of large groups of people crossing barefoot our countries in a search of a new home. Although Balkan countries are not the final destination the migration trend is a major security challenge to our societies as well. Large groups of migrants bring a possibility of a safe passage of dangerous theorist\through our countries and thus a possibility of a creation of new terrorist nets or strengthening of the existing ones. The second fear is that Europe may not have the capacity to accept the migrating population. In such case, migrants or refugees shall remain in a limbo. Not having the capacity and resources to cope with such a large amount of people at once, out countries may withes unfortunate humanitarian catastrophe.

Many other security challenges endanger the prosperity and security of our Region, however, the economic crisis, the recent developments in Ukraine, the foreign fighters and migrants are questions that we must not underestimate. There is no easy solution, there is no rapid response. Only greater Regional cooperation, deep commitment to our values and strengthened governance can help us preserve peace, security and economic stability in a long run.

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New Security Threats and Western Balkan: NATO and National Response

Abstract

NATO Strategic Concept adopted at the NATO Summit in Lisbon in 2010 emphasizes the need for NATO to adapt to changes in the security environment to adequately respond to new security threats. These new security threats are associated with terrorism, cyber attacks, energy security issues and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In this respect NATO established a separate department which is tasked to monitor the situation in this field. Countering new security threats requires a holistic approach. So far, European allies have been skeptical in giving NATO a greater role in this area. On the other hand, the US is pushing for a greater NATO role in dealing with new security threats. NATO must determine the role it wants to play in countering new security threats. In that sense Alliance leaders must prepare specific policy guidelines and say what it is they want to work on with their partners and, of course, to give concrete proposals for cooperation. These policy guidelines should give specific answers to the question of what should be the role of NATO in countering new security threats. At the NATO Summit in Warsaw in 2016, NATO is expected to discuss how to more effectively deal with new security threats, particularly terrorism and the fight against the Islamic state. In this paper we will discuss scope of new security threats and NATO and national response.

Key words: *terrorism, cyber attacks, energy security, corruption*

Terrorism as a Global and Regional Security Threat

Modern terrorism is characterized by its transformation from secular to religious terrorism and new tactics, strategies and long-term goals of terrorist organizations. The Balkans is a transit area that connects Europe with the Middle East. In addition to the geographic proximity, it is weak border controls and unstable governments which make this region suitable for jihadist groups to transit from Europe to Syria. A particular problem is that these extremists can easily get passports, which allow easy borders crossing in Europe. Travel documents issued by the competent authorities of the Western Balkans have been found in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Iraq and Syria. Jihad activists continue to recruit new fighters, to corrupt local officials, to threaten the international forces deployed in the region and undermine the process of reconciliation

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between different ethnic groups.³

Numerous groups are from the Balkans which are fighting against the Assad regime in the current conflict in Syria. According to some estimates, it is a conflict in which foreign fighters are the most represented group. In many ways, it is a bloodier conflict than that of the former Yugoslavia. It involves three major Islamic groups: Islamic Front, Al-Nusra Front and the Islamic State. Unlike the Yugoslav conflict, where most combat actions have taken place in rural areas, combat actions of the conflict in Syria are taking place in urban areas thus making the conflict more attractive for foreign adventurers. By the gained experience and their radicalization, they pose a serious threat to the countries of origin. There are many motives and preconditions for Balkan jihadists to go to Syria. There are the religious and historical ties, proximity of the region to Syria, the active support of the cells in the region, the urban war zone, poorly guarded borders etc. All this allows the Islamic extremists of the Western Balkans not only to participate actively, but also to be operational support to transiting groups and both financially and logistically to assist them. This includes procurement of false travel documents, intelligence on the region, supplying weapons, money and products.⁴

At the latest Strategic Concept, NATO has decided to focus on carrying out counterterrorism activities. This alliance role will be performed in close coordination with the UN. In this respect, NATO has not been too much exposed so far in the international coalition to combat Islamic State, which is led by the United States. So far the Alliance has played the role of mobilizing platform that was only partially successful.⁵ During the last summit in Wales the allies, although they supported the US coalition against the Islamic state, abstained on the immediate deployment of the Alliance.⁶ But that does not mean that NATO is completely absent from the activities, as it already plays a significant role in several areas: defense of Turkey's territory, military training and education programs for Iraqi security forces, monitoring of foreign fighters engaged on the ground and strengthening partnership with the countries of the Middle East. NATO, in particular, insists on measures for capacity building so countries could deal with the terrorist threat. But whether it is enough remains an open issue.⁷

In the coming period minor attacks in Europe, with fewer casualties are expected to occur. However, they would carry a strong emotional message that will challenge the Western values and freedoms. Furthermore, it will mean an increased number of young people from Western societies and Western Balkans being recruited into the ranks of

³ Mark Sedgwick, "Al-Qaeda and the Nature of Religious Terrorism", in *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Winter 2004), pp. 795–814

⁴ David Malet, *Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civil Conflicts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 9.

⁵ Andreas Jacobs and Jean-Loup Samaan, *Player at the sidelines: NATO and the fight against ISIL*, Research Paper, NDC Rome, No. 107, December 2014.

⁶ Thomas Hegghammer, "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting," *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 1 (February 2013): 1–15.

⁷ Michelle Nichols, "Syria, Iraq a 'Finishing School' for Foreign Fighters: U.N. Report," Reuters, 31 March 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/31/us-mideast-crisis-islamic-state-un-idUSKBN0MR2NP20150331>; Peter Neumann, "Foreign Fighter Total in Syria/Iraq Now Exceeds 20,000; Surpasses Afghanistan Conflict in 1980s," International Center for the Study of Radicalization, 26 January 2015, <http://icsr.info/2015/01/foreign-fighter-total-syria-iraq-now-exceeds-20000-surpasses-afghanistan-conflict-1980s/>.

the Islamic state. Any extremism must be addressed, regardless if it is violent or non-violent, and the roots that cause radicalization must be eliminated. Given that radicalization begins with the individual, often from Internet enabled recruitment, it is a big challenge. Authorities in Muslim countries are the most appropriate to deal with this radicalization in its initial forms and significantly contribute to a substantial reconciliation between the Western perception of Islam and the Islamic perception of the West.⁸

Fighting Corruption in the Western Balkans

The Western Balkans is an enclave of the EU and NATO, which is essential for the rest of the continent. In 2003, the European Union promised prospective membership to the Western Balkans. EU reiterates its support to the European perspective of the Western Balkans but that support has lost its credibility to a certain extent. This is especially true after the Union froze the enlargement process. A similar story is the case with NATO membership. Once the alliance sent invitations to Albania and Croatia in 2008, it put further expansion on hold.

EU and NATO institutions are overloaded with many other issues that have priority on their agendas. Obviously, these lists do not have the issue of enlargement very high on the agenda. This is not good news, neither for candidates nor for the current members. By freezing the expansion one of the strongest sources of influence on the candidate has been lost. Both, EU and NATO recognize, though reluctantly, that the states can act more efficiently when they are running for a membership than when they become part of these institutions. It has been confirmed by the examples of Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary. No wonder that these four countries are neighbors of the Western Balkans.

Western Balkan countries have a great need for positive examples, but there are not many things to be commended. States face different problems. In some cases it is the constitutional disposition that causes a problem; in others the shattered internal stability. In a third it is violation of the rule of law, etc. However, it seems that corruption is a common denominator for all countries. EU has always paid special attention to this issue. Although primarily a military-political organization NATO is increasingly becoming aware that the economy has major implications for security. So, the command in Brussels has created a separate organizational unit that has to make analysis and advise the competent authorities responsible for the economic aspects of security. Countries of the region are requested to act as given below.⁹

Albania is required to intensify the efforts to combat corruption and implement its anti-corruption strategy and action plan as to strengthen the cooperation between law enforcement agencies and to show tangible results in the investigations. Albania has been noted that there are very few charges of corruption and organized crime, in particular the organized crime associated with illegal immigration, use of false documents, money laundering, drug cultivation and trafficking. Albania is also required to strengthen the independence, transparency and accountability of the judiciary, including to provide greater legal certainty for economic operators and to increase investor trust.

⁸ Jacqueline Page, The "Home Game: Countereng Violent Extremism within NATO, *Research Paper, NDC Rome, No. 104*, September 2014.

⁹ EU Enlargement Strategy, European Commission, Brussels, 10.11.2015 COM (2015) 611 final.

Authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina are asked to respond to the "legitimate demands of the people of BiH." Strengthening the rule of law, fight against corruption and measures for financial accountability, and protection of human rights are also needed.

Kosovo is noted that corruption remains prevalent in many areas, especially in public procurement, which continues to be a serious problem that needs to be addressed. Hence, the authorities are asked for a real political commitment and concrete results in the fight against corruption. In addition, strengthening of the inter-institutional cooperation is needed. The judiciary should not be pressed so it can effectively combat this phenomenon.

Macedonia is noted for a lack of strategic planning in this area. It is especially noted for corruption in the public procurement process, political corruption and high-level corruption. Public confidence in anti-corruption bodies remains low and therefore measures to raise awareness are urgently needed as well as greater political commitment which the EU report on Macedonia's progress in 2014 stated. In addition, Macedonia is noted for selective application of regulations and political influence in this area. Hence, a proactive approach is needed to eliminate these serious issues, reads the report.

Although ahead of the rest of Western Balkans in terms of EU integration Montenegro has been noted that progress in the fight against corruption has been limited. Capacity of the existing institutions in the area of prevention of corruption should be improved and they should have a more proactive approach as the EU has observed. An established system of controls on conflict of interest and asset declarations has been ineffective.

Serbia has been praised for strong political aspiration for the fight against corruption. But Serbia is expected to provide concrete judgments, especially for the high-level corruption, which now are rare. Some changes in the criminal law have been suggested as a prerequisite to effectively combat this phenomenon.

Hence, there are more than good reasons to implement reforms in all countries in the region. However, the benefits to be obtained from the EU have mainly been consumed so far and it is very difficult to find incentives that will move the region forward. How this situation will affect political stability remains an open issue. Protests had already been witnessed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia. Macedonia also has very dissatisfied social groups which recently protested.

Regional Approach to Energy Security

The West and Russia show strong rivalry for influence over the governments of the Balkan states. This region has always been a place 'Great Powers' wanted to possess. Here, the great empires have clashed in attempts to conquer or maintain their supremacy. Current is the clash between the West and Russia for greater impact over the Balkan countries. Unlike the past, when the impact was realized by "possession," now the great powers struggle for influence through investments and investing into energy projects. Weak regional governments, non-integrated into Euro-Atlantic structures, have been trying to balance between the impacts of the competing actors.

Western powers have two main objectives as to maintain regional stability and to minimize the impact on Russia. In that sense, NATO and the EU are directly involved in the internal affairs of the Balkan countries since the signing of the Dayton Peace

Agreement for Bosnia and Herzegovina, intervention in Kosovo and the Framework Agreement for Macedonia. They are still strongly present in the region, military (through KFOR mission) and politically (by influencing reforms in the countries in their efforts to join the Euro-Atlantic structures). In that sense the US and the EU in particular, have invested considerable resources and political capital to reform the Balkan societies and contribute to economic development. But the results have not always been desirable. The region's long status quo contributes regional governments to seek other alternatives for the development of their countries, which are beyond the Euro-Atlantic agenda.¹⁰

In that sense they see Russia and China as saviors of the poor economic situation in which they are. Russia's aggressive behavior in the immediate neighborhood contributed to NATO strengthening its military capabilities on the east wing. At the same time, it accelerated EU's decision to focus on establishing a southern corridor for natural gas, which will bypass Russian energy giant "Gazprom" in the European energy market. Thus it will reduce Europe's dependence on Russia. Hence, the West strongly opposed Bulgaria's participation in the Russian project "South Stream" after which Russia gave up the project by the end of the last year.

Russia has been using the close historical and cultural links with countries such as Serbia and Greece to threaten the West. Russian interest in the Balkans is to prevent western expansion in the region both military and in the infrastructure by strengthening of the existing and construction of new infrastructure projects. Although the West has greater resources to invest in the Balkans, Russia has several major regional energy capacities and provides loans to governments of the Balkan states. Russia maintains good relations with local oligarchs in the states. It particularly it invests in Serbia and Republika Srpska, which is a separate entity in BiH.

The plight of the West would have stopped if Russia had been on hold with the project "South Stream." However, that is not the case. Russian efforts to undermine European efforts to diversify energy supply have continued with the announcement of building a "Turkish stream", which should be a substitute for the failed "South Stream." The pipeline is due to bring gas across the Black Sea to the Turkish-Greek border. To enable that "Gazprom" reach Central European markets, Russia has been preparing to build a gas pipeline that runs from Greece via Macedonia and Serbia to Hungary. Hence, in addition to Turkey, these countries are at the center of the Russian diplomatic offensive. However, due to the internal financial conditions of Russia, deliveries to the Balkan countries are relatively limited.

However, political and security instability in Macedonia threatens to undermine these plans. Alternative routes for this project through Bulgaria, which is under strong pressure from the US and the EU and Albania, which is firmly pro-Western, are unachievable. Hence there is "great concern" by Moscow about the situation in Macedonia. But, the instability of Macedonia is not the only problem in the region. In 2013 there were social protests in Bulgaria after which the government resigned. Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is politically paralyzed made significant economic and political reforms in 2014, but has suffered by strong protests against corruption which could not be adequately addressed by the political system in the country. Greece is in a deep economic crisis and several governments have interchanged. This situation in the Balkan countries allows external actors to be more active in trying to increase their

¹⁰ Michael Ruhle and Julijus Grubliauskas, *Energy as a tool for a Hybrid Warfare, Research Paper, NDC Rome, No. 113, April 2015.*

influence. They will do it further by providing financial and political support to local governments. But the fragility of regional governments prevents them firmly to connect to any external actor. Like many other countries that are in the border areas, they will try to maintain a degree of neutrality. As long as the Euro-Atlantic structures, the EU and NATO, do not fully integrate the region, governments in these countries will try to keep a balancing strategy. It would mean signing economic agreements that would be beneficial, getting bailouts and political support of interested external actors, and at the same time they would be trying to express loyalty to the West not to be deleted from the Euro-Atlantic agenda.¹¹

Regional Capacities for Cyber Defense

Cyber security means ensuring the safety of cyberspace by threats that can have different forms starting as malicious software, spam, phishing, to sophisticated viruses that can "make dysfunctional" the whole social system. Stealing secret information from national companies and government institutions, attacking infrastructure vital to the functioning of a nation or an invasion of privacy of a citizen, are extreme examples of the wide range of threats in the cyberspace, where, no one starting from governments through companies, to ordinary citizens, is secure.

Although NATO as military alliance seeks to use quite rational language it has still not defined its cyber terminology. Due to lack of consensus, terms like cyber attack and cyber war are still not precisely defined. On the other hand, the role NATO should play in a possible cyber conflict is also not defined. In January 2008, NATO adopted its first policy on cyber defense and accordingly developed an appropriate plan of action which paved a clear vision of the danger and the need to react to such a threat from cyber threats. The new strategic concept and the declaration adopted at the Summit in Chicago in 2012 recognized that cyber attacks are increasingly sophisticated and therefore designing an effective cyber defense is one of the priority tasks for NATO. Finding an effective response must be carried out through an approach based on intensive coordination, through which the resilience of the system of defense will be strengthened. However, the complexity of these threats imposes a series of challenges in the area of capacities and ways of dealing with them. They largely can cause conflicting situations that defy international public law and human rights in particular.

Western Balkan countries are faced with the challenge and repression by the need to incorporate modern technologies in every area of modern living. In this respect today it is almost more than clear that to achieve this goal, current trends in the cyber domain must be followed. In the Western Balkans there is an ongoing process of implementation of modern technology by which the citizens will be provided greater commodities, costs will be reduced and other processes will speed up in a sequence.¹² However, this should not blind us and defocus us of the potential risks for several reasons. First, along with the incorporation of technological achievements and modern technologies, societies of the Western Balkans and other countries of the world, import risks. Second, platforms through which modern technology is used and much of the modern infrastructure which require software packages are not designed according to

¹¹ Jonathan Bitoun, Operational Green: Enhancing NATO's Energy Supply Security, *Research Paper, NDC Rome, No. 106*, November 2014.

¹² Hegenbart, Christine, Semantics Matter - NATO, Cyberspace and Future Threats, *NDC Rome Research Paper n 103* - July 2014.

security criteria, but by economic criteria, the lower costs and greater economic and operational efficiency. Third, the global trend owners of these infrastructures and software systems in most cases are private companies, for which security issues have no direct economic logic and are not a required expense at present. Fourth, the practice of modern threats clearly indicates that non-state actors who have a negative agenda are always attacking the line of least resistance or choose the so called "soft targets." Unfortunately, these attacks on infrastructure, due to its relations are causing cascading effects by having serious capacity that is asymmetrical, and with very little effort, can cause a serious effect.

Western Balkans Response to the New Security Threats

Countries of the Western Balkans are facing the challenge of how to respond to new security threats. Some of the countries in the region are members of NATO (Albania and Croatia), one EU member state (Croatia), some candidates for membership in NATO and the EU (Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina), some "military neutral" and have aspirations for EU membership (Serbia) while some have aspirations, although membership in NATO and the EU is very far in relation to meeting the requirements for membership (Kosovo). This heterogeneity of the region is reflected in their willingness to deal with new security threats. Some countries had developed a solid legal and strategic framework to deal with these security threats while others are in the process of preparing strategic documents and institutional capacities for this purpose. The current "refugee/migrant crisis" which affected some of the countries (Macedonia and Serbia) only makes the environment more complex.

