

An abstract painting with a textured, expressive style. The background is dominated by warm tones of orange, red, and brown, with a prominent, thick, bright green diagonal brushstroke running from the upper left towards the lower right. The painting has a sense of movement and energy, with various textures and colors layered together.

Ana Jović-Lazić and Alexis Troude (eds.)

**SECURITY CHALLENGES  
AND THE PLACE  
OF THE BALKANS AND SERBIA  
IN A CHANGING WORLD**



*Cover:*

Goran Jović, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Faculty of Fine Arts, The University of Fine Arts in Belgrade, "The Battle of Kosovo", 2000, Belgrade, Serbia.

SECURITY CHALLENGES  
AND THE PLACE  
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IN A CHANGING WORLD

Ana Jović-Lazić and Alexis Troude (eds.)

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## PREFACE

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In the twenty-first century, international political, economic and global security relations have undergone a series of important changes that challenge and reshape the established International Order. It also affects Serbia and the Balkans, as well as their place in Contemporary International Relations.

This Collection of Papers was completed at the end of March 2020 against the backdrop of the Coronavirus crisis that is threatening Serbia, the Balkans, Europe, and probably the entire modern world. Therefore, it may seem an inauspicious moment to be writing about the Security Challenges and the position of the Balkans and Serbia in a Changing World. For a while, the outcome of the current crisis cannot be predicted with any certainty. It is unlikely to be similar to that of previous crises in recent history. Indeed, if nothing else, in an increasingly dependent and multipolar global system which for the first time faces the same challenge, the current crisis emphasizes the need for a coordinated global response to effectively protect the basic interest of humanity – survival.

The Collection of Papers is edited by Ana Jovic-Lazic from the Institute of International Economics and Politics, Serbia, and Alexis Troude from the University of Versailles, France. The review team consists of distinguished scientists from China, Russia, Slovakia, Poland, Croatia, Germany and Australia. Contributors to this book are all respected experts on the topics they are writing on. Scientific papers are written by authors from Serbia, Russia, France, the United Kingdom, Hungary, Poland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Spain, and Turkey. The authors try to answer the questions of how and why is the current World Order shifting. Some of them considered strategic directions for the development and consolidation of the Balkan's and Serbia's place in contemporary international relations, as well as its political, security, economic, and legal aspects. In addition, the authors analyze the influence of the interests of major and regional powers on the position of the Balkans and Serbia, like those that place Serbia in the immediate regional and wider geopolitical context. They also deal with Serbia's responses to key foreign policy and geopolitical challenges.

Depending on the topic and the research question which is covered, scientific papers are divided into three thematic units. In the first unit,

prominent scientists in the field of international relations perceive the question of Remodeling and Transformation of the World Order. The scientific paper written by Richard Sakwa is dedicated to the Clash of World Orders. Andrey Fursov examines the political and economic roots of the turbulent political system, trying to answer the question of why and how the world of 1991–2021 was born. The topic of the paper of Ramachandra Byrappa is Building foreign policy resilience in the 21st Century: the Concept of Commonwealth. At the end of the first unit, Kopanja and Stekić write about patterns of restructuring of the World Geopolitical System.

The second unit consists of papers that examine the challenges and perspectives of the Balkan's regional security. Vladimir Trapara writes about the Balkans as a Geopolitical Periphery of Eastern Europe and the implications of the past for its uncertain future. Ruth Ferrero-Turrión examines the EU Border outsourcing process and its impact on the Balkan region. Čeranić and Lalić write about the current state and perspectives of Security in the Western Balkans. Šekarić and Lazić analyze the Western Balkans' Energy Security in a triangle of the EU, Russia, and Turkey. Olga Barbasievicz tries to answer the question is there a universal pattern for reconciliation by analyzing the successes and failures of European and Asian reconciliation as a tool for the Balkans. In her paper, Birgül Demirtaş compares the attitudes of Turkish political parties towards Syrian refugees, ending the second unit.

The third unit contains papers focusing on the position of Serbia in contemporary international relations. About multivectorness as a way out of the impasse of strategic vulnerability writes Elena Ponomareva. Alexis Troude pays attention to Serbia and its place between East and West. Russian vector in Serbian politics, as well as its impacts and outcomes on regional relations, is the topic of a paper written by Dušan Proroković. Miša Đurković sees the relations between the Serbian people and the European Union as a sad story with an unknown end. Siniša Atlagić examines the communication and psychological aspect of the Controlled Chaos Strategy and instruments for its realization in Serbia. Duško Dimitrijević gives a very useful review of the contemporary relations of Serbia and China in a changing world. Ivona Lađevac analyzes the Serbia and the Belt and Road Initiative. Glišić, Đorđević, and Stojković write about the EU Global Strategy, as a possible framework for deepening cooperation with the Republic of Serbia in the Defence domain. Ana Jović-Lazić considers obligations, achievements, and challenges in the process of alignment of Serbia with the CFSP/CSDP of the EU. The third unit ends with an article in which

Marjanović and Zubović analyze the main macroeconomic indicators of Serbia and the selected SEE Countries

We hope that this Collection of Papers will help in a comprehensive understanding of the complex position of Serbia and the Balkans in the contemporary world, which is changing rapidly. That was the main purpose of its publishing.

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**REMODELING  
AND TRANSFORMATION  
OF THE WORLD ORDER**





## THE CLASH OF WORLD ORDERS

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*Abstract:* The end of the Cold War in 1989 opened the door to the potential transformation of European international politics. In the event, Cold War patterns of behaviour were reproduced in new forms. These include a revived confrontation between the Atlantic powers and Russia, accompanied by the new division of Europe. This geopolitical confrontation is accompanied by renewed ideological divisions, with liberal democratic states apparently ranged against authoritarian systems. However, matters cannot be simply folded into new binaries. Four types of world order contend for hegemony today: the liberal international order; transformative (revolutionary) internationalism; mercantilist nationalism; and conservative (or sovereign) internationalism, each with its own logic and principles. The international system can be considered the hardware, while these four models of world order are viewed as the software. World order is in transition from a previously hegemonic model to a more pluralistic one in which the normative validity of others can be acknowledged. This opens up the potential for a more balanced and dialogical type of international politics.

*Keywords:* International system, world order, Europe, Cold War, sovereign internationalism

### INTRODUCTION

The view that international politics today is chaotic and disorderly implies that we have moved away from a more ordered system.<sup>2</sup> There is little evidence that this is the case. Instead, we are seeing the shift from one dominant model of world order to a more fluid situation in which several models contend. The power and authority of the hegemonic system that took shape after 1945 is declining, while alternative models are becoming more internally coherent and convincing. The Atlantic power system was presaged long before the Second World War, notably in Woodrow Wilson's appeal in 1919 to create what became the League of Nations, accompanied

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<sup>2</sup> This paper draws on my paper: Sakwa, 2019.

by a special role for the old imperial powers as they moved to new forms of legitimation based on norms of self-determination and development. This gave rise to the mandate system in the interwar years and full-scale decolonisation after the war. In August 1941 the United Kingdom and the United States adopted the Atlantic Charter, which further reinforced the importance of norms in international affairs. In 1949 the Atlantic Charter became the foundation stone of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), which is not only a collective security alliance but also one founded on principles of human rights and democracy. In the 1950s this was complemented by the creation of what became the European Union (EU). This is the Atlantic power system (APS), which until recently was sponsored and guided by the US.

With the collapse of the alternative Soviet model of world order, the APS was rebranded as the liberal international order (LIO). The term had barely been mentioned earlier, but it now effectively claimed to be synonymous with order itself (Ikenberry, 2001, 2011). Instead of returning to some first order questions about the nature of the international system and the most appropriate way to bring the former Soviet bloc and Russia itself into the transformed world order, a singular model of expansion was adopted. The APS had always had expansive ambitions, but these were kept in check as long as the Soviet Union existed. However, when these ambitions were described in terms of the LIO, then its scope was truly universal. This immediately provoked charges of double standards and hypocrisy, since there was ultimately no way to transcend the fact that the LIO was a more ambitious version of the APS and rooted in large part in the same hegemonic structures of power. A particular model of world order now claimed to be universal and applicable to the whole world, in the forms that it had taken in the heartlands of the Atlantic region (Bacevich, 2020).

The Atlantic power system after 1989 reprofiled itself as the liberal international order, and at the same time it became radicalised. At the economic level, globalisation combined free trade with the transformative power of new communications and transport technologies. The LIO really did appear to herald a new world without borders and in which the power of states to manage their own affairs eroded to the point at which some talked of their ultimate redundancy. Third way leaders like Tony Blair in the UK repeatedly argued that large swathes of policy were now beyond the reach of government. In politics, the promotion of democratisation and human rights was embedded in notions of the democratic peace theory. Security for the APS would only be guaranteed if more states became

democratic; but for that to happen, it was assumed not only that democracies do not go to war with each other, but that they would inevitably align with the Atlantic powers. Kantian ideas about 'perpetual peace' focused on regime type and the values of liberal democratic societies. By shifting the terms of discourse towards the liberal international order, the geopolitical realities and the power hierarchies embedded in the Atlantic system were hidden (Immerwahr, 2019).

The audacious affirmation that a part of the international system could now claim to be the system itself was only viable because of the semantic shift that had taken place. It would be absurd for the Atlantic power system to have global ordering ambitions, yet when couched in terms of an expansive liberal international order, it appeared legitimate. The ideas and processes at the heart of the LIO had become hegemonic after 1945 and effectively unchallenged with the collapse of bipolarity and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The LIO had undoubtedly delivered enormous public goods in this period, in terms of development and the defence of human rights and dignity. Samuel Moyn describes the human rights globalism that took shape from the 1970s as the 'last utopia' (Moyn, 2012). Little trace remained of a programme of human self-fulfilment and instead the last utopia develops Isaiah Berlin's idea about 'negative freedom' to the limits and asserts what should not be done by humans to each other. The negative space around each individual should not be transgressed. The social solidarity advanced by the welfare states in the advanced capitalist democracies, accompanied by redistributive mechanisms, universal social security and high degrees of equality, was replaced by human solidarity in which state power was tempered by the rights of individuals. This represented an epochal transformation of solidarity that in the end turned the European Union away from 1980 ideas of a 'social Europe' towards one focused on advancing competition by increasingly intrusive regulatory bodies. This is why the LIO delivered repeated economic crises, growing inequality, the erosion of social security rights, and the growing precariousness of the terms and conditions of employment and, ultimately, a new Cold War. Social solidarity of the era of social democracy had given way to human solidarity, but there was not much of the latter either. It was also coming under pressure from alternative models of world order.

## THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

This is why it is important to distinguish particular models of world order from the broader international system. This is something that Henry

Kissinger failed to do in his masterful book on world order (Kissinger, 2014), and which is the common failing of world order studies. Drawing on English School thinking, the international system can be conceptualised as a three-level construct (Sakwa, 2017, pp. 38-68). At the top, there are the developing apparatus and processes of global governance (termed the secondary institutions of international society by the English School), with the United Nations at its apex and complemented by an increasingly ramified network of international law and normative expectations. The English School distinguishes between primary institutions of international society, comprising sovereignty, territoriality, balance of power, war, international law, diplomacy and nationalism, and describes how these European-generated elements were expanded to the rest of the world (Bull and Watson, 1984). The so-called secondary institutions include not only the United Nations but also other bodies that seek to generalise solidarist practices in a plural international system (Buzan, 2014, pp. 32-36). They include the institutions of international financial governance, derived initially from the Bretton Woods system comprising the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the system of global economic governance, notably the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Here also are the international legal and environmental covenants, as well as those covering the rules of war and international humanitarian practices. These secondary institutions are by definition universal, whereas the primary institutions generate practices of exclusion, with the Western core imposing its own 'standards of civilisation' and acting as the gatekeeper, notably in the context of colonialism (Gong, 1984).

Many of the secondary institutions are of Western origin, but their development has been governed from the outset less by expansion than by mutual constitution (Dunne and Reus-Smith, 2017). For example, the establishment of the UN drew on various Western traditions as well as Soviet, Chinese, Indian, Islamic and other ideas. As the secondary institutions strengthen and become more genuinely universal, they threaten accustomed patterns of Western hegemony, but at the same time provide the sinews for order after the waning of this hegemony. English School thinking suggests that the international state system evolved out of institutions like the state, territoriality, the balance of power, diplomacy and sovereignty, which formed in Europe and then expanded through colonialism and then revolutionary nationalism across the world to become truly universal, whereas many of the institutions of international society were created by the Allies during the war and reflected Western values, and were at first relatively exclusive. Without challenging this genealogy, it

should be noted that from the first a universalist dynamic was embedded not only in the primary institutions of international society, but also in the top-level secondary institutions, which have since become generalised as the institutions of 'global governance' and have become more delineated and gained in authority.

This is where we move to the second level. Beneath the solidarity of international governance institutions we have competing states whose relations in English School thinking are governed by the primary institutions of international society. In the original English School formulation, the international society of states devised in Europe expanded in successive waves to encompass the whole world. This really was an 'expansion', enlarging a system into which Russia, with its characteristic ambivalence, was soon incorporated (Neumann, 2011). However, the original expansion model is based on a single level system, but with the development of the 'secondary institutions' and their associated sharing of sovereignty on functional issues (such as the environment), the single-planned model becomes inadequate.

The third level of the international system encompasses a broad range of civil society organisations as well as the media and other forms of societal intervention. This is where economic rationality and the logic of the market operate. Hard-line realists typically dismiss the role that international organisations play in international politics, and even more so sub-state movements and processes. However, in the era of neo-liberalism and globalisation these can have a substantive impact on global processes. The peace movement of the 1980s failed to prevent the deployment of cruise and Pershing missiles to Europe, but fears of re-awakening the mass anti-nuclear movement are part of the calculation of responses to the end of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) agreement in 2019. Above all, pressure for drastic decarbonisation in the face of the climate catastrophe is now part of the calculus of all rational governments. The upsurge populist movements and sentiments act as a warning to the complacency of entrenched elites. Civil society may well take its revenge on the widening inequalities of the neo-liberal era and reshape our thinking about international order.

### **Models of global order**

It is in this context that four types of global order have shaped international politics in the post-1945 era. By global orders I mean 'software' systems that provide a consistent set of norms about the correct and most

appropriate conduct of international affairs. A global order comprises the claim that a particular set of norms and institutions have universal validity. It is not to be confused with globalisation, which is a particular technological, communicative, economic and cultural process that cuts across the various models of world order, although populists and other critics tend to confuse the two. Neither is it to be confused with the globalism that Donald J. Trump contrasted with patriotism in his speech to the United Nations in September 2018 (Ward, 2018). Globalism as we shall see below comes in at least four forms, and some are no less 'patriotic' than the one that he favours. The models are not associated to a specific space but refer to a way of conducting international politics, although they do tend to have a regional focus. The four are ideal types, and the practice of international affairs typically draws from a range of world order repertoires not tied to a single model. States can choose elements from the different models, although the character of a regime and its place in international affairs will predispose it to apply one operating system relatively consistently to the exclusion of others.

#### *The Atlantic power system - liberal international order*

The first is the US-led liberal international order, which was born in the early years of the twentieth century and then formulated by Woodrow Wilson in terms of a commitment to an Atlantic-based system of universal order. The liberal international order is based on an expansive dynamic of universal rules and economic interactions. This has been the most vigorous international order of the modern era, transforming much of the world in its image. The liberal international order combines military, economic and political (normative) sub-orders, each operating according to a specific dynamic but coalescing to create a polymorphic and 'rules-based' international order (Chalmers, 2019).

Contrary to much analysis, this order evolves with the changing character of international politics. Thus the post-war Atlantic power system up to the end of the Cold War in 1989 was shaped by the bipolar confrontation with the Soviet Union and its promotion of an alternative model of world order. The second phase between 1989 and 2014 was characterised by the apparently limitless opportunities opened up by unipolarity. It was in this period that the APS developed a new persona in the guise of the liberal international order. In the absence of a coherent alternative, the LIO became radicalised in at least five ways: the Hegelian, associated with the discourse of the 'end of history'; the Kantian, with the

extreme emphasis on 'human rights globalism'; the Hobbesian, with numerous ill-judged military interventions intended, among other things, to advance democracy in the world; the Hayekian, which represented the triumph of neo-liberal thinking and the disembedding of market from social relations; and the Marcusean cultural victory of identarian liberalism accompanied by the social fragmentation associated with post-social solidarity politics (Sakwa, 2018). Some of this radicalisation was the natural result of the absence of a viable competitor, allowing the inherent character of the liberal international order to be developed to its full extent; but some of it was hubristic, exposing a dark exclusivity and intolerance of other social orders and traditional life patterns (Pabst, 2018).

In the third phase, the one in which we now find ourselves, the expansive liberal order met its limits both domestically (in the rise of national populism and a revived leftist internationalism) and in international affairs, in the emergence of coherent alternative models of world order. In part this reflects the broader shift of economic power from the West to the East, but also from the larger failure of the expanding US-led liberal international order to find ways to incorporate the periphery without the former outsiders fearing for the loss of their identity. In the Russian case resistance in the end took the form of a New Cold War, while in the case of China long-term civilisational contradictions have re-emerged.

#### *Transformative (revolutionary) internationalism*

The second type of globalism is the one represented until 1991 by the Soviet Union and its allies, which for a time in the 1950s included China. The Soviet Union from the beginning represented an unstable combination of socialist nationalism and revolutionary internationalism, but with the consolidation of Stalin's rule the former predominated. With the disintegration of the Soviet bloc in 1991, the challenge of revolutionary internationalism largely disappeared, although some echoes of the old model remain. At the same time, new sources for the transformational renewal of the international system are emerging, notably the climate emergency. The meaning of revolutionary transformation, of course, in this context has changed from the old Leninist idea of the forcible seizure of power towards the more Gramscian notion of the transformation of social relations, beginning above all in the lower level of our three-story edifice, the arena of civil society, cultural norms and economic interactions. The climate emergency demands new forms of social organisation and a



thorough rethinking of growth-led models of economic development. Decarbonisation will change not only technological but also social and economic relations. Emerging disruptive digital technologies and biotechnologies are already changing the way that people live and work, and we are only at the beginning of this new revolution. In the end, a new form of transformative (revolutionary) internationalism may be the only answer to the survival of humanity on this planet.

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), established in Bandung in 1955, has gained a new vitality to oppose the re-emergence of bloc politics and to give voice to countries overshadowed by the return to great power relations in international affairs. 'Nonalignment 2.0' has been advanced as the keystone of India's foreign policy in the new era (Tellis et al., 2012). At the same time, rampant militarism and unchecked arms spending, accompanied by the breakdown in the strategic arms control regime inherited from the Cold War, is provoking the return of active peace movements. The long-term stagnation in middle class and worker incomes accompanied by the erosion of the physical and social infrastructure in the advanced capitalist democracies has prompted a new wave of leftist radicalism. The question of socialism is once again on the agenda (Honneth, 2018). In short, this transformative model of globalism has deep roots in civil society and is forcing change in states and the institutions of global governance. It may well represent a revolution in international affairs as profound as any provoked by world wars and economic crises.

### *Mercantilist nationalism*

The third type of globalism is gaining increasing traction today. This is the transactional and mercantilist approach adopted by Trump and the various national populist movements of our time (Eatwell and Goodwin, 2018). For Trump the international sphere is simply the extension of the market into the larger domain, where a zero-sum logic predominates and in which there is a ruthless battle for market share. The strong become stronger, while the weak endure what they must. There is no room for multilateral agencies or international alliances, which in Trump's view only constrains the US. Values are humbug, everything is transactional, and there is no need for democracy promotion. This is a stark model of Westphalian internationalism, harking back to an earlier era before 1914 when the first era of globalisation came into contradiction with statist Social-Darwinism. The national interests of sovereign states predominated, and in part the First

World War represented a revolt against the erosion of state sovereignty by market relations. Today, this logic is reprised in the arguments of radical Brexiteers in the UK, and in the sovereigntist movements in continental Europe, notably in Marine Le Pen's National Rally in France, Thierry Baudet's Forum for Democracy in the Netherlands and Matteo Salvini's (Northern) League (La Liga) in Italy.

The revolt against globalisation took place in the very countries that had taken the lead in outsourcing jobs and services. The benefits of globalisation had been spectacularly badly distributed, and while lifting millions out of poverty in China, destroyed the industrial heartlands of the advanced capitalist democracies while allocating increased wealth to the rich. This is accompanied by a cultural revulsion against not only globalisation but also the apparently heedless cosmopolitanism with which it became associated. This is why the *policies* advanced by elites in the Anglo-Saxon world are so readily dismissed, and instead the marginalised masses increasingly look for *meaning*.<sup>3</sup>

The putative defection of the US from the liberal international order that it had done so much to create was at first welcomed by the Russian elite as a vindication of its conservative stance, but it soon became clear that Trump's mercantilist nationalism has no room for allies or even friends, and that it lacks the intellectual or political resources to challenge the US national security establishment. Because of the Russiagate collusion allegations Trump had a fraught relationship with some of the security agencies, but overall the Trumpian insurgency quickly made peace with what Michael Glennon calls the 'Trumanite state' (Glennon, 2015), the vast Cold War military and security apparatus. Russia was once again left out in the cold. However, it was not alone, and America's European allies faced the unprecedented situation in the post-war era of having to give substance to the idea of 'strategic autonomy' (European Union, 2016, pp. 4, 9, 19, 45, 46; Leonard and Shapiro, 2019). Not surprisingly, they talk of chaos in the international system but in fact the crisis is more localised. It reflects the loss of hegemony and strains in the liberal international order, and in particular in the Atlantic power system. A rogue America threatens to spread this chaos globally.

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<sup>3</sup> This was supplied by the Trumpian slogan of 'Make America great again', and the Brexiteer slogan 'Take back control'; they are meaningless but, paradoxically, offer meaning.

*Conservative (sovereign) internationalism*

The fourth type of globalism is the one now associated with Russia, China and their allies in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). This model of conservative internationalism emphasises sovereign decision-making by nation states, but it also understands the importance of internationalism. As in the two-level European Union, where the Commission and its agencies exercise elements of supranationalism while the member states retain large areas of inter-governmental autonomy in decision-making, so the international system in this sovereign internationalism model operates on the three levels of the international system presented earlier. For conservative internationalists it is the middle floor that is the most important (for Trumpians it is the only one that matters), but this does not preclude a strong normative commitment to the secondary institutions of international society on the top floor, including as we noted earlier the UN and the whole ramified network of international legal, economic, environmental and social governance.

Sovereign internationalists recognise the importance of global governance institutions to manage economic and social processes, and increasingly to deal with the climate crisis and digital innovations, notably cyber-attacks and information management. Their internationalism is more than instrumental, although defenders of this position are certainly not willing to cede extensive supranational powers to international society. We are still a long way from creating a world government, but there remains a constant dynamic (as in the EU) between the two levels. In other words, contrary to the common charge of liberal internationalists that this model represents a regression to non-cooperative Westphalian statism, in fact this model of world order espouses a non-hegemonic and more traditional form of internationalism. It rejects the democratic internationalism promoted by post-Cold War liberal internationalism, based on the expansionist logic of an order that essentially claims to have ready-made solutions to problems of peace, governance and development. Instead, the emphasis is on diplomacy between sovereign subjects, although this does not preclude commitment to the norms embedded in the institutions of global governance.

Russia is presented as the defender of a more conservative and traditional representation of Europe, and thus a strange alignment of Moscow and neo-nativist European national-populists has been forged. Russia thus returned to its nineteenth century manifestation as the defender of conservative cultural values and legitimate government; anti-liberal and

authoritarian. This representation is at most only partially accurate, but in conditions of New Cold War, Russia was certainly looking for friends wherever it could find them, especially if it could help undermine the unity required for the biannual renewal of EU sanctions. However, neither Russia nor China are genuinely revisionist powers, since both seek to defend the structures of the existing international system, and in the case of China globalisation itself. Their sovereign internationalism is at most neo-revisionist, challenging the practices of the US-led liberal international order rather than the principles on which it is based. The hegemonic practices to which they particularly object are generated by the Atlantic power system at the heart of the liberal order, which in their view generates double standards and a false universalism. Partisans of the anti-hegemonic alignment seek to make the global governance institutions in the top tier of the international system genuinely universal.

## CONCLUSION

European history moves in roughly 30-year cycles, and 1989 joins the pantheon as one of those turning points that shape the continent. Like all other great inflexion points, from 1848 to 1919, 1945 and 1968, the significance of the events is debated long after. The absence of a settled meaning and the capacity for endless reinterpretation may well be the characteristic that makes these events so important. This certainly applies to 1989, the moment when the bipolar security order that took shape in the late 1940s gave way to what was considered to be a moment of European unification. It was also the moment when the long-term challenge of revolutionary socialism as an alternative modernity gave way to what was perceived at the time to be the victory of capitalist democracy, liberalism and the onset of the 'end of history'.

Collectivist models of social emancipation gave way to the primacy of 'negative freedom' and the primacy of individual human rights. Sustained alternatives to capitalist democracy and the international order in which it was embedded were delegitimated. However, the collapse of the Soviet challenge and the victory of the Atlantic power system radicalised what came to be known as the 'liberal international order', which effectively claimed to be synonymous with order itself. This resulted in a two-fold return swing of the pendulum: rethinking forms of national and social solidarity; and the shift towards more pluralist (multipolar) forms of international politics.

In this context, some points stand out. First, if indeed the liberal international order is a universalised version of the Atlantic power system, then the challenge is to ensure the relative decoupling of the two. The relative decline of the Atlantic power system need not threaten the fundamental postulates of the liberal international order, if the latter can be fully grounded in the autonomous operation of the secondary, as well as the primary, institutions of international society. This would help overcome charges of double standards and the problem of hegemony. This is the implicit challenge advanced by the conservative internationalists. The challenge today may well be to envision a post-Atlantic West. This would allow Europe, and in particular the EU, to advance a genuinely pan-continental post-Atlantic unity.

However, and this is the second point, the sovereign internationalists may well be right to defend the traditional practices of international affairs, above all the accustomed practices of international diplomacy and the niceties of respectful interstate relations, but ultimately they cannot be immune to the normative demands for human solidarity. Some of these states, notably China, have delivered impressive public goods within the framework of social solidarity, but the stick, as in the Soviet bloc before 1989, is pushed too far in one direction. A new balance needs to be found.

Third, while revolutionary internationalism of the traditional sort has waned, the transformative internationalism rooted in the third level of the international system, civil society, is gathering strength. Today the environmental catastrophe is threatening the very sustainability of life on earth. At the same time, the threat of the nuclear holocaust has not disappeared, exacerbated by the onset of a whole suite of new hypersonic and other destabilising weapon systems.

Fourth, the populist return to nationalism, mercantilism and Trumpian 'patriotism' reflects very real problems in post-Cold War domestic and international politics. The sort of globalism (by which national populists primarily mean globalisation, although they also attack the globalism embedded in the UN and other international governance institutions) condemned by Trump has been part of the hollowing out of belief in the efficacy of state intervention and in social solidarity as whole. Populism is the demotic idiom of the oppressed and excluded, but it is also used opportunistically by the privileged and the powerful. Social solidarity is not the alternative to human solidarity but its complement.

Finally, in our European context the challenge is twofold: to find meaningful forms of human solidarity within the European Union, and

thus once again to turn it into a genuine instrument of peace and emancipation; and to think about the ways that we can meaningfully engage in the biggest challenge of all: devising a post-Atlantic West in which Europe can finally combine societal and human solidarity from one end of the continent to the other.

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## POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ROOTS OF THE TURBULENT POLITICAL SYSTEM, OR WHY AND HOW THE WORLD OF 1991-2021 WAS BORN

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*Abstract:* The world political system of the last 30 years (since December 1989) is characterized by immense and growing turbulence: more and more acts of Western aggression (Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya), more and more local conflicts to the benefit of transnational corporations, more and more grey zones (the latter fact reflects both the 'fading away' of the nation-state and the criminalization of world politics and world economy). Is there one single factor explaining these events, or do we just have a mosaic of disorderly chaos? Being far from cheap conspirology discourse and working strictly within the political-economic approach to the history of the capitalist system, which is largely a cryptohistory, the author thinks that the fact determining the turbo transformation of world politics is the dismantling of the capitalist system (The fact that this system does not correspond to the current world is acknowledged officially even by the 'wizards of Davos'). Partly it is elemental, but to a larger extent, it is the process of chaos organized by global elites. The problem is that in the process of the battle for the future, first, there are more and more contradictions between rival elite groups (the Anglo-Saxons and Europeans, moderate and radical globalists, financiers and industrialists, etc., let alone occult differences), and, secondly, the process of dismantling spins out of control increasingly. This creates a combination of organized and disorderly chaos in world politics, which makes it difficult to analyze it adequately.

*Keywords:* world political system, capitalism, chaos, global elites, political economy.

### INTRODUCTION

It became commonplace that we live in a more and more turbulent world, a world torn apart by the economic crisis, political instability, regional

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wars, the spread of grey zones, the acts of aggression on the part of the West (against Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria). 'The veil of darkness is rising over the world' – this phrase from J.R.R. Tolkien's 'The Lord of the Rings' seems to be increasingly appropriate to current state affairs in the world. It is evident the dividing line between a rather stable world of the Cold War epoch and the Age of Turbulence was being drawn through 1991, the year the USSR formally died (informally, i.e., it really died on 2-3 December 1989).

The Age of Turbulence began in 1991, and according to the prognostications, the economic crisis which is to come in 2020, 2021 or 2022, seems to draw the line behind the Age of Turbulence. That does not mean that turbulence will be over. On the contrary, it will acquire a new quality of the terminal crisis of the capitalist system. The fact that capitalism is an outdated phenomenon and does not correspond to the contemporary world is evident even to 'wizards of Davos' and some of the Western European political leaders.