Hence countries from the Western Balkan region should do the following. First, countries should develop a firm legal and institutional basis to adequately respond to the challenges coming from new security threats. Second, regional cooperation initiatives which are numerous (some of them are directed to address new security threats) and overlap should be revalued and become operational for the needs of the states. Third, threats to the security of the region can not always be accommodated into a regional format. Although they often have commonality each country has its own specifics and needs to be considered when making regional strategies. Fourth, a better system to exchange information on a regional level is needed. This is especially true in the exchange of information and intelligence between the authorities responsible for law enforcement. Last, but not the least, in terms of dealing with "migrant/refugee crisis" no country in the Western Balkans can tackle this problem alone but that it requires a joint and coordinated strategy between the countries in the region and the international community.

Instead of Conclusion

Alliance must determine the role it wants to play in countering new security threats. In that sense NATO leaders must prepare specific policy guidelines and say what it is they want to work on with their partners and, of course, to give concrete proposals for cooperation. NATO should invest in capacities to address new security threats in order to meet the objectives of the strategic concept. In this regard considerations should be taken to avoid duplication of capacities among the allies and proper allocation of resources. Then NATO should work closely with partners from

Western Balkans to strengthen their capacities to address new security threats, especially terrorism. On the other hand, the partners need to clearly define their needs in this area and look where help and support from NATO is needed. Finally, Alliance seize the moment while the Western Balkan countries still feel a strong desire for integration into the Euro-Atlantic family as this could be a missed opportunity for stabilization and integration of these countries. The Alliance should be particularly attentive to the region because if it does not integrate it, the region could destabilize and represents a threat to the member states.

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**European Integration Priorities from the EC Perspective:
towards a New Methodology of Comparative Analysis**

Abstract

European Union's Enlargement policy is a strict process built on the criteria that were established during the 1993 Copenhagen summit, including the later established Madrid criteria (1995). The enlargement process also includes lessons learned from the previous enlargements of the Union, such as regional and country specific criteria.

Today, the enlargement agenda includes the countries of the Western Balkans (Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, FYR of Macedonia and Kosovo³) and Turkey (Iceland was a candidate country also, but its government decided to end the well advanced accession negotiations in March 2015).

As regards the whole enlargement process, it is important to pay attention to the European Commission's principles of "fundamentals first" in the accession process. Core issues of the rule of law, fundamental rights, strengthening democratic institutions, including public administration reform, along with economic development and competitiveness, remain key priorities in the enlargement process.

In the "Enlargement package" 2015—a set of documents explaining EU's enlargement policy, that the EC publishes once a year, the EC has introduced a strengthened approach to its assessment of every country's readiness to assume its future membership obligations. As the EC had already pointed out, this new style of reporting provides greater transparency in the accession process. The focus on fundamentals is reflected in the specific areas that are the subject of the strengthened reporting present in the 2015 Enlargement package. The purpose of this paper is to analyse this new methodology in the case of Western Balkans countries (WB6) which enables us to develop comparative analysis of the enlargement countries from qualitative to quantitative aspects, using dynamic and static indicators of progress.

Key words: *enlargement, European Union, European Commission, fundamental rights, candidate countries*

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1. Introduction

The countries of the Western Balkans have always been considered as a part of Europe, at least historically and geographically. For that reason, they have a place in the future EU enlargement plans. In that context, the EU's activities towards this region have two major goals. The first goal is an extensive process of stabilization, after the turbulence of the 1990s, which includes fulfillment of political preconditions for integration. In a broadened context, it includes regional cooperation and improvement of neighbourly relations. Another supporting goal of the EU is a process of accession through the democratic and economic development of these countries, which includes fulfillment of administrative criteria for integration. Following that approach, the European integration process has proved to be a successful tool to support development and to some extent to stabilize a politically sensitive region. The individualized approach of the EU, together with the membership perspective, has recently motivated the Western Balkans to pursue economic reforms, cooperate in combating war crimes and finally open up and reintegrate with their neighbours. Given access to the EU market, the Western Balkans enterprises have been able to gradually increase the foreign sales of their production and modernize their economies. Therefore, for the EU, as for the region, it is worth pushing for the next steps in bilateral and regional integration as strongly as possible and thus enhancing stability and sustainable growth. Having in mind all mentioned, the EU has to play a difficult political game so as not to discourage the slowest progressing countries in the region, so that they remain attached to the European values and do not revert to periods of instability (Jakubiak and Oruc, 2008, 23-24).

However, today, the EU enlargement policy framework for the Western Balkans countries consists of numerous preconditions and limitations for the integration process itself, which is a result of specific circumstances in each country in the region respectively, lessons learned from previous enlargements, such as challenges in the EU related to serious economic crisis and needs for deeper integration.

2. Integration Dynamic of the Western Balkans Countries

EU has been actively involved primarily in stabilisation process and then in the reconstruction process of the WB since 1995. Main pillar of this process lies on basic principles of the European strategy for Western Balkans, clearly defined in 1999 and incorporated in the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP). Key objective of this process is accession of the region's countries to the EU, with parallel achievement of full and permanent stabilisation, not only in individual countries but in the region as a whole. Integral part of this process is fostering mutual regional cooperation of the countries that wish to join the EU as well as individual requests towards each country individually.

SAP is realised through legal document Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA). Legal base for conclusion of the SAA is article 217 of TFEU which indicates that such an agreement establishes "an association involving reciprocal rights and obligations, common action and special procedure". The SAA introduces the institutionalisation of relations with the EU, namely: political dialogue between the EU and signatory country, harmonisation of national legislation, gradual development of free trade area between two signatories and promotion of regional cooperation within

SAP.

On signing the SAA, before the full ratification in all national parliaments of EU member states and the SAA country, an Interim Agreement on trade and trade related matters enters into force enabling the trade provisions to be applied immediately. Key objective is to create the conditions for functioning of Free Trade Area within the transitional period defined in the agreement with parallel asymmetric abolishing of customs duties by the EU. Nowadays, all countries of the Western Balkans are in current enlargement agenda together with Turkey.

All countries in the region have signed and started implementing SAA. Next important step in the accession process is submitting membership applications which, based on a positive assessment prepared by the Commission, allows country to become a candidate. Montenegro and Serbia started accession negotiations with the EU, while Albania and Macedonia are candidates, and Bosnia and Herzegovina⁴ and Kosovo are potential candidates for EU membership. Regional integration dynamic is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. European Integration Dynamic of WB6 (February 2016)

Phases of the SAP	Macedonia (FYRoM)	Albania	BiH	Kosovo	Serbia	Montenegro
Feasibility study	16.6.'99.	6.6.'01.	18.11.'03.	10.10.'12	25. 4. '05. (SCG)	
Start of SAA negotiations	5.3.'00.	31.1.'03.	25.11.05	13.10.'13.	10.10'05	26.9 '06.
Signing of the SAA	9.4.'01.	12.6. '06	15.6.'08.	27.10.'15.	28.4.'08	15.10.'07
Interim Agreement	1.6.'01.	1.12. '06	1.7.'08	1.1.'16.	1.2.'09	1.1.'08
Market opening	10 years	10 years	5 years	10 years	6 years	5 years
Entry into force	1.4.'04	1.4.'09	1.6.'15.		1.9.'13.	1. 5. '10.
Submit application	22.3.'04.	28.4.'09.	15.2.'16.		19.12.'09.	15.12.'08.

⁴ On February 15th 2016, Bosnia and Herzegovina applied for EU membership
<https://euobserver.com/enlargement/132271>

Candidate country	9.12.'05.	27.6.'14.			1.3.'12.	17.12.'10.
Accession negotiation					21.1.'14.	29.6.'12.
Main challenges	Rule of Law					
	Name issue dispute with Greece	Political dialogue	Unfunctional federal state	Dialogue Belgrade Prishtina	Administrative capacities	

Source: Government web sites of the Western Balkans countries and Authors' estimation of main challenges;

Following the fifth EU enlargement experiences (so-called "Golden enlargement period" of EU-10 finished by May 2004), Western Balkans European integration process in the format of economic crisis creates much more challenges than it was the case with the countries that started its accession process in the '90s. All of the countries in the Region, with same political and economic heritage, make it a complex structure of seven small countries, divided and different, with six official languages and more than 5,000 km of new state borders, including several unsolved border issues, ethnic issues and sovereignty issues (Djurovic and Milovic, 2013, 325-339). According to data for 2014, four candidate countries and two potential candidates (WB6) represent only 3,6% of the EU-28 population, 5 % of the EU territory and about 0,53% of the EU GDP (Eurostat, 2015).

3. Enlargement Plus

As stated in the Treaty on European Union, the EU is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, as well as on the respect for human rights including those of national minorities. These values are common to all Member States whose society is characterized by pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity, and equality between men and women. Building and respect of these values are important motives for countries interested to enter the EU association process.

For that reason, the Union has defined "in time" the accession criteria, getting prepared for the fifth great enlargement to the East. The EU association process in the broadest sense has been defined through the so-called Copenhagen criteria (1993) related to the following criteria:

1. Stability of democratic institutions, the rule of law, respect for human rights and the protection of minorities;
2. Existence of functional market economy and the ability to deal with the competition pressure and EU market and
3. Ability to accept obligations stemming from the membership, including the goals of the political, economic, and monetary union.

Besides these basic criteria, there is one more criterion added in Madrid in 1995

and it is related to adaptation of administrative, governing, and judicial structures to the EU norms. Fulfillment of the mentioned additional criterion implies full publicity and transparency of work as well as the active role of the Parliament, chambers, trade unions, non-governmental organisations with the aim of realisation of the social consensus and provision of public support.

Furthermore, the improved policy of conditionality which following the accession criteria puts the focus on *the political accession criteria* which were extended in 1997 (one year before the opening of the first round of accession negotiations for the fifth enlargement) with requirements for the more determined fight against corruption and for the independence of judiciary. This criterion is focused mostly on the Western Balkans region (and Turkey) which was defined as regional approach towards the South-East Europe. Namely, The Vienna European Council in December 1998 recalled the close interest, which the European Union had in the political and economic development of all the countries of South-East Europe and in the stability and prosperity of the region as a whole. The EU makes a major contribution to these objectives through, on one hand, the enlargement process involving a number of countries concerned and, on the other hand, *the regional approach* involving countries of the Western Balkans. This approach was confirmed with the introduction of the SAP in 1999 and its additional pre-conditions for accession negotiations: full cooperation with ICTY (The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia), protection of minority rights, return of internally displaced persons and refugees, media freedom, solving of border disputes, regional cooperation, and good neighbourly relations. The conditionality of SAP remains the common framework for relations with all Western Balkan countries up to their accession.

Having in mind the experiences from the fifth enlargement, the European Council agreed on new *consensus on enlargement* in December 2006 (one month before the official accession of Bulgaria and Romania). Thus, all future enlargements of the Union will be subject to a more detailed pre-accession dialogue and more complex negotiation process. The process becomes more complex already in the battle for the status of a candidate country, which means that the country needs to be "prepared beforehand" for obligations deriving from membership. The accession and accession negotiations, thereby, become more complicated and demanding, so we can talk about a new trend in the EU enlargement policy – *enlargement plus* (Djurovic and Jacimovic, 2012, 12-15).

Gradually, with the raising impact of economic crisis on the EU and candidate countries' economies, the European Commission also developed *the economic sub-criteria* for evaluation of readiness for future membership (EC, 2011, 2-3).

The European Commission proposed new rules for negotiating Chapters 23 and 24. Given the challenges faced and the long-term nature of reforms, chapters related to judiciary and fundamental rights, and justice, freedom and security will be tackled early in the negotiations to allow maximum time to establish the necessary legislation, institutions, and solid track-records of implementation prior to closing of negotiations. The new negotiating rules are defined for the whole region (EC, 2012, 12-13).

4. New Methodology for Comparative Analysis of the Enlargement Countries: European Commission Report (2015)

In its 2015 Progress Report (part of the Enlargement package), the European Commission presented a few novelties. The novelties are the following:

- A unique overall membership readiness mark/grade, on the basis of the overall progress made by fall 2015 (state of play or statistical indicator of the overall progress) – with 5 levels of readiness (static indicators of readiness);
- A unique dynamic mark of progress that the country achieved in the last 12 months (level of progress or the dynamic mark of progress) – 5 levels of activities (dynamic indicators of progress).

This new style of reporting contributes to a greater transparency in estimation of the integration process and allows better comparative analysis. The evaluation methodology can be shown in the following table:

Table 2. From qualitative to quantitative evaluation of progress

PILOT AREAS – State of play	Early stage (1)	Some level of preparation (2)	Moderately prepared (3)	Good level of preparation (4)	Well advanced (5)
LEVEL OF PROGRESS - in last 12 months	Backsliding (1)	No progress (2)	Some progress (3)	Good progress (4)	Very good progress (5)

Source: EU Enlargement Strategy 2015

Apart from this unique methodology for every country, for every negotiating chapter, the European Commission introduced one other novelty. The EC chose 10 indicators of great significance that have a regional dimension. Those 10 indicators are the basis for the mark of the overall progress on the path to the EU, which becomes an useful tool for comparing countries. These mentioned descriptive indicators can also be converted into quantitative marks.

Selected indicators are the following: a) four political criteria: functioning of the judiciary, fight against corruption, fight against organised crime, freedom of expression; b) administrative capacities estimated through public administration reform; c) two economic criteria (existence of a functioning market economy and capacity to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union) and d) three negotiating chapters of specific importance for EU integration process (public procurement, statistics and financial control). Evaluation of the above mentioned indicators per country is presented in table 3.

Table 3. Ten indicators of regional importance: from qualitative to quantitative measurement

	AL	BA	KS	MK	ME	RS	TR
1. FUNCTIONING OF THE JUDICIARY							
State of play	Early stage	Some level of preparation	Early stage	Some level of preparation	Moderately prepared	Some level of preparation	Some level of preparation

Level of progress	Some progress	Some progress	Some progress	<i>Backsliding</i>	Some progress	Some progress	No progress
2. FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION							
State of play	Some level of preparation	Some level of preparation	Early stage	Some level of preparation	Some level of preparation	Some level of preparation	Some level of preparation
Level of progress	Some progress	Some progress	Some progress	No progress	Some progress	Some progress	No progress
3. FIGHT AGAINST ORGANIZED CRIME							
State of play	Some level of preparation	Some level of preparation	Early stage	Some level of preparation	Some level of preparation	Some level of preparation	Some level of preparation
Level of progress	Some progress	Some progress	Some progress	No progress	Some progress	Some progress	Some progress
4. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION							
State of play	Some level of preparation	Some level of preparation	Some level of preparation	Some level of preparation	Some level of preparation	Some level of preparation	Some level of preparation
Level of progress	Some progress	<i>Backsliding</i>	No progress	<i>Backsliding</i>	No progress	No progress	<i>Backsliding</i>
5. PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM							
State of play	Moderately prepared	Early stage	Some level of preparation	Moderately prepared	Moderately prepared	Moderately prepared	Moderately prepared
Level of progress	Good progress	No progress	Good progress	Some progress	Some progress	Good progress	Some progress
6. ECONOMIC CRITERIA 1– existence of a functioning market economy							
State of play	Moderately prepared	Early stage	Early stage	Good level of preparation	Moderately prepared	Moderately prepared	Well advanced
Level of progress	Some progress	Some progress	Some progress	No progress	Some progress	Good progress	No progress
7. ECONOMIC CRITERIA 2– capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union							
State of play	Some level of preparation	Early stage	Early stage	Moderately prepared	Moderately Prepared	Moderately prepared	Good level of preparation
Level of progress	Some progress	Some progress	No progress	Some progress	Some progress	Some progress	Some progress
8. C5 - PUBLIC PROCUREMENT							
State of play	Some level of preparation	Some level of preparation	Early stage	Moderately prepared	Moderately prepared	Moderately prepared	Moderately prepared
Level of progress	Some progress	Good progress	Some progress	Some progress	Good progress	Good progress	Some progress

9. C18 - STATISTICS							
State of play	Some level of preparation	Early stage	Early stage	Moderately prepared	Some level of preparation	Moderately prepared	Moderately prepared
Level of progress	Some progress	Some progress	Good progress	Some progress	Some progress	Good progress	Some progress
10. C32 – FINANCIAL CONTROL							
State of play	Moderately prepared	Early stage	Early stage	Moderately prepared	Moderately prepared	Moderately prepared	Good level of preparation
Level of progress	Some progress	Some progress	Some progress	Some progress	Good progress	Good progress	Some progress
OVERALL STATE OF PLAY 10 PILOT AREAS	2.2	1.5	1.2	2.7	2.6	2.6	3.0
LEVEL OF PROGRESS FOR 10 PILOT AREAS	3.1	2.8	3.0	2.3	3.1	3.4	2.5

Source: EC Progress Report 2015 and Authors' calculations;

If we convert every qualitative mark of progress into a quantitative one, we get a static and a dynamic indicator of progress in the process of the European integration for every country of the region. When we talk about the overall progress in the mentioned 10 pilot areas (static indicator), we can see that Turkey and Macedonia have achieved the best result – 3 and 2.7 respectively. Next in line are Montenegro and Serbia – with 2.6 each.

When we take a look at the dynamic indicator, Serbia has the highest dynamic indicator of progress in the last 12 months – 3.4. Albania has an average mark of 2.2 for the overall progress and a pretty high 3.1 for the dynamic indicator, such as Montenegro. FYR Macedonia is “readier” for membership than Albania (static indicator 2.7), but it backslides in the integration process in a few of the pilot areas (judiciary and freedom of speech), which led to a lower than expected dynamic indicator of 2.3.

Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo are potential candidates with a lot of job to be done in the future, especially in the selected pilot areas (static indicators are 1.5 and 1.2 respectively). However, the dynamic indicator is better, and Kosovo has made more progress than Bosnia in the last 12 months. Dynamic indicator for Kosovo is 3.0 and for Bosnia it is 2.8.

Turkey is the only enlargement country with well advanced market economy and good level of preparation regarding capacities to cope with competitive pressure and market forces from the Union. Backsliding mark is given to freedom of expression, such as to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia. Static indicator for Turkey is 3.0 while dynamic indicator is 2.5.

Overall, this methodology represents the first attempt to interpret qualitative evaluation in quantitative form, which enables us to carry out a more targeted comparative analysis of the Western Balkans countries on their path to the Union.

1. Conclusion

The overall result of readiness for the EU membership for seven enlargement countries is modest. Average static indicator for the group of enlargement countries is 2.3 while dynamic indicator for the last year is 2.9. Five candidate countries are better prepared for the EU membership while Bosnia and Kosovo are still below 2.0 for static indicator. When it comes to specific countries, the present European perspective varies. Serbia has the best dynamic indicator followed by Albania and Montenegro. The worst dynamic indicator in Macedonia (2.3) is reflection of the current political crisis in the country and overall slowdown of the reform process.

However, accession dynamics cannot be precisely defined without considering readiness of the other contracting party – the European Union and its *integration capacity*, which will depend on the quality of implementation of institutional reforms envisaged by the Lisbon Treaty and competitive challenges that the Union will face with the debt crisis and position at the global scene in the forthcoming period. A new moment which strongly impacts support for enlargement is serious migrant crisis which threatens to the stability of the EU and the unity of its member states.

On the other hand, the contemporary enlargement process has been significantly hampered by the economic crisis, which brings economic conditions of both parties in the enlargement process to the fore. The crisis causes slow recovery of the EU, such as at the region, while the countries increasingly turn to internal sources of growth and productivity in order to improve their own competitiveness.

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James Seroka¹
**U.S. Foreign Policy in the Western Balkans:
A Re-Assessment for Meaningful Re-Engagement**

Abstract

The most defining characteristics of U.S. foreign policy activity in the Western Balkans for the past fifteen years are how much it has become disengaged from trying to influence regional dynamics and how little U.S. policy has adapted to changes in the region. Today, much of U.S. foreign policy decision-making appears to lack consistency and unity of purpose and seems to rely heavily on preserving an unrealistic static view of the world. Some of the causes for this include the politicization of the foreign policy process, the absence of a general strategy for foreign policy and national security, insufficient external checks and constraints on U.S. foreign policy behavior, the heightened comingling of U.S. foreign policy to domestic and/or partisan politics, and an inability to respond effectively to asymmetric threats. In 2015, it has become increasingly apparent that each nation in the Western Balkans has needs that differ from its neighbors, and that the continuation of an antiquated regional foreign policy that treats all identically would guarantee failure for all. For the United States, the time has come to jettison the “Western Balkans as the determining foreign policy concept and to respond separately to the problems and opportunities within each of the nations in the region.

Key words: *U.S. Foreign Policy, Western Balkans, Obama National Security*

I. Foundations of U.S. Foreign Policy in the Western Balkans

It is clear that the involvement of the United States in the Western Balkans is much diminished from the role it held twenty years ago. It would be gratifying to report that this disengagement of the United States from the Western Balkans is the result of a careful appraisal of opportunities and threats of developing trends and events in the region. It would also be comforting to report that after careful review, current U.S. policy in the Western Balkans has become an integral part of a well thought-out and coherent global foreign policy strategy. Unfortunately, neither statement is true.

The most defining characteristics of U.S. foreign policy activity in the Western Balkans for the past fifteen years are how much it has become disengaged from trying to influence regional dynamics and how little U.S. policy has adapted to changes in the region. Overall, U.S. foreign policy in the Western Balkans today can be characterized by its minimalist goals, relatively low profile, and fixation on the preservation of the status quo. This attachment to stability, rather than commitment to further progress and

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democratic advancement is now the defining characteristic of U.S. foreign policy in the region². While senior U.S. officials still regularly visit the region, these visits usually conclude with vague statements on the desirability of Western Balkan officials to cooperate with each other, but offer little concrete action or serious proposals to enhance progress and overcome impediments to democratic change. U.S. actions and resources appear satisfied to maintain a state of suspended animation in the region, and U.S. policy seems to be very hesitant to engage in actions that may disturb this state of affairs. In short, continuance of stability, not progress or democratization, is becoming the hallmark of U.S. regional policy in the Western Balkans.

Despite fundamental transformations in the region during the past 15 years, current U.S. policy in the Western Balkans is still framed by the same three policy objectives that guided policy during the 1990s. The first and primary objective of U.S. foreign policy in the Western Balkans is to prevent the reoccurrence of ethnic/nationalist violence in the region. The second is to delegate substantive decision-making, implementation of policy, and responsibility for the region to the European Union and its institutions; and the third is to minimize the possibility of renewed Russian influence in the region.

To a remarkable extent, all of these three U.S. regional policy objectives have been largely achieved and/or are no longer relevant to the current situation in the region. For more than a decade, there has been little probability that the Western Balkan nations would again become engulfed in inter-ethnic violence. Also, there are few, if any, realistic scenarios that would require the U.S. to commit significant peacekeeping forces as a deterrent to the outbreak of serious communal violence. Second, the European Union has taken on the primary responsibility for security, development, law and order, democratization and European integration throughout the region, while the U.S. role has diminished and largely follows the EU lead. Third, while concerns over Russian influence have recently become more salient to U.S. decision-makers, Russian influence in the region has not markedly increased, and it is unlikely that the regional states would see much benefit in a turn towards Russia and away from the trans-Atlantic community.

Understandably, after the chaos of Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s, U.S. policy for the Western Balkans had to be centered primarily on the goal to maintain and support stability in the region. Once the region's governments and various ethnicities abandoned physical conflict with one another, however, the United States was no longer compelled to give serious attention to the region and could be content, if not eager, for the European Union to take the leading role. Further, with the eastward expansions of NATO and the European Union, the Western Balkan states lost their claim to be critical to vital U.S. strategic interests, as well as their ill-fated standing as potential serious threats to European security. Gradually, as the region achieved stability, the United States was able to turn its attention to more pressing and strategic concerns elsewhere and disengage from the Western Balkans.

The second policy objective of U.S. foreign policy in the region; namely,

² It can also be argued that stability defines the EU's policy in the region as well. Judy Dempsey's Strategic Europe, "Is the EU Sleeping on the Western Balkans?" (May 13, 2015) <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=60069>

devolution of authority to the EU and its institutions, has also become outdated and needs to be re-assessed. The European Union has reached, if not exceeded, its resources and authority and is no longer in the position to execute a comprehensive regional policy for the Western Balkans for itself, let alone on behalf of the United States. In the European Union, the Neighborhood initiatives have stalled; the Eurozone is in crisis; accession is no longer a realistic near-term option for potential new members; labor mobility to the EU is being restricted; Euro-sceptic movements within the EU nations are growing in influence; and the potential for rapid economic expansion is dim. While the United States may prefer that the EU continue to assume full responsibility in the Western Balkans, it needs to be recognized that the EU lacks the commonality of purpose, will, and resources to go it alone. In other words, the U.S. has an opportunity to become a more active partner with the European Union and to contribute towards a new democratic and growth-directed vision for the future.

A third objective of U.S. foreign policy in the Western Balkans was the determination to restrict the growth of Russian influence globally, and particularly in Europe. As tensions between Russia and the United States re-emerged following the annexation of the Crimea by Russia, the United States found it easy to recast its relationship back to the period of the cold war with the Soviet Union and to magnify the importance of Russian inspired plots and threats to the Western Balkans, as well as other regions of concern. The determination of U.S. foreign policy to restrict Russian influence throughout its periphery and in the Western Balkans, however, is not just an echo of Cold War rhetoric and behavior that could be dismissed by governments in the region as a passing fad. For allies and partners of the U.S. in the Western Balkans, a strong anti-Russian position has emerged as the paramount U.S. requirement for its continued friendship and support. Hopefully, the fixation on the Russian menace will not weaken U.S. resolve to push these governments further in a democratic direction.

Realistically, the possibility that any Western Balkan nation, including Serbia, would exchange its dynamic relationships with the United States and European Union in favor of establishing a dependency on Russia is very low, if not non-existent. For some U.S. decision-makers, however, the memories of the Cold War, as well as fear of a resurgent Pan-Slavism or Orthodox brotherhood of nations, die hard, and there an unwarranted concern that Western Balkan nations might abandon its connections with Europe and the West to become Russian client states³. Continued emphasis by the United States on a perceived growing Russian threat in the region is a distraction that can delay or damage the capacity of the U.S. to advocate for change and reform among Western Balkan governments. The basic fact is that each Western Balkan government is now either a member of NATO and/or the EU or is an applicant for membership in one or both organizations. None have expressed any serious interest in joining the Eurasian Union or in solidifying a dependency relationship with Russia.

When one examines U.S. foreign policy in the Western Balkans, a strong case can be made that the three U.S. foreign policy objectives have become frozen and are not

³ Some policy groups see a more significant threat from Russia in the region. See: Bodo Weber and Kurt Bassuener, "The Western Balkans and the Ukraine Crisis: a Changed Game for EU and US policies? Democratization Policy Council (September 2014) <http://www.democratizationpolicy.org/pdf/briefs/DPC%20Policy%20Paper%20Western%20Balkans%20&%20Ukraine%20crisis.pdf>

particularly relevant to the situations on the ground today. The U.S. policy objective to maintain stability is rooted in the tragic experiences of the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Nevertheless, while the goal of maintaining civil stability in Western Balkan societies still holds some relevance and value, it need not inhibit a comprehensive U.S. response designed to deal with the full panoply of acute needs facing these nations today. For many citizens in the Western Balkan, stability has been transformed into political and societal paralysis; and nations, including Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo and especially Bosnia, will almost certainly experience societal crises if they do not find a way to transcend the institutional paralysis that masquerades as stability⁴. There is an opportunity for the United States to revise and update its Western Balkan foreign policy framework to accommodate these needs and find ways to meaningfully re-engage to support appropriate change in the Western Balkans⁵.

II. Systemic Concerns with the Current U.S. Foreign Policy Processes

The weaknesses and problems identified with the U.S. foreign policy decision-making process in the Western Balkans are not limited to this region alone. U.S. foreign policy decision-making processes in South and Central America, sub Saharan Africa, South Asia and with numerous specific nations share shortcomings similar to those in the Western Balkans. In many nations and regions of the world, U.S. foreign policy is antiquated and needs to be reassessed. Further, since U.S. foreign policy lacks a general strategic framework, it can appear to be inconsistent, if not incoherent, and unable to differentiate between urgent and important concerns.

Overall, it is becoming increasingly noticeable that much of U.S. foreign policy decision-making today appears to lack consistency and unity of purpose. Also, U.S. foreign policy seems to rely more heavily on preserving a static view of the world that resists change and innovation in order to preserve or advance U.S. global dominance⁶. Prioritization and agenda setting by the White House and U.S. Departments of State, Defense increasingly tend to follow the news cycle, and assessments of risks and threats can be divorced from comprehensive planning and analysis.

Some of the shortcomings in U.S. foreign policy decision-making are a result of changes in the international environment, world balance of power, and even technology to which the U.S. government has not adapted to or recognized its full significance. Some are systemic and reflect weaknesses in the foreign policy process that transcend administrations, and some can be linked to the personal preferences of the Obama Administration and tied to the administration's view of politics and policy-making⁷.

⁴ The International Crisis Group briefing on Macedonia highlights the problems that occur in supporting frozen political politics as a substitute for stability. International Crisis Group, "Macedonia: Defusing the Bombs," *Crisis Group Europe Briefing*, No. 75 (July 9, 2015). <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/europe/balkans/macedonia/b075-macedonia-defusing-the-bomb.aspx>

⁵ See: Edward P. Joseph, "The Balkans, Interrupted" *Foreign Affairs* (May 10, 2015). <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/southeastern-europe/2015-05-10/balkans-interrupted>

⁶ For a well reasoned argument on this point, see: David A. Shlapak, "Towards a More Modest American Strategy," *Survival*, Vol. 57, no. 2 (April – May 2015), pp. 59-78.

⁷ Derek S. Reveron, Nikolas K. Gvosdev and Mackubin Owens, *U.S. Foreign Policy and Defense Strategy: The Evolution of an Incidental Superpower*, Washington DC: Georgetown University Press (2014).

Problem 1: Politicization of the Foreign Policy Process

For some time in the United States, both foreign and national security policy-making, although publicly deliberative, have been highly politicized processes, often with an emphasis on protecting or enhancing the reputation of the sitting president. These policies, and the process behind them, reflect the personality, electoral campaign program, and managerial preferences of the president himself⁸. In addition, there is no accepted process protocol for decision-making in the foreign policy arena, and each president is free to structure the process, decide who to include in the process, and decide how to arrive at decisions.

Committed to demonstrating a contrast with the Bush administration, Barack Obama chose a different orientation to national security and foreign policy decision-making than his predecessor. First, Obama had pledged a demilitarization of foreign and national security policy. Under his administration, responses to threats would be based upon all the instruments of power, both soft and hard, and not rely exclusively or even disproportionately on military power⁹. The second feature was that his foreign policy and national security approach would be characterized by restraint and deliberation, again in contrast to his predecessor. Third, a feature that has been widely criticized but, if used properly, could still be a good guide for action; namely, to think and plan deliberatively before taking action (i.e. *Don't do stupid stuff.*)¹⁰.

The problem with the President's orientation to foreign policy decision-making was that these three elements were not balanced by additional resources, constraints on behavior or institutional safeguards. The first feature – demilitarization of policy and use of all the instruments of power – assumed that the President and his advisors either had the luxury of time, authority, breadth of vision and determination to perfect the complex mechanics of specific policy responses, or that the President would be willing to delegate considerable responsibility to others outside the National Security Council and White House staff to develop and monitor such programs.

Neither condition holds for the Obama White House. Experience has shown that the President did not have the time, patience, or inclination to invest in the personal relationships with foreign leaders, Congress, or his cabinet officials necessary to make this work. President Obama's White House centralized policy decision-making in the White House staff, particularly the National Security Council¹¹. Members of Congress were only incidentally consulted, often after the decision had been made, and the U.S. State Department often played a secondary or inconsequential role in foreign policy

⁸ Kori Schake, "The Obama Administration's Troubling History of Politicizing Intelligence," *Foreign Policy* (April 25, 2013). <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/04/25/the-obama-administrations-troubling-history-of-politicizing-intelligence/>

⁹ Mark Lagon, "The Value of Values: Soft Power Under Obama," *World Affairs Journal* (September – October 2011). <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/value-values-soft-power-under-obama>

¹⁰ This is not a formal policy, but rather a shorthand formula used by the Obama White House to describe the Obama foreign policy decision-making process. Source: Bob Dreyfuss, "Obama's Goldilocks Foreign Policy: Is it Not Too Hot, Not Too Cold?", *The Nation*. May 27, 2014. <http://www.thenation.com/article/obamas-goldilocks-foreign-policy-it-not-too-hot-not-too-cold/>

¹¹ Karen DeYoung, "How the Obama White House Runs Foreign Policy," *Washington Post* (August 4, 2015) https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/how-the-obama-white-house-runs-foreign-policy/2015/08/04/2befb960-2fd7-11e5-8353-1215475949f4_story.html

making. Finally, the interagency process was often overlooked and the advice of senior statesmen and others generally ignored¹². Under such conditions, foreign policy decision-making tended to lack creativity, failed to generate new thinking, or break new ground.

The second feature - that of restraint and deliberation - encouraged an atmosphere where the foreign policy and national security policy-making became more reactive rather than proactive¹³. The unexpressed hope was that problems would go away and solve themselves before they assumed crisis status (e.g. Edward Snowden and intelligence, Egypt's political turmoil, Libya's descent into chaos, ISIS battlefield success, Russia's reaction to the Ukraine political crisis, etc.).

The third feature – *Don't do stupid stuff* – also discouraged risk taking and bold decisive action by policy makers to deal creatively with a foreign policy problem. There seems to be an assumption that perhaps someone else would become engaged and take responsibility. Perhaps fate would intervene to change the situation in a more favorable direction. Perhaps a no risk option would appear in the near future and the red line would not be crossed. The failures to respond boldly to the chemical attacks in Syria, Israel's disproportionate response in Gaza, Japan's provocative behavior with China, or the Ebola epidemic underscore this unfortunate pattern.

Problem 2: Absence of a General Strategy

Today, the process of drafting foreign and national security policy in the U.S. is generally undefined and often appears serendipitous at the grand strategy level. There is no requirement or expectation that an actual strategy be implemented based upon an analysis of threats, opportunities, resources, and capabilities. There is no consistent vision, no plan, no set of priorities to direct policy, and there is no formal match of available resources to priorities. The result is that, at best, foreign policy discussions start from the beginning for every crisis, and the resulting policy decisions are not cumulative or predictable. While there is a standing congressional request for an annually updated national security policy, the updates appear irregularly and the contents are not policy statements, but rather political wish lists drafted to assure the American people that the President cares about their concerns.

For U.S. foreign policy, there is generally no expectation or process for producing a guiding general strategic document¹⁴. President George H. W. Bush, for example, acknowledged that he was not interested in the "vision thing," and President Obama saw no need for any strategic document reminiscent of George Kennan's Long Telegram¹⁵. It is extremely difficult, therefore, to develop general strategy when the political leadership sees no need for such work, and may feel constrained if such a document were drafted.