Bearing in mind that all historical chronological divisions and subdivisions are to some extent arbitrary, I will state the following nevertheless. With the period of 1991–2021, we have a single chronohistorical bloc of its own – like, for example, the 'watershed period' of 1871–1914 (or 1929/33 and 'es trentes glorieuses' of 1945–1975).

The said period is characterized by the rise of the three interconnected phenomena: financialism, social and economic inequality, and chaotization (both orderly and disorderly) of world politics. Is there one single factor explaining these phenomena and events pertinent to them? I do believe there is. It is the demise of the capitalist system, which is both a 'natural' dissolution and an 'artificial' dismantling by a part of global elites. Just like the feudal seigneurs of the 15<sup>th</sup> century who, in order to keep power, property, and privileges (status) dismantled the half- (but only half!) dying feudalism, the capitalists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century began dismantling capitalism. The Age of Turbulence is one of the stages – an important one – in this process. But the theme of the present article is neither this age, nor the process of historical murder of the capitalist dragon by its masters – the 'Masters of history', as Disraeli used to call them, or the 'Masters of world game' according to the Russian writer O. Markeev.

Here I would like to ponder on the question of the origins of the Age of Turbulence. The answer to it can clarify not only the problem of the emerging and the beginning of this chronobloc, but, first, of its inner mechanics, and, secondly, of its end.

Pondering on the question of historical (political-economic) roots of 'les trentes inglorieuses' one should try to answer several 'naïve' questions, and as always naïve questions are followed by the most important and essential ones:

- 1) what is capitalism; the specificity of its dynamics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century;
- 2) the 1960s as the turning point in the development of the capitalist system and the Modernity; the role of the Soviet leadership in the transition to a negative evolutionary trend;
- 3) the 1980s as the birth cradle of the Age of Turbulence.

### **CAPITALISM IN THE 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY: 'GUNS BEFORE BUTTER'**

It seems that the essence of capitalism and, hence, its definition is an evident fact. But as Sherlock Holmes used to say, there is nothing more deceptive than an obvious fact. Capitalism is not a simple and linear triumph of capital and cannot be limited or deduced to capital only. Capital existed before capitalism and will exist after its demise. The fact that capitalism is a complicated social and institutional system, which ensures constant accumulation of capital (time) and its expansion (space), while at the same time limiting capital in its own long-term and holistic interests is more often overlooked than not (Fursov, 1996, p. 3). Having no such limitation, very soon, capital would eat to the end both society and nature (biosphere). The means of limitation were the state, civil society, politics, and mass education. I would like to stress: they used to limit not capital as such, but its long-term and holistic interests as opposed to partial and short-term or, at least, medium-term ones.

The whole history of capitalism was its struggle against its limitations; in fact, it was a driving force of capitalism as a system, one of its main contradictions. And the chief arbiters between the sides ('extremes') of this contradiction were, of course, closed supranational groups. So capitalism is not just capital; it is the unity of capital with its social institutional limitations under the control of supra-state, supranational closed groups whose main interest is not just capitalism but power; capitalism serves them as the means; but at the same time, they are the tool of self-correction and self-development of the capitalist system. The whole picture reminds of M.C. Escher's famous drawing 'Relativity'.

Now let us have a look at the dynamics of the capitalist system. The 'long 16<sup>th</sup> century' (1453–1648) was the period of the genesis of capitalism. As

Hegel used to say, when a thing is emerging, it does not exist yet. So the genetic phase is, in fact, a precapitalist one. Then we have the early phase, roughly from 1650 to the 1780s (1648–1789). The second, the mature phase lasted from 1780 to the 1910s (1789–1914) and the third phase, late capitalism from 1910 –? (1914–2050?).

During the first two phases or periods of its development, capitalism in its expansion covered the whole world. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the last stride was the ‘Scramble for Africa’. Further development presupposed conflicts not between the core and the periphery, but between core states and European semiperipheral empires for the repartition of the colonial periphery, which meant imperialist wars between European states. The driving force of development in these circumstances became the destruction of the industrial base of this or that core state or empire and further development in the form of the postwar reconstruction of what had been destroyed. This means that in the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the economic dynamics of capitalism was actually exhausted and became a secondary factor. It was the extra-economic dynamics that came to the foreground, became the first and most important factor.

The motor of development of the capitalist system after the World War I was the industrial reconstruction of the USSR and Germany; after the World War II, it was the reconstruction of the USSR, Germany and Japan (hence economic miracles: ‘the Soviet’, ‘the German’ and ‘the Japanese’ ones). But by the early 1960s, all miracles were over, the development potentiality of the postwar reconstruction was finished. More than that, further industrial economic and scientific-technological progress of the core countries of the capitalist system became an obvious menace for the dominant groups of core capitalism because it was strengthening the social and political positions of the middle class and the upper layer of the working class. The social and political turbulence of the 1960s became a sign of trouble, of misfortune for the ruling circles of the capitalist system.

Their reaction to this challenge of history took three main forms:

1) They tried to slow down industrial and scientific-technological progress in the name of ecology, of ecological menace. The leading role here was played by the Club of Rome (1968), which proposed the concept of ‘zero growth’. It was not just an economic operation, but also a cultural, a psychohistoric one: for example, the Tavistock Institute was charged with the task ‘to stamp out cultural optimism of the sixties’. Very soon, the place of science fiction was taken by fantasy literature. And if one compares scientific and technological inventions of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to

that of the second half, the picture will be the following: plenty of inventions in the first half and rather few – mobile phone, the internet and the personal computer – in the second. We have a real slowdown in scientific-technological progress.

2) The second direction was the counteroffensive of the upper classes against the middle class and the working class under a neoliberal banner. Thatcherism and Reaganomics became the social weapons of the strong against the weak, an evident manifestation of the ‘revolt of the elites’ as opposed to ‘the revolt of the masses’ of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

3) All these activities could be successful only in case the Soviet Union would not use the situation for its benefit. Hence, the third direction was to neutralize the Soviet Union by (false) promising to integrate it into the capitalist world as an equal partner. The Soviet leadership was offered several ‘attractions’:

- the cooperation in the sphere of global ecology;
- the organization of the rise of oil prices by means of the Arab-Israeli conflict;
- the ‘Moon bargain’;
- the détente in world politics.

And the Soviet leadership answered in the affirmative.

This brings us to an extremely important question – the role of the Soviet leadership, the role of the Soviet elites in the destruction of the USSR, and the coming of the Age of Turbulence.

### **THE USSR: A LEAP IN THE DARK (FROM ANTICAPITALISM TO CONVERGENCE)**

The decision of the Soviet elites and their course onto further integration of the USSR and the socialist camp into the world market (which in reality meant – into the world capitalist system) was determined by the fact that by mid-1960s the Soviet leadership actually refused to perform a stride from anticapitalism to postcapitalism, i.e., to what official party ideology termed as ‘communism’, and was looking for an alternative. It began to think about the convergence with capitalism hoping it would be admitted to the world economy on equal terms – it was precisely this choice which led the USSR to a catastrophe.

There was a serious problem with the Soviet system. Being a negation of capitalism in the sphere of production relations, the Soviet system had as its material basis the same system of production (a Marxist would say – ‘productive forces’) as capitalism did. To transform itself from anticapitalism to postcapitalism the USSR had to solve three problems:

1) to create a principally new system of economic management as a necessary condition for a new system of production (with a higher level of productivity);

2) to create a principally new system of energy – more powerful and less expensive than that based on oil;

3) to create a military-technological defence of the fulfillment of the first and second tasks (Fursov, 2017b, p. 633).

Did the USSR in the mid-1960s have a possibility and a potential to solve these problems and really outpass the stagnating capitalist West, the USA?

It definitely had.

In the first half of the 1960s, under the guidance of academician V.M. Glushkov, there was created the National Automatized System for Computation and Information Processing (OGAS). It made possible the scientific (cybernetic) governance of the Soviet society transforming it into an information one.

At the same time, a group of scientists under the guidance of I.S. Filimonenko finished the work of creating installations for cold thermonuclear synthesis. In fact, it was an invention of an extremely cheap source of energy that could close the oil industry forever as expensive and unnecessary (‘Goodbye, the Rockefellers, the Rothschilds, etc.’).

Finally, under the guidance of the Soviet genius in military air and space construction V.N. Chelomey, a serious breakthrough was achieved by means of which the USSR would outrun the USA in arms race by 30–40 years.

But none of these possibilities were realized. Glushkov’s system frightened the US. According to American prognostications, if this system was installed by 1970, the USSR would outrun the US forever. It is no surprise that in 1964 under US President Lindon Johnson was organized the group ‘To Stop Glushkov’. But even more frightened were Soviet upper groups – the nomenklatura, at least its leading part. If put into action, Glushkov’s system could change the power balance in the USSR: it would led to the emergence of technocrats in power parallel to and independent from the so-called partocracy. That is why the nomenklatura did its best to

block the introduction of Glushkov's system, and by 1970 it became evident that the OGAS would not be enacted.

As for cold thermonuclear synthesis, by the end of 1967, all works in this direction were also abandoned. By that time, at the upper layers of the Soviet state was formed a pyramid of a powerful group of those who had vested interest in oil trade and, consequently, in the integration into the world market and in the convergence with the West. This group did its best to bury Filimonenko's programme using an administrative resource.

Clan rivalries did not let Chelomey transform his inventions into innovations. Chelomey's counteragents used the détente as an argument against the development of the types of weapons elaborated in his construction office (Bodrikhin, 2014).

As a result, by the end of the 1960s, Soviet ruling groups, in fact, blocked transformation of anticapitalism into postcapitalism and chose integration into the capitalist system. No wonder that in the mid-70s, the West seized the historical initiative from the USSR and began a counteroffensive, which coincided with the neoliberal crack down of the middle and working classes in the West itself. At first, counteroffensive against the USSR aimed just to weaken it as much as possible. But in the early 1980s, the task was reformulated and came to mean destruction. The reason was very simple: grave perspectives for the capitalist system.

### **THE TWILIGHT OF THE HISTORICAL 20th CENTURY (1981-1991)**

In late 1981, R. Reagan gave an order to organize three analytical groups. The task was to work out the scenarios of development perspectives of the capitalist system of the USA and the USSR. The groups were headed by prominent intellectuals – M. Gell-Mann (a Nobel Prize winner and the organizer of the Santa-Fe Institute), R. Collins (sociologist with close ties to the Bush family) and B. Bonner. The three groups were working separately from each other, but their prognostications coincided. All predicted a cyclical crisis of the world economy in 1987-88. The crisis was to cover both capitalist and socialist segments of the world economy. But, unfortunately for the USA, which would be busy with the confrontation with the USSR on the periphery of the world capitalist system, America would not be able to arrest or at least to weaken the crisis. As a result, in the early 1990s, the world economy would be hit by the depression, and its consequences would be much more serious and graver than that of the 1929-33 crisis. According to prognostications, the consequences for the West would be much harder than

for the socialist camp (the decline of production by 15–20% in the West and just by 10–12% in the socialist segment of the world system). According to all three prognostications, the political results would be the following: the possibility of coming to power of communists in Italy, France and Spain; of left labour in Great Britain; mass racial and class riots in the largest US cities. After such prognostications, the destruction of the USSR became a question of life and death for the US, for the survival of the capitalist system.

What is interesting, a very pessimistic prognostication for the nearest future of the capitalist system was made in the early 1980s in the USSR by Pobisk Kuznetsov. According to his research, the functioning of the capitalist economic mechanism would lead in 1993–1995 to the situation in which the quantity of dollars in the world economy as compared to 1 kilowatt/hour of electric energy used in it would exceed the border magnitude. As a result, the hyperinflation of prices, commodities and assets would begin. This means, wrote Kuznetsov, that before the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the capitalist system would lie in ruins.

But in historical reality it was the USSR which was ruined while the West got almost 20 excessive ‘fat years’, thus cheating History. How could it have happened?

Despite all intentions of the West to destroy the USSR, the West could not do it alone – it was not strong enough for that. It had to find allies in the USSR. And it found them. In the USSR itself, at least since the mid-1970s, a group determined to change the social order in the country was formed. This group – ‘a triple union’ – was represented by some segments of the nomenklatura, some segments of the KGB, and shadow economy ‘businessmen’ largely of Georgian and Armenian origin, the latter having close ties with respective diasporas in France and the US. These close ties were exercised through the ‘Spurk’ – a semi-personal Armenian intelligence net organized by a Soviet leader Anastas Mikoyan. But without Western help, the triple union could not capitalize on the Soviet Union – it too had to find allies, and it found them. So there was formed an international double agent with two ‘heads’ – Soviet and Western.

The larger part of the Soviet ‘brigade’ did not want to destroy the USSR altogether; perhaps it was ready just to let go some of the republics – and that was all. They wanted to change the social order. But in the course of actions by the end of 1988, they lost control of the process. The West (the USA of G. Bush Senior) got the upper hand, ceased the initiative. Combined with the Yeltsin factor in 1991, it led to the destruction of the USSR, both as the anticapitalist order and the state. In 1991 began the Age of Turbulence.

It began with the plunder of the ex-socialist zone of the world economy, first of all of the former USSR and GDR.

While in 1989 in Eastern Europe, including the European part of the USSR, lived 14 mln below the poverty line, in 1996 their number soared to 168 mln. It is no surprise that in the last three years of Clinton's second term, the US had a budget surplus for the first time in 30 years. Due to this plunder, the capitalist system got almost 20 'fat years'. This was provided by three factors.

1) With the end of the Cold War, the world market was flooded by cheap natural resources – fuel-energetic (oil, gas), chemical, metallic. It was the result of the privatization of Russian industry.

2) Simultaneously, there was an unprecedented (since the times of Soviet industrialization) rise of foreign investment in China. Cheap Chinese products immensely favoured a consumption boom all over the world.

3) The NATO countries lowered their military expenses for a while, and a part of the funds was transferred to the sphere of social programmes. By 2007–2008, the 'basket luncheon' of the 'fat years' was over – *nihil dat fortuna mancipio*, and there came a crisis. It was neither solved nor overcome. It was just inundated, flooded with money. It did not go away, just slowed down, and is very likely to resurrect in 2020–2021. Since this crisis is not just purely structural as that of 1929–1933, it is systemic – part and parcel of a general (I stress: systemic and not structural), i.e., the terminal crisis of capitalism.

The absence of the USSR changed the world situation at least in three directions:

1) With the USSR, the only force which contained the West in its imperialist inspirations faded away, be it in Cuba, Vietnam, or Angola. World politics without the Soviet Union became the world of imperialist, mainly Anglo-American gangsterism: Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, fell victim to it. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the US, Great Britain, and their allies settled down to the realization of their geopolitical programme in the Middle East and Africa: splitting up states into ministates convenient for exploitation by transnational corporations.

2) Without the USSR with its social achievements, the dominant groups in the West actively began to dismantle the social achievements of the welfare state. The offensive actions against the middle and working classes began 10 years before the destruction of the USSR (Thatcherism in Great Britain, Reaganomics in the USA), but only after the said destruction, these actions could acquire full swing. It is no surprise that by 2010 social and



economic inequalities in the core capitalist countries returned to the level of 1910 – to the norm of capitalist society, as was shown by T. Piketty in his seminal work ‘Capital in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’. Since 1945 capitalists were forced to violate this norm and make capitalism look social against its nature largely because of the existence of the Soviet Union. The return to the norm was the direct result of the destruction of the USSR.

3) The Cold War demanded a high measure of the unity of the Western elites (Fursov, 2017a). Of course, there were different contradictions between different groups of North Atlantic elites as well as inside them, and the USSR tried to use and exploit these contradictions. Yet in the Soviet epoch of world history, the North Atlantic elites did their best to consolidate their efforts, especially in the late 1980s, when even West German elites (after 1988) decided to join the process of the destruction of the Soviet Union. Now, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Western elites having no common enemy and facing the terminal crisis of capitalism found themselves in the situation approaching civil war – at least Brexit and the whole Trump affair testify about it. It is clear that all these trumps-macrons-obamas-blairs-etc. are the puppets of the real Masters of the game. Of course, I am not going to put anybody of this bunch of high-ranking clerks with the Dutch royal family, the dukes of Lorraine and Lichtenstein, or the dukes of Furstenberg and some other families of the Western European grid which formed by the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century and later organized its semiclosed service structures. When I recite the names of presidents, etc., I just define the superficial, surface dimension of the real struggle. Inter-elite war for the future – between different clans, globalists and the so-called ‘patriots’, between radical globalists and moderate globalists – is a feature of the Age of Turbulence. The principle is: who will cut off whom from the future. The whole situation is aggravated by a catastrophic climatic change.

I believe we are witnessing the last multidimensional hunt of the Capitalist Age. And our task is to change places with the hunter and transform him into a game. Is it cruel? Undoubtedly. But is not the hunter himself merciless and cruel? Yes, he is. So for our part nothing personal, just business – the business of making History.

## CONCLUSION

The Age of Turbulence (1991–2021), which is coming to an end opening the gates to the Terminal Age (of capitalism), was the result of the realization of interests of parts of Western dominant groups and parts of the Soviet

nomenklatura. Both groups wanted to keep their power, property and privileges by slowing down scientific-technological progress, by the financialisation of the economy, and – in fact – dismantling of capitalism. However, the dismantling of capitalism presupposed the dismantling of systemic anticapitalism and the destruction of the USSR. These events postponed the systemic crisis of capitalism for 20 years, but the dark side of the postponing was the chaotization of the world economy and world political turbulence, and – in the long run – the speeding up of the terminal phase of the crisis: one can cheat History, but only for a very short time, and after that, the cheater has to pay dearly (Fursov, 2017c).

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## BUILDING FOREIGN POLICY RESILIENCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY: THE CONCEPT OF COMMONWEALTH

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*Abstract:* Today, the international system is in disarray. One rarely knows who is a friend and who is a foe, and for how long. In such a conjuncture, integrating into dense institutional frameworks or alliances could be seen as the obvious thing to do. It could mean stability and anchor in a stormy world political system. But the reality could be something quite the opposite. Big and powerful countries can pretend to have bellwether foreign policy strategies. The same cannot be said of small countries, especially countries like Serbia, who are seeking to navigate in the middle lane. Here, what is required is flexibility, to be abreast of crises and stay afloat. Today's international system pushes agile foreign policy systems to seek shelter under practical and functional concepts and methods which provide leeway and latitude. Most importantly, they are looking for accommodation of both divergence and cooperation under an ethic of equality. For this reason, it is my opinion that the value of the "commonwealth" as a concept should be re-assessed and made more adaptable for today's foreign policy needs. Loose systems of associations will have the advantage of keeping channels of communication open and, at the same time, preserve the much cherished national sovereignty. For countries like Serbia, the system of the commonwealth would allow for the maximisation of national control over its destiny and preserve its resilience.

*Keywords:* Non-binding commonwealths, Western Triple Axiom, Triple lock-down system, Overdependence, Co-dominance, straitjacket agreements, neutrality, structural lee-way, genius loci.

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## THE CONCEPTS AND MODALITIES OF THE COMMONWEALTH AND THE WESTERN TRIPLE AXIOM (WTA)

### The Commonwealth

Commonwealth as a concept is a means of managing change in international relations in a non-coercive manner. There has to be a constant appraisal of these instruments and a hierarchy set. It is thought that Cicero, the great Roman statesman said: 'No form of commonwealth is ever maintained for very long.' (Zetzel, 1999, p. 30). Change and adaptation are the only constants. 'One of the great strengths of the Commonwealth as an organisation is its manifest ability to adapt to its environment.' (Groom, 1984, p. 294). According to A.J.R. Groom the: '... four functions are: a capacity to adapt to the social and physical environment as a coherent unit; the ability to integrate sub-units; a sense of identity; and sufficient self-knowledge to enable goals to be set.' (Groom, 1984, p. 294). Commonwealths could be built at different levels and managed in a devolved manner. The basic characteristic is that it has to be proactive but non-constraining to the participants: 'It is not overtly coercive and its structures are not oppressive. It brings a sense of community into the struggle to control coercion and dismantle oppressive world structures.' (Groom, 1984, p. 303). In terms of perception, commonwealths are very advantageous because they are not perceived as formal alliances put together against someone or some specific threat. And therefore, they act as complementary instruments for traditional strategic and foreign policy elaboration.

Inside a commonwealth framework, one can choose the level and intensity of cooperation and, at the same time, concentrate on the coordination aspect of the forum or grouping. On a practical side, the economics of the commonwealth structure is also extremely attractive for countries that have few resources but would like nonetheless to maintain strong international visibility. Staying on the practical side, '... compared with the UN, the Commonwealth is speedier in its processes because of the absence of a constitution or elaborate rules...' (Groom, 1984, pp. 302-303). The commonwealth as a concept also provides greater flexibility and adaptability, '... all of which stem from habits built up consensually, and relate to a penchant for flexibility and diversity' (Groom, 1984, p. 294). In this manner, the commonwealth could act as an ante-chamber for an alliance, if the complete trust is established fully.

The greatest strength of the Commonwealth as a concept is that it is not geared to forcible integration nor loyalty. Instead, it allows for the natural

growth of both, and thus attains greater resilience and sustainability (Groom, 1984, p. 295). These positive characteristics could be greatly incremented by the establishment of a Secretariat that is: ‘... not too strong but competent, flexible and efficient, can be a device for facilitating consensus and acting as a barometer and bridge transregionally, between official and unofficial...’ (Groom, 1984, p. 303). As a working concept, therefore, the commonwealth provides much-needed fluidity in negotiations.

### **The Western Triple Axiom (WTA)/Co-dominance/Co-gérance**

What does one mean by the Western Triple Axiom? The Collins English Language Dictionary describes an axiom as a statement or idea which people accept as being true. For the last 70 years, there was one phenomenon, called the West, which most Europeans thought to be the natural aspiration of everyone. Worldwide, the West is a cultural phenomenon, which is very diffused and impalpable and almost a cliché. But in Continental Europe, it is real, tangible and omnipresent, and it is not perceived in the same way in Western Europe and Eastern Europe. Seen from an Eastern European perspective, it can be defined as the Western Triple Axiom (WTA) or three layers of control: the first is the blanket control by the military power of NATO, the predominant economic power of the European Union and finally the over-arching industrial power of Germany. However, there is a twist to this. On the surface, it looks like a blanket dominance of the US. But at a closer look, it is, at least for the moment, a co-dominance of both the US and Germany. And as Britain leaves the European Union, France gets industrially marginalized and German preponderance becomes overwhelming. This was long anticipated: ‘With the increasing significance of frameworks of cooperation and integration, like NATO, the OSCE, the European Union and the G7/G8 summits, this civilianization is now functionally more intensive than it ever has been. With the democratization of Southern Europe ... Eastern Europe, it is also geographically more extensive’ (Tewes, 2002, p. 3).

This is the repetition of structures of world integration. From the 1880s onwards, there was no doubt that both Germany and the United States, who had no large-scale empires, were the main organizers of the world economy (van Dijk, 2015, pp. 177-199). They systematically created the conditions for the disintegration of all other spheres. The First and the Second World Wars decided who would be the leader of the tandem and who would play second fiddle. With ups and downs, and periods of lapses, this collaboration

has continued to expand and prosper. They always had common enemies and ambitions, and never really saw each other as enemies but rather as accommodating contenders keen to work out the modalities of co-dominance (Kagan, 2019). Another way of seeing the European integration would be to see it as a *co-gérance* (meaning co-tutelage or co-management, a French term) of their industrial integration of lesser nations.

The way it was done in Central and Eastern Europe, after the collapse of communism, was by the disruption of local economic sovereignty and self-sufficiency. They prioritized certain sectors in a rational and organizational logic that gave preponderance to *co-gérance* (Wandel, 2010, p. 141). As whole swathes of industrial sectors were closed or delocalized to China, revenues fell sharply, giving rise to household debt and the consequent financial integration under *co-gérance*. In the final act, *co-gérance* then rations industrial/economic capacity to the integrated territories (member states), creating permanent dependency. In Europe, the US has modelled *co-gérance* by giving Germany economic predominance but denying it any viable form of military self-sufficiency. After 9/11 and the war on terrorism meant that the security dimension of American influence over Europe and especially Germany increased, forcing all relations to obey the law of integration and central control (Aldrich, 2004, pp. 732-733). From this perspective, *co-gérance* means overall integrative control remains the privilege of the US, while the day-to-day integration becomes the responsibility of Germany. Some in the CEE do not see this in a favourable light, instead preferring *co-gérance* between China and Germany, hoping that the integrative process would be a little more disengaging. But none have taken the decisive step to promote this model for the moment.

All the reason why the concept of the Commonwealth should be considered, not as an alternative to the integrative dynamic of the Western Triple Axiom or *Co-gérance* but as a strategy to find foreign policy leeway, a breathing space, autonomy and an insurance policy, is to counter the excesses or failures of this unstoppable integrative dynamic. The concept of the Commonwealth provides a repository of initiatives that should not annoy *co-gérance*. The following case studies will go on to illustrating these conceptual formulations. In an ad hoc manner, I chose Japan to show the dangers of over integration and its apparent inability to find an autonomous foreign policy initiative. As an alternative model, I use Hungary to illustrate how a relatively small country, at the core of the integrative dynamic, has successfully established a breathing space in its foreign policy initiatives and created a high degree of sovereign centrality.

## THE CASE STUDY OF JAPANESE AND HUNGARIAN FOREIGN POLICY STRUCTURES

With a GDP close to 5 trillion USD, compared to Serbia's 50 billion USD, Japan obviously has enormous economic resources at its disposal. But does this mean it has a foreign policy that can defend its national interests at various levels? In spite of all its wealth and industrial expertise, Japan is considered a foreign policy dwarf, unable to articulate its priorities in the regional and global domains. During the Cold-war period, Japan was lulled into a dependency on the United States for most of its foreign policy requirements. But the same dependency started to become an impediment after the collapse of the Soviet Union with a huge price tag attached to it. During the First Gulf-war, Japan was forced to pay an astronomical 13 billion USD (Funabashi, 1991, p. 59).

The deep bilateral retrenchment looked like a strong shield with a rational and reasonable US foreign policy but this had a disastrous side-effect of shielding off Japan from having its own homegrown foreign policy, oriented towards neutralism: 'The very conditions under which Japan achieved her independence involved her in a firm alliance with the United States and in a commitment to certain important aspects of American Far Eastern policy...' (Morris, 1960, p. 9). After describing the situation as a precarious abyss, Yoichi Funabashi states that: 'Overdependence on its bilateral relationship with the United States undermined Japan's creative diplomacy by closing off avenues to other foreign policy initiatives... Regionalism was seen as both bad politics and bad economics.' (Funabashi, 1991, pp. 62- 63). Defeated in the war and locked into a 'protected alliance' with the United States, Japan did not try to create alternatives for itself, nor did it contribute to creating an environment that would loosen great-power dominance: '... Japan has seldom tried to present itself as a rule-maker in the world community. The rules were already there. Japan simply tried to adapt to them and, if possible, excel at playing the game' (Funabashi, 1991, p. 60). And since the 1990s, this handicap has not been systemically and systematically addressed.

Japan desperately lacks the instruments of delivery for its influence, regionally and globally. And it is notably struggling to establish visibility and grappling with the possibility of slipping down the hierarchy in the way it is viewed by the outside world, from a power to be reckoned with to a power that does not count. In my opinion, the main problem for Japan is that most of the avenues it tries to build are adjoined to the main boulevard of its bilateral relations with the United States of America, bogged-down by

the straightjacket of the American model alliance and cooperation. Once one enters this relationship, it is extremely difficult to disentangle oneself from it without provoking a collapse in a very important relationship. This could come when Japan accommodates its foreign policy to the democratic wishes of its people rather than the '*gaiatsu*' politics or '*outside influence*' (Funabashi, 1991, p. 73). Japan is not alone in this.

In a similar fashion, Hungary, a Central European country, is accommodating with an EU-NATO-German '*triple lock-down system*'. But its approach to regaining control of its foreign policy destiny looks much more creative and successful, without upsetting anyone. Before joining the EU, the 'three goals of Hungarian foreign policy in 1990 were a transatlantic orientation, regional stability and support for Hungarians in neighbouring countries.' (Hoebink, 2010, p. 195). With the EU membership, these priorities were disturbed because the EU has its own priorities that it would like to superimpose over the national levels. This makes Hungarians weary of outside control. In 2010 the Hungarian people gave a clear indication that they wanted a fundamental change. There was pressure to signal a new departure that would guarantee greater '*manoeuvrability*' or '*articulation*' of national desires of a '*genius loci*'. There is also a desire to build alternatives to reduce the overall dependency on outside instances. What will happen if the WTA weakens or simply collapses? Big countries can rescue themselves, but small resource-restrained countries will be devastated. They will be faced with an arduous process of extraction, similar to Brexit, and an uphill task of rebuilding their foreign policy priorities. A good example of this is the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. S. Frederick Starr, writing in *Foreign Affairs*, treats the whole of Central Asia as a clean slate, where any big power can sketch its own design; simply because these countries did not have their own foreign policy design. (Starr, 2005, pp. 164-167). Countries in the ex-USSR struggled for decades to build-up credible and workable foreign policy structures. From this point of view, *straightjacket agreements* and deeply *entrenched arrangements* are very disadvantageous for small countries. Talking about the aftermath effects of Brexit on the broader European affairs, David Keys in *The Independent Online* wrote the following: 'It will further increase the economic centrality of Germany, accentuate differences between France and Germany and increase divisions between southern and northern Europe. What's more, divisions within the EU (and potential post-Brexit economic and strategic tensions between the EU and the US (and between the EU and Turkey) could very well also weaken NATO' (Keys, 2019). Any responsible government should prepare for all eventualities.