¹² See: David J. Rothkopf, "National Insecurity: Can Obama's Foreign Policy be Saved?", *Foreign Policy*, No. 208 (September - October 2014), pp. 44-51.

¹³ Alessandro Scheffler Corvaja, "Obama's Foreign Policy Legacy," *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung International Reports* No. 7 (2015). http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_42195-544-2-30.pdf?150806163200

¹⁴ The Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review issued by the Department of State functions more as a management and budgetary document than as a statement of principles or general strategy.

¹⁵ David Remnick, "Going the distance: On and off the road with Barack Obama," *The New Yorker*, January 27, 2014, pp. 40-61.

Problem 3: Insufficient External Checks and Constraints

U.S. foreign policy and national security decision-making also suffers from a procedural weakness in that it has become accustomed to make policy in a vacuum without substantive involvement with other nation states. The end of the Cold War gave the United States that “unipolar” moment where it had the capacity, if not the obligation, to make decisions and act upon them, virtually alone¹⁶. A consequence of that period is that oftenthe U.S. has not yet internalized how to consult meaningfully with other nations and include others as true partners, deserving of full respect and consideration.

Beginning with the Clinton administration, U.S. crisis diplomacy tended to presentto others a series of intractable demands, redlines that must not be crossed, expectations of capitulation from adversaries, but not compromise or serious negotiations with them. What is worrisome is that such conduct is not just reserved for small states, but hasalso been applied to significant powers, such as Russia¹⁷.

As former Secretary of State Madeline Albright expressed, the U.S. deserved to lead, because it is taller and sees farther; it is that “exceptional nation”. This attitude is widely shared in the United States, and for a time there was a charge by Mitt Romney, Obama’s opponent in 2012, that Mr. Obama did not viscerally feel that the U.S. was truly exceptional and, consequently, wedid not deserve to lead the country. While national pride is commendable, arrogance or hubris is not. Every nation, including the U.S., needs to understand the national interests of others and to work with or negotiate with other states on the basis of shared national interests (e.g. Russia and Ukraine) or respect for those interests (e.g. Germany and/or Brazil and U.S. intelligence gathering).

Third, the inability of other nations, even close allies, to exercise external checks on U.S. foreign and national security policy encourages the U.S. to make tactical decisions that can have profound and long-term negative strategic impacts. It may also encourage decision-making based on short term cost-benefit analysis at the expense of long term relationships (e.g. U.S. drone policy)¹⁸.

Problem 4: Excessive Comingling with Domestic and/or Partisan Politics

An additional problem with contemporary foreign policy decision-making processes in the U.S. is the extent to which these policy areas have become comingled with U.S. domestic politics and directed by the vagaries of public opinion or partisan politics¹⁹. Public opinion polling, rather than being used as an analysis of threat and national interest, often directs the policy-making process. For example, in 2013, the

¹⁶ For an explanation, see: William Blum, “American Exceptionalism and U.S. Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Policy Journal*, September 19, 2014. <http://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2014/09/19/american-exceptionalism-and-us-foreign-policy/>

¹⁷ Lawrence Freedman, “Ukraine and the Art of Crisis Management,” *Survival*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (May – June, 2014), pp. 7-42.

¹⁸ For example, the debate in the U.S. over Iran’s nuclear program agreement gives little credence to the views of the other signatories in the P5+1 process.

¹⁹ Steven Hurst, “Parties, Polarization and U.S. Foreign Policy,” in Indeerjet Parmar, Linda Miller & Mark Ledwidge (eds.) *Obama and the World: New Directions in U.S. Foreign Policy (Second Edition)*, New York: Routledge (2014), pp. 95-106.

public's resistance to engagement against the Assad regime in Syria stayed the President's hand from taking action despite the provocation. While in 2014, the public's revulsion against the beheading of two U.S. hostages forced the President's had to respond much more forcefully in a much more complex situation, with relatively little direct U.S. interests involved, and with a much lower probability of successfully completing the mission.

Frequently, party positions on foreign policy issues in the United States today are framed by whether or not a particular position would strengthen or weaken the president's agenda. For example, the unanimous opposition of the Republican Party to any Iran accord greatly limited U.S. negotiating flexibility, weakened support for the U.S. position among the P5+1 partners, and encouraged foreign interference by Israel and possibly others in the U.S. foreign policy decision process²⁰.

Problem 5: Inability to Respond to Asymmetric Threats

Neither the United States nor any other great power has developed a tool box with appropriate capabilities and resources to respond appropriately and effectively to asymmetric threats and tactics²¹. U.S. foreign and national security policy is premised on the principles of the Treaty of Westphalia of regularized interactions among nation states and conflicts that primarily occur on the battlefield and engage recognizable armed opponents. Terrorist acts, suicide bombers, hostage taking, rogue chemical warfare all occur outside the normal parameters of conflict for which the U.S. is prepared. As a consequence, U.S. responses to asymmetric threats can be ineffective and counterproductive and involve the mobilization of enormous resources compared to the resources employed by the aggressors.

Combined, the five problems in the U.S. foreign policy decision-making process outlined above impede the capacity of the United States to respond adroitly to emerging foreign policy challenges or opportunities. They also make it very difficult for the U.S. to advocate a consistent, principled, coherent and adaptable foreign policy, and they foster a policy environment where decision-makers are reluctant to re-examine and re-assess policy.

III. Assessment and Proposals for Change

It should be clear that facts on the ground in the Western Balkans have outgrown the original parameters of U.S. foreign policy made during the difficult period of the 1990s. Compared to that time, the region is now relatively stable and secure, and it is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. In the broad picture of the foreign and security policy problems facing the United States today, the Western Balkans no longer

²⁰ See Suzanne Nossel "This is What Will Happen if Congress Blows Up the Iran Nuclear Deal," *Foreign Policy*, July 30, 2015. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/07/30/congress-iran-nuclear-deal-obama-veto-kerry-mccain/>

²¹ See: Linda Robinson, Paul D. Miller, John Gordon IV, Jeffrey Decker, Michael Schwillie and Raphael S. Cohen, *Improving Strategic competence: Lessons from 13 Years of War*, Rand Corporation, Santa Monica CA 2014.

requires a high priority for its attention or engagement. U.S. goals for the Western Balkans as determined fifteen years ago have largely been met and considerable progress has been achieved. Among these achievements are the following:

1. Since the early 1990s, it has been U.S. policy to encourage stability and prevent armed conflict. Realistically, there is little chance today that any nation in the Western Balkans will turn on a neighbor, and none have the capabilities to engage in armed aggression on any substantive scale.
2. It has been the policy of the United States to preserve the sovereignty and integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina. This has largely been achieved, and neither Serbia nor Croatia appears to have any intent to infringe on the integrity or sovereignty of the Bosnian state²².
3. A third goal was to help build the Kosovo state as a capable and sovereign entity. In this respect, irreversible progress has been made, although much more progress is needed.
4. The fourth goal of U.S. policy in the region was to enable all the states who wish to qualify for EU membership and/or membership in NATO. Croatia has successfully joined both. Albania is a NATO member. Montenegro and Macedonia are making progress towards NATO membership, and all the states in the region are in various stages of EU application.

To a great extent, the challenges that face the Western Balkans today are not the critical issues of stability and sovereignty that challenged the regions in the 1990s. It is also clear that the prospects of a Russian threat in the region are not substantive enough to justify a reappraisal of U.S. foreign policy directed to containing Russian influence.

Given these dynamics, the United States now has an opportunity, together with its partners in Europe, to reassess the situation in the Western Balkans and to respond to the new challenges that have emerged with a new partnership framework. Some of the challenges that could be addressed include the following:

- Developing and supporting legitimate and democratic political structures and institutions;
- Supporting plans for meaningful ethnic power sharing;
- Encouraging foreign direct investment;
- Establishing effective border controls, and eliminating transnational crime and trafficking;
- Rebuilding the economy to provide career opportunities for the youth and others;
- Reducing the sphere of corruption in politics, commerce and society; and
- Restoring realistic hope and expectations for a better future in Europe

The challenges listed above do not impact equally each nation in the region. 2015 is not 1995, and the challenges in the region cannot be met with an all encompassing regional plan. These challenges can be met more successfully on a country by country basis, and solutions may not work if structured into the artificial regional construct of

²² The refusal of the Serbian government to back Republika Srpska President Dodik's maneuver to solicit support from Russia to secede from the Bosnian Federation is an illustration of Serbia's reluctance to become involved with sovereignty issues in Bosnia-Herzegovina.
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/17/us-bosnia-referendum-serbia-idUSKCN0PR1GG20150717>

the Western Balkans. For example, Macedonia's problems with legitimacy and power sharing are unique to Macedonia and deserve special attention. Croatia's perspective is that it should not even be considered to be a part of the Balkans²³. Bosnia's challenge to advance beyond the Dayton Accords and create a functioning state is unique to that nation. Kosovo's difficulties in building a functioning economy and creating state institutions, and Albania's struggle to provide rule of law each demand different solutions and policies. Each nation in the region has needs which are distinct from the others, and a regional policy that binds them together would guarantee failure for all.

For the United States, the time has come to jettison the "Western Balkans" as the determining foreign policy concept, and respond directly to the problems and opportunities that fit each nation's circumstances. Detailed discussion about U.S. policy with the Western Balkans will not be particularly informative as a guideline for the future, and it is U.S. policy with Serbia, or Croatia, or Montenegro etc. that counts, not the region as a whole. Each country deserves to have its own relationship with the U.S., its own set of challenges, and the U.S. should have goals and expectations that are specific for each country that may not necessarily overlap across national borders²⁴. In other words, "Yugoslavia" is history; there is no constituency to resurrect it; and its memory should not continue to guide U.S. policy today.

To the extent that there is an expectation to formulate a U.S. regional policy that encompasses the entirety of the Western Balkans, such a policy needs to be flexible, general, and adaptable. For the combined region as well as for each country, the objective of U.S. foreign policy is to work to have a friend or ally; to avoid adversarial relations; to discourage a dependency relationship, ethnic violence, and political instability; to foster economic and commercial contacts; and to contribute to Western Balkan/European security. For each country in the region, the path towards that outcome will vary.

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Mladen Nakić¹
The Alliance Facing an Old Challenge:
Security of Southeast Europe

Abstract

In the last twenty years, the processes in the southeastern part of Europe were relatively stable, but not spared certain challenges. Compared to the events that took place throughout the 19th and 20th centuries when the wider region was the most exposed to violence, upheavals, coups and wars, today's development is peaceful yet with certain challenges that may threaten the achieved progress. SEE stayed scene of geopolitical forces, and an important link of Euro-Atlantic area with Europe and beyond, to the Eurasian Basin. Any changes in the balance of power and interests of the great powers had an impact on relations in Southeast Europe. SEE remained the most sensitive part of Europe in the political and security terms with reflection in its economic development. Existing global challenges and its internal challenges presents additional trials for SEE. Some countries of the Southeastern Europe have not completed its internal transition process, and some still do not function as a stable and functional state. Keeping all in mind, NATO remains the most important factor of security and stability in Southeast Europe.

Key words: *Southeastern Europe, NATO, stability, enlargement, security*

The Historical Legacy

In this article Southeast Europe (SEE) includes Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Albania, Romania, Moldova, Macedonia, Montenegro, Greece, Bulgaria and Kosovo (see map). SEE has gone through different path of historical and political development than other regions in Europe. Since it is a crossroads of trans-Atlantic route to the Eurasian (Black Sea) and the eastern and southern Mediterranean, it is not surprising that each of these areas adds SEE some of its regional security turbulences. In particular, this applies to the area of SEE that goes to the eastern borders of Europe and to Eurasia, where great powers have a particularly strong interest. In the center of SEE is its Western Balkan sub-region with plenty of cultural, linguistic, ethnic and religious diversity, which is the largest in Europe measuring in square kilometers. In particular, the Western Balkans includes the country south of the Croatia and the north of Greece (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Macedonia, and Albania) is a key point

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for the stability of the entire region of Southeast Europe. It is known that the Western Balkans is not a geographical term but only political determinant, and as sub-region of the Balkans was inaugurated in 2000. by the European Union as part of the sub-region of Southeast Europe.

This is why the SEE has never managed to become a cohesive part of the European continent in political and economic, but also social and cultural terms. Additionally, disintegration of the former Yugoslavia has produced even more instability in the region. European Community at that time had tried to solve the problem working together with UN peacekeeping missions. Finally, there was also the first NATO's military intervention outside the territory of the Member States ("Out-of-Area" Operation, B&H, 1995.).²

On the other hand, the collapse of communist regimes in late 1980s, political fragmentation and insufficient success in the democratic transformation of societies, had caused serious economic problems in the whole area, without exception. For that reasons, SEE has not yet reached the level of industrial and agricultural production, from the time before 1991. The wars in the Western Balkans additionally destroyed the human and natural resources as well as existing energy, transport and economic infrastructure. All this has a negative impact on the social situation of the population (high unemployment, poverty, frequent corruption, organized crime, illegal migration, etc.).



² <http://books.sipri.org/files/books/SIPRI02Findlay.pdf>

The Geostrategic Changes

Changes affecting Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe in the late of 1980s and early 1990s led to important geostrategic changes. It has led to the redistribution of power balance in Europe as part of ongoing attempts to create a New Global Order (NGO). One of the key challenges, on the one hand, was how to reduce or to provide neutralization of Russian influence on South East Europe.³ On the other hand, all countries of the former communist bloc and some non-aligned countries chose to turn in the direction of alignment in the Western bloc and NATO instead, and move their development to the market economy. However, in recent times we are witnessing the process of refurbishment of competition of the great powers for influence in this area. We testify how Russia wants to re-establish the balance of power and challenging the United States and EU interest in deferent regions worldwide. Russia has maximum benefit from the high price of energy to ensure its national interests around the world. Investing in SEE, Russia has clear intention to make strong energy and economic tie with states such as Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Republika Srpska), Montenegro, Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. At the same time, it need to be reminded of the fact that in this area or in its immediate vicinity there are parts of the US and Russian tactical nuclear weapons. Due to the increase in violence and instability in the Middle East it should be expected further strengthening of US and Russian military influence in Southeastern Europe, especially in Eastern Europe and the southern Mediterranean.

With US Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean Sea and air bases in Italy, Greece and Turkey, a military base Bondsteel in Kosovo despite the reduction in the number of local US forces is an important installation for military ground training. The same or similar purpose has US military facilities in Romania and Bulgaria. U.S. and Romania have agreed (2011.) on setting up anti-ballistic missile batteries that would make Southeastern Europe as a part of NATO's missile defense (NATO's Theater Missile Defense) against the threat in the future, primarily from Iran. Russia considers that the project is actually directed against its interests.

Security Challenges

One of the indicative parameters of security in Southeast Europe after the Cold War era is the level of investment in military budgets. Although current trend is to reduce the military budget, military personnel and conventional weapons. However, nobody wants to give up of their heavy conventional weapons or military production.

³ Hall Gardner, Elinore Schaffer, Oleg Kobtzeff, *Central and Southeastern Europe in Transition: Perspectives on Success and Failure Since 1989*, s.166

Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces (in force since 1992.)

	Tanks			Artillery			Warplanes		
	Before	After CFE (1990)	2011.	Before 2011.	After CFE (1990)	2011.	Before	After CFE (1990)	2011.
Romania	2960	1375	345	3928	1475	870	505	430	103
Bulgaria	2209	1475	301	2085	1750	738	335	234	91
Greece	2276	1735	1590	2149	1878	3156	458	650	303
Turkey	3234	2795	4503	3210	3529	7450	355	750	694

Source: The Military Balance 2011

Number of persons in the armed forces:

	Active Duty	Reserve	Tanks
Serbia	28.184	50.171	212
B&H	10.577	-	334
Macedonia	8.000	4.850	31
Montenegro	2.984	-	-
Kosovo	2.500	800	-

Source: The Military Balance 2012; International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2012.

A special aspect of security in SEE also apply on existing five nuclear plants and a small number of nuclear research reactors. Although all SEE countries comply with the provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) that entered into force in 1970, the problem of nuclear safety still persists. Under the influence of the EU, four of the six reactors built during the era of Soviet Union in the Bulgarian town Kozluduy plants had been closed.

Current security challenges in Southeastern Europe are related to several factors

which are not one-dimensional and generally have non-military auspice. There are internal and external non-military factors.⁴

Internal factors are related to certain elements of the stability of the states. All countries in the region, without exception, have serious economic problems related to the social picture of a society (unemployment, crime, corruption, human rights, etc.). With the exception of a very few countries in which there are tendencies of secession and ethnic conflicts (Kosovo, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina), the rest of the Southeast Europe has a stable political system without visible challenges to their democratic functioning. The social dimension and dissatisfaction presents serious risk to all countries, especially in Greece, Macedonia, Albania, and Serbia.

The external factors that can threaten the stability of the region present unresolved border issues on land, the Danube River and the Adriatic Sea. Expanding external influences (indirectly) are related to the interests and never hidden influence of Russia on the entire area. Negative external factor is certainly the current migration crisis whose waves are mainly flow via Southeast Europe to Western Europe. Although this is a transitional migration, but negative effects on the region is more than obvious. Migration crisis jeopardizes the Schengen system (22 EU members plus four non-EU) given that some States restore control of their internal borders. For that reason, European Council's President Tusk warned that the collapse of migration policy can lead to the "collapse of the EU as a political project if we are not able to control the external borders".⁵

An additional destabilizing element is the Islamic radicalization in some countries of the Western Balkans or even attempt to import radical interpretations of Islam among the majority Muslim population (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Albania, and Macedonia). Solving security problems in these countries require specific approaches and solutions which should lead the EU in cooperation with the US. NATO's 2011. Strategic Concept clearly stated that objective is "to enable the Western Balkans to be part of Euro-Atlantic integration".