To avoid uncertainties, Hungary has endeavoured to construct or strengthen existing *commonwealths* at various levels and in concentric circles in a very rational manner, just in case the EU and NATO commitments were to weaken. It has to avoid institutional bonds that would irritate the Triple Axiom, but it could enter *commonwealth arrangements*. It systematically tried to reinforce its foreign policy resilience. Projecting one's reputation in the international arena is considered vital in the rehabilitation of a country's status. (Crescenzi et al., 2012, p. 261). The first step it took was to strengthen the relations between itself and its community outside its immediate borders in a very peaceful and constructive manner – giving support for educational improvements. One has to be acquainted with the fact that, during the 1945-1990 period, many Hungarian communities living outside the immediate borders were systematically weakened (A. R., 1947, pp. 125-127). And even Hungary under communism did not redress the situation (Deme, 1998, p. 308). The second step was to strengthen the Visegrad Four forum to align the economic and political interests of the Central European segment of its immediate geopolitical neighbourhood. The third step was to extend this framework to encapsulate the whole of the Central and Eastern European region (CEE) with the 17+1 formation. In this forum, Hungary is mainly seeking greater manoeuvrability and harmonization so that the region could empower itself economically without undergoing a process of *constraining integration* similar to that proposed by the WTA. The idea is that the stronger the region becomes economically, the more resilient each CEE member becomes. The fourth step is the realisation that the economic and geopolitical importance of the Turkic Sphere of nations is increasing, and it could present Hungary with inter-regional advantages. It is for this reason that Hungary became an observer member of the Turkic Council and has now decided to become a full member of it ('Hungary provides state scholarships for more than 700 students from the states of the Turkic Council' (Government of Hungary portal, 2019)). This policy coincides with that of the Eastern Partnership proposed by the EU. A win-win situation for everyone. Finally, the fifth step is to entice global outreach. Hungary is neither a leading economic and financial power nor a leader in specialised technologies the world is desperate for. Therefore, it has to find other means to reach out to the larger world. Being predominantly a Christian country, Hungary has decided to make the defence of Christianity as one of its priorities. For this purpose, it is in the process of building a loose commonwealth of global diversity, as a peaceful consultative forum (Government of Hungary portal, 2019). All the above are not alliances but *commonwealth initiatives* that are giving a structural leeway and meaning to the Hungarian foreign policy

without imposing any constraints upon it. In this way, Hungary can stay globally visible and connected, whatever happens with the *WTA* or segments of it.

What is missing, however, is commonwealths that would include Austria, the Balkans, and Romania. Although Austria, Hungary and Romania are in the European Union, there is not enough coordination to create a similar framework as the *V4*. And the Balkans region as a whole is too eclectic for any meaningful and rational grouping. That said, a solution could be achieved in both cases, through a Lower Danube commonwealth grouping. This would have the advantage of remaining outside *WTA*, and at the same time, bringing together Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria. Currently, the European Union has initiated a Danube Region, which is part of the *WTA* integration dynamic - it has its privileged place. The purpose of the Lower Danube commonwealth that I am proposing would be a looser association that would deepen understanding between the members and set regional or sub-regional priorities. The first and foremost priority of the Lower Danube Commonwealth would be to create regional economic cooperation and complementarity, and also put in place a strategy for infrastructures that make this easier. It is possible that in the future ideological commonwealths in the fields of radical or expansive conservatism could be created to make Hungary more connected, especially with a post-Brexit Britain.

### **SERBIA AND THE PROSPECTS FOR GREATER FOREIGN POLICY RESILIENCE**

Serbia has lost its primacy in the Balkans, and with that has lost control of the prime levers of its domestic and foreign policy. The cornerstone of its preponderance in regional affairs and its significance came from its high degree of autonomy and self-sufficiency; it had acquired a remarkable status and an enviable position in international affairs. Even the mighty powers thought of befriending it rather than offending it, let alone attacking it. And a quarter of a century since the demise of the Yugoslav federal structure, Serbia has difficulty in moving away from its isolation and reformulating a durable foreign policy in order to regain its previous status.

During these last twenty-five years, it was deprived of all the opportunities provided by globalisation while she is now confronted with the uncertainties created by this very globalisation. Unable to rebuild itself as needed, it is pushed into a resource-retrained phrase of world

development, where a lack of diplomatic and foreign policy integration can become a structural impediment. My argument is that to attain resilience, both in domestic and foreign policy domains, small countries like Serbia have to maintain active cooperative networks. Whatever perspective we look at, Serbia seems to be at a crossroads and a crucial moment in its diplomatic and foreign policy choices. The first thing for Serbia to do is to identify core constituencies, domains and interests, both short and long-term. It has then to map out and highlight elements that can strengthen its resilience over time. These domains and commonwealths could be: 1. Diasporic Commonwealth; 2. Heritage Commonwealth; 3. Geopolitical Commonwealth; 4. Knowledge Commonwealth.

### **1. Diasporic Commonwealth**

Since the demise of Yugoslavia, many Serbian communities are scattered across the Balkans. And over the centuries, the need to remain culturally and spiritually attached to their home country has meant that a dynamic Serbian diaspora has been established. As a foreign policy domain, the diaspora is central for its resilience. The current Serbian state method of managing relations with the diaspora became legalistic and institutional with the passing of a comprehensive law in 2006, which came into effect in 2009, called 'Law on Diaspora and Serbs in the Region'. It is a very praiseworthy initiative and it is a very logical move by the Serbian state given the fact that 'remittances' by the diaspora constituted 8.6% of the GDP in 2018, according to the World Bank (2018). But this approach has a few weaknesses. By wanting to have institutional control over the diaspora, Serbia risks isolating some of them and even make them hostages to eventual conflicts or tensions between Serbia and the host country. The recent experience between Turkey and its diaspora in Germany is a good illustration of this risk, i.e., straightjacket systems do not work (Vidino, 2019). What is needed is a system of commonwealths, where the initiative comes from each specific community, and the Serbian state helps in the coordination of these desires.

### **2. Heritage Commonwealth**

Historically, before Europe was plagued by petty nationalisms, the Balkans, the Carpathian Basin and the Black Basin were one big melting pot. There was a free flow of people, cultures and goods. Historic heritage sites of one nation can be found several hundred kilometres inside the

neighbouring country. In terms of religious and cultural heritage, the same patterns can be observed, orthodox tradition dominates the region, closely followed by the Ottoman and the Catholic traditions. For thousands of years, it was a region with inter-ethnic conflicts. But these negative experiences are only one aspect of the region, a facet that is overblown by competitive national discomfiture. And it also represents a unique richness in terms of natural beauty, culinary diversity, and architectural extravagance. The region also overlaps that of the Danube River Basin. What is more, for most of the countries in this region, intra-regional trade represents more than 50% of their trade. For Serbia, it is around 40% (Observatory, 2018). Given these undeniable positive attributes, a commonwealth can be formed as a bedrock for further enhancements, mainly of infrastructures for a variety of needs like trade, tourism, research and development, and educational facilities.

### **3. Geopolitical Commonwealth**

Serbia has wisely decided to declare itself a neutral country, but this might not be enough: 'Alternatives are of no value if they do not have a clear purpose that motivates abandoning existing concepts' (Agrell, 1984, p. 159). The West would like to see Serbia distance itself from Russia before taking its neutrality seriously. The relationship with Russia is complex, and it is more than a relationship of interests, it is deep-rooted and civilizational. Both the EU and NATO are powerful straightjackets and would aim to squash Serbian neutrality in the bud. To balance the situation or make it more palpable, Serbia has to find solutions that would guarantee its neutral status; thus, it would avoid entering into formal alliances. The best option for its neutrality to prosper would be to reduce tensions by adopting mechanisms of conflict prevention. There is no conflict prevention and conflict resolution forum in the region. A commonwealth dealing with regional security and peaceful resolution of conflicts is very urgently needed. Who better than a neutral Serbia to take the initiative to organise such a forum?

### **4. Knowledge Commonwealth**

Serbia is faced with serious problems attracting and retaining talent. As its population ages, it will need high value-added jobs to maintain its state-functions, its welfare system and pay for the modernization of its economy. The flow of talent and a qualified labour force would be key to its future

success, and integration at the upper end of the world economic hierarchy. The current strategy of the advanced countries has been to monopolise talent and thus have control over the highest-yielding form of capital. Leading countries like the United States pick and select researchers and create despotic exclusivity in terms of research capacity and sharing of the results (Selvaratnam, 1988, p. 52). This is going to create knowledge aridification as the most qualified researchers are plucked, and new research is restricted in countries of departure. Serbia can benefit massively by setting a new trend. Serbia could promote development by creating a pool of knowledge catered for underdeveloped countries. Because what is supported by WTA, is its own development (Selvaratnam, 1988, p. 59). And most importantly Serbia can stop and reverse the brain-drain. The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) is a good example of this. It was created as a 'regional intergovernmental organization established in 1965 among governments of Southeast Asian countries to promote regional cooperation in education, science and culture in the region.' (seameo.org). With the SEAMEO framework, there exists the Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (RIHED). Commonwealth forums are created for specific research or educational programs and financed in an ad hoc manner. Serbia should consider creating similar regional and inter-regional, non-binding commonwealths.

## CONCLUSION

A small country with a small economic capacity does not always mean it is devoid of foreign policy options. Serbia is indeed in a special and highly delicate position because it is surrounded by contending military alliances in an acutely sensitive geopolitical region. The burden of foreign policy construction is further complicated by its newly acquired status of neutrality. A fundamentally new approach is needed to find appropriate policy instruments. My idea for proposing these commonwealths was to meet four basic needs for Serbia's foreign policy. Firstly, to protect Serbia's new-found neutral status. Secondly, to give greater foreign policy visibility at various levels. Thirdly, to provide an affordable foreign policy framework. And finally, it should provide flexibility and manoeuvrability, allowing for adaptability in an ever-changing world. I am not saying the concept of the commonwealth will suffice, but it could certainly be parallel support to rely on in times of crisis and confront periodic systemic upheavals. As A.J.R. Groom said of the Commonwealth: 'The world could survive without it, but not as well' (Groom, 1984, p. 303).

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## THE WORLD 'SHATTERING': PATTERNS OF RESTRUCTURING OF THE WORLD GEOPOLITICAL SYSTEM<sup>3</sup>

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*Abstract:* This paper aims to investigate patterns of the world geopolitical system restructuring at the beginning of the third decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. With the rise of great and regional powers in the world geopolitical system, a state of equilibrium established following the end of the Cold War is being undermined. In an epoch of the world system disequilibrium, there exists a preponderance for conflict throughout the system, especially in the regions lying between different geostrategic realms. By employing the theoretical approach developed by Saul Bernard Cohen, this paper strives to tackle the question of how the rise of the power of great and regional powers affects the structure of the world geopolitical system. The assumption is that the rise of the power of great and regional powers of the world geopolitical system will lead to `compressing` and `shattering` of geopolitical regions that lie between them. By analyzing the restructuring patterns, this paper demonstrates that the regions lying between different geostrategic realms will become increasingly more „compressed” and „shattered”. Through the analysis of the change in the order of power between states, this paper will provide an overview of the regions most affected by the relations between great and regional powers and their future prospects.

*Keywords:* world geopolitical system, shatterbelt, compression zone, great powers, regional powers, geopolitical regions.

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## INTRODUCTION

The end of the Cold War brought in the scientific community a vast number of books and articles in which scholars began their works by stating the fact that the Cold War is over. This is not without reason because a change in the way the international system was structured has impacted ways authors conceive their research and conduct their analysis. This induced the need for being highlighted from the very first sentences of their work. Simply put, the ways in which the international system is structured influences both states and their behavior. Thus, to explain such behavior of states, one needed to understand how the system is or was structured. But the focus on the end of the Cold War is slowly beginning to become somewhat outdated as well. The international system at the end of the Cold War and the one at the beginning of the third decade of this century are starting to diverge from one another in their core. The structure of the international system dominated by the United States gives way to the structure in which US dominance is weakening, with other states starting to catch it up. If changes in the international structure after the Cold War were so profound, the study of trends of the current international structure is not only a worthwhile endeavor but a necessary one.

Yet, such an endeavor is a challenging one. Suffice to say the Cold War has provided the scholarly community with somewhat relative ease in determining its end because Soviet withdrawal from the international competition has marked a relatively clear indicator of change. However, the scholarly community of today does not have such a luxury of ease. Whereas taking one state out of the equation meant the change in structure in which there are no other challengers to the US, the contemporary world is faced with more than one state stepping up to compete, not only on the global level but the regional one as well. Allegiances are changing, enemies emerging, and those defeated are reclaiming their former might. The complexity of the global structure to come is showing its full potential to challenge our ability to explain not only the structure but the ways it is impacting states within the system. Yet, highlighting how challenging the endeavor is, should not be equated with taking a defeatist stance with regards to the plausibility to identify the patterns of change, as well as the potential impact it might have on the states in the world geopolitical system. If the changing structure is not directly observable, the change in power relations produced by the rise in the power of many great and regional powers, as well as their behavior, to a certain point are allowing us to extrapolate the patterns of restructuring of the world geopolitical

system. From that, one can extrapolate ways in which the changing structure impacts states within the system by imposing limitations and providing opportunities for them to act.

It is for all the above-mentioned reasons that this paper aims to provide an analysis of the restructuring of the world geopolitical system by identifying the patterns of change occurring within the system and the impact it might produce on the states within the system. In doing so, this paper strives to provide not only a basis for understanding the directions towards the world geopolitical system is restructuring, but also how such restructuring can influence the states within the system. By deploying the geopolitical approach of Saul Bernard Cohen, this paper casts an assumption that the changes in the relative power distribution among great and regional powers are producing *disequilibrium* of the world geopolitical system (Cohen, 2015), leading to the restructuring of the existing and the competing geostrategic realms and geopolitical regions. Such circumstances of restructuring are impacting geopolitical regions positioned between the competing geostrategic regions by `compressing` and `shattering`. This eventually led to a greater preponderance of conflict among the states located within those regions.

### GEOPOLITICAL APPROACH TO THE WORLD'S SYSTEM ANALYSIS

For a discipline studying the interconnections between geography and politics, geopolitical approaches have seldom focused on the analysis of the world system and its structure. Whether we focus on classical or critical geopolitics, their focus lies less in the analysis of the world system than on specific states. Discussing the works of Mackinder or Spykman, one is faced with an underlying notion of the existence of spatial areas more valuable than others, and whose control by one state allows for the control of the world (Mackinder, 1904; 1942; Spykman, 1944). Meinig summed up this notion by stating that the essence of these approaches lies in positional supremacy (1956, p. 554) characterized by a segment of space of exceptional value whose control allows one state to triumph over others. On the other hand, authors like Kjellen or Ratzel, as well as Haushofer and Maull, put less emphasis on specific spatial areas as it does on the limitations of spatial surface available to men and recommendations to statesmen on what to do (Maull, 1941; Kjellen, 1943; Haushofer, 1966, p. 40; Ratzel, 1969, pp. 17-28).

Likewise, critical geopolitics mostly avoids discussions on structural factors of world politics, focusing instead on discourses, namely by analyzing practitioners of geopolitics, those studying geopolitics, as well as discourses communicated through popular culture (O'Tuathail and Dalby, 1998, p. 4). Within the literature on critical geopolitics, there are only two references worth noting which are of interest to structural analyses. The first relates to the notion of geopolitical imaginations, but they are connected more to the analysis of societies within states and ways how such imaginations may hinder or enable specific foreign policy actions (Guney and Gokcan, 2010, p. 23). The second relates to a brief mention of the existence of structural geopolitics as a sub-discipline of critical geopolitics in one of the Geraiod O'Tuathail papers, but it has been virtually completely abandoned ever since (1999). With both classical and critical geopolitical approaches having their limitations in systemic analyses, the theoretical approach this paper deploys in the analysis of the world geopolitical system is the one developed by Saul Bernard Cohen.

Cohen's geopolitical approach to the study of international affairs has a tradition spanning for more than half of the century. While considered by many as a clear representative of the classical geopolitical approach (Glassner and De Blij, 1980, p. 273; O Tuathail, 1986, p. 73; Guzzini, 2012, pp. 36-37), Cohen's work was built upon the critique and, for the most part, rejection of classical geopolitical postulates and reasoning (Parker, 1998, p. 114; Cohen, 1998, pp. 42-44; Parker, 2015, p. 141; Stepic, 2016, p. 330). Instead of the static and deterministic approach, which he contributes to classical geopolitics, Cohen proposes a dynamic and possibilistic one, where the geopolitical system primarily was shaped by *equilibrium*, conceptualized as being 'the quality of [dynamic] balance between opposing influences and forces' (Cohen, 1991, p. 557; 2015, p. 61). For Cohen, the geopolitical analysis is primarily systemic as it 'does not predict the timing of events, crises, and flash points that force radical changes in the geopolitical map...What such analysis can do is focus the attention of policymakers on conditions likely to bring about geopolitical change' (Cohen, 2015, p. 1). More importantly for this research, Cohen states that 'changes in the balance within the international system can also be anticipated by the geopolitical analysis' (Cohen, 2015, p. 1).

Conceived in such a way, Cohen's approach is focused on analyses of the structures of the world geopolitical system and its effects on the political processes unfolding within the system. For Cohen, the

geopolitical structure is organized hierarchically into the three spatial levels: geostrategic realm, geostrategic region, and national states (including highly autonomous regions and *quasi-states*) (Cohen, 1975, pp. 63-66; 2015, p. 37). While there is no need to elaborate extensively on the concept of national states, geostrategic realms are 'parts of the world large enough to possess characteristics and functions that are globally influencing and that serve the strategic needs of the major powers, states and regions they comprise' (Cohen, 2015, p. 41). On the other hand, geopolitical regions are 'subdivisions of realms...[which]...are connected by geographical contiguity and political, cultural, military interactions and...by the historical migrations and intermixture of peoples and shared histories' (Cohen, 2015, p. 44).

Each regional whole has a set of geopolitical features (Cohen, 2015, pp. 39-40), a notion 'borrowed' from Derwent Whittlesey (Whittlesey, 1939; Cohen, 2002, p. 682), based upon which the characteristics of each regional whole is identified, allowing for determining the geopolitical structure of the world geopolitical system. Central to the analysis of geopolitical features are the core states which dominate geostrategic realms and geopolitical regions. A hierarchal order of power exists within the world geopolitical system. In this setting, a state could be in one of the five different orders of power (Cohen, 2015, p. 3) which are identified based upon a set of indicators, ranging from human and material resources, over nuclear technology to perception or self-image as to rank in the hierarchy (Cohen, 1982, p. 230). This discussion is relevant with regard to the focus of this paper that the relative strength of the core states of the regions and their changes lead to transformations of the structure of the world geopolitical system. According to Cohen, 'the relative strength of particular cores determines where and at what hierarchical scales geopolitical repartitioning takes place' (1998, p. 45).

But the hierarchical structure of the world geopolitical system does not end with geostrategic realms and geopolitical regions. While they are the most fundamental building blocks of how the world geopolitical system is structured, not all regions are necessarily a part of such a scheme. Crucially, geopolitical regions need not be a subdivision of geostrategic realms because some might exist between and independent of geostrategic realms (Cohen, 2015, p. 44). In such cases they can be: a) shatterbelts, a notion inspired by Fairgrieve and Hartshorne (Fairgrieve, 1927; Hartshorne, 1944), defined as '*strategically oriented regions that are both deeply divided internally and caught up in the competition between great powers of the*

*geostrategic realms*' (Cohen, 2015, p. 48)<sup>4</sup>, b) compression zones, which differ from shatterbelts mainly in sense that they include regional and not great power competition (Cohen, 2003), c) gateways, that 'serve as bridges between realms, regions or states' (Cohen, 1998, pp. 60-66; Cohen, 2015, p. 37), and finally d) convergence zones, which are also between geostrategic realms but without determinate status (Cohen, 2005). Knowing the spatial differentiation of different realms, regions, and the variations of geopolitical regions, one can understand how the world geopolitical system is structured and how it affects the states within the system.

### TRENDS OF TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD GEOPOLITICAL SYSTEM

Arguing that the post-Cold War structure of the world geopolitical system characterized by the dominance of the US is beginning to give way to a new structure from an analytical point of view means several things: a) that other states are approaching the US in terms of relative power; b) that the borders of the existing spatial differentiation within the world geopolitical system are in flux; and, c) that two aforementioned changes can lead to changes in characteristics of certain geopolitical regions, thus impacting the states located within them. A deeper examination of these processes allows identification of the restructuring patterns of the global system and the trends towards which this system is leaning. While, to a certain point, it could be deduced that there exists a chronological order among these processes, this is not necessarily the case. Although, in general, changes in the distribution of power and the dynamics of great power relations dictate, for the most part, changes in global equilibrium, the process of restructuring of geostrategic realms can also lead to the increase in the power of one side. Whether Turkey is part of the Eurasian realm dominated by Russia or the Maritime realm dominated by the US alters the capabilities of those sides, as well as their ability to impact global events. Similarly, without 'compressing' the region of Southeast Asia, it is highly unlikely for China to expand its sovereignty into the South China Sea.

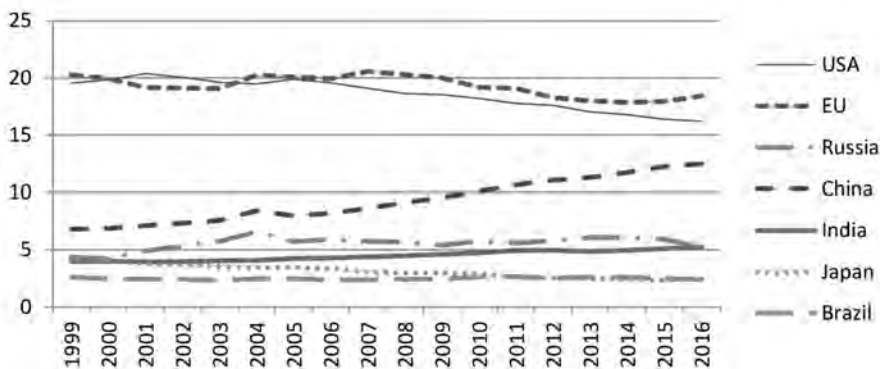
The previous two examples follow the line of reasoning this paper argues. But these examples are a product from more than a decade of change in the dynamics of great power relations. It can be argued that the

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<sup>4</sup> Taking into account the entirety of Saul Cohen's work, the concept of shatterbelt is perhaps his most well-renowned contribution to geopolitical literature.

process of transformation of the world geopolitical system began with the 2008 Russo-Georgian conflict. Although Russian power has been steadily increasing since Putin came to power, it was this conflict that marked Russian return to world affairs. While Russia was relatively silent during the attempts of expansion of the Maritime realm dominated by the US during the 1990s, culminating in 1999 expansion of NATO to former Warsaw pact states, a similar event in Georgia in 2008 was met with Russian action (Kargiannis, 2013). In fact, the events of the 1990s, during the dominance of the US, directly led to the restructuring of the previous world geopolitical system, namely by such expansion (Cohen, 2010, p. 164). Compared to the 1990s, Russia was capable to enact its will in Georgia, but this cannot be considered more than just the beginning of the transformation of the world geopolitical system. Confined to the space bordering Russia, it did not represent a clear indication that Russia is capable and powerful enough to challenge US dominance. Less than a decade afterward, Russian involvement in Syria was significantly different in shedding light on Russian capability to influence events further away from its borders.

Graph 1: Changes in states' power 1999-2016<sup>5</sup>



Source: InEuropa, 2019

<sup>5</sup> The Y axis demonstrates the composite index of the seven variables: economic capital, militarisation, land, human resources, culture, natural resources, and diplomacy (InEuropa, 2019).

Graph 1 demonstrates the rise in Cohen's first order powers. States Power Index shows that in the period 1999-2016, most of the states are stagnating, while only China has a significant rise, and the USA measures significant dropdown.

Parallel to the 'Russian revival', another important series of events are connected to the rise of China and their impact on the *disequilibrium* of the post-Cold War system. Although, since the Sino-Soviet split during the 1970s, China and Russia were not in friendly relations, it was not until the 21<sup>st</sup> century that China became powerful enough to 'establish' a geostrategic realm of their own<sup>6</sup>. Their economic rise during the 1990s provided a foundation for the rise in their power, culminating in the 2013 proclamation by Chinese President Xi Jinping of their desire to take the leadership role of the world system by 2050 (Kačiga, 2019, p. 19). But the authors of this paper believe that China today is not only capable of competing with the US but is, to a certain point, willing to do so. With the launch of their Belt and Road initiative, even the spatial focus of their endeavors is visible, with Chinese activities stretching from the North and South China Sea, all the way to Eastern Africa and Europe.

The 'Russian revival' and China's rise represent the most important changes in the dynamics of great power relations, which are leading to the transformation of the world geopolitical system. While most significant, they are far from being the only relevant. Cohen identifies both the EU and Japan as great powers while seeing Brazil and India as being between regional and great powers (Cohen, 2015, p. 51). Although if we observe the EU in general, it would be the most powerful entity in the world system, the fact that it is an amalgamation of states severely hinders its ability for swift, coherent and coordinated implementation of power. Furthermore, Brexit shook the EU, leaving uncertainties on future prospects of the Union. While France is attempting to step up as the leader of the Union, the lack of cohesiveness in the perceived directions the EU ought to take is questioning their ability to coordinate their efforts towards a shared objective. Although their power is somewhat decreasing, a more important point is connected to the future of their alliance with the US, which French President Macron brought into question (Emmanuel Macron, 2019). Similarly, Brazil was, at one point, hailed as the upcoming superpower but internal turmoil, which started during the reign of Dilma

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<sup>6</sup> Cohen's 1998 paper does not mention an independent East Asia realm led by China, while his 2003 book does (Cohen, 1998; 2003).

Rousseff and has continued until today brings into question such predictions (Cardenas, 2018). In the case of Japan, although indicators point towards a reduction in their power, Japan is becoming more willing to use what they have at their disposal, by taking steps towards remilitarization and abolishment of its pacifist constitution (Auslin, 2016). With the mixed signals on whether the US will remain in Northeast Asia or not, Japan is taking measures to ensure that it is capable of confronting China without US presence.

*Table 1: States divided into First and Second order powers*

FIRST ORDER OF POWER		
United States, Russia, China, European Union, Japan, India		
SECOND ORDER OF POWER		
HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Brazil Canada Turkey Australia Iran South Africa Nigeria	Indonesia South Korea Vietnam Israel Mexico Pakistan Egypt Venezuela Saudi Arabia	Algeria Thailand Argentina Taiwan

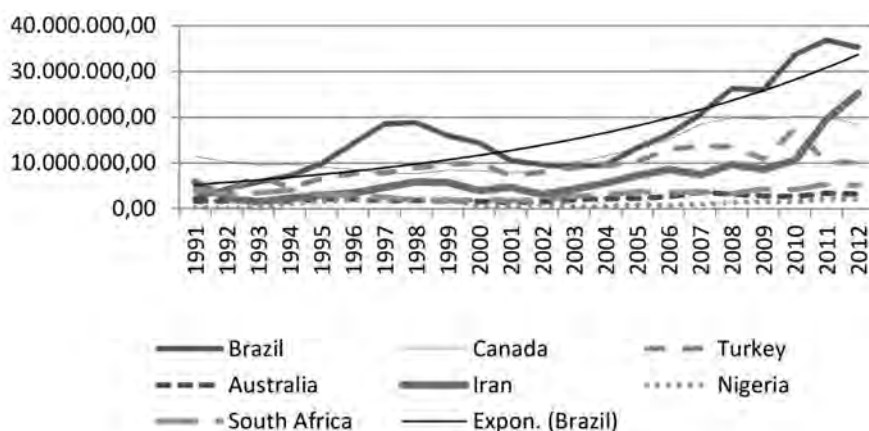
Source: Cohen, 2015, pp. 51-53

While changes in the power dynamics of great powers are paramount to understand the patterns of the transformation of the world geopolitical system, the behavior of regional or second order powers is not without its impact on the process of restructuring the system. In the observed timeframe, many states, which Cohen dubs high second order powers, have not only increased their capabilities but also actively participated in the international events. Namely, these are Turkey and Iran, which actively participated in the Syrian civil war. While Cohen believes Australia and Canada are by no means irrelevant, their behavior has been somewhat ambiguous in mostly remaining on the sidelines. He further claimed that South Africa and Nigeria, torn by internal struggles, were not able to fulfill their potential in becoming leaders of Sub-Saharan



Africa. Thus, the authors' stance is that the behavior of Turkey is perhaps the most interesting of all states from this cohort since there are signs of it 'switching allegiance' by aligning with Russia after more than half a century of alliance with the US. In doing so, in the area where Europe and the Middle East are converging, we emphasize the process of restructuring of geostrategic realms is unfolding with the Eurasian realm expanding through Turkey aligning more and more with Russia.

Graph 2: Military Expenditure of the Cohen's 'high second order powers'



Source: Singer et al., 1972.

Graph 2 demonstrates that Cohen's group of high second order powers' military expenditure is all but stagnating. All the countries within his identified bloc have a gradual rise in their military budgets over the last decade. This could be a clear indicator for analyzing the regional powers' role within the international system. Although this represents a process of significant change in how the world geopolitical system is structured, it is not the only one. Across the borderlands of the Maritime realm, one finds signs of rupture between the US as the dominant power and dominant states in those geopolitical regions. Besides Turkey, France, Germany and Japan are all beginning to distance themselves from the US, thus impacting the US ability to act on Eurasian soil. With Turkey leaning towards aligning with Russia, France advocating for Europe more independent from the US (Macron's, 2019), German defiance of the US in

the case of the North Stream 2 project with Russia, and Japanese fending for themselves in the shroud of uncertainty regarding the US future in their region, the process of restructuring of geostrategic realms and geopolitical regions is currently unfolding within the world geopolitical system. Although it is highly doubtful either the EU or Japan can establish geostrategic realms of their own, the establishment of independent geopolitical regions could mark higher competition of the states from three geostrategic realms in those regions, especially on their peripheries. Similarly, this process is producing the inability of the US to successfully counter the policies of other great powers by which those states are attempting to expand their dominion.

### The World 'Shattering'

In this chapter, we will discuss the world in the shattering process in accordance with Cohen's assumptions. Previously mentioned processes produce the most significant impacts, but not within the geopolitical regions which are parts of geostrategic realms. Rather, the *disequilibrium* process of the world geopolitical system is producing significant consequences towards the regions located in between geostrategic realms. Changes in the power dynamics of great and regional powers and the processes of geostrategic realms and geopolitical regions restructuring are leading to their 'compressing' and 'shattering'. By this, the authors consider that the characteristics of these regions are progressing towards more negative values, indicative of compression zones and shatterbelts. If a region was a convergence zone prior to the process of restructuring, these trends point towards its transformation into a compression zone.

Within existing literature, the idea behind the shatterbelt concept is based on the assumption that, due to their peculiarities, some regions are more conflict-prone. More specifically, these regions involve interstate and intrastate conflicts, along with the large powers located outside that region. Based on an extensive review of the theoretical literature on shatterbelt, Paul Hensel and Paul Diehl identify four characteristics of this region. First, it is a group of 'politically immature' states and represents an area for the competency of the great powers, not an area dominated exclusively by a single force (Hensel and Diehl, 1994, p. 39). The second feature is related to the first, and describes shatterbelt as a region abounding in the states 'beyond the reach of the great powers' but located in areas of overlapping of their spheres of interest (Hensel and Diehl, 1994,

p. 40). The direct foreign presence of a large force in the shatterbelt area or the strong paternalistic attitude of a large force towards one of the countries in the region is the third specificity of this concept. Finally, last but not least, the final feature of the states of shatterbelt is their internal fragmentation in ideological, ethnic or religious terms.

There exists an increase in competition within several regions of the world indubitably involved in the global 'shattering' process. Among many possible shattering regions, we identify ten of them with high scale potential to fit into theoretical schemes. Northeast Asia is perhaps a unique case because it is composed of quite formidable and powerful states. With trends pointing to a break among allies Japan and South Korea, and with the ambiguity on the US role in this region, there are conflicting reports on whether or not the US will leave its existing troops in the region. Instead of being a borderland between two realms and with rising tensions between Japan and South Korea, US withdrawal points towards the region becoming a convergence zone and not a gateway as Cohen predicted (Cohen, 2015, p. 315). Likewise, Southeast Asia is experiencing a similar fate. Although no longer a shatterbelt (Cohen, 1975, pp. 273-287), Southeast Asia has an internal 'fertile ground' for it to 'shatter' relatively easily. With current issues regarding sovereignty in the South China Sea and the interests of all three geostrategic realms, Southeast Asia is assumed to be a convergence zone or perhaps even a compression zone.

We argue that Central Asia represents an interesting case in which there are elements to characterize it as a shatterbelt because of the existence of internal frictions but also the active presence of both China and Russia. But because there is no evidence of great power rivalry, while still having the majority of elements to be a shatterbelt, this region could be identified as a compression zone. On the other hand, we list the Middle East as a region that might be called the only 'true' shatterbelt. It fits not only in the above-mentioned four indicators but within all definitions of shatterbelt. The Middle East is characterized not only with the presence of global powers but also regional powers, namely Turkey and Iran. That is why even without the great powers, this region's prospects will not improve because if they lose a shatterbelt title, they will remain a compression zone.

In accordance with identified indicators, we align Central Europe as a convergence zone. While it is being compressed through variable relations in the US-EU-Russian triangle, it does not show signs of conflict

between the V4 states. With existing historical animosities, there is enough material for it to become a compression zone in spite of current great relations. But this can only be achieved in the wake of greater US-EU frictions because of the animosity of Central European states towards Russia. The Western Balkans, on the other hand, could be characterized as a compression zone leading towards the shatterbelt, as all three great powers are present, including the UK, France, Germany, individually and through the EU, as well as Turkey. This determination is in line with what Cohen concluded for this region (2015, p. 45). Cohen assigns the Horn of Africa to be a compression zone as China's entry might mark the future in which there is a higher chance for great powers' competition. This is why we would identify it as a 'shatterbelt with a new face'. The main argument for this claim is that even though there is a major presence of great powers, it is not in the interest of any of them for peace to erode into a full-fledged conflict. Therefore, the fate of the region will depend on the global occurrences among the major players.

Unlike Cohen's claims (2015, p. 417), we argue that Central Africa presents a compression zone, as it is not in the major focus for great powers to make it a shatterbelt by their actions, as does Western Africa, due to interethnic conflicts in some parts and with French involvement in the majority of them. Being the high second order power, Nigeria is not able to effectively 'organize' this region due to internal ethnic and religious conflicts (Cohen, 2015, p. 39). Central America is still a politically uncertain region with no clear developments within some specific 'bridging' countries such as Venezuela, which classify it as a convergence zone (Cohen, 2015, p. 148). Furthermore, it is questionable whether other great powers will be able to 'break' US dominance over the Western hemisphere. Based on these arguments above, we summarize the regions' geopolitical characteristics in the table below.

Table 2. Shattering regions<sup>7</sup>

Assigned character	Region	Military paternalism*	Political immaturity**
Shatterbelt	Middle East	Full	Full
Compression zone	Western Balkans	Partial	Partial
	Horn of Africa	Full	Full
	Central Asia	None	Partial
	Central Africa	Partial	Partial
	Western Africa	Full	Partial
Convergence zone	Southeast Asia	None	Partial
	Northeast Asia	Full	Partial
	Central Europe	None	None
	Central America	None	Partial

\* This variable is operationalized as military troops or missions deployed within the region by one of the three great powers.

## CONCLUSION

Being dynamic in nature, the world geopolitical system is in the process of constant modification and change. Whether those changes are major or minuscule, the process of change itself is inevitable, regardless of the efforts of certain states which, out of their own interest, are keen on preserving the specific way the world geopolitical system is organized. Those states which were once the most powerful need not have the same position in the future. The ones aligned today need not be tomorrow. Regions that were relatively turbulent before need not be so in the future. To successfully navigate the constantly changing nature of the world geopolitical system, one needs to understand not only how it is composed currently, but also the directions towards it is leaning. This paper strived to provide a concise overview of the trends of transformation currently unfolding within the world geopolitical system. By observing changes in

<sup>7</sup> Data taken from the Fragile State Index whose methodology distinct these indicators into three respective groups: full, partial, and none.

the relative power distribution of the great and regional powers, as well as how the spatial distribution of different geostrategic realms is changing, patterns of the transformation emerged.

Within the Maritime Realm dominated by the US, there exists turbulence in the sense that other major actors of the realm are starting to diverge from the US, indicating the gradual loss of cohesiveness. On the other hand, both the Eurasian and the East Asian realms are attempting to expand their borders by attracting new allies into their ranks. But with such events unfolding in the struggle for supremacy of the world geopolitical system, the geopolitical regions caught in between geostrategic realms are going to bear the largest burden. With the competition among the superpowers likely to increase, the regions in between their geostrategic realms are to experience increasing 'compressing' and 'shattering'. By this, we mean the characteristics which induce the regions in between geostrategic realms to change towards increasingly more negative values from the perspective of states within those regions. What were once gateways are now becoming convergence zones, convergence zones are becoming compression zones, and compression zones are becoming shatterbelts.

With this being an unfolding process, the world geopolitical system is still faced with only one shatterbelt (Middle East). But the trends of transformation and the patterns of restructuring of the world geopolitical system point towards the world in which there are greater possibilities of more than one shatterbelt. Even more importantly, these trends point to regions progressing towards more negative values, thus regardless of the number of shatterbelts, an increase in conflicts in such regions is more likely to happen. It is questionable to what degree the majority of states can influence these changes to prevent their full manifestation out of fear of impacting them negatively. States and statesmen must take into account these changes unfolding to provide security for their states and their citizens. This is why the relevance of shatterbelt and similar geopolitical concepts should be further researched to provide a deeper understanding of how global affairs are being facilitated.

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# **BALKAN REGIONAL SECURITY: CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES**



## THE BALKANS AS GEOPOLITICAL PERIPHERY OF EASTERN EUROPE – PAST IMPLICATIONS FOR AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE<sup>2</sup>

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*Abstract:* In the post-Cold War period, the Balkan Peninsula experienced the issue of “Balkanization” – fragmentation of once compact multiethnic political space – similar to the one it had already experienced in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Both historical instances of Balkanization countered wider European integrative trends of the time. A historical comparison between the first and the second Balkanization finds the cause for this “repeating” of history in an extraordinary geopolitical position of the peninsula as the periphery of geopolitically significant Eastern Europe. As a theoretical framework, Miller-Kagan’s patterns of great powers’ involvement in regional conflicts are used, alongside with geopolitical classic Halford Mackinder’s concept of Eastern Europe. The main thesis is that due to the peripheral position of the Balkans within Eastern Europe, the great powers’ influence in the region has been continuously limited – instead of opting for integration like they did in Central-East Europe (a region of higher priority) they allowed local actors to balkanize their political space. However, the Balkans was just a pioneer of the first Balkanization – after World War I the process spread throughout Eastern Europe. Signs that the second Balkanization is also spreading – not only in Eastern Europe (with further fragmentation of the post-Soviet space) but also throughout the EU (with the rise of sovereignty due to the migrant crisis, as well as with regional separatism in several Western European countries) – are clearly visible. The conclusion is that in times of global uncertainty, explaining historical similarities could help in answering the challenges before they arise.

*Keywords:* Balkanization, the Balkans, great powers, geopolitics, Eastern Europe, Halford Mackinder.

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## INTRODUCTION

For more than a hundred years, the Balkans has been widely known as a “powder keg” of Europe. World War I erupted following the event that happened in the Balkans. The civil war in Balkan state Yugoslavia was the first event to deny that the “end of history” arrived with the end of the Cold War. It seemed that the early 20<sup>th</sup> century history was repeated at its end in the Balkans. Yet, there is much more to this comparison because these two historic events – World War I and the Yugoslav civil war – were part of much wider processes, which as well included events that preceded and followed them. These processes – in this paper referred to as the first and the second Balkanization – show some striking similarities between each other. The theoretical goal of this paper is to analyze these similarities to establish the main factors that cause Balkanization and its spreading to other areas. The practical one is to derive lessons from history in order to formulate what is needed to reverse the current trend of Balkanization spreading. The rest of the paper is organized as follows. First, the definition of Balkanization is offered, two historical instances of Balkanization are described, and the main factors that cause it are identified. Second, the third and decisive factor – patterns of the great powers’ influence in the Balkans – is further elaborated. Third, these patterns are explained by the geopolitical position of the Balkans as the periphery of Eastern Europe. Fourth, the current spread of the second Balkanization and possibilities of its reversing are considered. Finally, the main theoretical and practical arguments are summarized in the Conclusion.

## THE TWO BALKANIZATIONS

To “balkanize” something means “to break up (a region, a group, etc.) into smaller and often hostile units” (Balkanize, 2019). In the context of this paper, “Balkanization” refers to “the violent fragmentation of larger states into smaller, mutually hostile and barely viable units” (Perica, 2019, p. 47). Or in less harsh and pejorative words, it is simply the fragmentation of a politically compact multiethnic space into several smaller would-be nation-states. The term originated at the end of World War I to describe the formation of new nation-states throughout Eastern Europe on the territories of former empires (Andersen and Pinos, 2015, p. 25). This process was named after the Balkan Peninsula, which had already experienced the division into several small states with troublesome mutual relations during the period between the Napoleonic Wars and World War I. The

establishment, expansion, and mutual struggles for power and territories of Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania on most of the peninsula that was once firmly in the hands of the Ottoman Empire, ran counter to a wider European trend of the time. As a result of divisions of Poland at the end of 18<sup>th</sup> and German unification in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, on the eve of World War I in the rest of Eastern Europe, there were no nation-states other than three empires and the great powers: Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary. The neighbouring Apennine Peninsula was no different – several small states there united into a single Italy. The Balkans was the only place in Europe (actually, after the decolonization of Latin America was finished, in the world) where new small states appeared in large quantities.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, it was not a surprise that the Balkans was used as a word for coining a new term that would denote fragmentations of multiethnic political spaces that followed – first in the rest of Eastern Europe and the Middle East after the World War I, and later with the decolonization in Asia and Africa after World War II (Andersen and Pinos, 2015, p. 25). What begs for an explanation is why was exactly the Balkans the place in which Balkanization started, even when the overall international trend was quite the opposite? The question gained even greater significance after the Balkanization was back to the Balkans in the post-Cold War period, with the dissolution of Yugoslavia (Andersen and Pinos, 2015, p. 25; Simić, 2013, p. 114). Once again, it was opposite to wider European trend of integration with the formation of the EU, yet it now seems to be an introduction to new fragmentations throughout Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – first in post-Soviet space, then with increased regional separatism in Western Europe, and finally with the rise of sovereignty in some EU members due to the migrant crisis.

Three factors can be identified that enabled what we would call “the first Balkanization” in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Two of them are connected to the character of the Ottoman Empire: its relative weakness compared to European great powers and its peculiar internal arrangement. The third one is about patterns of great powers’ influence in the region. All three factors also contributed to “the second Balkanization” at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – one just needs to replace the Ottoman Empire with SFR Yugoslavia. The first and the second factor are easy to consider, even by common sense. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ottoman Turkey was a former great power, an empire in

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<sup>3</sup> The only other European examples, but in “smaller quantities”, were Belgium (1839) and Norway (1905).

decline. Unlike other great European powers who were the main subjects in international politics, bent on aggrandizing their own territories and colonial possessions, Turkey was an object in a vain struggle to survive. So, it was not surprising that new states could emerge only in its territory since the rest of the European continent had already been carved up by far stronger and more stable powers who supported Balkan national liberation movements at one time or another. Their formulation of the “Eastern question” was a clear sign of the Ottoman Empire’s weakening (Arslan, 2019, p. 408). Similarly, SFR Yugoslavia could have been an influential international actor only due to its geopolitical position between the spheres of influence of two superpowers that balanced each other. Yet, it was a small and weak state on both world and European scale, and would not stand a chance against any of the superpowers alone.

When it comes to the second factor, Ottoman Turkey organized its subject peoples by a model of *millet*s, religious communities that had some degree of autonomy, which was not territorial (Hagen, 1999, pp. 52-53; Mylonas, 2019, pp. 866-868). When these religious divisions became the basis for nation-building, their non-territorial nature and the fact that ethnic and religious groups were territorially mixed produced two outcomes: too much particularism in matters of territory and identity, which prevented the construction of one or two unified Balkan state(s); bitter clashes between would-be nation-states in the Balkans over territories and identities. SFR Yugoslavia also had a complex internal arrangement, with borders between the federal units that cut across dispersed and mixed ethnic and religious groups, which led these groups to conflicts over the interpretation of national borders and identities after the former multi-ethnic common state collapsed (Perica, 2019, p. 42).

## THE BALKANS AND THE GREAT POWERS

Although the two mentioned factors explain why territorial spaces of the Ottoman Empire and SFR Yugoslavia were more prone to political fragmentation to small and mutually hostile units compared to the rest of Europe, they still do not explain why the two Balkanizations actually happened. As the main actors on the European stage, the great powers still had the last word over territorial outcomes of Ottoman Turkey and Yugoslavia’s collapse – why did they allowed Balkanization in both historical instances, instead of opting to create a lesser number of greater states (or even a single one) in the region, or (in the case of the first

Balkanization, when such practice was still allowed by international law) to annex parts of the region themselves, like they did in the rest of Eastern Europe? This leads us to consider the third factor, which would also explain why Balkanization in both instances expanded (or would yet expand) to European regions that do not share the presence of the first two factors to an equal extent – patterns of great powers’ influence in the Balkans.

To this end, the model of great powers’ (non)involvement in regional conflicts, developed by Benjamin Miller and Korina Kagan, is a useful tool. Miller and Kagan recognize four patterns of great powers involvement in regional conflicts: competition, cooperation, disengagement, and dominance (1997, pp. 57-58). These patterns are conditioned by the great powers’ capabilities (overall and those of power projection to the region in question) and interests. Competition and cooperation are more likely in the case of equal capabilities and interests, while disengagement and dominance occur when asymmetry is present (Miller and Kagan, 1997, pp. 61-64). Higher great powers’ competition leads to higher small states’ “positive” autonomy (ability to manipulate the great powers), which causes intensified local conflicts. Great powers’ cooperation reduces the degree of small states’ autonomy and leads to conflict mitigation. When the great powers disengage from a region, the degree of small states’ autonomy increases and conflicts remain uninterrupted; when only some of the great powers disengage, the remaining one can establish hegemony. Dominance means very low autonomy of regional small states and highly effective conflict management, even more than in the case of cooperation; the price is the liberty of small states, especially if hegemon is not democratic (Miller and Kagan, 1997, pp. 59-61).

Miller and Kagan claim that the creation of several newly independent states in the Balkans between the congresses of Vienna and Berlin was the result of great powers’ cooperation in conflict management on the peninsula (1997, pp. 66-69). Between 1880 and 1914 there was competition in the region between Austria and Russia, which increased Balkan states’ autonomy and their capability to manipulate the great powers for their own ends, resulting in their further territorial expansion at the expense of Turkey, conflicts between Bulgaria and its neighbours, and creation of independent Albania (Miller and Kagan, 1997, pp. 69-71). Finally, according to these two authors, the war in former Yugoslavia was the result of Soviet disengagement and limited Western engagement in the region, until the United States established its dominance (Miller and Kagan, 1997, pp. 76-78). Miller and Kagan published their article in 1997, so they could not include the



continuation of Balkanization in former Yugoslavia even under the U.S. dominance: with the independence of Montenegro and self-proclaimed independence of Kosovo. What catches the eye here is that under all four Miller-Kagan's patterns of great powers' involvement in the Balkans – regardless of whether the regional conflicts were managed, left uninterrupted, or intensified – the repeating feature was Balkanization, in the sense of political fragmentation of the region into small and mutually hostile units.

This can be explained with what lies in the essence of Miller-Kagan's patterns of great powers' involvement in regional conflicts – actual capabilities and interests of these powers. They say all great powers save for Prussia/Germany had high interest in the Balkans between 1815 and 1914, which at first led to their cooperation, and later to competition (p. 66). Nevertheless, they do not say that exactly the least interested power – Germany, whose Chancellor Bismarck said that “the whole of the Balkans is not worth the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier” – in the role of the host of the Congress of Berlin, was a decisive broker of balkanizing solution for the Balkans (Simić, 2013, p. 117). France has never been deeply interested in the Balkan region (Napoleon III instrumentally used its issues to undermine the Vienna system). Austria's priorities got diverted to the Balkans only after its defeat in the war against Prussia 1866, lying in German Middle Europe before that. Russia and Britain's interests for most of the peninsula were instrumental as they clashed over the control of Constantinople and the Straits. British first tried to prevent the collapse of Turkey, but “lost faith in the ability of the ‘sick man of Europe’ to go on living and resigned themselves to the empire's partition” (Hagen, 1999, p. 53). Russia settled with Berlin's annulment of the San-Stefano Treaty too easily. Austria and Russia's interests in the region did increase from 1880 and 1914, eventually leading them to start World War I, but before that neither had enough capability to decisively influence Balkan matters; this is what Miller and Kagan recognize when saying that the Bucharest treaty of 1913 was concluded between the Balkan states themselves, and not submitted to the approval of the great powers (1997, p. 71). They also confirm that Yugoslavia collapsed as the result of the great powers' disengagement due to their low interests (the United States) and capabilities (the European Union), yet warned that U.S. interest in the Balkans remained low even after achieving dominance (1997, p. 79). Therefore, they could easily understand why the U.S. subsequently settled with further Balkanization as the simplest solution for local conflicts, rather than engaging in a more difficult task of regional integration.

## THE BALKANS IN MACKINDER'S EASTERN EUROPE

We can conclude that both Balkanizations were not products of too much influence of the great powers in the region – in case of which some of them would have either annexed or integrated parts of the Balkans under their own spheres of influence – but of their limited engagement due to their insufficient interests and/or capabilities. This was quite opposite to how the great powers behaved during the same periods in some other strategically more important areas, especially in the rest of Eastern Europe. Having in mind that the Balkans is also a part of Eastern Europe, to explain this contradiction we must observe an extraordinary geopolitical position of the peninsula as the peripheral part of vast East-European space. The notion of geopolitical East-West European divide is well-developed among scholars, but nowhere as convincingly as it is in the works of one of the classics of geopolitics, Sir Halford Mackinder.

Mackinder defined Eastern Europe as a combination of the Baltic and the Black Sea water basins, which is a natural extension of Eurasian Heartland, a vast area that covers continental waters' and the Arctic Ocean basins (Mackinder, 1919, pp. 130, 134-135, 148). The most famous Mackinder's quote is his syllogism: "Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island<sup>4</sup>; who rules the World-Island commands the World" (Mackinder, 1919, p. 186). Therefore, Eastern Europe is a key concept in Mackinder's geopolitics, and a stepping stone towards global hegemony (Trapara, 2014, pp. 31-32). According to this logic, the main reason why no great power ever succeeded in establishing such hegemony is the fact that Eastern Europe never entirely fell under the control of a single power. Closest to achieving command over Eastern Europe in its entirety came Nazi Germany (during its offensive on the Eastern Front in World War II, which ultimately failed), Soviet Union (during the Cold War, but it was successfully contained before reaching western and southern borders of Eastern Europe), and the post-Cold War United States (whose geopolitical march to the East reached its peak and stalled with events in Ukraine in 2014). Given that a large portion of the Balkan Peninsula (which is also valid for former Yugoslavia) belongs to the Black Sea basin, we can consider it a part of Mackinder's East Europe, which means that the region should be of great geopolitical value for the great powers.

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<sup>4</sup> Eurasia.

However, the Balkans is more of an “appendix” to Eastern Europe than its first-class part; most of the great power history actually happened to the North and the East of it – in what is the rest of Eastern Europe, which we would call Central-Eastern Europe (CEE). This was an area in which the great powers – especially those closest to it, like Germany and Russia – could not afford to take chances, and needed to have a firm control over at least some portion of it. In the Balkans, they could afford gambling and neglect from time to time. In this sense, in the post-Cold War period they could even make a difference between specific parts of the Balkans – for example, Eastern half of the peninsula (Romania and Bulgaria) has much greater significance for U.S. geopolitical march to the East compared to what is now called the Western Balkans.

However, during the 19<sup>th</sup> and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, too much gambling and neglect in the peripheral, yet geopolitically still significant Balkans, brought great powers to a disastrous World War I in the end. In its aftermath, the first Balkanization spread to Central-Eastern Europe, mostly due to temporary disengagement of defeated Germany and revolutionary Russia (Miller and Kagan, 1997, p. 72). Hostilities between status quo and revisionist states in this region and the Balkans, in combination with unresolved border issues, would eventually lead to even more horrible World War II, during which Nazi Germany managed to establish temporary dominance over the regions and redraw its map in due process (Miller and Kagan, 1997, pp. 73-75). Another German defeat gave CEE and parts of the Balkans another master – the Soviet Union, which froze disputes over (some renewed, some newly established) borders, while Balkanization continued to spread elsewhere – in the shape of decolonization of Asia and Africa (Miller and Kagan, 1997, pp. 75-76). It is important to underline that neither Nazi Germany nor the Soviet Union was interested in the Balkans even close to how much they valued CEE.

It would be the same with the United States in the aftermath of the Cold War regarding Yugoslavia, in which Washington’s low initial interest in combination with Russia’s disengagement and European powers’ lack of capabilities would produce the second Balkanization (Miller and Kagan, 1997, pp. 76-77). It appeared too easy to take another gamble in the Balkans, allowing Yugoslav federation to simply fall apart, yet much more difficult to defend the idea of federal units taking its place as newly established states with the existing non-ethnic borders. Of course, such mess was not allowed in a far more valued CEE (Romania and Bulgaria added), where conflicts were prevented and borders remained firm (with an insignificant exception

of “velvet divorce” between the Czech Republic and Slovakia), while the whole region was set on a successful path to European integration. Even after engaging more robustly in ending the Yugoslav wars that were inevitable as the result of its initial behaviour, the U.S. would pursue much disinterested regional dominance way into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, not bothering to resolve a single open issue between and within troubled Balkan states, while only rhetorically supporting their EU perspective, which still remains a far-away vision for most of the Western Balkans. It is yet to be seen how the appearance of a new great power in CEE and the Balkans – China – under the “17+1” initiative will affect political stability in both regions.

### THE CURRENT SPREAD OF BALKANIZATION

Yet, the fact that the Balkans (at least former Yugoslav space) remains a “powder keg” is not the most worrisome consequence of another great powers’ neglect and gamble in this region. The main potential problem for Europe and the world is that 20 years into the 21<sup>st</sup> century there are visible signs that – like it was the case with the first Balkanization a hundred years ago – the second Balkanization is also spreading to other areas, due to renewed conflicts and power redistribution between the great powers. And it is quite clear that everything once again has started in the Balkans. Western unilateral handling of the Kosovo crisis in 1998/1999, including NATO aggression against Yugoslavia, triggered Russia’s orientation towards more assertive foreign policy. Facing subsequent NATO enlargement to the East, Russia would opt for the further Balkanization of post-Soviet space to prevent some of its neighbours’ NATO membership. In 2008, after a brief war with Georgia, Moscow recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and in 2014 responded to a pro-Western coup in Kiev by taking Crimea from Ukraine and supporting the creation of the Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics on its territory. On both occasions, a “Kosovo precedent” was invoked by the Kremlin as a (quasi)legal justification for territorial changes (Trapara, 2018, pp. 41, 50).

The Middle East was the region that suffered even more from Western powers’ unwillingness to act on the lessons learned in the Balkans. Unlike the mishandling of the Kosovo issue, the United States had a positive achievement in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the Dayton Accords, which stopped the war and laid the foundation for peaceful and functional relations between three Bosnian peoples (Trapara, 2016, pp. 57-58). Yet, the U.S. has been systematically working against this arrangement in the

decades that followed, not even thinking of applying it elsewhere. Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Yemen and Syria (where Russia also got involved) ended up balkanized within themselves, with no Dayton for any of them in the sight. This triggered massive waves of refugees and economic migrants from these countries towards Europe, which caused what is now called the migrant crisis. This process recently affected intra-EU relations, with some members (especially those of CEE) “re-sovereignizing” themselves to avoid the influx of migrants, ignoring Brussels’s quota system, even building physical barriers (like Hungary’s fences on its southern border) against migrants’ entry. This is a clear example of the second Balkanization spreading to the EU, but it is not the only one. The issues of political boundaries and territoriality, which 20-30 years ago seemed to remain reserved only for the Balkans, now seem to be fully back to the EU itself. Brexit, separatisms in Scotland and Catalonia, British-Spanish clash over Gibraltar – together make a threatening trend of a new political fragmentation throughout Europe (Andersen and Pinos, 2015, pp. 25-26; Gozubenli and Tekeshanoska, 2018, pp. 6-7). In 2014, even Pope Francis had to warn Western states, who had faced regional separatism, to do what they can to avoid “the tragedy of Balkanization” (Perica, 2019, p. 49).

Fortunately, this trend is not inevitable and can be reversed. History of the first Balkanization teaches us what should be done and what mistakes should not be repeated before it is too late. It is important because Balkanization “keeps ethnic conflicts in check, but it does not solve them” (Andersen and Pinos, 2015, p. 37). To stop the second European and global wave of Balkanization, one should go back to its roots – to the Balkans. The great powers (especially those in the West) should first admit that they acted irresponsibly and made some mistakes with their past policies in the region, and then change these policies in order to do their best to correct the mistakes. Of course, this should be done cooperatively – the U.S, the EU (and its most powerful members), Russia and China (as a new great power whose influence in the region is on the rise) should take responsibility and work together with local actors to find solutions for the open regional issues which would stabilize the region, and present this success as an example that could be applied in other areas that suffer from Balkanization. Instead of undermining the Dayton Accords and insisting on unconditional recognition of Kosovo independence, the U.S. and its allies should uphold the current constitutional arrangement for Bosnia as the only possible model which keeps this country together, while allowing for a more creative compromise solution to the status of Kosovo. If successful, both outcomes could then be, of course, taking into account local circumstances and

working with local actors, used as a model to resolve conflicts and stop Balkanization in other places – from the Middle East, through the post-Soviet space, to the EU itself.

## CONCLUSION

We live in the age of great uncertainty. What yesterday was taken for granted tomorrow can be put into question. International Relations, as such, like all social sciences, are an uncertain scientific discipline in a perpetual struggle to explain the complex and changing international environment and try to predict the outcomes. Yet, history is a safe haven for IR researches, for if the present and the future are not certain, the past is – at least that part of it which is not contested. Therefore, it is not surprising that all major IR theories are formulated and tested on historic events and processes. Although we can never be sure about what is going on in the world, let alone what will happen, we can always observe some trends and search for similar ones in history to see what outcomes they produced, and under which conditions. It is obvious that the spreading of Balkanization is a trend of the day, for the conditions that caused its previous “edition” to spread are present once again. Yet, it is still a nascent challenge that can be answered and reversed. In this paper, it was argued that the great powers’ gambling and neglecting behaviour in a peripheral part of a key geopolitical region of Eastern Europe was a primary condition of the first Balkanization and its later spreading throughout Europe and the world. Such behaviour was present, and it still is, in the second Balkanization, too. Therefore, going back to the roots and sealing off Balkan Pandora’s box, should be viewed as a necessary condition for introducing some degree of order to uncertain global relations.