The closure of the borders within the EU, as well as those external borders, in particular to the countries of the Western Balkans, and forced migrants to return back to Balkan route, may create a new security problem. Thus, part of disgruntled migrants could be easy prey for recruitment by radical Islamists in Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia.

The Role of the EU

2003. European Security Strategy (ESS) has made very clear on several major threats to the Member States: terrorism, organized crime, energy (in) security, climate change, failed states, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and others.⁶ In some other security assessment ESS also emphasized the problem of unresolved borders and existing conflicts in the EU neighborhood. Some SEE countries are listed as possible sources of those problems (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia). Therefore, the European Union uses the Stabilization and Association Agreement as an additional mechanism in the preparation of SEE countries for EU membership.

⁴ Janne Haaland Matlary, Magnus Petersson, NATO's European Allies: Military Capability and Political Will, 107-113.

⁵ <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-europe-migrants-tusk-idUKKCN0UX1TM>

⁶ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>

The biggest security challenge is the Western Balkans as a sub-region of SEE, which is often compared with the challenges that come with the southern Mediterranean and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The main measures to address these challenges are the strengthening of democratic processes and the functionality of the state as a precondition for stability. The European Commission (EC) that took office in late 2014, immediately announced the "consolidation of enlargement over the next five years". At the same time EC sent a message to the States that the enlargement process has no alternative and the process of their adjustment to membership need to be continued.

Regarding the situation in the Western Balkans, there are four factors that can act (de)stabilizing:

1. Macedonia has been failed to solve their own internal political problems last five years which are largely caused by the Greek veto on its NATO membership and the start of membership negotiations with the EU. Despite the efforts of the EU and the US, it seems we are facing lose-lose scenario. Macedonia loses the most, but the EU also put its credibility on the line. The EU has been playing a key role in Macedonia (Ohrid Agreement) since 2001. The European Commission recommended to launch negotiations in 2009, but the situation has remained status quo, and got even worse internally.

2. Bosnia and Herzegovina still does not act as a fully functioning state. Messages from the Republika Srpska are increasingly bellicose in order to question the existence of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, just announcement of moving its capital from Sarajevo to Mostar sounds promising, but essentially nothing special has changed. On the other side, the best possible news for the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina is fact that the Croatian member of Bosnia's tripartite presidency presented the application for EU membership in February 15, 2016.

3. The third and fourth factors are Serbia and Kosovo itself and their common effort in approaching the EU through a process of mutual normalization. Serbia is heading towards early parliamentary elections most likely on April 24, 2016. Prime Minister Vučić requires the full term for the announced reforms. The greatest test in 2016. for the stability of Kosovo will be the formation of Serbian municipalities, beginning work of the Special Court for crimes of former Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and election of a new President of Kosovo.

The Economy as a Guarantor of Stability

The economic picture in Southeast Europe (SEE) for 2016. looks promising. The EU countries in this region have a positive assessment, especially for Romania with the planned growth of 4.1% of GDP. For Bulgaria and Serbia is expected GDP growth of 1.5%. The main driver should be foreign direct investment. The International Monetary Fund predicts economic growth for BH of 3% (in 2015 it was 2.1%). Albania expects the continuation of reforms and estimates GDP growth of 3.4%. The European Commission predicts economic growth of Montenegro by 3.3%, mostly thanks to projects like the construction of the highway Bar-Boljare (169 km). For Macedonia, the European Commission predicts economic recovery and GDP growth of 3.9% in 2016. Despite political instability, Kosovo expects GDP growth of 3.8% in 2016 (3.2% in

2015).⁷

There is no doubt that for the entire region one of the key importance is implementation strategic investment projects like the aforementioned highway Bar-Boljare in Montenegro, Trans-Adriatic pipeline (Trans-Adriatic Pipeline, TAP) in Albania as well as the project of building a terminal for liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Omišalj (Croatia), which is in fact the European project in Croatia with the wider regional aspect of which could benefit Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, Poland and Ukraine.

Conclusion

Security image of Southeast Europe mainly reflecting the challenges of seeking adequate answers to long-lasting challenges. Bulgaria and Romania continue their efforts to fully implement the *acquis communautaire* through continuous verification of what is done. Greece, due to the economic and political crisis, is not adequately respond to migration problems and is one of the most responsible member of the EU for migrant issues.

However, key point for the stability of Southeast Europe is the Western Balkans, especially efforts of those countries on the path of institutional association with the EU. No doubt, progress has been made, but some challenges still threatening entire region, especially if we take into account wider geopolitical context. It is essential to keep the enlargement process remains open and unblocked (Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo). Unfortunately, those countries are still not immune to be destabilized by internal or/and external factors because their society continually undergoing democratic transition processes. Some of them (Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo) are still under international protectorate in which they have been operated by outside civilian and military forces. In Bosnia and Herzegovina there is EUFOR (with 2,000 troops). In Kosovo, NATO has around 6,000 troops as part of KFOR, while the EU's mission EULEX carried out by about 2,300 civilians, police officers, judicial officers and administrative staff. They should provide a certain level of predictability of procedures in maintaining stability. Additionally, to the existing transitional challenges, possible process of insufficiently organized and thoughtful migrant readmission could however have serious consequences on the stability for not only the SEE, but for the entire EU as well.

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⁷ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2015/09/28/from-recovery-to-reinvigorated-growth-in-south-east-europe>

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Identifying Trends in Islamic Radicalization and Developing Strategies for Countering Violent Extremism in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Abstract

Although it was assumed over the past twenty years that the Wahhabi movement in Bosnia was under control and did not represent a serious security threat, recent attacks in Zvornik, Sarajevo, and Zavidovići, and the increasing number of Foreign Terrorist Fighters leaving and returning to Bosnia and Herzegovina, suggests fundamentalism, radicalization and extremism are on the rise. Considering the geographic significance of Bosnia and Herzegovina in relation to the European Union (EU) and neighboring Croatia, the EU's newest member and significant contributor to NATO missions and the War on Terror, Bosnia and Herzegovina has both strategic and geographic significance for the Islamic extremist movement and as such represents a serious threat to the internal security of Bosnia and Herzegovina, its neighbors, and the EU as a whole.

Key words: *radicalization, extremism, terrorism, Countering Violent Extremism*

Introduction

Security challenges such as radicalism, extremism and terrorism are often tightly connected, sometimes inseparable, but, sometimes, very indistinguishable terms. They come in many forms and incidences. By themselves they mean little until they are viewed in the context of time and space and can be analyzed with the premise that they are manifested differently, as the surrounding factors are different from region to region. These challenges are especially sensitive when connected with any type of religion.

The goal of studying radicalism, extremism and terrorism is in explaining their causes, interdependencies and interconnections, detecting the indicators which lead to the transformation and the change of the discourse of action, the analysis of the consequences, and to provide important recommendations regarding how to prevent the

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occurrence and the development of radicalism, extremism and terrorism.

When viewed from the aspect of security theory, all three occurrences present a threat to individuals, social and public communities, national and international security. Their consistency follows from radicalism, extremism to terrorism. As forms of action that are predominantly exclusive, and as a consequence extremely dangerous, it is necessary to identify their occurrence as early as possible in order to implement long-term prevention strategies, and to recognize those elements of radicalization and extremism that can potentially result in terrorism.

The goal of this paper is to expose, explore and elaborate on the security challenges radicalism and extremism place on local communities and public institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and consequently, improve local, national, and regional capabilities for preventing or Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). For that purpose, the paper is focused on the following three primary and mutually supporting objectives:

- Identify Wahhabi communities and organizations in Bosnia (in order to);
- Assess local drivers of conflict and radicalization in Bosnia and community “entry points” for developing and implementing near-term CVE programs or measures to increase the resilience of “at-risk” communities;
- Identify and assess internal and external factors influencing tactical and strategic objectives for Wahhabism or extremist movements in Bosnia.

It is important to point out that to associate religion with any form of radicalism, extremism or terrorism is generally not well-received, as it misuses and changes of the focus assessing the core problem. As such, the intention of this article is not to elaborate on the causes and consequences of the aforementioned link but to present the current situation and the trends.

Why Bosnia and Herzegovina? What is so specific to Bosnia and Herzegovina that the country should be examined and analyzed, in terms of its social context, for the ability of radicalism and extremism to take hold and, possibly, facilitate terrorism? What makes Bosnia and Herzegovina different from other countries in the region, with which it shares common history, current fate and a dynamic future. This article will try to answer these questions.

Methodology and Structure of the Research

Even though there are various definitions of radicalization, all scholars agree on one - it is a process of change that occurs over a period of time and progresses through distinct stages⁴. How long this process takes differs from case to case. For instance, certain incidents, such as death of a loved one, may accelerate the process or cause an individual who is already radicalized, or on the path to radicalization, to engage in violence or terrorist activity. But the precise moment when a sympathizer becomes a terrorist is difficult to define. The New York Police Department (NYPD) has identified four phases of radicalization: pre-radicalization, self-identification, indoctrination and jihadization⁵. According to the NYPD approach, the first phase, pre-radicalization,

⁴*Preventing Religious Radicalization and Violent Extremism – A Systematic Review of the Research Evidence*, Youth Justice Board, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/396030/preventing-violent-extremism-systematic-review.pdf (Access: February 28, 2016)

⁵ Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat,

refers to an individual's life situation before being exposed to and adopting jihadi-Salafi Islam as their own ideology. During the second phase, self-identification, individuals start to explore Salafi Islam and associate themselves with like-minded individuals and adopt this ideology as their own. In the last two phases, indoctrination and jihadization, individuals no longer question these beliefs and accept their individual duty to participate in jihad, often by designating themselves as holy warriors or mujahedeen. McCauley and Moskalenko, both of whom are published experts in field of terrorism and counter-terrorism, have developed a similar but more comprehensive approach. They have identified twelve different social/psychological processes across individual, group and mass levels that can lead to radicalization. However, despite numerous theories and concepts, Peter Neumann, an expert in terrorism and political violence, argues there is still a lack of definition and that "little was done to systematically develop radicalization into a conceptual tool"⁶ through which such processes could be understood. Due to the aforementioned reasons, Neumann states that experts and officials often refer to radicalization whenever they want to talk about 'what goes on before the bomb goes off'⁷.

According to McCauley and Moskalenko, radicalization is seen as "*changes in beliefs, feeling and behavior in the direction that increasingly justify intergroup violence and demand sacrifice in defence of the ingroup*"⁸. However, McCauley and Moskalenko argue that radicalization, as a process, can involve movement of individuals and groups toward legal, nonviolent political actions (activism) or toward illegal and violent political action (radicalism). Moreover, they have drawn a clear distinction between radicalism and terrorism, which according to their theory is an extreme type of radicalism that is not only focused against governments but civilians supporting those governments as well.⁹

What we have to keep in mind when talking about radicalization in Bosnia and Herzegovina is that radicalization is associated with a syndrome of beliefs about the current situation and history of their community. McCauley and Moskalenko gave a good explanation in a single sentence "*We are a special or chosen group (superiority) who have been unfairly treated and betrayed (injustice), no one else cares about us or will help us (distrust) and the situation is dire – our group and our causes are in*

<https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/Justice/20070816.NYPD.Radicalization.in.the.We.st.pdf> (Access: February 28, 2016)

⁶ Neumann, P.R., 'Introduction', in P.R. Neumann, J. Stoil, & D. Esfandiary (Eds.), *Perspectives on Radicalisation and Political Violence: Papers from the First International Conference on Radicalisation and Political Violence* (London: ICSR, 2008), p. 2.
<http://icsr.info/wpcontent/uploads/2012/10/1234516938ICSR.PerspectivesonRadicalisation.pdf> (Access: February 28, 2016)

⁷ Ibid., p.4

⁸ McCauley, C., and Moskalenko, S., *Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism, Terrorism and Political Violence*, 2008, p.416, <http://www.brynmawr.edu/aschcenter/mccauley/webpage%20stuff/2008%20mechanisms%20rad%20McC%20Moskale.pdf> (Access: February 28, 2016)

⁹ McCauley, C., and Moskalenko, S., *Individual and Group Mechanisms of Radicalization*, in Fenstermacher, L., Kuznar, L., Rieger, T., & Speckhard, A., *Protecting the Homeland from International and Domestic Terrorism Threats: Current Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives on Root Causes, the Role for Ideology, and Programs for Counter-radicalization and Disengagement* (January 2010), http://www.start.umd.edu/sites/default/files/publications/U_Counter_Terrorism_White_Paper_Final_January_2010.pdf (Access: February 28, 2016)

danger of extinction (vulnerability)”¹⁰. This situation in combination with high unemployment, especially among youth, low salaries, high corruption, and unresolved conflict crimes, offers a strong base for strengthening the Wahhabi movement as well as for the recruitment of new members.

The main hypothesis of this research is that the creation of the Islamic State has had a direct, significant impact on the growing number of radicals in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The rise of transnational Islamic terrorist organizations, especially the Islamic State, coupled with poor socio-economic opportunities, has greatly enabled the Wahhabist movement in Bosnia. To confirm this hypothesis, we chose semi-structured interviews as our main research method. This method was determined to be the most appropriate for two reasons. First, it is more flexible than structured interviews or surveys. Second, it facilitates dialogue and obtaining more detailed answers, which is of significant importance for analyzing empirical findings and drawing final conclusions.

By conducting semi-structured interviews with locally-informed sources, including senior government officials, academia, and citizens across Bosnia, and by analyzing academic and government reports, local media, and Wahhabi-based publications, statements, audio recordings, and videos of Wahhabi members and leaders, the research team was able to identify key areas currently under Wahhabi control or influence as well as the main drivers of radicalization. Moreover, by using advanced social media and network analysis tools, researchers were able to identify online accounts that directly or indirectly support and propagate extremist views and/or terrorist activities. By connecting various social media profiles, mostly through Instagram and Facebook, we identified numerous networks of sympathizers. However, without additional research, it was not possible to distinguish Islamic extremism sympathizers from individuals who might have been in more advanced phases of radicalization or were prepared to facilitate or conduct terrorist activity.

Trends in Islamic Radicalization

Like everything, trends in Islamic radicalization are constantly changing and evolving. The use of online social networks such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram to radicalize individuals has become increasingly popular, especially since these networks are readily available on demand from a variety of outlets. The use of such networks has made terrorist recruitment, planning and coordination less expensive, faster and more secure, which has empowered terrorist organizations to expand their reach beyond traditional areas of operation or influence. Online social media-based activities and propaganda operations are one of the most important recruitment tools for the Islamic State, al-Qaeda, and similar groups since it provides a relatively safe, efficient and highly effective method for spotting, radicalizing, and recruiting vulnerable individuals. The recent case in the United States of a young Sunday school teacher and babysitter from rural Washington State is only one of hundreds of examples of effective online recruitment. The woman, who called herself

¹⁰ McCauley, C., and Moskalaneke, S., *Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism*, Terrorism and Political Violence, 2008, p.416, <http://www.brynmawr.edu/aschcenter/mccauley/webpage%20stuff/2008%20mechanisms%20rad%20McC%20Moskale.pdf> (Access: October 19, 2015)

“Alex”, reached out to the Islamic State via Twitter. Islamic State representatives sent her online promotional materials and soon after Alex converted to Islam. The group subsequently proposed that Alex travel to Austria to get married (to a group member) but fortunately, through family intervention, Alex did not travel abroad to join the Islamic State.

This is only one case among many in which a young individual was targeted for recruitment by radical Islam. The reason why the youth population is becoming more and more vulnerable to exploitation and radicalization is simple. In the case of Bosnia, a severe lack of social and community-based activities means a large portion of the youth population tends to spend more time on the Internet where they are easily discovered and targeted. Moreover, our research has shown that the segments of society most vulnerable to Islamic radicalization and extremism in Bosnia are in rural areas with few or poor socio-economic development opportunities, and where religious leadership has significant influence over the communities. Throughout Bosnia, there are numerous population centers where youth lack adequate opportunities for basic, let alone advanced, social and educational needs, or where extra curricular activities are limited or do not exist. It is in such communities where greater percentages of the youth population tend to express support or admiration for groups like the Islamic State, al-Qaeda, al-Nusra Front, or any of the myriad other franchise terrorist groups. The reasons why youth in these communities are more vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment are two-fold:

- They come from traditional communities where faith and religion remain an important and integrated part of everyday life; and,
- They seek better, more meaningful opportunities to demonstrate their value to their faith.

By aligning themselves with extreme Islam and associated terrorist groups, afflicted Bosnian youth hope to achieve both of these aims. Many are taking proactive steps, and are often paid to do so, by performing hijrah and helping their Muslim brothers and sisters to do the same.

The Islamic State has published numerous propaganda videos appealing to the Muslim population in Bosnia in an effort to idealize the rewards and opportunities proffered by the Islamic State. In a 2015 video titled “*Honor is in Jihad*”, foreign fighters from Bosnia fighting in Syria called upon their compatriots to leave Bosnia and go the way of Allah in Syria. The video proclaimed, “Many of you back there are always complaining of not being able to have a beard, to wear niqab, or living a hard life. Well, here is your chance now. Make hijrah. If it is that hard for you and you want this so much, make a hijrah because this will bring you from darkness into the light”. Additionally, two senior Wahhabi leaders from Bosnia, Nusret Imamović and Bilal Bosnić, participated in similar propaganda videos. A significant portion of the eventual indictment against Bilal Bosnić, who was sentenced to seven years in prison for recruiting Bosnians to join terrorist groups, was based on videos and speeches in which Bosnić encouraged young Bosnian men and women to join jihad and engage in terrorism.

Taking the aforementioned into account, one concludes that modern technology has become an important tool for extremists. With the use of Internet and social media terrorist groups are able to recruit, radicalize or raise funds with a much lower risk of

being caught. Even though the Internet, and social media specifically, play a significant role in enabling governments to monitor and combat terrorism, such media likely benefits extremists more in that it facilitates the dissemination of information and propaganda as well as logistic support to terrorist networks and sympathetic groups or communities. Bluetooth and GPS technology, mobile devices, and cellular hacking are also perceived as double-edged swords. Thus, it is more than necessary for governments and international organizations to continue to develop and implement new measures and programs to effectively suppress terrorist exploitation of the Internet and social media activities.

Key Findings of the Research

If left unchecked, the Wahhabi movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina presents a long-term, enduring threat to local, national and regional security. The initial activities associated with the arrival of Wahhabism in Bosnia were recorded almost twenty-five years ago, in the early 1990's, when foreign fighters from Muslim countries traveled to Bosnia under the pretext of helping their Muslim brothers in the war. However, besides military assistance, their arrival in the region was also seen as an opportunity to establish and promote radical Islam. Examples of this can be found in the numerous foreign Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and international aid organizations with ties to extremist groups that financially supported these foreign fighters and reconstruction and community development in post-war Bosnia. Al-Haramain, the Benevolence International Foundation, and the Saudi High Commission (SHC), are just two organizations that played a significant role in the establishment and expansion of Wahhabism in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For example, in 2001, during a raid of SHC offices in Sarajevo, NATO peacekeeping forces discovered evidence confirming a direct connection between the SHC and al-Qaeda. Bosnian police subsequently discovered \$41 million in missing or unaccounted for funds from SHC offices in Bosnia. Despite growing concerns SHC was sponsoring or had nefarious ties to extremist groups, SHC continued to operate in Bosnia until 2002.

Despite claims that the abovementioned and other similar organizations were closed long ago, open-source and secondary research suggests some of these organizations remain open and active and continue to provide financial support to communities in Bosnia. For example, Human Concern International (HCI) was never accused of terrorism though it funded organizations such as the Global Relief Foundation, an organization that was eventually shut down by the United States government on grounds it laundered money for al-Qaeda and had links to the Taliban. Yet today, HCI continues to collect donations for community projects in Bosnia as evidenced by the official HCI website where people can donate up to \$720 to support Bosnian children or provide humanitarian relief to victims of the 2014 floods in Bosnia. Separately, the International Islamic Relief Organization (IGASA), a group previously under investigation for suspected involvement in terrorism financing, not only continues to provide humanitarian assistance to Bosnia but does so from a local branch office in the country. In June 2015, IGASA donated 1,905 Ramadan packages to Muslim families in Bosnia.

Another indicator of the seriousness of the problem is terrorist activities propagated by radicals in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Between 1997-2015, six separate Islamic terrorist attacks occurred in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while an additional two

terrorist-related plots were thwarted. Furthermore, according to the latest statistics, in 2015, Bosnia and Herzegovina was the number one European country in terms of the number of foreign fighters per capita. Approximately 350 Bosnian citizens have joined terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq since the conflict began, with 92 Bosniaks having left Bosnia and Herzegovina for Syria in 2015 alone.

The abovementioned facts, as well as data indicating Wahhabi communities exist in at least twenty-eight separate locations in Bosnia, including Bosanska Bojna, Bužim, Velika Kladuša, Gračanica, Kalesija, Živinice, Srebrenik, Gornja Maoča, Ošve, Gornja Bočinja, Zavidović, Šerić, Sanski Most, Mehurići, and Bivolice, points to the magnitude of this issue. As in every other country that deals with the same problem, solutions cannot be reached overnight. The Bosnian government has made some progress in understanding how extremists' use social media networks to identify, radicalize and recruit new members. In the Bosnian government's recently published *Strategy for the Prevention and Fight Against Terrorism 2015-2020*, the government identified measures aimed at preventing the spread of terrorist propaganda, especially through the Internet. Moreover, by adopting new laws and regulations the government expanded laws for prosecuting Bosnian foreign fighters and citizens planning or attempting to join the Islamic State or other terrorist organizations.

However, the research presented here suggests there is still room for improvement. Lack of coordination between government institutions and agencies dealing with radicalization, violent extremism, and terrorism, as well as understanding the risks these issues present, are only some of the areas that can be improved.

Developing Strategies for Countering Violent Extremism

There are different concepts of understanding and action in the field of Countering Violent Extremism. In an analysis conducted by the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS), close attention is paid to a methodological framework for defining and understanding the problem. DHS designed a Countering Violent Extremism approach that addresses all forms of violent extremism, regardless of ideology, and which focuses not on radical thought or speech but instead on preventing extremist-inspired attacks. The DHS approach identifies numerous physical and virtual environments to promote information sharing and collaboration between multiple stakeholders (e.g., federal, state, local, territorial, tribal, private, civilian, and international entities working to counter violent extremism). DHS focuses on three broad objectives: Understanding Violent Extremism, Supporting Local Communities and Supporting Local Law Enforcement.¹¹

In 2014, the European Commission (EU) adopted a Communication identifying ten areas EU Member States were called upon to reinforce their actions to prevent extremism that could lead to violence, regardless of who inspires it. The proposed measures include the creation of a European knowledge hub on violent extremism, the development of training for frontline practitioners (e.g., teachers, youth workers, community police officers, child protection workers, (mental) health care workers, etc.) and financial support for projects making use of modern communication tools and social media to counter terrorist propaganda. Member States were also asked to

¹¹ Department of Homeland Security, *Countering Violent Extremism*, <https://www.dhs.gov/topic/countering-violent-extremism> (Access: February 28, 2016)

establish programs that would make it easier for members of extremist groups to abandon violence and its underlying ideology. These ten recommendations were the result of two years of work by 700 experts and frontline practitioners throughout Europe and the Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN), which was founded by the EU in 2011.¹²

There are many similarities between the American and European approach to Countering Violent Extremism but it is also necessary to identify the models that will be applicable in Bosnia and Herzegovina with respect to the peculiarities of the country itself. Out of both methodological paradigms the following objectives are applicable for Bosnia and Herzegovina: understanding violent extremism, supporting local communities, supporting local law enforcement, developing comprehensive national strategies, and developing closer cooperation among partner countries and the EU.

Within the “Understanding Violent Extremism” objective it is necessary to effectuate support and coordination efforts to better understand the phenomenon of violent extremism, including assessing the threat it poses to the nation as a whole and within specific communities. At the same time, it is necessary to increase research into trends in radicalization as well as to encourage critical thinking amongst young people about extremist messages. Education and youth exchanges are the key areas to help young people to think critically about extremists' views and discourses and expose the flaws of such propaganda. The greatest responsibility, in accordance with capabilities and abilities, rests with competent authorities, from the lowest to the highest levels. A significant contribution can and should be offered by the academic community as well as both civil and religious structures in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It will be necessary to maximize the use of available EU financing to ensure efficient and effective research as well as the transfer of knowledge and findings derived from such research. Continued EU funding will be essential for exploring how and why people radicalize (or de-radicalize) and for understanding how ideology and internet-based recruitment techniques and social role models factor into or facilitate these processes.

Local communities are the key to success in terms of countering violent extremism. It is necessary to support and strengthen local community resilience so they are ready and able to answer these challenges from within. Concrete capabilities such as developing and facilitating training for frontline practitioners who work with or have regular contact with at-risk individuals or groups must also be increased. This goes beyond the scope of law enforcement and judicial cases and must be applied to social workers, educators, and healthcare workers in a way that enhances their understanding of the process of radicalization and how to identify and respond to it. Additionally, government and communities must seek ways to empower victims of radicalization. Victims' voices are a powerful tool for prevention, intervention and de-radicalization, but only if these victims feel comfortable sharing their story and have the necessary support available. Here, also, it is possible to leverage EU experience and support. For example, the EU should consider providing additional financing and expertise to support local communities and aid groups working with former violent extremists and their victims, as these individuals are best qualified to describe the realities and consequences of Islamic extremism as well as the horrors of war and terrorism. Working alongside competent authorities and with key leaders in local communities,

¹² European Commission, *Strengthening the EU's response to radicalisation and violent extremism*, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-18_en.htm (Access: February 28, 2016)

experienced and knowledgeable subject matter and field experts can provide much needed advice, guidance and support in this area.

It is also important to provide subject matter expertise and support to local law enforcement. When working alongside and with local communities, these officers provide crucial frontline community policing and defense. To deter and disrupt recruitment or individual mobilization the support for local law enforcement programs, including information-driven, community-oriented policing efforts, should be a long term goal for Bosnia and Herzegovina. For this to be effective, local law enforcement must have strong community-based support from both local citizens as well as at the highest levels of government, which will provide them with critical knowledge, logic, support, long term vision, stability and program continuity. Certainly, the required assistance and knowledge transfer can be greatly facilitated by EU and international partners, private companies, and subject matter experts in this field.

Working together, national institutions, security services, local communities, non-governmental organizations, frontline workers, and subject matter experts can develop a comprehensive national-level Countering Violent Extremism strategy that if properly implemented will slow the growth, and eventually reverse the trend, of Islamic radicalism, extremism and terrorism in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This strategy must provide a platform and mechanisms for community engagement and capacity-building at all levels with the unified goal of maximizing protection of citizens and community values, interests and resources. The strategic objective should be to apply pressure and increase preventive measures and activities that reduce or deny the development of negative political, ideological, social or economic circumstances known to facilitate the spread of Islamic radicalism, extremism and terrorism.

Without closer cooperation between EU and other partner countries there will be only marginal success in combatting this problem. Bosnia and Herzegovina acting alone, without the support and cooperation of the EU and partner countries, cannot effectively address these challenges. EU funding and support will be critical in terms of ensuring better information exchange, police and judicial training and cooperation, and enhanced border security. "Soft measures" such as the exchange of best practices, lessons learned, subject matters experts and similar programs will continue to rely heavily on EU funding and assistance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The threats posed from Islamic radicalization and violent extremism cannot be underestimated. Bosnia and Herzegovina is an excellent example of how radicalization and extremism can take hold, evolve and in a brief period of time become a base from which extremist groups can operate and expand their influence. Twenty-five years ago nobody believed Islamic radicalization would become the problem it now is for Bosnia. Today, well-developed and highly-organized extremist cells have found in many communities a sanctuary from which they can freely finance or further enable terrorist activities. These same communities, under the umbrella of Wahabbism, are also providing fertile ground for new recruitments, all of which pose a direct threat not only to the national security of Bosnia but to its Balkan neighbors and greater European security as well. For these and many other reasons, it is imperative to find ways to strengthen existing measures, and where possible to develop new ones, aimed at countering this trend in radicalization.

Though Bosnia stands with the EU-led Anti-Terrorism Coalition and has demonstrated a willingness to support international counterterrorism operations, the large number of Bosnians who continue to flee to Syria, as well as the recent attacks in Sarajevo and Zavidovići, suggests there is room for improvement. Additionally, the lack of cooperation between Republika Srpska and Bosnian Federation, and poor (or non-existent) information sharing and lack of coordination amongst the various national and cantonal level Ministries of Interior further degrades the effectiveness of Bosnian national counterterrorism and counter-radicalization strategy.

Given the results of the above research, additional detailed research and analysis is recommended for the following reasons:

A. Enhanced understanding of radicalization and violent extremism— additional research into this area will benefit both state and local government officials who are dealing with this matter on daily basis. Currently, the Bosnian government does not seem to have a detailed understanding, map or analysis of Wahhabi movement centers of gravity or influence in the country. As such, the results of follow-on, more in-depth research will form the foundation and offer guidelines for understanding local drivers of radicalization and potential CVE initiatives.

B. Local communities, NGOs and CSOs – the engagement of these actors is of significant importance given their access to local and hyper-local data that can further inform and direct future CVE programs for local and state governments. However, trust between local communities, NGOs and CSOs on one side and government on the other is still very low in Bosnia. As such, their inclusion and collaboration in follow on research will further enhance mutual areas of cooperation and collaboration ensuring effective CVE program development and oversight.

C. Counter-radicalization and violent extremism programs— based on the expected results from follow-on research, international donors, aid agencies, and government institutions will be better informed and capable of developing targeted, highly focused and effective CVE programs to prevent a further expansion of radicalization and extremism in Bosnia. Now more than ever, this is especially important given the fact that Bosnia faces a significant problem from foreign fighter returnees and a growing percentage of the youth population that is vulnerable to radicalization.

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Shkëndije Geci-Sherifi¹ Kosovo and EU Integration Process

Abstract

Integration in the European Union for Kosovo as a young nation is not only a goal, but equally a necessity. The European perspective for Kosovo was ensured as early as 2003, in the Thessaloniki Summit. Since then, Kosovo has been working continuously towards achieving this goal. The ten-point declaration of the respective Summit along with advocating democracy, rule of law, and economic stability, emphasizes the European perspective for the Western Balkans through Stabilization Association Process (SAP). This process is profoundly important for Kosovo as through the process the reforms are to be achieved. The set aims were the cornerstone of European integration process. However, while the aims were region effective, the already existing as well as the previous state of play of the respective countries seems to have been overlooked; namely, it was easier for countries such as Slovenia for example to accomplish the foreseen criteria particularly economically but also from political point of view. Its status as an independent state was never disputed whereas Kosovo approaches this process with a rather devastated economy while its status is still disputed from five EU countries thus making the entire integration processes considerably more difficult. The paper hence, will try to answer this research question: To what extent has Kosovo fulfilled the EU integration criteria, and what are the remaining challenges and problematic areas? In addition, it will give an overview of the process and through analyses prove: Why is this integration process as such important for Kosovo.

In order to have a balanced look and analysis of the whole process, as well as get an answer to the research question posed, a wide variety of sources were used. These sources were used for two main purposes: to set down the theoretical ground for the argument this work will follow, and provide quantitative and qualitative data to prove this argument. The theoretical basis is obtained from reports, books, articles that create the political context necessary for analysis. Primary sources and personal observations and analyses were also used to provide qualitative and quantitative data for Kosovo's road to European Integration, from 1999 onwards. The conclusion is that, European Integration is of high importance for Kosovo, yet, the process of integration *de facto* might prove more useful than the actual integration itself.

Key words: *european perspective, Western Balkans, Kosovo, european integration*

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The Importance of the European Perspective and Integration for Kosovo

"Kosovo's destiny is clearly to join the European Union at some point"

Emma Bonino

Kosovo set up the Stabilization Tracking Mechanism - a tracking mechanism to check the SAP, and to create a "a forum to discuss Kosovo's progress in implementing the European Partnership".² This showed the commitment to help develop and reach the European Perspective and Partnership through the creation of this body which equipped the country with progress reports, progress analysis, funds and recommendations for development.

European Integration is very important for Kosovo and it is a goal over which there is a wide national consensus. While the integration as such is of utmost importance, the process itself, with all its highly demanding tasks and responsibilities, *de facto* might prove extremely useful as through its implementation, the necessary standards and reforms are achieved. This boils down to the criteria set for Kosovo by the European Union. Despite the fact that EU showed commitment and wanted to replicate its rather successful eastern enlargement in the Western Balkans, it is undeniable that country after country, the integration criteria got increasingly more specific and difficult to fulfill for the aspiring countries to join the EU. A major factor contributing to this was the expansionism the EU saw from 2004 on³, where the number of its members grew and with it came more territory, more people, more governments, and more views to take into consideration and work with. Even though the EU accession of Croatia in 1 July, 2013 set more hope for the Western Balkans countries whose efforts to implement the EU *acquis communautaire* are enduring, the EU began to face the '*enlargement fatigue*' phenomenon and as John O'Brennan puts it: *"...But the EU's engagement with the Western Balkans is proving uneven and unsatisfactory: the enlargement process is now on 'life support' and 'flat lining' along a trajectory of 'frozen negotiating chapters' and mutual mistrust toward (despite the promise made at Thessaloniki a decade ago) an increasingly uncertain destination"*. If we add to this the economic crises that affected EU member states along with the limitations and shortcomings it brought, the clear European perspective might be put at stake and this should not be allowed as the European perspective of the Western Balkans is of paramount importance for their overall future development. Furthermore, Western Balkans countries are the closest with the EU not only in the geographic sense but also in terms of values and aspirations. The citizens of these countries desire and above all deserve better socio-economic conditions, rule of law and accountability and this can be achieved by keeping the European perspective realistic and achievable and this requires mutual efforts and commitment both from aspiring and EU countries. For Kosovo in particular, the integration in EU is undoubtedly the top priority and as stated above there is a unanimity in this regards from the whole political, economic and social spectrum as the integration process contributes to the country's development and

² "52005DC0156." EUR-Lex. Accessed June 12, 2015. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52005DC0156>.

³ "The 2004 Enlargement: The Challenge of a 25-member EU." The 2004 Enlargement: The Challenge of a 25-member EU. Accessed December 29, 2015. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=URISERV:c50017&from=EN>.

strengthening of the international subjectivity.