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## THE WESTERN BALKANS: THE EU BORDER OUTSOURCING PROCESS AND ITS IMPACT ON THE BALKAN REGION

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*Abstract:* During the so-called refugee crisis of 2015 and 2016, the European Union launched a strategy to contain migration flows based on three main pillars: securitization, externalization and criminalization of help. In this paper, we will focus on the externalization or border outsourcing to third countries, particularly towards the Western Balkans. The implementation of the Action Plan approved by the EU and the countries of the region, together with different reforms on the asylum and refugees' rules and regulations in some EU countries, as well as the enlargement of the Safe Countries list towards the Western Balkans countries and Turkey, has had an impact in the region. Issues such as how the humanitarian crisis has impacted the Western Balkans countries or changes in the conditionality demands towards these countries based on cooperation on the outsourcing process will be addressed. Our main point of departure is that more attention towards this region has been paid by the EU due to the so-called refugee crisis, and the commitments agreed among Brussels and the Western Balkans countries to deal with it have had more importance to the EU than the progress achieved by these countries. On the other hand, we will state that the Western Balkans have been used as a buffer to contain migration flows under the excuse of the conditionality principle. Both facts have had an impact on the region in two main aspects. The first one, is related to the human mobility of Balkan citizens towards the EU countries, with or without visa liberalization. Second, by affecting regional cooperation and trust among these countries and other Balkans countries already in the EU. Our main conclusion is that the security and stability strategy implemented by the EU in the Western Balkans countries has led to a backstop in the democratic reforms of these countries, together with a loss of influence and presence perception of the EU in the region in favor of other actors less demanding in terms of protection of the rule of law, pluralism or democratization.

*Keywords:* refugees, conditionality principle, enlargement, regional cooperation, migration.

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## INTRODUCTION

The humanitarian crisis at the European borders since 2015 caused a reaction of border management policies without precedent. Although, as Arcos and Palacios (2018) have been able to prove, confidential reports about the possible impact of the mobilizations in North Africa have already existed since 2007 (the so-called Arab Spring), the massive arrival of people seeking international protection in Europe made the entire system collapsed. A European asylum management system was unprepared to handle many applications, in addition to suffering from significant asymmetries among the Member States.

The publication of the European Migration Agenda in spring 2015 by the Commission and submitted for discussion by the Member States, addressed, albeit belatedly, a comprehensive strategy on migration and asylum. This strategy was based on four basic pillars: border control, improvement of asylum and refugee policy, integration policies, and labor migration. At an informal Council meeting in Luxembourg, the States decided to focus especially on the first of the blocs, reaffirming a security interpretation of migration flows.

With this approach, special attention was paid to border control and its outsourcing. Thus, migration was understood as a threat to the security of European societies, rather than a structural challenge that had to be faced by the 27 (28) as a whole.

In this context, the need for cooperation with European neighbouring countries as a whole was emphasized. The starting point had been the construction of a Wide Europe with an epicenter in Brussels and with an area of influence of proximity that includes the Western Balkans, the countries of the eastern association, and the countries of the southern neighborhood, as well as Turkey. Although the process of outsourcing of migration control had already begun years before the crisis, as observed in the EU-Morocco Agreement, it was reinforced on a triple operational geographical axis in 2015. On the one hand, and as a priority, it was essential to close the main access road to the EU, i.e. the Western Balkans, especially Serbia and Macedonia (now the Republic of North Macedonia). These countries should serve as a retaining wall against flows from Greece through the Aegean Sea. The next step was the Declaration of Intentions agreed between the Member States and Turkey in order to curb departures to the Hellenic country and thus curb the movement of people in the Turkish

territory. The last link would be the Valletta agreement with the African countries that aimed to stop migratory flows from the Sahel.

This contribution aims to carry out a detailed analysis of the first of these outsourcing actions, the negotiation with Serbia and Macedonia. It will be analyzed from three axes. Firstly, from the negotiation procedure of the Member States with these countries. The EU did not hold a Summit with the Balkans, but an intergovernmental meeting with the community countries closest to the Balkan region. It was, in short, a multilateral approach led by Germany and Austria, with the idea of offering benefits to these countries if they collaborated in curbing people from Greece. At this point, it was striking to see how on this occasion the conditionality of accession was not brandished. The second axis was about the positions that the Balkans states adopted in relation to refugee flows, i.e., the way in which both Macedonia and Serbia managed the borders and modified their asylum legislation. It was an attempt towards Europeanization and, in the case of Skopje, taking advantage of the window of opportunity offered by this crisis to demonstrate its management capabilities of the potential incorporation into the EU. Finally, this time, the third axis is related to the EU's need to close the discontinuity caused by these countries in defining their borders from the point of view of regional stability and security.

The objective triangle of the conditionality policy application, similar to that of the neighborhood policy, fails to fully implement. Security, democracy and stability do not operate in these countries as it has been theorized from liberal and theoretical positions of modernization. It has not worked in the Balkans, where Brussels's sponsored regimes called stabilitocracies have been established for stability and security, nor in other European neighbouring countries.

The objective of this contribution is precisely the analysis of the border outsourcing process for the Balkans within the framework of a conditionality policy no longer based on merely technical issues of compliance with the accession chapters. Its foundations are of a political nature and imply almost enforceable compliance with a border control that the EU is not able to comply with and for which it uses the carrot and stick strategy with the eternal candidates for accession.

**THE PRINCIPLE OF CONDITIONALITY AND OUTSOURCING  
AS THE AXES OF MIGRATION MANAGEMENT  
WITH THE COUNTRIES OF ENLARGEMENT  
AND THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBORHOOD**

The debates about how to manage mobility within the European framework have undoubtedly influenced the relationship that has been established with the EU candidate countries. Serbia, North Macedonia and Turkey have been directly involved in Brussels's management of the humanitarian crisis experienced during 2015 and 2016.

Within the framework of the European migration policy in recent years, one of the approaches that had already been working intensely for years - the security approach - has been reinforced (Ferrero-Turrión and López-Sala, 2012). The idea behind the reinforcement of this approach was none other than to generate a perception of threat towards host societies linked to migratory flows (Terrón and Cusi, 2017). And so, the mechanisms on which it has been articulated have been the outsourcing, border securitization and the criminalization of aid. The tools that have been used to implement this idea are sustained in the dialogue with the countries of origin and transit (outbound) through incentives linked to development cooperation. Thus, the Member States continue in a dangerous drift of a security approach through not only border control or hardening of visas or deportations, but also to the naturalization of control outsourcing to countries that are in the immediate vicinity of the Union. And all this has been possible due to the implementation of the negative conditionality that uses instruments linked to development policies as it was observed in the Global Migration and Mobility Approach of 2011 (European Commission, 2011), on which both the Valletta Action Plan and the EU Emergency Trust Fund in Africa have been articulated as early as 2015 during the humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean (European Commission, 2015d).

It is surprising to observe the setback generated by this strategy of containment of flows. Traditionally, the EU had implemented policies towards third countries in immigration matters strictly linked to the control of departures from their countries of origin. The bilateral agreements signed by Spain during the first five years of this century addressed this issue based on mutual cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination, but development aid was never conditioned on this issue. In fact, the proposal to link issues, migration and development was put on the table during the Seville European Council during the Spanish Presidency. The result of the vote in the Council was a rejection (EC 2002). However, the drift

of the decisions taken by the Council is moving in the opposite direction. Far from continuing with a doctrine that refused to apply the positive conditionality to the development policies, it is going in the opposite direction. It is amazing to see that the adoption of such an approach does not correspond to the empirical studies carried out so far, where it is shown that far from curbing migration, development cooperation policies create better conditions for the exit of developing countries (OECD; ILO).

The humanitarian crisis of 2015 caused an earthquake at all levels of the European Union. In the first phase, it was an institutional shock (Ferrero-Turrion, 2016) and in the second, it directly impacted both its neighborhood policy and its expansion policy.

Border outsourcing is not a mechanism that has appeared in connection with the recent refugee crisis. Already in the Budapest Process of 1991, the Commission raised the need to establish more intense cooperation with countries of origin and transit with the ultimate goal of outsourcing border controls, facilitating return procedures, and reducing unwanted migration flows. At that time, these flows came from the Eastern and European Central countries. The initiative was called 'Measures to control illegal migration through and from Central and Eastern Europe' (International Organization for Migration, 2010, p. 5).

In addition, other outsourcing processes had already been launched in southern Europe. Already in the first Association Agreements with Mediterranean countries in the 90s appeared the clauses that referred to the outsourcing process. However, this process intensified very clearly with the outbreak of the Arab uprisings from 2010. The European Commission through its document 'Global Approach to Migration and Mobility' proposed the implementation of a 'Dialogue for Migration, Mobility and Security' in relation to southern countries (European Commission, 2011). Notable are the agreements reached with Morocco and Tunisia within this framework of action through the Mobility Agreements reached in 2013 with Morocco (Council of the European Union, 2013). In 2015, this outsourcing approach would be observed again in relation to Turkey. First in bilateral meetings between German Chancellor Angela Merkel, with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, where it was agreed not only to grant financial aid but also the possibility of reopening of accession negotiations and specifically those corresponding to chapters 17, 23 and 24, those dedicated to the euro and issues related to migration issues. All this, except the reopening of the negotiations, would be embodied in two Declarations between the EU countries and Turkey (European Commission, 2015b,

2015c), and the subsequent agreement reached in the spring of 2016 (Council of the European Union, 2016).

But it would not be until the June 2018 Council when the outsourcing process would be enshrined and standardized in its conclusions:

The European Council reiterates that an essential requirement for the EU policy to function properly is based on a general approach to migration that combines more effective control of the EU's external borders, greater external action, as well as internal aspects, in line with our principles and values (Council of the European Union, 2018).

It is, therefore, in this regulatory framework the deepening of border outsourcing with the Western Balkans will be carried out, which, as in the previous cases, is based on a strategy framed in an increase in EU assertiveness, linked to the protection of the territory and, therefore, linked to the security approach, and which is articulated on the principles, non-negotiable, of the acceptance of the European regulatory framework and the inverse conditionality (more money in exchange for more reforms). Both will be those that operate in relation to issues ranging from democratic reforms, cooperation in migration management and support to the EU.

In the case of the Balkans, where the principle of sustained conditionality was already applied to the principles of reconciliation, reconstruction and reform (Ferrero-Turrión, 2015, p. 13), at the time of the humanitarian crisis and the increase in flows to Serbia and North Macedonia, its application was made even more obvious.

## **THE OUTSOURCING OF MIGRATION MANAGEMENT IN THE WESTERN BALKANS**

The migration outsourcing process in the region did not begin with the 2015 refugee crisis, but, years ago, after the 1999 Thessaloniki Summit, since migration management was one of the main issues on the political agenda between the EU and the Western Balkans. The reverse conditionality strategy began to operate significantly in relation to visa facilitation processes and related repatriation agreements and, in turn, related to the open enlargement process (Ferrero-Turrión, 2015, pp. 16-17). The achievement of both items was realized between 2006 and 2008 in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. The EU offered in a raw way access to freedom of movement and repatriations in exchange for accelerating enlargement negotiations. The main idea behind these agreements was to reduce irregular migration in the EU. Therefore, it should

not be surprising that at the time of the 2015 crisis, the EU continued and tried to strengthen external control of its borders based on conditionality.

### **Meeting on the Western Balkans in the framework of the Berlin Process, Vienna, August 2015**

In the middle of the European crisis, in the summer of 2015, Jean-Claude Juncker, on a German initiative, called a summit in which all those countries affected by the so-called Balkan route would be present. At that meeting, Macedonia and Serbia, together with a small group of Member States, some of them former countries of the former Yugoslavia, such as Croatia and Slovenia, would participate for the first time on equal terms. This meeting was held as part of the Berlin Process, a five-year plan designed to show the EU's commitment to the process of enlargement towards the Balkans, which aims to strengthen regional cooperation between the six countries, and which began in 2014. Although the issues to be discussed at that time had to do with issues of regional cooperation and infrastructure, however, it was the refugee crisis that monopolized all the debates.

During the summer of 2015, the closure of the Central Mediterranean route through Libya had taken place, which had caused a rebound in the so-called Balkan route, or of the Eastern Mediterranean that essentially crossed Turkey, Greece until reaching Macedonia and Serbia and the border with the EU. With Greece in a deep economic crisis, on the verge of a new rescue, it was without means for the reception of displaced persons and refugees. Undoubtedly, the impossibility of having the Hellenic country to put a stop to the flows induced Brussels to promote the outsourcing dialogue with Belgrade and Skopje.

In this way, issues such as the evaluation of the progress made since the last Berlin Process meeting in 2014, as well as regional connectivity, vocational training, the economic situation of the region were subject to the issue of control of migratory flows. The representatives of the EU, the High Representative, Federica Mogherini, the Vice President of Energy, Maros Sefvovic, and the European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy, Johannes Hahn, derived the whole conversation towards this issue. Thus, Mogherini would say: 'The Western Balkans region faces many challenges, from the urgency of managing issues related to security and migration to the need to face economic and political difficulties. The Vienna High-Level Summit will give the opportunity not only to discuss the current challenges, but also our common future'. In this paragraph is

condensed all the policy that the EU intended to promote in the Balkans - control of migration as a key for security and a door to the enlargement. The human rights discourse shone by its absence (European Commission, 2015e).

Similarly, a few hours before the start of the meeting, the European Commission announced the provision of an additional fund of 1.5 million euros in humanitarian assistance to help refugees and migrants in Serbia and Macedonia. These million and a half euros would be added to the €90,000 granted to Macedonia in July of that year and to the €150,000 granted to Serbia on 20 August. In total, during that summer of 2015, EU humanitarian aid for the Balkans was 1.74 million euros (European Commission, 2015e). A very small amount if one considers that between September 2015 and March 2016, around 700,000 displaced people would cross these territories.

For that small amount, the agreement of all the participants in the Summit was achieved in giving a boost to the capacities in the field of 'border management, in particular, the fight against human trafficking, as well as in their asylum mechanisms' through regional forums, such as the Salzburg Forum (Western Balkans Summit, 2015). In addition, the countries of the Western Balkans 'committed themselves to assume their own responsibilities in the management of migration, asylum and border management in the face of their European perspective' (Western Balkans Summit, 2015).

### **Meeting on the Balkan Migration Route Action plan, Brussels, October 25, 2015**

It was the second meeting of the EU countries with the Western Balkans in less than two months. It met the Heads of State and Government of Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, current North Macedonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia in Brussels. It was a summit of special relevance for the Balkans leaders, and even though the meeting took place in the Commission building, the negotiating framework was intergovernmental and, therefore, they were positioned on equal terms with other European countries.

The Balkans countries have seen that as a great opportunity to demand more attention from Brussels to accelerate the enlargement process. These countries have not attracted the attention of European governments for a long time. Despite its insistence on continuing and deepening its integration

processes, a coherent plan to support the region had not yet been launched. Interest grew only when the ghost of destabilization appeared and, therefore, the danger of a new hole in European foreign policy. It seems that Old Europe had learned nothing from its mistakes. In any case, the fact was that, for the first time, the candidate countries, Macedonia and Serbia, were incorporated into the decision-making process around an issue that directly affected them. However, it is no less true that the main objective of the meeting was to curb the flows of displaced people who came through that route to the EU, which concerned Brussels the most at that time. And the candidate countries were also aware of this.

In this second act, there was a total border outsourcing in Serbia and North Macedonia on five lines of action: the permanent exchange of information; the limitation of secondary movements; the proportion of shelter and support for refugees; joint flow management; and border management. Besides, the fight against trafficking and smuggling of people would continue (European Commission, 2015f).

Each of these points was based on the total cooperation and coordination of these countries with the corresponding European agencies, Frontex and Europol mainly. In addition, the framework for action should be carried out based on regional cooperation and dialogue that Brussels was willing to support by all means at its disposal. The creation of more than 50,000 reception places on the Balkan route was also planned with the collaboration of the UNHCR and supported by international financial institutions such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Development Bank of the Council of Europe. To this economic aid, the cooperation in new identification technologies through biometric data would be added to favor the exchange of information with already operational European agencies such as the SIS or the VIS.

In the area of border control, the European Commission would also help these countries to establish readmission agreements with Afghanistan, Pakistan or Bangladesh to accelerate the repatriation processes of their nationals. And this would be reinforced with an unprecedented deployment of troops and measures at the regional level. Thus, the Rapid Intervention Teams, RABIT (its acronym in English) were reinforced, and the number of police personnel from border countries such as Slovenia and Croatia was displaced in Serbia and Macedonia (European Commission, 2015f) was expanded.

The main condition that the countries of the Western Balkans put was the temporality of the stay. If Belgrade and Skopje were afraid of something,



it would be to become hotspots for refugees. Hence, the emphasis was given in the Action Plan to the completion of a similar one with Turkey, as well as the insistence of strengthening control at the borders of Bulgaria and Greece with Turkey. If something worried the Serbian, Macedonian and Albanian authorities, and not without reason, was the possibility of a regional destabilization as a result of the presence of refugees in their territories and the potential conflicts between states to determine responsibilities.

## CONSEQUENCES OF THE HUMANITARIAN AND REFUGEE CRISIS IN THE REGION

The impact of the humanitarian crisis of refugee management in the Balkans has manifested itself in two dimensions, in the migratory flows themselves and regional cooperation.

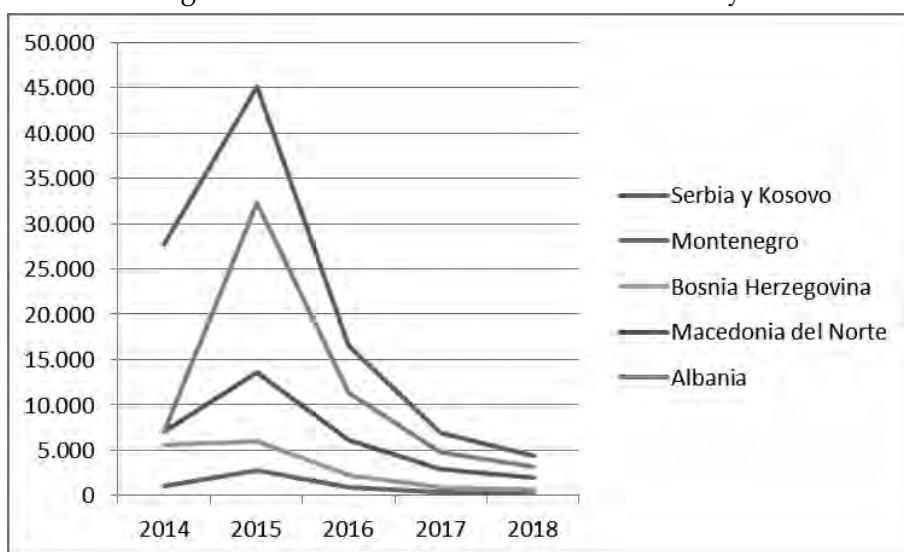
### **Migrations from the Balkans to the EU**

The societies of the Western Balkans throughout the years 2015 and 2016 assumed the reception of a huge amount of displaced people in the absence of the infrastructure and resources necessary to serve them. In addition, other factors contributed to the situation becoming increasingly tense. During the end of 2015 and the first quarter of 2016, legal reforms were made regarding asylum in Germany, Austria and Macedonia, establishing nationalities that would be considered as coming from safe countries. Besides, since the beginning of 2016, Austria and Germany begin to restrict the number of displaced persons they admit. From that moment they will only accept those asylum seekers registered in their countries. Austria would limit the number of asylum claims to 37,500 in 2016 and 130,000 in 2019. Besides, it will expand the repatriations to 50,000 asylum seekers during the next three years, as well as the number of safe countries along with a reinforcement of the fences on the border with Slovenia. Following agreements between the EU with the Western Balkans and with Turkey, Slovenia and Croatia would follow the German trail and reject all those who entered the Balkans.

In this way, the humanitarian crisis and the externalizing agreements reached with Brussels had a direct effect on the roads traditionally used by groups from these States, mainly Albanians and Roma, which until February 2015 constituted numerically one of the groups with a greater number of asylum applications in the EU countries. Thus, in 2015, only 5 of the 44 most

industrialized countries received 66% of asylum applications. The first one was Serbia and Kosovo (577,572), followed by Germany (441,364), Hungary (174,026), Sweden (155,583) and Turkey (133,214). Therefore, in just one year, Serbia was transformed from an issuing country of refugees to a country issuing and receiving them, since the arriving nationalities came from Syria (301,591), Afghanistan (160,831) and Iraq (76,009). In Germany, Syrian applications (158,657) were followed by those originating in Albania (53,805) and Serbia (50,127) (Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado, 2016, pp. 22-23) (Table 1).

Table 1. Migration from the Western Balkans to Germany 2014-2018



Source: Author's design with UNHCR data.

Despite what the numbers show, the percentage of rejection of these requests exceeded 90% in Germany. Between 2014 and 2017, 276,161 asylum files from these countries were examined in Germany, although most of them were rejected (Table 2).

*Table 2. Number of decisions taken and % protection for the Western Balkans recognized as safe countries (2014-2017)*

	2014		2015		2016		2017 (01/06)	
	decisions	% protection	decisions	% protection	decisions	% protection	decisions	% protection
Albania	3.455	2,2	35.721	0,2	37.673	0,4	6.316	1,5
Serbia	21.878	0,2	22.341	0,1	24.178	0,3	5.028	0,7
Kosovo	3.690	1,1	29.801	0,4	18.920	0,8	3.071	2,2
Macedonia	8.548	0,3	8.245	0,5	14.712	0,3	4.187	0,7
Bosnia	6.594	0,3	6.500	0,2	6.885	0,7	1.446	1,6
Montenegro	868	0	2.297	0,3	3.219	0,5	588	1,2
Total	45.033	0,4	104.905	0,3	105.587	0,5	20.636	1,2
All	128.911	31,5	282.726	49,8	695.733	62,4	408.147	44,7

Source: Federal Office for Migration and Asylum, Germany (Grote, 2018)

Most of the people who came to Europe at that time, especially Germany, were not forced migrants, but economic migrants escaping misery and xenophobia in their countries of origin, thus becoming evidence of the lack of policy effectiveness of conditionality of the EU. Given this situation, Germany decided to reform its Asylum Law, which was approved in October 2015. Through this reform, among other issues, Germany granted the status of a 'safe country' to three Balkans states: Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro.

### **The Commission Proposal: Inclusion in the Safe Countries List**

Following the German trail of the German asylum reform, the European Commission launched a proposal to the Member States to add the Balkans countries to the List of Safe Countries in the EU. It was included in the Europe Migration Agenda of May 2015 and was subsequently approved by the European Council on 25-26 June 2015. Finally, it would reach the status of the Regulation, as a reform of Directive 2013/32/EU, and it would be

approved by the European Parliament in September 2015. The arguments put forward by the Commission were that around 17% of the total number of asylum applications came from citizens of the countries that would be included in that list. The inclusion of asylum applications from the List of Safe Countries is processed through a fast-track, allowing fast returns if the application is unapproved. In this way, the effectiveness of asylum systems would be increased, the attempts to abuse the European Asylum System would be stopped, and it would allow the Member States to allocate a greater number of resources to the protection of people with needs.

In the case of the Balkans and Turkish countries, an unquestionable fact set out in the Copenhagen criteria was appealed: *'When the Member States decide to propose a State as a candidate for membership, they verify that they meet the "Copenhagen Criteria" on the guarantee of democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the respect and protection of their minorities. Candidates are therefore normally safe'* (COM 2018b).

### **Regional Cooperation in Danger**

To all this, it must be added that the future expansion towards the Balkans and Turkey faced a series of hardly salvageable factors. On the one hand, the 'fatigue of enlargement', an argument reinforced by the statements of Jean-Claude Juncker in his inauguration as president of the European Commission in 2014 and which joins a 'reformist laziness' on the part of the affected countries; the economic and euro crisis, with successive bailouts carried out in Greece, Portugal, Ireland or Spain; a persistent socio-economic crisis reflected in the increase in extremism, Euroscepticism and social movements; an institutional crisis that drags the European project since the failure of the Constitutional Treaty and whose last chapter, until now, is the United Kingdom's departure from the European club. In addition, it should be added that the EU was in one of the tensest moments with Moscow as a result of the crisis in Ukraine.

Regional cooperation was another of those affected by the humanitarian crisis, as the arrival of displaced persons destabilized bilateral relations between some countries. These countries had unwittingly become the focus of attention throughout Europe due to the enormous arrival of displaced persons, mostly from the conflict in Syria, but also from Afghanistan, Eritrea or Iraq, among others. The numbers of arrivals - 7,000 people in a single day to Croatia, more than 3,000 to Macedonia daily - made since August 2015, the Balkan corridor became a real bottleneck for the displaced. The means

available to these countries were scarce, and once the strategy of breaking through to Hungary was impeded by the lifting of fences and border closure ordered by the government of Viktor Orbán in Hungary, the new access routes to Europe were inevitably diverted, first to Croatia, then Slovenia, later to Bosnia. The not-so-hidden struggle to try to get refugees to move to the next country in the chain caused an evident deterioration in relations between Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia - countries that during the last twenty years had been trying to weave good neighborhood relations after the fratricidal wars that ended Yugoslavia and that at that time saw sustained relations on very weak foundations.

To this, a relevant factor should be added: some of these countries are candidates to enter the EU, others are already inside, which automatically establishes inequality relations in their positions when establishing cooperation, which is in no way balanced. Despite this, the roadmap established in the fall of 2015 began to be fulfilled. Thus, on 18 February, the Macedonian, Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian and Austrian police would reach an agreement to allow the entry of people on the basis of humanitarian aid and the requirement of biometric identification through photography in the identity document. This, together with the Declaration with Turkey, would close the Balkan route in spring 2016. From that moment on, the Balkans would no longer be host countries.

The diplomatic deterioration, the massive presence of refugees wandering streets and squares, along with the socio-economic instability that had manifested through the increase of social mobilization in practically all the countries of the region - from Bosnia, Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia and even Montenegro, between 2014-2016 brought the region to the verge of a new collapse.

## CONSEQUENCES

From all the above, we can extract several consequences that we have articulated around three levels of impact that will help us to have an articulated approach to the impacts that these countries face: micro-level, medium level and macro-level.

At the micro-level, it can be said with certainty that none of the citizens of these countries will be able to access an asylum grant. This should not be a problem, if there were, indeed, ways of legal access to the EU labor markets. However, the main reaction of the European governments has been

the opposite of the Commission proposal in the European Agenda of Migration and has focused solely and exclusively on border closure.

In this same area, it is expected that citizens from the Balkans countries that have visa liberalization make use of it and move to the EU territory (Ferrero-Turrión, 2015). They will enter, therefore, as tourists, but after three months they will find themselves in an irregular situation in the European territory. This was expressed in the latest report of the Commission on compliance with the requirements of the countries of the Western Balkans and the Eastern Neighborhood of December 2018 (European Commission, 2018). More serious is the situation faced by citizens from Kosovo since it is not recognized as a state by five EU member states (Spain, Romania, Cyprus, Greece and Slovakia) and therefore, their movements to the EU are carried out irregularly. The tightening of asylum laws, both at the European level and by some member states, has made the chances of sexual, ethnic or religious minorities to obtain asylum status very low.

The average level of the impact of the humanitarian crisis can be seen in the approach that Brussels employed towards these countries during the last four years. Far from deepening the Berlin Process strategy to advance the process of European integration of the Balkans, the EU in general, and the member states in particular, have chosen to incorporate as part of the principle of conditionality, more explicitly to the light of the implementation of the 2015 Action Plan, the process of border outsourcing in the region. Thus, these countries have been and are used as a buffer to control the external border of the EU on its eastern route. In addition, as approved in the EUCO on 28-29 June 2018, refugee camps with community funds have been opened in Serbia, North Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina (Council of the European Union, 2018).

Finally, at a higher level, the impact has been substantive. If, since the inauguration of Juncker in 2014, the combination of the 'fatigue of enlargement' by Brussels, together with the 'reform fatigue' by the governments of the countries of the Western Balkans, has already been observed, this crisis has not done anything if not to accelerate the trend. This has revealed the failure of EU policy. The principle of conditionality used on previous occasions has been demonstrated as a tool that must be reviewed, given its lack of efficiency and the loss of EU transformative power in favor of other actors such as Russia, China, Turkey, the Gulf countries that gain presence and influence.

On the other hand, the growing intergovernmentalism towards the Balkans observed in recent times by certain European states, France,

Germany and Austria fundamentally, makes the negotiation and influence capacity of these states greater than in the past. In the same way, this type of approach also favors the emergence of authoritarian political leaders under the EU umbrella that favors regional stability in the face of democratizing processes and reforms. What has been called ‘stabilitocracy’, a term used for the first time by Srđa Pavlović in 2016 to describe non-democratic practices, persist while the West makes a deaf ear and simultaneously appeals to democracy and the rule of law (Pavlović, 2016). Months later, the BIEPAG group conceptualized the term further by describing as stabilitocracy those semi-authoritarian regimes in the region that receive external support, mainly from the EU, for the sake of a false promise of stability (Bieber, 2017).

Finally, the situation in the Balkans puts the EU in front of the mirror. The implementation of reactive policies in the face of structural problems in a globalized context that favors human mobility does not guarantee what is a priori part of its main objectives, to achieve stability and democracy at its borders. The obsession to achieve security and stability at its borders, makes it forget other fundamental issues that are part of its DNA, such as the defense of the rule of law, democratization or pluralism, which causes it to lose leaps and bounds ability to influence compared to other actors that do not have such demanding requirements.