An Overview of the Kosovo's EU Integration Process

As the Integration in EU is a national priority, the Government of Kosovo, the government particularly through the Ministry of European Integration (MEI) has pledged to undertake the necessary steps to work towards clear progress thus identifying the opportunities for action and constructive change by setting priorities such as the free movement of citizens, economic integration, effective donor coordination, establishing one system of communication with actors inside and outside our institutions, and especially strengthening our cooperation with civil society. The mission of MEI is to support Kosovo's transformation and reforms in its path towards the European Union and this is accomplished amongst other by harmonizing policies of the Republic of Kosovo, laws in line with those of the EU, and maintaining widely-engaging and continuous dialogue between the two, while applying accountability and transparency⁴. The crucial elements of the integration process entail are: European Partnership, European Partnership Action Plan (EPAP), Task Force for European Integration, Structures for European Integration, Donor Conference⁵.

The European Partnership is an instrument that derived from the Thessaloniki Agenda with the aim of supporting process of reforms in Western Balkans in order to bring them closer with EU. It began to be implemented in 2004. Through this process, short and midterm priorities are identified and addressed by aspiring the countries. An important aspect of the European Partnership is that it support respective countries' attempts to achieve the accession criteria for the EU (Copenhagen Criteria). Most importantly, along with coherent structures for given reforms, it offers an accompanying financial framework⁶.

One of the key midterm planning document for Kosovo is the European Partnership Action Plan (EPAP) through which, Government defines actions needed to implement the European agenda and progress of integration in line with the priorities European Partnership identifies. EPAP has a set of criteria, political, economic criteria and European Standards⁷.

The Task Force for European Integration is a national consensus-building mechanism. This mechanism brings together various experts from the entire governmental and non-governmental structures of the country, in order to discuss and analyse thoroughly the current state of affairs and the challenges that must be addressed within the European integration process. The aim of the Task Force is to include a set of multistakeholders and actors from politics, academia, the public life, civil society, media who may contribute in the European integration process⁸.

Another very important aspect of the process are the Structures of the European Integration where officials from different institutions and international partners, work together in the field of development and EU integration. Thus, The Ministerial Council implements uniform policy of Republic of Kosovo for the EU Integration through

⁴"MINISTRY - Ministry of European Integration." Ministry of European Integration. Accessed December 15, 2015. <http://www.mei-ks.net/en/ministry>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

coordination of the activities of the ministries and other relevant bodies. The functions of the Ministerial Council include coordination of uniform state policy, definition of the main priority areas, activities for implementation and deadlines for their enforcement; ensuring the comprehensive process of the approximation of the legal acts of Republic of Kosovo to the requirements of the European Community law etc. etc. The Ministerial Council is composed of Prime Minister of Kosovo as a Chairman and Minister of European Integration as the Deputy Chairman while members of the council are the following ministers: Minister of Finance and Economy; Minister of Public Administration; Minister of Local Government Administration; Minister of Foreign Affairs; Minister of Internal Affairs; Minister of Justice⁹. Another important aspect of the process is the Donor Coordination. MIE is responsible for coordinating external aid to the Republic of Kosovo. Within MIE, there is a Secretariat for High Level Forums responsible for organizing annual meeting. This meeting brings together the highest officials of the Kosovo Government and the Donor Community and other agencies, to discuss important issues in reference to the commitment made at the Donor Conference, held in Brussels in 2008. The High Level Forum presents a mechanism established with the purpose of analyzing and assessing progress in social and economic development as well as the effectiveness of external aid. High Level Forum is the highest decision-making body that takes political decisions in order to make the donor coordination functional¹⁰. In addition, there is a platform for managing external aid (Aid Management Platform – AMP. This is an online system that manages external aid, namely projects, programs and other forms of assistance offered by donors. Through AMP project management is ensured as well as monitoring and efficiency evaluation.¹¹ Then, of very high importance is the Instrument for the Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). IPA is an EU financial instrument created in 2007 that aims supporting countries that are in the process of the European integration. The core objectives include strengthening of the democratic institutions, reform of administration and economy, protection of human rights and minority rights as well as the development of the civil society. The management IPA programs depends on the respective country implementing capacities. In Kosovo, the institution in charge is the European Commission Liaison Office. Thus the IPA funds for Kosovo in 2011-2013 were primarily focussed in police and justice system as well as the public administration reform and economic development. Other than IPA also of great importance in the integration process is the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) and Twinning. TAIEX is an instrument of the General Directorate of the European Commission for Enlargement. It mainly helps the aspiring countries of Balkans to approximate the legislation with that of the EU as well as provides expertise on different issues¹². Twinning as an instrument started to apply in the Western Balkans since 2002 mostly in the field of Justice and Home Affairs. However, Twinning projects in Kosovo started to apply as of 2006. Basically, Twinning project aims to support the Beneficiary Country in long term changes through expertise and experts from EU Member states and as such it is likely to be successful if the Beneficiary Country is fully determined to carry out the reforms and reorganization required in the

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Aid Management Platform. Accessed December 21, 2015. <https://www.amp-mei.net/>

¹² "TAIEX - Ministria E Integrimit Europian." Ministria E Integrimit Europian. Accessed January 04, 2016. <http://www.mei-ks.net/sq/taieux-110#sthash.TK9OjeBn.dpuf>.

respective project and in the context of accession to the EU¹³. All the above mentioned instruments are established to pave the path for the integration of Kosovo in EU. In addition to the Ministry of European Integration Kosovo authorities established other relevant structures within Kosovo institutions such as National Council for European Integration, European Integration offices in Ministries and Municipalities, Ministry of Local Government Administration, Parliamentary Committee for European Integration as well as a number of offices and departments within independent agencies and institutions. While the respective bodies and institutions work persistently to fulfill their tasks and duties certainly there are challenges that in one way or the other affect or hinder the flow of the process as such.

Challenges of the Kosovo's Integration Process

Some of the challenges in Kosovo's path towards European Integration are linked with the uneven transition and developments inside the Kosovo while others have to do with the inner political realm of particular EU member states namely those states that have not recognised Kosovo as an independent state.

In this chapter, we will give a brief analyses of three main challenges identified, first being the five nonrecognising states of the EU, their stance *vis-a-vis* Kosovo and the way it affects integration process, second, the Visa Liberalization or rather visa regime as one of the highly problematic restriction that Kosovo populations faces and third, Stabilisation Association Agreement (SSA) the reasons for its “uniqueness” that derive amongst other from the first challenge.

1. The Five EU Nonrecognising States and the Implications vis-a-vis Integration Process

The recognition of Kosovo from all its member states would have certainly reflected a more united policy and would have raised the credibility of EU for the very fact that Kosovo after all, figuratively speaking, being in Europe's yard, by default is a European issue. A failure to find a common ground on Kosovo whose status was reached and formulated with the great support of EU itself, decreases EU's reliability to deal with global issues. Non recognition of Kosovo from Spain, Cyprus, Slovakia, Rumania and Greece, has not only put at stake the international subjectivity of Kosovo but it has also hindered its path towards EU integration. As Henry H. Perritt, Jr puts it: *“The leadership succeeded in crafting enough unity to move forward, but its success was muted by the refusal of the five EU member states to join in the majority consensus and to recognise Kosovo”*¹⁴

This very experience with the EU shows that the process towards integration is not purely technical and that the political component is rather influential. Consequently, this then leads towards an unorthodox integration process, not like the one of other countries but a *sui generis* process. In the other hand, the hesitation of these five states to recognise the independence of Kosovo derives from the “fear” that this

¹³Twinning - Ministry of European Integration." Ministry of European Integration. Accessed February 04, 2016. <http://www.mei-ks.net/en/twinning#sthash.DtW4vOuD.dpuf>.

¹⁴Henry H. Perritt, *The Road to Independence for Kosovo: A Chronicle of the Ahtisaari Plan*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 285.

recognition could set precedent and influence movements for independence and this is certainly not the case. The recognition from Great Britain and Belgium absolutely proves the contrary. Furthermore, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) declared that "the adoption of the declaration of independence of the 17 February 2008 did not violate general international law because international law contains no 'prohibition on declarations of independence'":¹⁵ nor did the adoption of the declaration of independence violate UN Security Council Resolution 1244, since this did not describe Kosovo's final status, nor had the Security Council reserved for itself the decision on final status¹⁶. The fact is not that, none of these five countries have experienced ethnic cleansing, nor had an international intervention. These countries have never had an international process like the one led by Ahtisaari that resulted in a proposal for the creation of the state of Kosovo. Fore and foremost, the Yugoslav federation whose constitutive part was Kosovo, ceased to exist, consequently, all federal units of ex-Yugoslavia that wanted to get independent, undertook that step, including Kosovo.

Amongst the non-recognising countries, Spain takes the hardest stance because of the fear of the evident separatist movements within the country. Despite of the fact that the case of Kosovo as indicated above, is *sui generis* and does not set a precedent, Spain continues with insistence to oppose Kosovo's treatment within EU and NATO as an independent state. It is because of Spain's and Cyprus's insistence and less of Rumania's, Greece's and Slovakia's that Kosovo EU relationship is similar with the nonstate entities even though, EU has found modalities and formulas to achieve certain agreements. This nonrecognising stance therefore hinders real contractual relations and the integration process would have definitively flowed much easily with the recognition of the five respective countries.

2. Visa Liberalisation

Kosovo remains the only country in the Western Balkans that has a visa regime even though the process of visa liberalisation as such started as of 2012. Serbia, Montenegro and Former Republic of Macedonia received visa liberalisation in December 2010¹⁷ while Albania and Bosnia Herzegovina were granted visa waiver status in December 2010. Undoubtedly, Kosovo citizens feel despondent as they are the most "quarantined" as far as visa regime is concerned in comparison to the different socio-political stages over the last half century. Kosovo remains almost one of the most isolated countries in the world while its citizens can travel without visa only in five countries: Albania, Montenegro, Macedonia, Turkey and Haiti. From this end, general public including institutions feel that Kosovo was not treated fair in this regards and that EU has applied double standards as for Kosovo were required fulfilment of criteria that were not applicable for other countries of the region. Nonetheless, the undertaken

¹⁵"Kosovo Independence Declaration Deemed Legal." Reuters. 2010. Accessed June 17, 2015. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-serbia-kosovo-idUSTRE66L01720100722>.

¹⁶"International Court of Justice." Cases | . Accessed January 04, 2016. <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/index.php?p1=3>

¹⁷"European Commission - PRESS RELEASES - Press Release - Commission Proposes Visa Free Travel for Citizens from the Western Balkans." European Commission - PRESS RELEASES - Press Release - Commission Proposes Visa Free Travel for Citizens from the Western Balkans. Accessed January 05, 2016. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-09-1138_en.htm.

reforms in the framework of the visa liberalisation dialogue have impacted the efforts of the rule of law enforcement, advancement of Kosovo's position in the international arena as well as contributed in the progress in terms of European integration agenda. The respective reforms have certainly paved the path for the upcoming SAA Agreement particularly in the field of justice and security. However, further prolongation not only blurs the European perspective but it can also put the credibility of the government vis-à-vis its citizens at stake.

It is worth mentioning that the Government of the Republic of Kosovo has drafted unilaterally the Roadmap and the Action Plan for *Visa Liberalisation* as of 2009 thus trying to accomplish a number of condition prior to starting officially the visa dialogue. After the fulfilment of some pre-condition that are linked with the policies of repatriation and re-integration and the security of documents, the European Commission officially started the dialogue for visa with Kosovo on 19 January 2012¹⁸. In June, 2012 the European Commission presented the Roadmap to the Government of the Republic of Kosovo while its institutions worked with dedication and continuously in the accomplishment of criteria ever since.

Upon the delivery of the Progress Report for Kosovo in regards to the fulfilment of criteria for the *Visa Liberalization* from the European Commission in July, 2014, Kosovo Institutions began with commitment to address the recommendations in implementing all foreseen actions as presented in the report. As a result, a readiness report was drafted where an overview of the undertaken reforms and other undertaken measures from the relevant institutions is indicated along with the steps that need to be taken in order to fulfil the requirements deriving from the roadmap. After the delivery of the last report on the fulfilment of the technical criteria for the visa liberalisation, upon the request of the Kosovo Institutions, a delegation of experts from the EU member states and the European Commission visited Kosovo from 13 to 17 July, 2015 with the purpose of the evaluation of the situation on the ground respectively to see the implementation of the criteria deriving from the Visa Liberalisation Roadmap¹⁹.

Last but not least, the EC adopted the third and final report on Visa Liberalisation for Kosovo while the Migration and Home Affairs Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos stated that Kosovo has achieved a great progress in the regarding visa matter however, eight criteria remain to be fulfilled in the beginning of 2016. As soon as these criteria are met, the Commission will propose the abolition of visas²⁰. Kosovo officials have declared that they have addressed and implemented the respective criteria and that they expect a positive recommendation latest by February, 2016.

3. Stabilisation Association Agreement for Kosovo

One of the most important processes in regards to Kosovo's path towards integration in EU is certainly the SAA. SAA covers a wide cooperation spectrum of

¹⁸ "EU Commission Launches Dialogue with Kosovo on Visa Free Travel." EU@UN -. Accessed January 07, 2016. http://eu-un.europa.eu/articles/en/article_11774_en.htm.

¹⁹ Idem

²⁰ "Commission Adopts Final Visa Liberalisation Report for Kosovo." European Commission. Accessed January 07, 2016. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-6369_en.htm.

different sectors such as justice, trade, education, employment, energy, environment and a set of policies in other fields. Through this process the creation of closer relation with EU is enabled particularly in the field of free trade while country has to undergo through legislative and administrative reforms in order to get ready to be able to apply these reforms in practice. Despite the impediments elaborated in the previous chapters, the importance of the SAA for Kosovo presents an important element in the Kosovo European Union relations. For Kosovo the SAA is of great benefit as it can attract foreign investments offering at the same time an opportunity for the investors to sell Kosovo product to the EU market. The sceptics would argue that this could be eventually done even without the SAA, but the fact is that with SAA there will be contractual relations that ultimately offer bigger predictability and security. On a visit to Kosovo, the EU Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn stressed that the EU continued to support Kosovo's reform processes, pledging 660 million euro a year in IPA funding for Kosovo for the 2014-2020 period, he also pointed out the mutual importance of SAA by stating that: "Kosovo's progress on the EU path is important for Kosovo and the region, but I must stress that it is especially important for the EU itself"²¹.

However, the procedure for Kosovo to sign an SAA is done differently in comparison to the other aspiring countries of the region. The agreement as such, is not ratified individually with the respective states, but with the EU, the latter presenting a legal entity. This is partly linked with the fact that the five non recognisers of Kosovo's independence, namely Spain, Greece, Cyprus, Slovakia and Romania, would not agree to sign an agreement that will implicit recognition of Kosovo as a *state per se*. What makes SAA for Kosovo similar and different?

SAA in fact contains the key elements that include political, economic and legislative issues. It basically has 85% same content compared to the Western Balkan Countries.

However, SAA for Kosovo is unique and premiere.

Why premiere? It is premiere as it presents the first case that EU will sign an agreement for SAA after the empowering role deriving from the Lisbon Treaty. With entering in force of the Lisbon Treaty, EU has gained a legal personality²²

This ultimately gives EU the mandate to negotiate and conclude international agreements on its behalf which also makes EU subject of the International Law.

Why unique? Unique because it differs from other SAAs as not all EU member states agree that EU should be in charge of negotiation and signing for all policies. Therefore, this is why SAA for Kosovo differs from the SAAs of Western Balkan countries. The reason of non-inclusion (of 15%) is the division of competencies between the EU and the member states, in SAA with Kosovo for example issues like fight against weapons of mass destruction, smuggling of small weapons, etc are not included. Even though the process of signing of the SAA agreement was prolonged for the reasons stated above, the fact that the modalities were found sends a positive message in the light of the European perspective. The signing itself presents a historic

²¹ "Kosovo Will Sign SAA This Year, Hahn Says." :: Balkan Insight. Accessed December 29, 2015. <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kosovo-to-sign-saa-within-the-year-says-eu#sthash.b9RnDEsB.dpuf>.

²² European Commission - PRESS RELEASES - Press Release - Explaining the Treaty of Lisbon." European Commission - PRESS RELEASES - Press Release - Explaining the Treaty of Lisbon. Accessed June 04, 2015. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-09-531_en.htm?locale=en.

milestone that will help the economic growth of Kosovo and gets it closer to EU. Even though the SAA agreement is not directly linked to membership negotiations as such, still it presents the first step towards starting negotiations on EU accession for Kosovo.

Conclusion

The European Integration is an ultimate goal for Kosovo. Indeed, there is a long and difficult process ahead but the reforms that will be undertaken throughout the process are much more important for Kosovo than the final act of integration itself. Through the continuous transformation of all sectors in line with requirements and above all, EU values, the country will be able to improve the living standard and boost the economic growth. The European perspective hence is of strategic importance for Kosovo while the process as such goes beyond the declarative commitment of fulfilment of standards and criteria. The integration process will bring a change also in the relationship state *vis-a-vi* citizen, sustainable reform of the public administration and of all other relevant sectors as well as direct foreign investments and outreach of the marginalised social groups be it from the economic perspective or from the human rights point of view. All in all, the transformation process will convey a positive change for Kosovo but will forge peace and stability that is important for Kosovo, region and the EU.

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Gëzim Tosuni¹**EU Integrations: Challenge for Kosovo – Facts and Figures**

Abstract

The countries created after the break up of Yugoslavia, in the last few decades have aspired accession into the European Union. Some such as the Republic of Slovenia and the Republic of Croatia have succeeded. The others are following, each in their own way and capacity. Getting the country in the European Union (EU) seems to earn the respective political forces a lot of credit with their national voters. This is to be expected as once the country becomes a EU member, there are no restrictions of movements for the EU citizens, which are free to look for better jobs and places to live. While it is unreasonable to argue against the benefits a country and its citizens will enjoy by being part of the EU, one can, and should openly discuss the process, through ‘economic lenses’ especially from the perspective of the candidate country. A case can be made that joining EU unprepared can hamper country’s economic progress. Being faced with competition from far more developed and mature economies is a challenge for any country joining EU.

This paper aims to bring to light some economic aspects that Kosovo’s economy should consider during the pre-accession process. The research is based on international and local reports and studies. As such, the paper does not attempt to draw any conclusions on future success or failure of Kosovo to cope with EU environment. It is rather a document which draws attention to Kosovo’s Government, and why not, the EU Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement Negotiations, on some economic indicators, in order to increase Kosovo’s chances for better progress once it becomes a EU member.

Key words: *Kosovo, EU, EU-Kosovo Economic Indicators*

Introduction

European Union, EU. Rather than an association, it is an institution that reflects stability, safety and prosperity. While this is true for EU citizens, it is even more so for citizens of aspiring EU countries. In the last couple of decades whole of Europe, and particularly Balkans has been plagued but turmoil, more recently by economic crisis and prior to that with war. Late 2000s have seen Western Europe and other world developed economies suffer a financial meltdown due to systemic effects of crisis generated in United States of America, while 1990s have witnessed the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia disintegrate in several smaller states through a war which

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featured a significant number of massacres amongst neighbouring countries and nations.

And prevention of war amongst neighbouring countries and nations seems to be at the genesis of the European Union. If one were to look at the history of EU, it can be seen that it was a response to frequent, post World War II wars among European countries. The creation of Council of Europe in 1949 was created for this exact purpose by six founding member states: Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. In the 1950s the Steel and Coal community of Europe initiates the unification of the respective countries in the economic and political sense. The idea behind this unification, and based on Schuman plan, is that under a common management, heavy industries of European countries cannot make weapons on their own, to use against other member countries.

And this idea has prevailed since. There were no wars amongst EU members since. Moreover, the idea has spilled over to other social and economic aspects as countries and companies within EU have exhibited over and over that complementing each other is much more profitable than competing.

Having said that, in the last few years, expressions such as GREXIT and BREXIT have come to dominate a lot of discussions and debates related to EU. A Greek referendum that took place in June 2015 on whether Greece should stay in EU or not, was a big test for EU's foundations and stability. A bigger test is the Great Britain's referendum to come on the June 23rd 2016, which will have the British cast their vote on whether they want to stay in EU or not.

However, given that these matters raised above are beyond the scope of this paper, there will be no further delving into those particular aspects. They will be mentioned, however, in the context of Kosovo's accession aspirations for EU. Thus, the following chapter will look at Kosovo's prospects regarding the EU integration process, based on the presentation delivered in Šipan, June 2015 on the same subject.

Kosovo and EU Integration

For a better perception of Kosovo's situation regarding the accession process, the analysis has to be made on two fronts regarding the issues facing Kosovo. The political and economic issues. Both are equally important for this analysis, and addressing them will improve Kosovo's chances for inclusion in the EU.

1. The Political Issues

On the political front, Kosovo faces a number of issues that have persisted since the declaring of Kosovo's Independence eight years ago on 17th of February 2008. The most important and the obvious one is the refusal of five EU member states to recognize Kosovo's independence from Serbia. Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Slovakia and Spain, have each on it's own way resisted any pressure from abroad to change their political position with regards to Kosovo's independence.

Albeit for most of them, the refusal to recognize Kosovo's independence is not addressed against the Kosovar nation and state per se, they remain entrenched in their stances due to potential implications such recognition might have in their own countries. Their main concern remains that recognising Kosovo's independence would devoid them of political arguments should separatist movement in their respective

countries decide to follow Kosovo's example.

Never the less, having five countries in disagreement with 23 other members is a huge hurdle to overcome in a body which takes most of the important decisions based on full consensus rather than on majority vote. The consequences are felt even at the level of using the name 'Republic of Kosovo' as defined by the Constitution is not permitted in international forums. Following an agreement between Prishtina and Belgrade dated 24th February 2012, and mediated by EU, the Republic of Kosovo can be represented as "Kosovo*" with a footnote stating "This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence".

The other serious problem faced by Kosovo is the restriction of freedom of movement, which is one of the fundamental human rights. Even by the time this article is being prepared, Kosovo has not fulfilled all the requirements for visa liberalization, and as such remains the only ghettoized country in Balkans, citizens' of which need visas to travel in the majority of foreign countries (excluding Albania, FYROM, Montenegro, Turkey, and Serbia²). As presented by the European Commission Report on Kosovo's progress regarding visa liberalization roadmap (2015) Kosovo still has eight points to fulfill in order for the commission to recommend visa liberalization for Kosovo to the European Parliament.

Another significant political problem remains the lingering territorial issue which divides one of the bigger Kosovo towns, Mitrovica thus the whole Kosovo into Northern and Southern Mitrovica, alias Northern and Southern Kosovo along the river Ibar. This issue has persisted since the end of the war in 1999. This situation has not helped lower the corruption levels perceived by the citizens. Some argue that it actually has helped the development and spreading of corruption.

A numerous surveys consistently report that the perception of corruption in Kosovo is extremely high. Based on the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) devised by Transparency International, a 2015 UNDP report ranks Kosovo as 110th out of 175 countries falling behind all regional and neighbour countries (except for Albania with which it shares the 110th place). This and other political issues have contributed significantly to the economic issues that Kosovar society is facing.

2. The Economic Issues

On top of the political issues listed above, and one might argue, perpetuated by the same, Kosovo faces a range of economic issues. Problems such as a gap in GDP indicators compared to neighbouring countries, and EU, unemployment figures, foreign trade balance and trends are only but a few problems that require focused attention and efforts to address, in order to enable the economy to move forward.

An analysis of the GDP aggregate indicators, as presented in Figure 1 below, shows a very small GDP increase over the period 2010 - 2013.³ Also, the main contributor to the GDP is consumption, which as any Macroeconomics textbook teaches, is indicative of the poor countries. This is brought more to context by the fact

² There is an agreement in place which allows Kosovars to travel to and through Serbia if they have a valid Kosovo ID. At the border crossings, Serbian border authorities will issue Kosovar citizens with a temporary A4 document containing personal information. Valid Kosovar Passports, or Valid Kosovar Driver's Licenses are not accepted by Serbian authorities.

³ The period is not expanded in order to remain true to the presentation in the conference. Also, introducing the subsequent 2014, does not make significant changes to the interpretation.

that the investments represented in the Figure 1 are mainly government spending. To make things worse, Kosovo consistently has deep negative trade balance, which means that the imports outweigh exports by far.

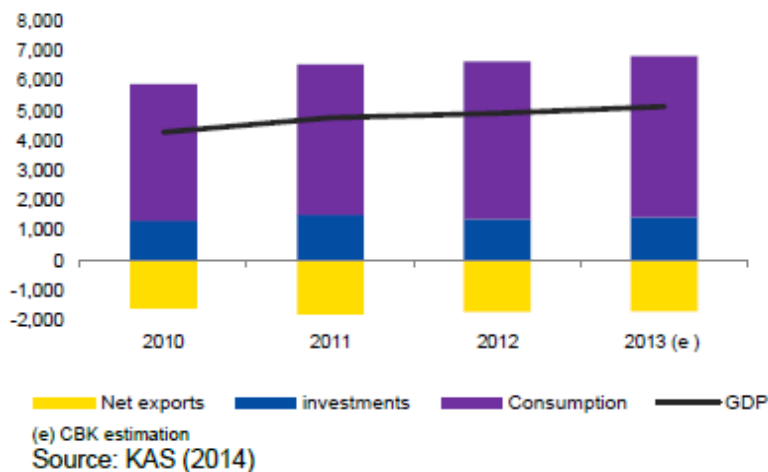
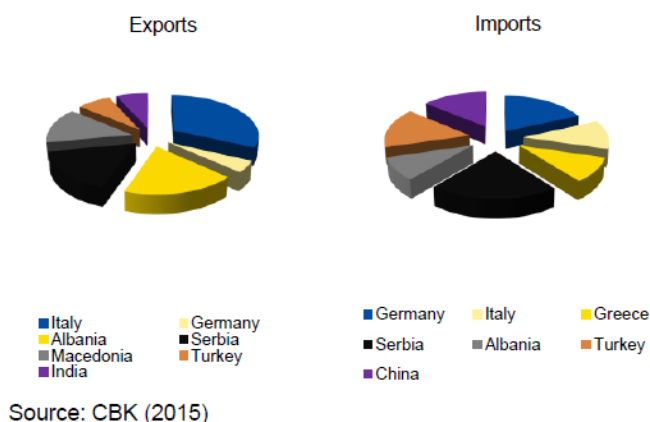


Figure 1: Main GDP Components⁴

The negative trade balance creates a number of problems for the economy, which for obvious reasons are not going to be further discussed here. However, looking at the structure of the imports and exports, provides a small insight on the behaviour of Kosovar companies and economy. According to the CBK Macroeconomic Development Report (2015), and as illustrated in the Figure 2 below, one of the main trade partners for Kosovo is Serbia. Namely, almost a quarter of all imports come from Serbia, however, in terms of exports, main partners are two EU countries, Italy and Germany.

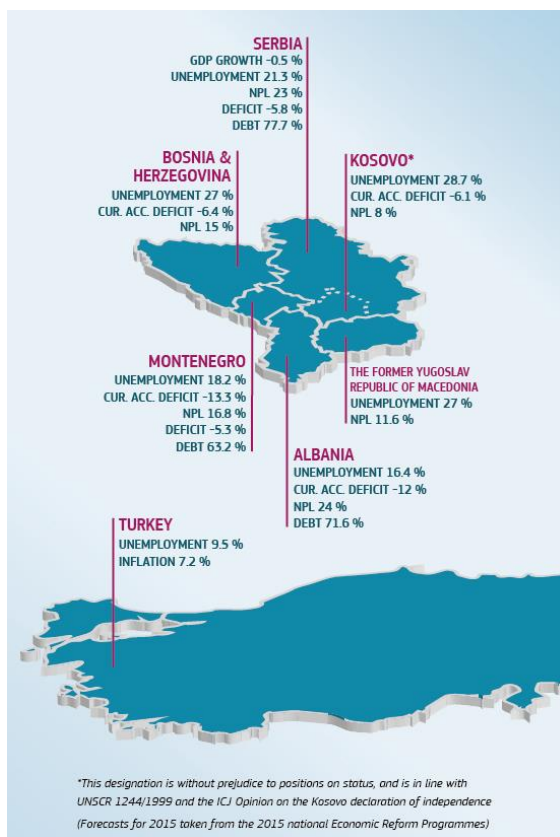


⁴ Available at: <http://bqk-kos.org/repository/docs/2014/CBK%20AR%202013-english.pdf>

Figure 2: Exports and imports structure by countries (in %)⁵

The fact that Serbia remains the main importing partner can be partially explained by political issues mentioned in the previous section. The territorial division of Kosovo, is a fertile environment for corruptive behaviour, meaning that there might be opportunities for smuggling of goods into Kosovo by circumventing official channels. This would, allegedly, make those products cheaper which have higher demand than goods from other countries, or Kosovo for that matter as raw materials are charged with same custom duties as finalized goods in Kosovo.

Policies not properly thought and executed, on top of the political and economic issues mentioned above, have constantly hampered the development of the private sector in Kosovo, and with that the progress of the economy as a whole. This has caused Kosovo's economy to constantly fall behind the neighbouring and regional economies. As illustrated in the Figure 3 below, Kosovo's economy falls behind in every economic indicator measured by the European Commission during the regular reviews.⁶



⁵ Available at: http://bqk-kos.org/repository/docs/2015/Raporti%20i%20zhvillimeve%20makroekonomik_English.pdf

⁶ Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/graphs/2015-06-12_assessing_balkan_and_turkey_en.htm

Figure 3: Graph of the Week. (Source: EC)

It is obvious that Kosovo falls behind its neighbours in every aspect. Even the unemployment figure, which some might argue is deflated, is higher than the surrounding countries. The indicators resemble the ones of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a country that has similar political problems to Kosovo.

However, the real challenge for Kosovo's economy becomes apparent only when few of the basic indicators are compared to indicators in the EU. When unemployment rates, GDP/Capita, Foreign Trade balance and few other indicators are pitted against EU, the real magnitude of the problem becomes apparent. In Table 1 below, the indicators which are calculated based on publicly available information, are presented to provide the reader with some sense of what gaps need to be bridged.

Table 1: Kosovo - EU comparison

	Kosovo	EU
Unemployment (%)	> 30	< 20
GDP/Capita € (2010)	1'813	32'400
Foreign trade balance (5 year annual avg.) million	- 473*	85,4**
Days to process a claim	60 - 90	15
Setting up new business (working days)	11	3
* EUR		
** USD, compared to US		

Unemployment rates in excess of 30 per cent (which in author's opinion, is a more realistic estimation than the one on Figure 3), present any economy with a fierce challenge on how to find ways of growth. This is even more so for a country such as Kosovo, which has the youngest population in Europe. The inability to generate jobs for population with features as described here, leads to massive exodus of people as exhibited in December 2014 and first part of 2015 when an estimated 100000 Kosovars fled to Hungary in order to pursue better lives within EU countries.

Given that the GDP Per Capita of citizens living in EU countries is roughly eighteen times higher than the GDP Per Capita of citizens living in Kosovo, it is hard to find persuasive arguments to keep people from fleeing. On the other hand, a close to half a billion euros per annum negative balance in foreign trade between Kosovo and EU leaves a noticeable void in country's finances. While EU has on average exported more than 85 million USD in goods and services to United States than imported.

In terms of processing legal and administrative processes, Kosovo has a big gap to fill. As reported by different institutions, in order to process a claim in Kosovo, on average one needs to wait 60 to 90 working days, while to get the same procedure done in EU, it takes 15 days. A legal system that is unable to cope with business' demands in processing legal claims at shorter periods, by default increases the risk of conducting business. This means that businesses have to put aside more provisions in order to secure continuity of their affairs, which means that the costs of doing business in

Kosovo are increased by inefficiencies in the legal system. Same logic applies to the administrative procedure as simple as registering a new business which in Kosovo takes almost four time as long as in EU.

What Steps in the Right Direction have been Made

A huge step in the right direction is the conclusion of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) negotiations between EU and Kosovo. The Kosovo Parliament ratified the same on November the 2nd, 2015. The Stabilisation and Association Agreement is used by the EU as a mechanism to promote a wide range of reforms spanning over almost every aspect of any country in order to prepare the new aspiring member countries for the economic activity within EU.

In practice this means that with the SAA in place, the EU has, except for few agriculture lines subject to tariff-quotas, abolished all custom duties for goods exported to EU. Kosovo, on the other hand, will do the same by abolishing all custom duties for goods exported by EU countries into Kosovo. However, the SAA foresees that certain sectors will keep the custom duties in place, but the same will be progressively reduced to zero within five, seven and ten year's period from the signing of the SAA.

In addition to the SAA, Kosovo lawmakers for years, and voluntarily have passed legislature that is compatible with EU Laws, Regulations, Directives in order to achieve compatibility between the two legal systems. This practice, although might have been harsh and unnecessary at certain cases, in long term, one can argue that it will pay dividend as it will help in faster synchronisation of legal systems once and when Kosovo joins EU.

Furthermore, the first Economic Reform Programme (ERP) has been submitted for the first time in 2015 by Kosovo to the European Commission Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs. The Commission's intention is to enhance economic policy and its governance through preparation of ERPs. The programme, in its first part sets out a medium-term macro-economic and fiscal policy framework, as well as macro-structural reform measures to directly support the policy framework. While in the second part the improvement of physical and human capital is targeted with the intention to boost competitiveness and long-term growth in these countries.

On the economic side, the SME sector shows some signs of improvement in terms of export. What is more important, the service sector of Kosovo displays a positive trade balance with EU and the rest of the world. These are good omens that provide space to hope for an accelerated economic recovery and development of Kosovo's economy, thus making it fit to be a EU member.

Summary

The EU, as noted at the introduction of this paper, has been set up to stop wars among neighbouring countries and at the same time to promote economic cooperation. The practice has shown that this formula has performed very well in the past as there have been no wars among EU member states.

However, in the recent years EU itself has showed signs of stress. Financial difficulties had pushed Greece to the very point of exit from EU, but through tremendous efforts of EU countries and Greece itself, GREXIT was avoided. This does not mean that EU has an easy way ahead. With the British nation voting on referendum

of whether to stay or leave EU this coming June there is a chance, irrespective of the fact that it might not be the smart decision, that BREXIT will happen.

For Kosovo, it should not be a matter of questioning whether it will be better off or not in EU, especially in light of the referendums mentioned above. Kosovo should use all its capacities on ensuring EU membership. Having said that, as seen above, Kosovo has a number of political and economic issues that need addressing as soon as possible.

Kosovo should focus on improving the climate of doing business and address corruption. Kosovo should aspire to increase efficiency in the legal system so it processes claims faster than 60 – 90 working days it takes now to process a claim. Kosovo should concentrate in lowering unemployment, and providing jobs and hope for the young population if fosters.

Finally, and decisively, Kosovo should build on the positive developments in order to improve its chances of accession. Kosovo should make sure that it follows and meets the requirements stemming from the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. It also should utilise all its capacities to make the best use of the ‘grace period’ of five, seven, and ten years for the protected industries to become stronger so they can face EU competition once the protectionist custom duties are abolished. Kosovo should continue to harmonise local laws and regulations with EU legislature. This will provide better chances for Kosovo once it gets closer and eventually becomes EU member.

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