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## SECURITY IN THE WESTERN BALKANS - CURRENT STATE AND PROSPECTS

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*Abstract:* This paper examines the security in the Western Balkans in the context of current social happenings. In this regard, the dominant problems in the region itself were identified as external influences, and their implications for the security in the region analyzed. The theoretical framework for the analysis is the Regional Security Complex Theory developed by the Copenhagen School of Security Studies. The Western Balkans is geopolitically a very important region, and current problems pose a great challenge to the Western Balkan countries, the European Union and other key actors with geopolitical interests in this region. First, this paper gives a brief overview of the geopolitics of the Western Balkans, then it analyzes the current security dynamics and outlines the prospect of the Western Balkans regional security subcomplex. Due to different interests, particularly those of the Western Balkan countries and other geopolitical actors who have or aspire to have greater influence in this region, the prospects for the Western Balkans look very uncertain. The complex relations in the region, guided by different external influences and different interests of the Western Balkan countries, are much closer to the security regime, including the possibility of an eruption of conflicts or becoming a conflict formation.

*Keywords:* Western Balkans, regional security subcomplex, security dynamics, region, conflict

### INTRODUCTION

The Western Balkan countries share a certain historical heritage. They were socialist countries and, at the same time, the republics of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), except Albania. In the 1990s, after the dissolution of the SFRY, this region was marked by civil wars (Croatia

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1991-1995, Bosnia and Herzegovina 1992-1995, the Kosovo war and NATO military intervention in the FR Yugoslavia in 1999, the conflict in Macedonia in 2001). Generally, the region nowadays called the Western Balkans was marked by political instability and numerous economic and social problems, and the relations in the region still remain complex as well as the dynamics of security. Contemporary developments range from the uncertainty surrounding the European integration process to different approaches to NATO membership, and relations with the Russian Federation. The issue of Kosovo and Metohija in Serbia, internal political instability and ethnic tensions (B&H), the return of warriors from Syria and radicalization, along with the ongoing migrant crisis – are just some of the major security challenges and threats in the Western Balkans.

The issues of regions in international relations and security studies have only recently attracted the attention of scholars. Theoretical considerations date back from the Cold War period (Russett, 1967; Thompson, 1973; Feld and Boyd, 1980; Buzan, 1983; Väyrynen, 1984) and especially in the post-Cold War period (Buzan, Wæver & De Wilde, 1998; Neumann, 1999; Buzan & Wæver, 2003). It is also important to mention current studies on security dynamics in the Western Balkans region within the Regional Security Complex Theory (Lipovac, 2016; Ejdus, 2019). The theoretical framework for our analysis is the Regional Security Complex Theory developed by the Copenhagen School of Security Studies. Barry Buzan defined security complex as a set of states whose major security concerns are so interlinked that their national security problems cannot reasonably be resolved or analyzed apart from one another (Buzan, 1983, p. 10). Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver updated the definition of a security complex as ‘a set of units whose major processes of securitization and desecuritization are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed apart from one another’ (Buzan & Wæver, 2003, p. 201). The updated regional security complex theory starts with a constructivist approach based on securitization theory, moving away from the traditional state-centric approach (Ejdus, 2012, p. 117). Security dynamics within the Regional Security Complex Theory are determined by patterns of friendship and hostility. In this sense, we distinguish between a conflict formation, where the relationships in the region are identified as rivalry and hostility, with a real fear of an outbreak of war between states. The security regime is also complex where there is still a possibility of the eruption of war, but the relations between the states are governed by mutual rules which diminish the security dilemma because it is expected that the agreements between the states will be honored. At the end of the spectrum lies a security

community (Deutsch et al., 1957), that is, non-war communities which, during their development, go through the stages of emergence, growth, and maturity (Adler and Barnett, 1998, pp. 50-57). The basic condition for establishing a regional security complex or subcomplex is the existence of regional security dynamics between the states/units that are physically close together (Lipovac, 2016, pp. 116), which is evident regarding the Western Balkan countries.

The aim of this paper is to review the current security dynamics in the Western Balkans regional security subcomplex. In this regard, dominant problems within the region were identified, external influences and their implications for the security in the Western Balkans were analyzed.

### **A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE GEOPOLITICAL SITUATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS**

To geographers, the terms Balkans and the Balkan Peninsula signify the belt beginning east of the Aegean, south of the Mediterranean, and west to the Ionian and Adriatic Seas. The Trieste-Odessa border lies to the north. The Balkans comprises several countries – Bulgaria, Albania, Greece, Romania and Turkey – including the countries created following the dissolution of the SFRY, except Slovenia which only partially belongs to the Balkans. Ten nations, many ethnic groups, three major religions (Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Islam) – that is the Balkans. For a long time, this conglomerate of nations and diversity was perfectly suited to weighing the forces of the global and regional powers in the Balkans, while extending their interests. Figuratively, Balkanization is a broader term than the Balkans and signifies a region of permanent destabilization, permanent conflicts, and tensions between different ethnic groups (Simić, 2013).

The mosaic of ethnic and cultural diversity in the Balkans leaves room for American geopolitics strategists (Huntington, 1996; Brzezinski, 1997) to develop different theories. In the doctrines, the Balkans is defined as an example of ethnic conflict and rivalry – the term ‘Balkans’ means the central zone of global instability. Brzezinski (1997) uses ‘Balkans’ as a geopolitical metaphor in his subversive and destructive theory of the Eurasian Balkans. According to this author, the Eurasian Balkans includes parts of Southeast Europe, central and southern Asia, and the Persian Gulf and the Middle East. Brzezinski sees strategic interest in the Eurasian Balkans, that is, the US imperative, and advises that all that had happened in the Balkans should be applied by the US to the Eurasian Balkans as well – by creating ethnic,

religious, and political tensions to create chaos, that is, a condition well suited to American domination with the ultimate goal of overmastering rich natural resources.

The term Western Balkans' (*In Serb.* Zapadni Balkan) is a recent coinage that identifies the Balkan countries that have not yet joined the European Union (EU). The term was coined in 2003 at the EU Summit in Thessaloniki when the Thessaloniki Agenda was adopted to confirm the European prospect of the Western Balkan countries. These are the countries created after the dissolution of the SFRY – Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia, with Albania added. Since this is a political rather than a geographical term, certain linguistic correctness is also understood, and the phrase 'Zapadni Balkan' (Western Balkans) is spelled with the capital letter 'Z'. It is a recent term that completely suppressed the commonly used term 'Southeast Europe' from political and security discourse, which encompassed a wider geographical area. Thus, the central Balkans (we believe this is a more specific definition, especially in the geographical terms) 'withdrew' from Europe. Although opening a chapter in the EU accession negotiations is still regarded as a political success and mastering new 'steps' on the path toward full membership in the EU, this is no longer what political leaders emphasize as a result of their politics. Thus, since the Berlin Process, the term Western Balkans has been used to denote the territory which is ahead of the EU for the placement of goods exempted from duties and obligations, at the same time being a zone where the assurances of progress and success on the path to Euro-Atlantic integration are used to suppress Chinese and Russian influence (Ćeranić, 2018, pp. 189-195).

The EU's relationship with the Western Balkan EU countries is evident in every political discourse concerning the Berlin Process. The interlinking of countries that have gone through a difficult historical period marked by the conflicts between the peoples who share similar cultural and language backgrounds should result in the creation of a collective which, in the economic, political and security sense, will rely on the EU – this is the essence of the Berlin Process, the project 'patented' by German Chancellor, Angela Merkel. The Berlin Process is an initiative to strengthen economic cooperation between the Western Balkan countries and the European Union (Berlin Process, 2014).

The first Western Balkans conference was held in Berlin on 28 August 2014, the second conference was held in Vienna in 2015, the third in 2016 in Paris, followed by the conferences in Trieste (Italy, 2017), London (2018), and Poznan (Poland, 2019) (Berlin Process, 2014). Many things suggested

that it was left to Germany to regulate the political configuration in the Balkans internationally and that since the unification of Germany, the Balkans became the interest of a country whose state borders had become tight for its growing economic power. Based on the analysis of the Berlin process as a project, it may be concluded that this is the beginning of the creation of the 'B League' of the European Union (Ćeranić, 2018, pp. 19-25). The Chancellor of Germany has repeatedly emphasized that the countries of the Western Balkans need to connect economically and politically with one another and cooperate with the EU as a collective. American strategists, primarily Brzezinski, intended to leave the Western Balkans to Turkey, and in Ankara, it was supposed to be interpreted as compensation for not being accessioned to the EU.

In 2016, the relations radically changed. The coup aimed at ousting Erdogan from power (and executing him) failed. The president of Turkey accused his opponent Fethullah Gulen of organizing a coup, and in this context, he did not spare American 'deep state'.<sup>3</sup> Erdogan made a complete turnaround in foreign policy and began relying on Russia, at the same time moving away from the United States in the political sense. Things culminated in the acquisition of the Russian missile system S-400. Consequently, Turkey lost its intended gift in the form of the Western Balkans. The possibility of extending Turkey to the territory of the former Ottoman Empire economically and politically was accepted well in Ankara (Tanasković, 2015). As the Turkish-American relations changed, the US policy toward the Western Balkans (closely and consistently followed by Berlin) changed to – the Western Balkans must not be under Russian or Turkish influence.

In considering the relations in this region, one should not neglect the fact that the Western Balkan countries have very complex historical legacies. They are socialist republics of the former SFRY (except Albania). In the 1990s, following the dissolution of the joint state, this region was marked by civil wars (the 1991-1995 war in Croatia, the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the war in Kosovo and Metohija and NATO's military intervention in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999, the 2001 conflict in Macedonia). The causes of the dissolution of the joint state (which was marked by the conflicts between the contending ethnic groups) can be traced back to the geopolitical position of Yugoslavia. The country was known as

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<sup>3</sup> 'deep state' or 'a state within a state' is a form of covert power, a clandestine government that operates completely independently of the legitimate political leadership of the state.

the 'buffer zone' between East and West, that is, as 'no man's land' between two contending political and military blocs during the Cold War era. Although it was a socialist and one-party state, Yugoslavia was open to the West, the socialism it practiced was viewed differently in the West from the one behind the Iron Curtain. This could have been due to the absence of Russian military bases and troops, which was a long-term consequence of the cooling of relations with the USSR during the Informbiro period. After the dissolution of the USSR, the termination of the Warsaw Pact, or the Soviet defeat in the Cold War, the 'buffer zone' between the blocs that no longer existed lost its meaning. Thus, the demolition of the Berlin Wall, as a symbol of the block division, was the beginning of the dissolution of Yugoslavia. However, few Yugoslav political leaders wanted to read the geopolitical messages. Therefore, negotiations between republican leaders after the first post-war multiparty elections ended with failure. The flames of war spread from the west to the east of the country, from Slovenia to Kosovo.

### **Current security dynamics in the Western Balkans regional subcomplex**

In general, the region nowadays called the Western Balkans is marked by political instability and economic and social difficulties in the transition process. After a decade of wars, the region is entering a phase in which military confrontations should no longer be a means of resolving disputes. However, the region is still far from the states whose practices, attitudes and the sense of shared identity have been developed to such an extent that the issues of common interest and misunderstandings can only be resolved peacefully. Relations in the region remain a complex issue, as well as security issues, which are very dynamic and complex.

The Balkans has not lost its importance in the geopolitical positioning of global and regional powers. The return of Russia to the Balkans is also evident in terms of strengthening its political and economic (primarily in the energy sector) influence. In order to have and maintain a long-term presence in the Western Balkans, it was particularly important for Russia to be present and expand its influence in the countries that were not accessioned to the NATO Pact. To this end, Russia had begun to use soft power, which had long been used as a tool by its opponents, primarily the United States. It was mainly manifested through the creation of a network of non-governmental organizations operating on the basis of funds from foreign governments and foundations, through founding new media and

buying media influence and investing money in the selected political leaders and political options. In the Western Balkans, Russia needed far less effort than the Western countries for this form of power, because of its sincere and deep ties with the Serbian people in particular.

Russia does not hide its resentment toward the NATO aspirations to expand to Russia's borders, and Russia's opposition to the NATO ambitions (more properly American) has become a pillar of Russian security policy, both in the Middle East and the Western Balkans. Of course, Russia uses the position of a permanent member of the UN Security Council to protect Serbian interests, that is, to preserve the political capacities of Serbia and the Republic of Srpska. Although in the context of Russian influence in Serbia (and in the Western Balkans in general), the Serbian-Russian Humanitarian Center in Niš is often referred to as a military intelligence center, Russian influence is of a different nature. Energy security is by far the most significant security sector through which Russian power is manifested in the Balkans. The announced construction of the South Stream and then the Turkish Stream (which is being implemented) will enable the energy stability in the Balkan countries, but also in the European Union, the largest buyer of Russian energy. Russian resistance to the NATO expansion regarding the Western Balkans has remained in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (solely because of the Republic of Srpska's opposition). Macedonia has not yet formally joined the NATO either, although after the parliamentary decision, the integration process into NATO is progressing smoothly. Due to different viewpoints regarding the NATO membership and the relations with the Russian Federation, the relations in the region still remain a complex issue as well as security dynamics.

The Kosovo and Metohija issue in Serbia, internal political instability and ethnic tensions (B&H), the problem of fighters returning from Syria, radicalization and the current migrant crisis – are just some of the major security challenges and threats in the Western Balkans. Specifically, after the latest information that the Islamic State warriors are returning to the Balkans (the last warning concerning all possible security implications was given by French President Macron), we have the impression that a new 'Balkanization' of the Balkans is being prepared. In addition to ex-combatants arriving in Bosnia and Herzegovina by 'regular line', such as the recently deported group, there are also groups that first arrive in Albania without media pomp, from where they move to Kosovo and further to the Balkan states. Note the 'piling' of migrants in B&H where the exact number of newcomers or their security structure is completely



unknown. TV appearances made by French President Macron who emphasized the real problems in the Western Balkans – the return of warriors from Syria, which, as pointed out by the President of France, made Bosnia and Herzegovina a hell machine – indicate that Macron had seen through the United States’ intentions concerning the EU, and since the Chancellor of Germany had no courage to respond more sharply, he did it. One may justifiably ask whether migrations are artificial or a form of unconventional weapons? After all, the ‘Forced Migration’ projector ‘Forced Migration Plan’ testifies to this. The author is Kelly M. Greenhill, Assistant to Senator John Kerry and a Pentagon consultant. She even published a book entitled *Weapons of Mass Migration* (Greenhill, 2010). It should also be noted that the American ‘deep state’ strategists such as Brzezinski estimated that the ‘Balkanization’ of Northern Africa and Central Asia would be an ideal means of preventing the Russia-China-Iran alliance. If this alliance were fully implemented, the influence of Washington in Euro-Asia would be permanently thwarted (Ćeranić, 2020).

A large number of migrants have been set out from the Middle East, including the countries unaffected by the war, such as Pakistan. The ‘Balkan route’ is very attractive to migrants, as it is the shortest land route to the EU. Affected by large migrant waves, Germany and other developed European countries could not cope with it, so they even welcomed the migrants. Mass migration (which initially posed a problem in Germany only, but soon it became a huge problem for the entire EU) just like Brexit, the UK’s withdrawal from the EU (which became quite certain after Boris Johnson’s Conservative had won) is the process that can essentially change the functioning of the EU, even its survival in the current form. Much of this indicates the EU is affected by the strengthening of the US-British ties, which is also reflected in the Western Balkans. Specifically, the EU’s influence is permanently weakening. For example, regarding the issue of Kosovo and Metohija, the importance of the EU has become quite peripheral. As far as the US is concerned, the role of the EU should be to guard Maidan, that is, to prevent Russian influence in Ukraine and the Baltics.

Britain has deep security and economic interests in both the Middle East and the Balkans. In the security sense, the priority in the Middle East region is the fight against Iranian interests, and in the sense of economic free trade agreements. The British government intends to increase investments in the Balkans, with energy and mining being the biggest interest. The traditional British antagonism toward Russia is also evident in this region. The British

directly, more often in disguise, seek to eliminate 'Russia's malign influence'<sup>4</sup> from the Western Balkans. In this context, their diplomats are pressuring political leaders in Serbia and B&H, the government has been funding NGOs and the media investigating Russian influence, and so on. Thus, in February 2018, Serbia's President Aleksandar Vučić received an official visit from Alex Younger (Zašto su Britanci nezadovoljni srpskim tajnim službama? 2018), the Head of the UK's Secret Intelligence Service<sup>5</sup> (of course, the details of the talks have not been disclosed). The UK's Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) has had a strong presence in the Balkans, primarily in B&H, Serbia, Macedonia, and Montenegro. Owing to Brexit, the SIS can take actions in the Balkans on its own (Ćeranić, 2019, pp. 38-43). The British would often send a military contingent, usually the size of a battalion, to B&H to formally secure democratic processes. This battalion within the EUFOR mission participates in a drill called 'Rapid Response' every year. The Conference on the Western Balkans, the fifth within the Berlin Process, was held in London on 10 July 2018.

Turkey acts in the Western Balkans with its new ally – Russia. The Russian-Turkish relations, especially in the economic sphere, have been on an upward trajectory for years. Turkey's trade volume with Russia is incomparably higher than Turkey's trade with the US. The agreements on free trade, free traffic, free movement of goods, services and investments were signed between Russia and Turkey (Ćeranić, 2019, pp. 119-123). Concerning the Western Balkans, Turkey is most interested in Serbia, where it makes large investments. Turkish interest is, of course, focused on Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Turkish consulate in Banja Luka, that is, the Republic of Srpska, is being prepared for opening. Turkey's role in the energy sector is significant. In other words, when Bulgaria abandoned building the South Stream, the gas pipeline which was to provide additional gas to both the Balkan and EU countries, Russia managed to ensure a new route for its gas pipeline in consultation with Turkey. The Turkish Stream pipeline, which was formally launched on 8 January 2020, will carry gas from the Anapa station in Russia to the town of Kiyikoyin Turkey.

Of all Islamic countries, Saudi Arabia has the strongest influence in B&H; it is present in B&H in a radical way, through the 'export' of ideology, the well-known Wahhabi movement, that is, the interpretation of Islam which

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<sup>4</sup> It was coined by Brian Hoyt Yee, one of the US officials who were in charge of the Balkans.

<sup>5</sup> The Secret Intelligence Service, commonly known as MI6, is the official name of the British foreign intelligence service.

has encountered violent responses across the region. The most striking feature of the Wahhabi movement is the total denial of the development of Islamic intellectual thought in the course of fourteen centuries. The interpretation of the seventh-century Islam, the one nurtured by 'first-generation Muslim scholars' is the only one that is relevant to the supporters of this religious and political direction, which is progressively developing in a number of countries. Its supporters show intolerance, even aggression toward opponents (Ćeranić, 2018, pp. 285-291).

The Wahhabi community has strengthened to the extent that it has created an organization parallel to the Islamic Community in B&H. The Islamic community publicly responded and demanded that the state provide protection, as Reis Hussein Kavazović pointed out in 2016, after identifying 60 Jamaats or religious communities under the Wahhabi influence in the country. Jamaats are also referred to in security discourse as 'Sharia enclaves' because the B&H laws do not recognize but only practice Sharia law. This 'Islamic State' infrastructure, which also refers to the network of enclaves inhabited and operated under special rules, poses a major threat in the security sense while expecting warriors to return from the Syrian battlefield. At the same time, all terrorist attacks in B&H (the attacks on police stations in Bugojno and Zvornik, the attacks on the US Embassy and members of the B&H Armed Forces in Rajlovac) were committed by the followers of this ideology. Security discourses often refer to this thought: 'Not every Wahhabi is a terrorist, but every terrorist is a Wahhabi' (Sekka et al., 2005). Wahhabism as a religious-ideological and political movement in BiH is more present than it is publicly acknowledged. In addition to the factions that ideologically rely on al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, a faction ideologically linked to the International Union of Islamic Scholars and the Muslim Brotherhood can also pose a significant security problem. The intensification of the relations between the Wahhabi movement and the Shia<sup>6</sup> in B&H should be considered in the context of relations and their conflicts at the global level. The most important missionaries of Shi'ism in B&H are the institutions established and supported by the Islamic Republic of Iran (Institut Ibn Sina, Fondacija MullaSadra, Persijsko-bosanski koledž).

In considering the influence of great and regional powers on the Western Balkans, the presence of China in both the economic and security sectors must in no case be forgotten. China seeks to implement the Belt and Road

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<sup>6</sup> A religious group that is most represented in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Initiative, informally called the New Silk Road. It is an investment in infrastructure, a project worth thousands of billions of dollars, which would primarily transport Chinese goods from Chinese ports in the Pacific to European countries via a network of high-speed railway lines. The transport would not take longer than three days. To this end, China has rented the Port of Piraeus in Greece.

Geopolitically, the Western Balkans is a very important area and the current problems pose a major challenge for the European Union and other key actors with geopolitical interests in the region. Due to different interests, especially those of the Western Balkan countries and other geopolitical actors who have or aspire to have greater influence in this area, the prospects for the Western Balkans look very uncertain.

### **Prospect of the Western Balkans Regional Security Subcomplex**

The interest of global and regional powers in the Western Balkans is very pronounced and often conflicting. On the one hand, the United States, supported by the United Kingdom and often by the EU, seeks to fully incorporate the region into NATO. Albania and Montenegro have become formal members, and there is a strong possibility that North Macedonia will become a member too. Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are not members of the Alliance, and the Republic of Srpska in B&H is the one which opposes NATO integration. Russia, on the other hand, understandably seeks to prevent NATO from expanding beyond its borders, being aware that by fully integrating the Western Balkans into NATO, it would have a compact NATO territory against itself. And in the case of new proxy wars supported by NATO, NATO would have a logistically simple situation (the supply of military equipment to forces with which Russian military and police forces would clash would be simplified). Both Brussels and Moscow are aware that the military potential of the Western Balkans means nothing to NATO or Russia. It is the first 'line of conflict' between Russia and the United States in the Western Balkans. The second line of conflict concerns the economy. Russia has become an indispensable factor in energy security in the Western Balkans through the purchase of Serbia's oil potential and more fuel distribution companies. The construction of pipelines that would transport Russian gas via the Balkan pipeline network within the Turkish Stream to the Balkan countries and farther to the EU would eventually make the Western Balkans, including the EU, completely energy-dependent on Russia, which the United States and the United Kingdom seek to prevent.

To counteract Russia's influence, the governments that have signed energy supply contracts with Russia have become targets for psychological operations and colored revolutions carried out with the help of the non-governmental sector funded by American foundations and several Western governments. Also, the media and media influence are bought for the same purpose, while an investment is made in the selected political options and political leaders in order to replace, from the American point of view, non-cooperative governments. The same is true for the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. The United States quite openly seeks to thwart Chinese trade routes (including Russian pipelines) running from Greece via Macedonia and Serbia to Hungary, that is, the EU. At the same time, there is an ongoing campaign against Russian influence in the region, which is largely exaggerated. One has the impression that the Western Balkans has become a training ground for various operations, with the sole aim to create chaos. The Berlin Process – six conferences have already been held – refers to the Western Balkan countries' economic interconnection and collective cooperation with the EU, leaving these countries outside the EU. The above issues make the prospect of the Western Balkans regional security subcomplex, in the security sense, look very uncertain. In the political and security terms, the Western Balkans, excluded from European integration, remains a 'shaky' region.

## CONCLUSION

Although the Western Balkans is no longer a priority within the foreign policy of Western countries as was the case in the 1990s, the region is still important for the geopolitical positioning of great and regional powers. External influences of countries with different interests in the Western Balkans are of great importance in the creation of regional security dynamics. After a decade of confrontation during the 1990s, all Western Balkan countries were formally committed to European prospects, which would provide a common political and security framework for all countries in the region. However, there is no consensus in the EU regarding enlargement, and the Western Balkan countries are overwhelmed with a number of internal problems and unresolved issues. Such discourse makes this complex situation even more complex and creates conditions for new instabilities and the use of the countries in the region as a testing ground for wider geopolitical games. In the context of regional security complex theory (Buzan, 1983; Buzan & Wæver, 2003), the Western Balkan countries, considering the security dynamics in the region, are still far from creating a

security community although they are all committed to European integration. The complex relations in the region, guided by different external influences and different interests of states, are far closer to the security regime, including the possibility of the eruption of conflict or becoming a conflict formation.

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## THE WESTERN BALKANS' ENERGY SECURITY IN A TRIANGLE: THE ROLE OF THE EU, RUSSIA AND TURKEY<sup>3</sup>

*Abstract:* One of the key dimensions of vivid security dynamics in the Western Balkans is concerned with its energy security, especially when considering its specific geographical position within crossed energy transportation routes between East and West. The international pipeline connection of diverse states into one regional cluster made the theme of energy security in terms of natural gas very important. The main research question is: *What makes the state-of-the-art in the Western Balkans' energy security within the context of growing Turkey's role, besides the EU and Russia?* Consequently, the main hypothesis refers to the increasing role of Turkey in the Western Balkans' energy security. Reorienting of the EU and Russia to the supplying of South Europe via southern pipelines resulted in the increased role of Turkey in terms of the new 'energy hub'. The energy security dynamics of the Western Balkans will be examined through case studies regarding the Southern Gas Corridor and the Turk Stream, which are making Turkey a significant actor on the East-West energy supply route. According to the already mentioned regional nature of pipelines, the analysis will shed light on the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) and its main concepts, such as geographical proximity of these actors and their historical and cultural relations. In accordance, the role of Turkey as an insulator state in terms of RSCT will be revised. The analysis employed a literature review and qualitative content analysis of key political and security statements and media releases as well, made in regard to energy actors identified. Although the quantitative data sources were consulted, the research is of a predominantly qualitative nature.

*Keywords:* the Western Balkans, energy security, the EU, Russia, Turkey, pipelines, natural gas.

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## INTRODUCTION

Labeling energy as a key contemporary challenge makes this resource one of the most important in terms of international relations. The fact that normal functioning and development of all societies depend on the availability and accessibility of energy resources makes the theme of energy security justifiable in terms of scientific researches (Trapara and Šekarić, 2019). While some energy resources, such as oil, are determined through the existence of the global market, natural gas issues are a little bit of different nature. The natural gas issue refers to a strong regional dimension due to several kilometers long international pipelines that link diverse states into one regional cluster. This formation, which gathers different states in terms of producers, transit states and consumers, is characterized by specific regional security dynamics and diverse, often divergent energy interest of energy actors. With the global energy shift to the concept of diversifying energy routes and resources, rerouting energy trajectories creates new forms of energy dependence and cooperation, while some new actors become significant in the context of energy relations. One of the best examples of the mentioned refers to Turkey as 'emerging as an indispensable partner to Europe' (Yorucu and Mehmet, 2018, p. 1).

Turkey is not an energy producer but sits near more than three-quarters of the global proven hydrocarbon reserves and, therefore, presents an important energy transit country. In addition, its geographic position in terms of newest diversification projects of both the EU and Russia makes it a significant state in the context of the Western Balkans' energy security. This specifically refers to the Southern Gas Corridor (EU gas project) and the Turk Stream Natural Gas Pipeline Project (Turk Stream (Russian gas project)) due to their transportation lines that go through or near to the WB states.

The Western Balkans (WB) represents the region that sits historically between East and West. Moreover, this region is often presented as one of the 'battlegrounds of the energy game unfolding between Russia and the EU' (Önsoy and Udum, 2015, p. 176). The Western Balkans countries, however, have not been able so far to capitalize on this key location and draw benefits as transit countries (Ralchev, 2012, p. 1). Therefore, the main goal of this paper is to gain insight into the *state-of-the-art* of the Western Balkans' energy security dynamics within the context of growing Turkey's role, besides the EU and Russia.

## THE REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX THEORY AND THE CASE OF TURKEY

The regional security complex theory (RSCT) was originally developed by the theorists of the Copenhagen School of Security Studies. It rests on the premise that ‘no nation’s security is self-contained’ according to an inherently relational nature of security dynamics (Buzan and Wæver, 2003, p. 43). In other words, ‘The region refers to the level where states or other units link together sufficiently closely that their securities cannot be considered separate from each other’ (Buzan and Wæver, 2003, p. 43), where the geographical proximity of the states or units concerned is the most prominent.

According to the main presumptions of RSCT, Turkey is seen as an insulator between the Middle Eastern RSC, European and the post-Soviet RSC, playing a peripheral role in the international system, thus making it unable to identify as part of any particular region.<sup>4</sup> The role of an insulator state Turkey has gained due to its inability ‘to bring different regional security complexes together to form its own strategic arena or to clearly present itself as a pole in any regional security complex’ (Luenam, 2015, p. 4). In other words, sitting on the edge of three regional security complexes makes Turkey, although a very important geopolitical actor, unable to be more present and involved in the security dynamics of its neighbors. However, in terms of changing Turkey’s previous foreign and security policy in the 21st century, intensification of its relations with its neighbors (Barrinha, 2014, p. 166) and recent energy security dynamics, this position must be questioned because it reaches beyond its own traditional peripheral and passive role characteristic of an insulator states.

Turkey’s geographical position between diverse regional complexes gives it the potential for greater involvement in regional security dynamics. When it comes to the Western Balkans countries, Turkey is seen as a traditional actor having historical and cultural interests within this area (Buzan and Wæver, 2003, p. 395). With recent diplomatic visits of the Turkish president to the Balkans countries, Turkey’s interests in developing

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<sup>4</sup> The concept of an insulator is specific to RSCT and implies ‘a location occupied by one or more units where larger regional security dynamics stand back to back. This is not to be confused with the traditional idea of a buffer state, whose function is defined by standing at the center of a strong pattern of securitization, not at its edge’ (Buzan and Wæver, 2003, p. 41). Insulators are not located in the regional security complex but rather sit in-between two or more regional security complexes (Buzan and Wæver, 2003, p. 483).

and implementing business projects and, especially, energy presence in this part of Europe, make Turkey very present and active in the Western Balkans. On the other side, growing Turkish-Russian relations primarily in energy security issues, make this state close to Russia a great power of the post-Soviet regional security complex. However, Turkey sees itself as a 'bridge between gas-producing and gas-consuming countries' (GIS Dossier, 2018). Therefore, the statement of Buzan and Wæver that Turkey, as insulator state, is unable 'to bring the different complexes together into one coherent strategic arena' (2003, p. 395), becomes questionable when having on mind recent events linked to energy security, especially Turkey's ambitions to become a regional energy hub. Rather, as Barrinha suggested (2014), Turkey could become a great power insulator, not necessarily passing the process from being a regional and great power successively.

### ENERGY MIX OF THE WESTERN BALKANS COUNTRIES

The Western Balkans, although geographically set, consists of countries that have not been integrated into the EU by the treaties from 2004 and 2007. Hence, the Western Balkans includes 'former Yugoslavia countries minus Slovenia plus Albania'.<sup>5</sup> This 'formula' actually stands for political and discursive designation of this region rather than its geographical determination. Some studies are showing the justification of thematizing the Western Balkans as a peculiar regional security subcomplex (as a part of European regional security complex) (Lipovac, 2016; Kudlenko, 2018; Veličkovski Stojanovski, 2019).

The diverse energy mix of the WB region is the result of the different energy needs of the Western Balkans countries. However, the mutual reliance of these countries on each other and mutual energy connections consequently lead to a spillover effect in the domain of energy security. Setting aside the consumption of petroleum and lignite as still dominant resources, the Western Balkans countries are highly dependent on Russian oil and gas. According to some data, Serbia and Croatia import the most natural gas from all Western Balkans countries (UN, 2016; Gazprom Export,

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<sup>5</sup> The Western Balkans was formally set in 2003 during the EU-Western Balkans Summit in Thessaloniki that gathered six WB countries and confirmed their pathway towards the EU membership (European Council, 2003). Besides, Croatia is considered as part of the WB region regardless of its EU membership because of its strong historical, political and security bondages with the rest of the Western Balkans countries.

2019), where Serbia is the most dependent country from Russian natural gas. Russian gas supplies the Western Balkans countries via a pipeline that passes through Hungary and Serbia or Bulgaria. Considering that Russian energy resources (primarily oil and natural gas) dominate the Western Balkans import portfolio, the role of Russia is obviously the most important.<sup>6</sup> However, dependence on a single supplier is marked as a threat to the energy security of the consuming country, making space for countries' attempts to diversify supplying routes.<sup>7</sup>

The Western Balkans states face diverse problems when it comes to their energy security. Problems such as frazzle and ruined energy infrastructure, high CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and many others, make the need for its recovery urgent (Lachert and Kamiński, 2019).<sup>8</sup> A huge amount of energy infrastructure of those countries was damaged in the civil war during the '90s, while the rest of it desperately needs reconstruction. Pipelines that pass through or nearby these countries are seen as an opportunity to enrich their own energy security. Strong regional cooperation in the domain of energy security has never been more at stake than now, especially between non-EU members and the rest of the European Union.

Although the South Stream project (Russian gas project) was a desirable pipeline for most of the Western Balkans because of its direct transportation via these countries<sup>9</sup>, it has never been finished. Therefore, the Russian gas project Turk Stream is now seen as the successor of a previously failed project and one of the burning issues when it comes to enhancing the energy security of the Western Balkans region.

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<sup>6</sup> Russian Gazprom is the main gas supplier to the entire region and the only producer of domestic gas (and oil) in Serbia (Kovacevic, 2017, p. v).

<sup>7</sup> As a great example of this situation could serve the event from the winter in 2009 when Russia cut the gas supply to Ukraine. Consequently, Croatia and Serbia received 'only 10 % of the normal amount for a week; following that, all gas supplies to the Western Balkans was cut off' (Önsoy and Udum, 2015, p. 182).

<sup>8</sup> In these terms, the region is still using old energy infrastructure built based on the Soviet bloc technology during the second half of the 20th century (Trapara and Šekarić, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> For instance, Gazprom and Srbijagas have constructed the world's largest gas storage facility at Banatski Dvor in the Republic of Serbia; North Macedonia signed a bilateral agreement with Russia in June 2013 aimed at the construction of a South Stream gas line for supplying this country. The same month, Serbia and Gazprom signed a roadmap to implement energy projects in the Republic of Srpska in regard to the South Stream project (Önsoy and Udum, 2015, p. 181).

## ENERGY ROLES OF THE EU AND RUSSIA IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Although the Western Balkans was not the primary interest of the EU or Russia in terms of initial energy relations compared to some other European countries and routes, its role has been increased recently, especially when it comes to the Southern Gas Corridor (EU natural gas project) and the Turk Stream (Russian natural gas project).

Regarding the EU's energy policy towards the Balkans (and the rest of Southern and Eastern Europe), it is important to note that these countries are part of the European Energy Community established in 2006 to create harmonization of national legislation with the EU *acquis communautaire* in the domain of energy and integrate the European energy market. This kind of integration is often seen as the 'EU attempts to incorporate regional states into its own overall energy network', thus trying to decrease its energy dependence from Russia (Önsoy and Udum, 2015, p. 176). So far, the EU has been the major investor when it comes to the Western Balkans energy sectors whose main instruments in this context are the IPA funds and the WBIF initiative (Nedučin, 2018, p. 21).<sup>10</sup> The significance of the Western Balkans region in terms of the EU energy demands relies on the fact that the Western Balkans 'hosts three overlapping EU energy corridors: Central/South Eastern Electricity Connection, North-South Gas Interconnections & Oil Supply and Southern Gas Corridor' (Kovacevic, 2017, p. 1). Lately, in the context of the EU energy policy, the Western Balkans is seen as a key part of the EU's attempts to diversify gas supplies. The EU's energy interest towards this region raises local expectations of transit rents and cheaper gas prices,

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<sup>10</sup> In the context of investing in energy sectors in the Western Balkans, China has lately become one of the main investors as those countries are part of the 17+1 Initiative. For more detailed information, see: Zakić and Radišić, 2019.

<sup>11</sup> Currently, the Southern Gas Corridor is comprised of two parts: the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP) (beginning at the Georgian-Turkish border, connecting to the existing Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipeline (BTE), and transporting Azerbaijani gas from the Caspian Sea gas field of Shah Deniz II), and the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP). At the Turkish-Greek border, gas from the TANAP flows into the TAP, which leads from Thessaloniki through Albania and the Adriatic Sea to Italy and further into Europe with a capacity of approximately 10 bcm/y of gas. It is often mentioned that 'gas from the TAP could be transported into Southeastern Europe along the coast of the Adriatic Sea by the Ionian-Adriatic Pipeline (IAP), which will pump up to 5 bcm/y of gas through Albania, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Croatia' (Tichý, 2019, p. 35).

especially in the context of the Southern Gas Corridor<sup>11</sup> and the North-South Gas Corridor<sup>12</sup>.

When it comes to Russia, it is worth of the notion that, in addition to Western Europe, Central and Eastern Europe represent a very important energy market for this country. With exports reaching 38.38 bcm in 2018, according to the latest data, Russian gas provides more than half of the region's gas consumption (Gazprom Export, 2019, p. 7). A significant part of these exports goes to meet the needs of Bulgaria in the amount of 3.17 bcm, for Romania 1.32 bcm, but also for the Western Balkans, where Serbia receives 2.15 bcm as the largest importer of Russian natural gas and Croatia with 2.04 bcm. Significantly smaller quantities go to Bosnia and Herzegovina in the amount of 0.24 bcm and Macedonia in the amount of 0.16 bcm in 2018. Due to the enormous dependence on Russian gas, which accounts for over 95% of total imports of this energy product in the Western Balkans, Russia is the most important and dominant energy player (Index Mundi, 2019).<sup>13</sup> Besides, the Balkans is seen as a traditional Russian zone of interest, where the multi-polar distribution of power is the only tenable solution. Bearing in mind that a significant part of both Russian national security and foreign policy activities relies on its energy sources, it is expected that Russia will endeavor to maintain its role as a dominant provider of gas and oil to both the EU and the Western Balkans region. Besides, a Russian decision to stop gas supply to Europe via the Ukrainian transit route highlighted the importance of the southern part of the European continent with its potential of supplying route. In this power constellation, the importance of the Western Balkans in terms of energy security is growing.

## **TURKEY'S ROLE IN THE WESTERN BALKANS**

### **Historical and cultural bondages between Turkey and the Western Balkans**

Traditionally Turkey's role is well-known in the Western Balkans while the new one in terms of energy security starts to appear. Turkish foreign

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<sup>12</sup> The North-South Gas Corridor connects the LNG Terminal in Świnoujście with the Baltic Pipe, passing central Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and the LNG terminal in Croatia eventually.

<sup>13</sup> Although there are no official and unique data on the dependence of the Western Balkans countries on Russian gas, this conclusion is reached through the crossing of official Gazprom data on natural gas exports and CIA Factbook data on the total consumption of this energy product classified by the same countries.

policy towards the Balkans is conditioned by historical, political, economic, cultural and security determinants. In addition to legitimizing itself as the civilizing heir to the Ottoman Empire, Turkey's Balkans policy is based on the aspiration for restoration of the Ottoman cultural and political heritage, a paternalistic attitude towards the Balkans Muslims (Albanians and Bosniaks), and a tendency to rise in regional power with intense economic, trade and energy relations with the Balkans countries. A shift in foreign policy activities of Turkey is also seen within the *amity-enmity* pattern or, as Barinha stated, 'Turkey has also moved from a security perception based on enmity relations with its neighbors to one, if not of amity, at least of stronger convergence of interests' (2014, p. 178-179). Following a series of political failures and an erosion of its mediating capacities, Turkey is gaining more importance and attention in developing economic, trade and energy relations with the Balkans countries.

The ambitious and also unrealized Nabucco pipeline project raised for the first time the issue of Turkey's energy role in the Balkans. However, the actualization of its energy role was marked by the projects of the Trans-Atlantic Pipeline and the Turk Stream, which, according to the capacities and construction dynamics, represent a considerably realistic option.

### **Turkey's role in the Western Balkans' energy security**

Since the Atatürk's period, the issue of energy independence, as a factor of economic development and overall power, has been on the top of Turkey's national-state agenda, from which an energy standpoint poses an ambivalent potential. While the absence of key energy sources (oil and natural gas) and high levels of demand make Turkey an energy-dependent, the extremely favorable geostrategic and geo-economic position between Russia, the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Middle East (which accounts for almost half of the world's natural gas exports, and Europe with nearly 15% of the world's consumption of natural gas) provides numerous opportunities, including the pursuit of a stronger energy policy towards the Middle East and the Balkans.<sup>14</sup>

Although Turkey could not be comparable with the EU or Russia in terms of power, its geographical position and historical and cultural factors that make it very close to the Balkans and its foreign policy aims as well,

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<sup>14</sup> Unlike self-sufficient electricity demand, Turkey is ranked 17th in the world for crude oil imports and 6th in the world for natural gas imports (The World Factbook, 2019; British Petroleum, 2019, p. 35).

make Turkey a very important factor for the Western Balkans' energy security. Some latest trends in terms of Turkey as a growing regional power show that it has a strong interest in investing in the Western Balkans countries (Lachert and Kamiński, 2019). Besides, the statements that Turkey's good geographic location could be used not only for enhancing its power but as a factor to 'boost its prospects for accession to the European Union' are not rare (Winrow, 2013, p. 145).

A comprehensive study on a Balkan gas hub, made by Aleksandar Kovacevic, showed the potential of the region when it comes to gas supply mechanisms and options (2017). The author summarized Turkey's role in this dynamic, showing that the Turkey gas corridor provides at least two supply options for the Balkans:

- The bi-directional flow between Turkey and Bulgaria,
- The TANAP - TAP pipeline system for delivering Caspian (Azerbaijan) gas to the Western Balkans and Italy. The TAP is further accompanied by the Adriatic-Ionian pipeline intended to link the TAP in Albania with the existing (and developing) pipeline system in Croatia (Kovacevic, 2017, p. 31).

Due to the implementation of major energy projects, Turkey has shifted from being a significant transit country to a regional energy hub.<sup>15</sup> Turkey's energy map is prevailed by two natural gas corridors, the eastern (Iraq, Iran and Qatar) and the northern (Russia, Azerbaijan and other Caspian countries) and several competing energy projects. However, the indicated geopolitical position also creates a series of tensions in Turkey's relations with energy-exporting countries. Intense confrontation between the Nabucco project (supported by the US and the EU) and Blue Stream (supported by the Russian Federation) replaced the competition between the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) and the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP) versus former South Stream and current Turk Stream project.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The first pipeline through Turkey - 'West line' - came from the Russian Federation, via Ukraine, Romania and Bulgaria (signed in 1986, built in 1987 and reached a maximum amount of 6 billion m<sup>3</sup> in 1993). The second pipeline stretched along the eastern route, from Iran in the Tabriz-Erzurum-Ankara route (2001). Shortly after (2003), a Russian project Blue Stream was put into operation, and after that, a gas pipeline from Azerbaijan Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (2007) was built nearby. Also, the Kirkuk-Ceyhan crude oil pipeline is an important segment of regional energy maps. The unrealized projects - the Persian gas pipeline on the Iran-Iraq-Turkey, Qatar and Nabucco pipeline - are worthy of mentioning.

<sup>16</sup> Construction of the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP, 10 billion m<sup>3</sup>) began in June 2018, while the first gas deliveries to Europe are expected in early 2020.



Having in mind the previously mentioned, it is obvious that the only viable way to boost European and the Western Balkans' energy security in terms of natural gas is one that includes the pipeline(s) that passes through the Turkish territory.

### **The Southern Gas Corridor and the Turk Stream projects**

**The Southern Gas Corridor.** In order to reduce dependence on Russian gas, the European Commission supported the Southern Gas Corridor Initiative (in 2008), which connects to the existing South Caucasus Pipeline, after which two new pipelines are planned: the Trans-Anatolian pipeline (TANAP) (started in 2018) and the Trans-Adriatic pipeline (TAP), whose total value is estimated at around \$ 40 billion.<sup>17</sup> As a project aimed at supplying the EU with Caspian gas via Turkey and with the support of the USA, it has raised many controversial debates wide across Russia.

The Trans-Anatolian pipeline extension and a certain competitor to the Turk Stream appears on the Balkans energy map as a transit project - the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (878 km, 90% completed, expected in 2020, 10 billion cubic meters) - through which it is planned to take Azerbaijani natural gas via Turkey and Greece to the market of Western Europe.

Similar to the case of Turk Stream, Turkey takes a central role within the Southern Gas Corridor, contributing to the strengthening of its overall geopolitical power in the Balkans, especially in relation to Greece. Also, some announcements of the expansion of the Trans-Adriatic pipeline to the Western Balkans countries have further strengthened Turkey's significant energy role in the region.

Although the Southern Gas Corridor currently bypasses states of the Western Balkans, some recent announcements were made regarding its possible extension. In 2018, a series of agreements were signed, providing the construction of the Ionian - Adriatic Pipeline aimed at connecting the energy markets of Albania, Montenegro and Croatia with the Southern Gas Corridor.<sup>18</sup> This gas project is of obvious significance to the WB countries.

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<sup>17</sup> The European Investment Bank approved one of the biggest loans ever, worth 1.5 billion euros, for the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (De Carbonnel, 2018).

<sup>18</sup> The financial problems of Albania and Montenegro have threatened the realization of the Ionian-Adriatic pipeline. On the other side, during the past year, Croatia has intensified the work on the construction of the LNG terminal in Krk and the connection of the energy network with the surrounding countries, which is an introduction to the construction of the Ionian-Adriatic pipeline (Ibrahimzade, 2019).

**The Turk Stream.** The Turk Stream must be seen as a segment of a complex and dynamic global energy competition. Unlike most of the projects supported by the US and the EU so far, the South Stream (2010) was the first to give greater importance to the Western Balkans. The choice of the route testifies to the geopolitical direction of this course, which extends through Bulgaria and Serbia to Central Europe, not as it was once mentioned, via Greece to Italy. However, after the suspension of the South Stream project (in 2014), a memorandum of understanding was signed between Gazprom and BOTAS, whose plans were threatened by the blockade of Russo-Turkish relations (in 2015). However, construction of the new Turk Stream pipeline, worth 11.4 billion euros with a flow of 31.5 billion m<sup>3</sup>, is foreseen by a new intergovernmental agreement signed in 2016.

The pipeline project Turk Stream is often presented as ‘another giant project after the TANAP’ that will together play a key role in ensuring European energy security (Turkey, 2019) and the Western Balkans likewise.<sup>19</sup> The first part of this pipeline is aimed at supplying Turkey, and the second part goes farther from Bulgaria to Serbia and Hungary, each with 15.75 bcm annual capacity (Tsolova, 2019) and bypassing Ukraine. Separately, Serbia and Hungary are building another pipeline that will carry the gas from the Turk Stream and take it further to the EU. Turkish energy minister designated Turkey as someone who plays a ‘key role in securing Europe’s gas supply’ (Turkey, 2019). Therefore, the TANAP-TAP system and the Turk Stream project are seen as core gas projects for Europe and the Western Balkans’ energy security in the future.

On the first day of 2020, Bulgaria started receiving Russian gas via the Turk Stream (Bugarska, 2020). The inauguration event was held on 8 January with Russian, Turkish, and Serbian presidents and Bulgarian prime minister, where the possibility to include North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro in the project were also highlighted (TurkStream, 2020). This event was followed by some controversial debates such as the increasing influence of Russia and Turkey in the Balkans (Bojić, 2020) and the division of European countries on ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ (Bauomy, 2020), expressing great attention to further developments within European energy security.

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<sup>19</sup> Currently, this project (as well as Nord Stream 2) is facing USA economic sanctions.

## CONCLUSION

In the process of the global energy transformation and overall energy paradigm that expresses the necessity of diversifying energy resources, transport routes and energy partners, some regions are gaining in importance. One of the best examples is the region of the Western Balkans, sitting in a triangle between traditional energy actors in the form of the EU and Russia and Turkey as an emerging 'energy hub'. With key pipelines passing through its territory, Turkey could really become the new 'energy hub' not only for Europe but for the Western Balkans respectively, with seriously improved geopolitical importance and threatening to shake prevailing presumption of RSCT theory in terms of an insulator state.

In accordance with their traditional roles and energy interests and policies within this part of the European continent, the EU and Russia will continue to aspire towards the Western Balkans in the energy security domain, but the role of Turkey must not be neglected so far. Hereof all attention will be pointed to Turkey-EU and Turkey-Russia relations, i.e., energy competition between the EU and Russia. In this atmosphere, the Western Balkans, as energy-hungry countries, could benefit from confronting the main challenges and use given opportunities to improve their own energy security and strengthen their own positions in the overall energy security dynamics.

In addition to the undoubted advantages, from the perspective of the Western Balkans states facing complex political circumstances and economic transformation, the Turk Stream has already posed a number of major political challenges. Turkey's and Russia's global and regional cooperation, especially in the energy security domain, requires an analytical observation of future steps and moves and a pragmatic review of the traditional and dominant *enmity-amity* patterns characteristic for understanding the role of these countries in the Balkans. In this manner, a lot of future dynamics would also depend on good regional cooperation.

Both natural gas projects confirm Turkey's geostrategic position as an energy hub onto the Western Balkans and the rest of Europe. Strengthening the energy role of Russia and Turkey in the Balkans and Southeast Europe will threaten Western energy positions in this region. Firstly, the realization of the Turk Stream and the North Stream 2 will lead to a decrease in Ukraine's geopolitical importance in the gas transit route to Europe. On the other hand, in addition to Russia and Turkey, Bulgaria and Serbia will undoubtedly benefit from participation within this project. Secondly, the

completion of the pipeline and the agreed construction of a nuclear power plant in Turkey will strengthen political relations between Turkey and Russia. Thirdly, the construction of the Turk Stream will cause not only a strengthening of the energy presence of Russia and Turkey but also a much greater degree of the energy dependence of the Balkans states. Fourthly, transit countries will realize a number of economic benefits from this cooperation, including smaller transit prices. Finally, it should expect that these factors will strengthen not only the economic but also the overall political influence of Russia and Turkey in the Western Balkans.

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## IS THERE A UNIVERSAL PATTERN FOR RECONCILIATIONS? SUCSESSES AND FAILURES OF EUROPEAN AND ASIAN RECONCILIATION AS A TOOL FOR THE BALKANS?

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*Abstract:* The postwar period brought not only the division of the world into two hostile camps but also the need to reconcile and work through the past wrongdoings. The world was amazed by Willy Brandt's knee-fall in Warsaw in 1970, and some of the countries took that as an example of the perfect reconciliation. Nonetheless, Polish-German apologies were not the ones that washed away all blame. The war memories still raise many emotions among the two nations. However, Japan and Korea, two allied democracies that still struggle with the war memories, frequently point to the European neighbors as a perfect example of reconciliation. The aim of this paper is to verify the strengths and weaknesses of European and Asian reconciliation and to find among them the working patterns for the Balkans, as well as the failures that should not be repeated.

*Keywords:* reconciliation, the Balkans, Europe, East Asia, politics of remembrance.

### INTRODUCTION - RECONCILIATION AND THE POLITICS OF REMEMBRANCE

Fascination with other countries which are far away from each other is widely known all over the world. Due to its soft power<sup>2</sup>, Japan seems to be one of the most attractive countries. Korea is nowadays also gaining the attention of Europeans. European youth stay under the influence of Japanese

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<sup>2</sup> The term popularized by Joseph S. Nye in his book *Bound to lead: the changing nature of American power* (1990), showing the appeal and attraction as a power shaping the preferences of others.

and Korean music, called J-Pop and K-Pop. Germans and Poles read manga, discuss the latest anime, buy Korean cosmetics and eat sushi or kimchi for dinner. Japan and Korea, together with their unique culture and art, became part of the European lifestyle.

For East Asians, the Western European countries are for decades a symbol of elitism. The honeymoon tours, young Asians tours organized after graduation, are aimed to visit the Eiffel Tower, the Colosseum or Big Ben. Europe benefits from its long history without special care of Asian tourists when compared with the East Asian 'soft power'. Germans somehow use the image of the romantic churches and castles, cozy cafés, and European chic to attract part of the Korean and Japanese travelers. Poland attempts to promote its culture with Chopin and traditional crafts. Nonetheless, the must-see place for Asian tourists is still the symbol of the most tragic history of the nation: The Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.

Besides the above-mentioned popular European sites for Asian nations, there is an issue in European history that raises interest among them. This issue is reconciliation.

History is both a factor in the process of remembrance and a dominant element in Polish-German relations.<sup>3</sup> And reconciliation is a process that aims to soften the past burdens and enables the countries struggling in the past to establish a proper relationship. It can go back, freeze, or develop. One of the most important aspects of reconciliation is an apology.

The term *apologia* derives from Greek, and it is a term derived from oratory art, meaning defense speech against charges, as well as the praise of a person, piece of work or institution (SJP); in everyday speech, it can also mean justification or apologies. It is worth mentioning that the term combines conflicting slogans or an apology. It may be noted that the term *apologia* combines denial, justification, as well as an expression of repentance. For the purposes of this article, I focus on the apologies, defined as an agreement (Benoit, 2009, p. 92), or *mea culpa* (Tavuchis, 1991), which Jane W. Yamazaki calls the real apology (2006, p. 2).

This article aims at presenting and analyzing Polish and German paths for reconciliation. They are considered by Koreans as the one that should be repeated by Japan towards South Korea.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Japanese-Korean struggles over history will also be analyzed in this paper to show the failures

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<sup>3</sup> See more in Feldman, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> See more in Barbasiewicz, 2019.



that were committed by Asian nations. This analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of rapprochement attempts in both Europe and Asia aims at finding the solution and leads for the Western Balkans.

### POLISH-GERMAN PATHS FOR RECONCILIATION

Poland and Germany share not only the memory of World War II atrocities. They also share 123 years of the occupation policy of Prussia towards large parts of Western Poland's territories, which ended in 1918. This period of occupation and the awareness of not existing Polish territory made the anti-German sentiment even stronger in the 1920s and the 1930s. The outbreak of World War II is the most clearly remembered in Polish history as a period of cruelty and dehumanization. The reconciliation process started about a decade after the war, and it is a constant course in Polish-German relations. However, it should be remembered, that the pre- and postwar situation of both countries was diametrically different. Poland became a part of the Soviet bloc, and Germany remained divided into the western and eastern parts. Therefore, the policy of dialogue was conducted from the Polish side with two different countries, and its own acceptance of Germany's gestures and statements was strongly controlled by the Soviet Union.

One of the most important aspects of the Polish-German dispute was the question of borders. Even though the agreement between the Polish government and East Germany (German Democratic Republic) was signed in 1950 (German-Polish society, 2012), the Polish western borders were still not recognized by West Germany (Federal Republic of Germany). East Germany did not also include regulations concerning the border traffic, which was of special interest to the Polish side. Nonetheless, the borders mentioned in the 1950 Treaty were agreed to be the official Polish-German borders. The relations with West Germany were established due to *Ostpolitik*, initiated in 1969 by the FRG Chancellor Willy Brandt as a normalization policy with the Central and Eastern European countries. Brandt's arrival to Warsaw in 1970 brought the Treaty of Warsaw, with acceptance of the existing borders. In the world's opinion, however, the most significant moment was the knee-fall of the German Chancellor in front of the Ghetto Heroes Monument. The picture of Willy Brandt kneeling in front of the monument, in the center of Warsaw, became the symbol of post-war apologies and is shown in numerous books and textbooks, not only in Europe but all over the world, including Asia.<sup>5</sup> The

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<sup>5</sup> However, it should be remembered that the pictures of Willy Brandt kneeling in front of the monument were prohibited in Poland until 1989. See more in Ruchniewicz, 2019, p. 23.

final step to achieve the political status-quo regarding the borders' post-war uncertainty was the Treaty between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Poland on the confirmation of the frontier between them (Treaty between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Poland, 2002), signed in 1990. It was also supplemented by a Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Cooperation, signed in June 1991.

However, one of the most significant aspects of Polish-German reconciliation happened on the societal level. It was possible, after the Nuremberg Trials, which took place from November 1945 till October 1946. The trials recognized the guilt of the Nazis. Having this official confirmation of Germany's responsibility, the ground for rebuilding the relations was ready even the wounds were still opened.

In August 1948 the Hellmut von Gerlach Society was founded. It aimed to rebuild political, cultural and economic ties with Poland (Turek, 2018, p. 26). The first step to build the bridge of forgiveness was the cooperation of Christian churches (both protestant and catholic), which started in the 1950s, from the first cooperation of the protestant churches and neglecting anti-Polish stereotypes in their publications (Żurek, 2019, p. 233). In 1964 and 1965, German Christians organized the pilgrimage to Auschwitz, which was the visible sign of the readiness for the process of reconciliation (Żurek, 2019, p. 234). The first key-event of Polish-German rapprochement was the Pastoral Letter of the Polish Bishops to their German Brothers, ended with a statement: 'We forgive and ask for forgiveness' (Text of the message, 2016). It seemed to be the most important document in the whole reconciliation process (Żurek, 2019, p. 237).

The symbolic culmination of the reconciliation process was the mass in Krzyżowa in Lower Silesia (Szurlej, 2013, p. 31), which took place on 9 November 1989. During this service, the symbolic gesture of the 'sign of peace' occurred between the Polish Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki and the West German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl.

Contemporarily, Poland and Germany share the commonwealth in a supranational organization, which is the European Union (EU). As Justyna Turek stated, mentioning the experience of Poland and Germany as a tool for compromise: 'European countries still grapple with obstacles concerning the reconciliation process, but Poland-German pattern seems to be a positive pattern (...). (...) steps of reconciliation based on forgiveness and mutual understanding - from political level and both societies - may have an excellent contribution to reconciliation (...). Forgiveness between adversaries is the first step in building relations and it is possible if we look

at the European continent' (Turek, 2018, p. 21). This experience can become an instrument, which after adjusting to the cultural and historical understanding, can become a pattern for other countries on how to get through the most difficult path from two extreme points. As Burkhard Olschowsky and Robert Żurek claim, without German-French reconciliation, there would not be the European Union, but without Polish-German reconciliation, there would not be the EU covering almost the entire continent (Olschowsky and Żurek, 2013, p. 40).

Poland and Germany were enemies during one of the bloodiest conflicts, World War II, due to which Poland lost almost 6 million citizens, i.e., 17% of the pre-war population (Materski and Szarota, 2009). These days, they share common norms and values inside a supranational organism. It does not mean that past events do not overshadow the contemporary issues. They are visible in political propaganda, memorials and common anniversaries. But the path for understanding was opened. And since reconciliation, which is an ongoing process, aims at gaining a 'just memory', which is a proper resolution and forgiveness for others and oneself (Lavabre and Nicolaidis, 2009, pp. 87-88), the process between Poland and Germany can serve not as a perfect, but verified way to become co-partners, even if in not so distant past the nations could define each other as enemies.

## JAPANESE-KOREAN STRUGGLES OVER THE PAST

The countries that definitely need the process of reconciliation are Japan and the Republic of Korea. Existing in a quasi-alliance, each of them is allied with the great-patron/protector – the United States.<sup>6</sup> The establishment of the basic relations between these Asian democracies was caused by the pressure from the United States (Barbasiewicz, 2018). This 'push hard' policy of American policymakers towards rapprochement in the 1960s, caused the lack of the process of reconciliation and lasting struggles over history between both societies.

The outside pressure became the reason of history being an unworked issue in the bilateral relations of Japan and Korea. The source of the pressure was the special interest in sharing the responsibility of guaranteeing the security from the Japanese side to the Republic of Korea, during the increased American involvement in the Vietnam War. Together with forced

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<sup>6</sup> This theory was developed by Victor D. Cha (2000).

reconciliation, the incising sense of unfairness started to deepen in Japanese society. Japan, which was the aggressor during the war, due to its demilitarization, became one of the main suppliers of the American army fighting in Vietnam, while South Korea had to send the second largest contingent to support the US in the war.<sup>7</sup> This situation caused the Korean human losses and the involvement in the next conflict, not that long after World War II and the Korean War. Japan, at the same time, benefiting from being the demilitarized country started its economic growth, leaving the rest of Asian countries far behind.<sup>8</sup>

The first attempts from the Japanese Emperor's side to express reconciliation started in the 1980s. On 6 September 1984, Japanese Emperor Hirohito held in his palace a party for South Korean President, Chun Doo Hwan. During the toast, he referred to the difficult past with words 'It is indeed regrettable, that there was an unfortunate past between us for a period in this century, and I believe that it should not be repeated again' (Haberman, 1990, p. 1). Soon after Hirohito passed away, Akihito, who succeeded, apologized to Korean President Roh Tae Woo while saying: 'I think of the sufferings your people underwent during this unfortunate period, which was brought about by my country, and cannot but feel the deepest regret' (Weisman, 1984, p. 5). This visit of the Korean president also became a possibility to draw attention to the "comfort women" issue. This was the beginning of how in the 1990s a new and ongoing historical struggle over the comfort women issue has started. Some scholars assume that about 70% of all comfort women were from Korea (Hicks, 1999, p. 113). The South Korean Women's and Church Women's Alliances and the Seoul District Female Students' Representative Council decided to ask President Roh to tackle the issue in Japan (Hicks, 1999, p. 113). The Korean president did not answer to this request, but the Korean Foreign Ministry requested the cooperation from the Japanese side in compiling a list of all wartime labor draftees (Hicks, 1999, p. 114). Soon after, the Socialists raised the issue in the Japanese Parliament. When the Japanese government denied, the anger among the ex-comfort women started to rise, and Kim Hak Sun decided for an official testimony. This led to the first lawsuits in Japan. When the Japanese government claimed that the documents concerning the issue were missing, Yoshimi Yoshiaki found the official papers in the Library of the National Institute for Defense Studies and delivered them as proof. The case

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<sup>7</sup> See more in Kim, 1966.

<sup>8</sup> For detailed data, see Yoshioka and Kawasaki, 2016.

of the comfort women became officially confirmed and a vivid issue in Japanese-Korean relations.

The change in the Japanese government and the period the Liberal Democratic Party lost the majority, led the Socialists to the PMs position. One of them was Murayama Tomiichi. He was the one, who made a statement on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of World War II, considered by many as the closest to perfection. Murayama apologized: '(...) In the hope that no such mistake be made in the future, I regard, in a spirit of humility, these irrefutable facts of history, and express here once again my feelings of deep remorse and state my heartfelt apology. Allow me also to express my feelings of profound mourning for all victims, both at home and abroad, of that history (...)' (Statement by Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama, 1995). Nonetheless, the usage of the issue of history in the political campaigns and the struggles over comfort women reparation caused not only political but also social hate.

The survey conducted among Japanese and Koreans from 2013 clearly shows that almost half of each society have bad impressions about each other. This does not help in building a common future and reconciliation. Besides the comfort women issue, the other 'burning points' are the territorial disputes (Takeshima/Dokdo Islands), and the lack of proper recognition from the Japanese government side (The Genron NPO and East Asia Institute, 2018).

The public opinion is formed by the actions undertaken by Japanese and Korean political and social actions that bring back to mind the past happenings. For example, before the first survey, in 2012 the Korean president visited disputed islands (Sang-Hun, 2012). The world was also informed of the willingness of the Korean side to construct an airport next to the islands (Nam, 2014). On the Japanese side, the actions of local politicians, as well as the statements made by the Prime Minister, also angered Koreans. For example, the statement by the mayor of Osaka, claiming that the comfort women were necessary for Japan's wartime soldiers ('Comfort women', 2013) brought much criticism not only in Korea but worldwide.

Even when Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzō and Korean President Park Geun Hye decided on the agreement on reparations for the sex slaves from Korea in 2015, it became the next issue of the struggle on history and apologies, which ended with a withdrawal of diplomats of both countries. The unwillingness on the Korean side could be caused by Abe's statement on the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II. He mentioned Korea among others who suffered from Japanese war actions,

but with the emphasis that Japan 'repeatedly expressed the feelings of deep remorse and heartfelt apology for its actions during the war' and was 'consistently devoted to the peace and prosperity of the region since the end of the war' (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 2015). This showed the entire world that Japan does not wish to apologize anymore, and the younger generations are not responsible for the war.

The above-mentioned, selected issues on Japanese history show how without the previous steps to the mutual forgiveness and understanding, every word in political speech, and every political or social action can become a great issue in bilateral relations. For sure, Japan and Korea are the countries that show the bad influence the lack of reconciliations has for the entire society.

### **STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF POLISH-GERMAN RECONCILIATION AS A LESSON FOR THE BALKANS**

The above-mentioned process of Polish-German rapprochement and Japanese-Korean struggles over history do not mention the sole success of the first ones and the failures of the second pair of the countries. Poland and Germany still are the place of the historical disputes, but they established the benefits of coexisting as partners in different organizations, from which the most important and integrating are the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). It does not mean that Japan and South Korea do not participate in common organizations or do not share the security policy. But compared to Poland and Germany, they share only a common security patron – the United States, without being equal partners within bigger organizations, and – as it was shown above – without being equal partners within the triangular alliance (although the strongest feelings towards this state were during the Cold War period).

One of the strongest points of Polish-German cooperation is on the societal level. Different NGOs and organizations participate in establishing the Polish-German dialogue. One of the most important factors in building an understanding between the parties is the youth exchange program. A great example is the Polish-German Youth Cooperation. As it states in the mission: 'equality and partnership are the foundations of our activity. We work in a Polish-German team, we speak both languages, we are present in both countries'.<sup>9</sup> These words are the best explanation of the success

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<sup>9</sup> For detailed information visit the official website: <https://www.pnwm.org/o-pnwm/misja-i-wizja/>.

benefiting from building foundations for good neighborly relations between Poles and Germans. The Erasmus exchange program financed by the European Commission also helps Polish-German cooperation, making Germany one of the most frequently chosen countries for studying of Polish students, and German students as one of the most frequently studying at Polish universities (PL – one of the most popular Erasmus destination, 2014).

The next important step was establishing the Polish-German Textbook Commission, which is preparing one textbook on history, after agreeing on the universal version of the history of both Polish and German sides. Until today three textbooks were delivered to history teachers. The scope of topics in the published textbooks covers the period from prehistory until World War I and is defined as 'multi perspective' (Araszkiewicz, 2019, p. 15). The textbooks enforce the youths in understanding the past, which strengthens the willingness of students in searching and interpreting the sources, as well as looking for their credibility (Araszkiewicz, 2019, p. 15).

The weakest point in the attempts to reach full reconciliation and getting to a 'just memory' point is the lack of awareness on the German side of the atrocities committed on Polish citizens, with the parallel cultivation of this national tragedy in the Polish memory (Schmidt, 2019, p. 10). In Germany, Polish-German reconciliation is not appreciated, mostly because of the existing lack of interest in Eastern Europe and the biggest appreciation of German-French reconciliation (Olschowsky and Żurek, 2013, p. 40).

Consequently, the interesting result comes from the relations between Japan and South Korea. There is a significant interest in Korean pop culture, which causes a positive attitude of Japanese towards Koreans (among all the negative attitudes presented in the previous chapter).<sup>10</sup> It shows that besides the significant interest in the other country, reconciliation does not happen.

However, the actions aiming for the commemoration of the Polish victims in Berlin bring the hope of changing the lack of understanding on the German side. As one of the co-initiators, Leo Mausbach claims 'A Polish tourist who visits the sites commemorating World War II in the center of Berlin, will find in the Tiergarten district a monument in honor of Soviet soldiers, a monument in honor of the murdered Sinti and Roma, a memorial to homosexuals persecuted by Nazism and Holocaust memorial. He will also find places commemorating the German resistance movement and

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<sup>10</sup> Around 50% of Japanese have a positive attitude towards Korea thanks to music, drama, or culture (The Genron NPO and East Asia Institute, 2019, p. 6).

German suffering (...). Poland, in which there were the most victims of war in relation to the population, does not have its appropriate place here [in Berlin] to commemorate these victims and honor Polish resistance' (Mausbach, 2019, p. 11). It is very important since numerous scholars mention that the biggest obstacle to full reconciliation is the lack of awareness of the Polish nation that Germans call for honoring the Polish victims and the role of the Polish underground in World War II. However, on the political level, the remembrance of the atrocities committed against Poland is well remembered. For example, in the Bundestag, Angela Merkel recalled on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the attack on Poland the responsibility of Germany in starting the war (Merkel reminds, 2014).

However, the researchers mention also the Polish politicians' approaches to destroy rapprochement while using the anti-German sentiment in their statements. The renowned Polish historian, Krzysztof Ruchniewicz (2019) mentions the changes that appeared in Polish society – blaming the Polish side for the worsening in relations between Poland and Germany. He referred to the public opinion survey conducted in 2017, in which according to Polish citizens the relations with Germany have worsened.<sup>11</sup> Ruchniewicz also analyses the interview with Jarosław Kaczyński, the leader of the rightist-populist Law and Justice Party, who stated that Polish-German cooperation after the Cold War was the forced one and Polish elites were compliant towards Germany (Jarosław Kaczyński, 2017).<sup>12</sup>

The earlier breaking point in the bilateral relations was the activity of Erika Steinbach, and her activity in establishing the Centre Against Expulsions Foundation, which became the political issue before the elections in the Bundestag in 2005 (Turek, 2018, p. 39). Together with the Prussian Trust, an organization of German expellees established in 2000 made claims on the real estate left in Poland (Turek, 2019, p. 37). Poland perceived these activities as anti-Polish and depicting Germans as victims (Ziemer, 2005, p. 58). The German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder clearly stated that the attempts to claim in the courts were not supported by the German government (Ziemer, 2005, pp. 49-50).

The above-mentioned strengths (mainly depicted here as the contemporary societal activities, assuming that the political rapprochement is done) and weaknesses, caused by the activity of certain politicians, can

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<sup>11</sup> Details could be seen in Roguska, 2017.

<sup>12</sup> The analyses conducted by Krzysztof could be seen in Ruchniewicz, 2019, pp. 15-27.



become a clue for the Western Balkans seeking reconciliation. The activity of the politicians (even very important as Kaczyński in contemporary Poland, the leader of the majority party Law and Justice), cannot reverse elaborated reconciliation, but can significantly spoil it for a period of time. The solid ground is crucial, and the social exchange that raises the awareness of the other side can keep the fruits of reconciliation in a more difficult environment.

## CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this article was to answer the question is there a universal pattern for reconciliation? In this paper, I attempted to present as case studies two different histories of post-war bilateral relations – in Europe and Asia. The case countries seem to be similar when taking into consideration the history of their relations, the trauma that was left in the societies after the war atrocities, and their contemporary role in the international society. Nonetheless, despite the similarities, the rapprochement process in Europe and Asia worked diametrically differently.

For sure, there is no universal pattern for reconciliation. Reconciliation is a never-ending process with its successes and failures. For sure, the role of the societal and religious organizations in the case of Poland and Germany used the opportunity of making first and very important steps to start this difficult and hard process of approaching to each other. These steps were taken when the burdens were still fresh. In the case of Korea, soon after gaining back independence after more than thirty years, the next tragic event took place, which left more scars on the societal structure – the Korean War. The interest of the big patron, the United States, and its occupational policy towards Japan, which enabled the country to stand beside all the military conflicts benefiting economically from the cooperation with the US, created the feeling of unfairness and the hard start from the beginning to establish the bilateral dialogue. The religion, which was the helpful spark for reconciliation in Europe, was not the case in Asia, where together with the occupational policy, the Japanese traditional religion – Shintoism (state version) was implemented.

The ongoing process of reconciliation in the case of West Germany was the outcome of *Ostpolitik* realized from the end of the 1960s. The Polish-East German relations were built on both countries' communist system and the need for the cooperation of the countries staying in the Soviet bloc. The end of the Cold War, and the active participation in the process of reconciliation of the societal and religious circles, helped to add to the official policy the

aspect of rapprochement in which both sides played an active role – in this case it was the mass in Krzyżowa. This work of memory enabled future cooperation on the multidimensional level. The active role in introducing Poland to the organizations in which it became an equal partner for sure helped the societies to cooperate. The programs of the cooperation between the citizens of both countries, enforced by the opportunities given by the European Union (such as student exchange, legal work) or the free citizens' flow, strengthened the aspects of cooperation between the society and politicians.

In the case of Asian countries, history became a tool in the political campaign and is used to build the spirit of the nation. Even though there is the existence of a significant interest in other side's culture, the reconciliation process that was forced from the beginning effectively prevents agreement.

Therefore, even though the universal pattern for reconciliation does not exist, some aspects were characterized in this paper as helpful and disturbing in the process. Among them we can define:

- The victim's side should also be active in the process, not leaving reconciliation only to the former aggressor's side.
- Societal cooperation, such as exchange programs helps build rapprochement.
- The usage of history as a tool in gaining political power, when there is no strong reconciliation movements' history, disables and even pushes back possible rapprochement.
- Reconciliation should come from the need of the country (even if only one) or the certain benefit it wants to achieve in the international environment, not from outside pressure.

The Western Balkans, the region in Europe which was torn apart by wars after the fall of Yugoslavia, can for sure benefit from the interest of the European Union and the help of this organization in building peace and reconciliation in the region, together with the incorporation of all the states into this supranational organization. For sure, for the Balkans, it is easier to learn from the Polish-German experience because of the European roots of these countries. The Balkans have the path trodden by the central European countries – the EU member states. But it is also beneficial to look at the mistakes committed by the Asian countries. The EU cannot force the Western Balkans countries to reconcile. They need to find the benefit coming from the process of reconciliation and try to perceive how it helped Poland and Germany.

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## SYRIAN REFUGEES AND TURKISH POLITICAL PARTIES: DOMESTIC INTERESTS VERSUS UNIVERSAL VALUES

*Abstract:* The open-door policy of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* - AKP) government during the early years of the Syrian conflict led to the inflow of more than 3.6 million Syrian refugees to the country in eight years. This great migration wave turned Turkey into the host of the biggest number of refugees in the world, surpassing the record of Pakistan. At the beginning of the migration wave, both political parties and the public had a welcoming attitude towards the migrants that had to flee from the Syrian civil war. However, in a few years, this attitude started to change rapidly and radically. This study aims to compare attitudes of the five biggest political parties represented in the Turkish Grand National Assembly towards the incoming migrants: the AKP, the CHP (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* - the Republican People's Party), the MHP (*Milliyetçi Halk Partisi* - the Nationalist Action Party), the HDP (*Halkların Demokrasi Partisi* - the People's Democratic Party) and the Good Party (*İyi Parti*). Why do some political parties have a pro-refugee attitude, like the JDP? How do they legitimise their policy? How did the JDP's migration policy evolve over time? Why are some of the political parties, like the İyi Party, perceiving the existence of refugees from a negative perspective? Why do they want to send refugees back? What kind of similarities and differences are there among political parties on the migration issue? Political parties' attitudes towards refugees represent their construction of self-identity and identity of others. Therefore, this study also aims to shed light on the debates of political parties on the Turkish identity as well.

*Keywords:* Turkey, Political Parties, Syria, Refugees, Migration, Critical Discourse Analysis.

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## INTRODUCTION

The territories of Anatolia have witnessed many migration waves throughout history. The breakup of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of independent states led to the inflow and outflow of millions of people. Especially Christian minorities were migrating from the Ottoman Empire to the newly founded nation-states in the neighbouring regions, and Muslim minorities were coming to Anatolia. Migration flow continued after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. Greek-Turkish population exchange of 1923 has led to population movement of more than 1.5 million people. Both incoming and outgoing movements were experienced in the country. Hundreds of thousands of people continued to migrate to Turkey since the early 1920s as Turkish workers started moving to Western European countries to get better job opportunities from the 1960s onwards. Hence, Turkey has been both an origin country and a target country for different migration waves.

There were some important features of these migration movements: first of all, the number of incoming people was reasonable compared to Turkey's population. The biggest waves occurred in 1989 and 1991. In 1989 more than 350.000 Turks had to migrate from Bulgaria to Turkey, but half of them went back to Bulgaria after the regime change. In 1991 more than 400.000 Kurds from Northern Iraq came to Turkey to escape from the Saddam regime's aggressive policies. But, after a while, they also went back to their homeland.

This brief historical review shows that although the Republic of Turkey has witnessed several migration waves, the number of migrating people was reasonable. Turkish political life, economic structure and society could tolerate newly coming people.

However, this situation has changed with the migration of Syrians from 2011 onwards, after the outbreak of the Syrian civil war. As the number of Syrian refugees has exceeded 3.6 million, Turkey has become the biggest refugee-hosting country in the world, surpassing the number of migrants in Pakistan. This has led to many challenges for Turkish politics, economics and society. At the beginning of the crisis in 2011, refugees were seen as 'guests' by many of the political actors since they were fleeing from the brutal war in Syria. However, as the number of Syrian refugees has considerably increased and the hopes for their return to the homeland decreased with time because of the continuation of the Syrian civil war, the refugee issue has become an important 'hot' topic in Turkey's political arena by different political parties.



This article aims to analyse the attitudes of Turkish political parties represented in the Turkish Parliament towards Syrian refugees via critical discourse analysis.<sup>2</sup> It will start with the theoretical framework. Then it will evaluate the approaches of the incumbent Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi - AKP), the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi - CHP), the Nationalist Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi - MHP), the Good Party (İyi Party) and the People's Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi - HDP). How do they perceive Syrian refugees? What kind of policies do they offer? Do they have consistent policies/policy proposals? Or did their approaches change over time? The article aims to contribute to the academic literature that deals with the perceptions of refugees in internal politics.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

According to the main assumptions of critical discourse analysis, discourse contributes to the construction of reality, therefore the language can be considered as more than just being a language. Discourse plays an important role, especially in the formulation of internal and external politics. When the decision-makers create discourse, they create not only their self-image but also the image of the other(s). It might also be the case that the others are marginalised through the discourse. They are being presented as the others. Sometimes these others are minorities, sometimes guest workers. In our contemporary world, these others are mostly migrants. In the construction of 'self' versus 'other', the 'self' is almost always presented as positive and the 'other' as negative.

Hence, the language contributes to the establishment of a hierarchy between elites and the others. Especially, in the construction of national identity in many countries, a superior self-image and an inferior image of others are used so that a homogeneous and consolidated internal identity can be formulated.

In recent years, critical discourse analysis is used extensively in studying national policies towards migration. The migration resulting from the Syrian

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<sup>2</sup> The study ignored small parties represented with a few MP's in the Turkish Grand National Assembly. Hence, the Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*), Turkish Workers' Party (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi*), the Great Union Party (*Büyük Birlik Partisi*) and the Democrat Party (*Demokrat Parti*) are not included in this article.

civil war led to securitization discourses and practices in many countries, including Turkey. When the politicians talked about migration, they also created reality. They tried to legitimise their security-overloaded discourse for the public. Migrants are presented as others for a long time (Demirtaş-Coşkun, 2006, pp. 5-15).

Jäger underlines the fact that there are different levels of discourse in politics, the media and academy in daily life as well as in education. Different actors can use discourse in these different sectors or arenas (2012, pp. 83-84). It is a fact that different discourse levels can affect each other. The discourse of politicians can have an impact on the media, or the languages used in media outlets can influence politics. Discourse in the media, in protest movements, in arts, social media and political life can have an interaction. Although there are different discourses at different levels, they are not independent of each other (Dijk, 2018, p. 231).

The critical discourse analysis sheds light on how the discourse of the ruling authority maintains and sometimes also intensifies the unfairness and economic inequality in society (Dijk, 1993, p. 249; Fairclough et al., 2004, p. 2; Wodak, 2013, XXXVII). In other words, this theoretical approach analyses how the rulers remain in power and how the discourse intensifies the status quo.

## TURKEY AND SYRIAN MIGRATION

The first Syrian migrants consisting of 252 people who had to flee the civil war in their homeland, entered Turkey from the Cilvegözü border gate on 29 April 2011. At that time, Turkey announced its open-door policy for the refugees. They were seen as guests who would stay in Turkey until the end of the war. The big wave of immigration to Turkey continued until 2015. Although Turkey ratified the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, it put a geographical reserve stating that only those asylum seekers coming from Europe would be given 'refugees' status. Since Turkey has been the gateway between the East and the West and surrounded by many unstable states, it has felt the need to put a geographical reserve to prevent the huge flow of migration.

Assuming that the Syrian civil war would end in a short while and all the refugees would return to their homeland in the short-term, Turkey has given the status of temporary protection to the migrants. This status has given the migrants the right to benefit from the basic services and to stay in the camps as well as the non-refoulement. As time passed by and the Syrian

civil war continued with all its intensity and tragedy, Turkey felt the need to revise its legal system to improve the lives of refugees. In April 2013, the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (*Yabancılar ve Uluslararası Koruma Kanunu*) was issued, and in October 2014 the Regulation on Temporary Protection (*Geçici Koruma Yönetmeliği*) was accepted (Erdoğan, 2015, pp. 317-321; Ihlamur-Öner, 2014, p. 44). According to these legal adjustments, refugees are under temporary protection, which allows them to have some fundamental rights in the country.

The Regulation on Work Permit for Foreigners under Temporary Protection adopted on 15 January 2016 was another indication that the Turkish authorities grasped the fact that most Syrian refugees will not go back to their homeland in a short period. After recognising this fact, the Turkish government has given the refugees the right to work, subject to certain conditions. Although only about 61.000 work permits were issued between January 2016 and October 2018, at least 1 million Syrians are estimated to work illegally (Leghtas, 2019). It seems that this has been tolerated by the Turkish authorities.

However, as time went by, it was understood that most Syrians would not go back to their homeland in any foreseeable future. All the reliable opinion polls showed that Syrians did not have any intention to return as the situation in their homeland remained fragile. This has led to an increase in the reaction of the Turkish public towards Syrians. Sometimes this has led to hate speech on social media as well as some violent encounters between the Turkish people and Syrian refugees. A single incident committed by a Syrian refugee was sometimes overgeneralized and presented to the public as if most Syrians were criminals.

According to the opinion polls, the Turkish public does not have the same level of tolerance and hospitality as it was the case in the early years of migration wave. As it is the case in many of the Balkan societies, the Turkish people have been proud of their hospitality. Since Anatolia has been the centre of many migration movements throughout history, the Turkish nation has been accustomed to migrants who had to flee assimilation campaigns, wars and conflicts in the neighbouring countries and sought shelter in the country.

However, the Syrian migration movement has been different from the earlier migration waves because of several reasons. First of all, the number of refugees is significantly greater than the earlier migration waves. Second, refugees have different ethnic backgrounds and speak different languages.

Third, there is no prospect of their return. These characteristics of Syrian migration led to increasing intolerance on the part of the Turkish population.

According to a public opinion poll conducted by Kadir Has University, about 58% of people were not happy with the presence of Syrians in 2016, and the number increased to 60% in 2019. The reason for their discontent was as followed: 52% stated that they had a tendency to commit a crime, 46% claimed that they disturbed people, 43% thought that they contribute to an increase in unemployment, and 37% believe that they harm the national identity. No official statistics proves the number of crimes committed by refugees is higher than the locals, however, the perception is different (Aydin et al., 2019).

Opinion polls conducted by the prominent migration expert Prof. Murat Erdoğan also show that public perception has become more negative towards refugees over time. According to the opinion poll conducted by prof. Erdoğan in 2014, the rate of Turkish people stating that refugees have become a burden to them was 20%, and in 2017 this rate increased to 43% (Erdoğan, 2014; Erdoğan 2017).

This shift in the Turkish public opinion from hospitality to intolerance has an impact on Turkish domestic politics. Although all the political parties from the governing party to the opposition parties welcomed the incoming refugees in the early years, their attitudes have changed afterwards. This study examined pamphlets, election manifestos of the political parties as well as the discourses of party elites in order to determine their approach towards Syrian refugees and changes in their discourses.

### **THE AKP AND SYRIAN REFUGEES: A CYCLICAL DISCOURSE**

Throughout the Syrian crisis, the AKP elite did not follow a consistent foreign policy towards Syrian refugees. At the beginning phase of the conflict, refugees were welcomed as guests and brothers and sisters, however, in the following years, the AKP leaders stated that they could be sent either to European countries or back to their homeland that is conflict-ridden Syria.

When the first migrants came to Turkey from Syria, Turkey implemented an open-door policy with the belief that the Syrian regime would collapse in a short while as it had already happened in Libya and Egypt, and all the refugees would return to their home in a few months. However, the expectations were not fulfilled, and the Syrian civil war continues in its 9th year.

The AKP's legitimisation of Turkey's refugee policies has been related to its image of Turkey as a regional power and global actor. Being a central state, having a geographical and historical *sui generis* position, Turkey was presented by the AKP elite as the protector of all the oppressed Muslim people in the world.

The concept of 'responsibility' was now and then repeated in the AKP official discourse. In its pamphlet called 'AKP 2023 Political Vision' after underlining the importance of Turkey in the neighbouring regions and global system, it was stated that Syrians would not be sent back because of Turkey's 'humanitarian and moral responsibility' (2023 Siyasi Vizyon, 2020).

In addition, a discourse on civilisation was developed. Reminding of all the refugee movements dating from 1492, the Jewish exodus from Spain to the Ottoman territories till the migration waves from the neighbouring regions after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, it was stated that 'our civilisation is a civilisation of tolerance' (AK Parti İnsan Hakları Başkanlığı, 2018). This civilisationist discourse aims to convince people that migration was not new in Anatolia. Getting power from the Ottoman and Republican history, the AKP elite tried to show their policy was not something new, but just a continuation of history. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated that for everybody who had fled from persecution, Turkey's geography had always been a shelter and safe roof (AK Parti İnsan Hakları Başkanlığı, 2018). Therefore, the AKP elite argued that they have just followed the footprints of the former Ottoman and Turkish elites.

It is also noteworthy that the AKP tried to address the emotions of its electorate by trying to create a fictional connection between personal emotions and state decisions. It was argued that refugees who had to flee from persecution and came to Turkey were like 'our own brothers'. Turkish President Erdoğan stated that 'Brother is brother under these difficult conditions. One has many friends during good times, but the important thing is to be a friend during bad times' (2023 Siyasi Vizyon, 2020).<sup>3</sup> Personal feelings and state interests are in fact different. In the IR literature, there are different levels of analysis: individual and state-level analyses are different from each other. However, from the very beginning of the refugee crisis, the AKP tried to appeal to the humanitarian feelings of people by ignoring the different levels of analysis. State decisions are in fact different from

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<sup>3</sup> The original quotation by the Turkish President is as follows: 'Kardeş bu zamanda kardeştir. iyi günde dost çok olur, önemli olan kötü günde dost olmaktır' (2023 Siyasi Vizyon, 2020).

individual decisions. Besides, the interests of states are different from individual interests. Therefore, state decisions cannot be justified by addressing the emotions of individuals.

An important characteristic of the AKP policy during the refugee crisis has been the imagination of new geopolitics. President Erdoğan stated that Turkey's official borders are different from the borders of the heart ('gönül sınırları'). By claiming that Turkey's borders of the heart include all the territories in which Turkey's brothers and sisters live, he tried to give a new meaning to state borders. He further claimed that those people who fled Syria and arrived in Turkey could be far away from their home and soil, but they are not far away from their homeland ('Vatan'), simply because of the fact they are in their homeland in Turkey.

This is a *new geopolitical imagination* of what a state territory consists of. This new understanding of borders of the state is closely related to the neo-Ottomanist foreign policy understanding of the AKP. Ahmet Davutoğlu, in his world-famous book entitled 'Strategic Depth', claims that Turkey has a historical and geographical depth. The combination of this historical and geographical depth creates strategic depth according to the understanding of Davutoğlu. The belief that all Muslims living in the ex-Ottoman territories are brothers and sisters, and Turkey has a special connection with them has been a component of the AKP foreign policy.

Besides these historical linkages created and recreated, the AKP has used religious ties as an instrument to justify its refugee policies, arguing that Syrian migration is similar to 'hicret' (migration) during Prophet Mohammad. Muslims in Mekka had to flee to Medina in 622 AC because of the oppressive policies of the people of Mekka. They were welcomed by the Muslims in Medina. In the history of Islam, the people in Medina were named 'ensar' (meaning those people in Medina who helped the incoming Muslim migrants), and migrants were called 'muhacir' (migrant). Turkish President has repeatedly stated that Syrian migrants should be perceived as those migrant Muslims (muhacir) in the early years of Islam fleeing oppression in Mekka, and the Turkish people should see themselves as hosts like the people in Medina welcoming migrants, in other words, ensar. Hence, not only historical but also religious elements, including the history of Islam, have been used in order to convince people to support refugees. This was also a way to convince the Turkish people to sacrifice even more for Syrian refugees (Karakaya Polat, 2018, p. 505). It is important to note that the AKP elite did not emphasize the legal right of these people to an asylum

in accordance with the 1951 Convention, but they tried to refer to historical and religious ties.

The refugee crisis has also played an important role in the AKP's construction of 'Westernism', meaning that the West, mainly Europe, was constructed as the other.<sup>4</sup> In fact, this process of presenting the West as the other already started with the Gezi Park protest movement in 2013, but it was further consolidated with the refugee flow (Demirtaş, 2018, pp. 308-323). In the official discourses of the AKP elite, Turkey was presented as a generous country having an open-door policy and providing every kind of help to those people in dire need. However, European countries were presented as those who close their borders to incoming refugees and do not provide significant assistance to those people. The otherisation of Europe was an opportunity for the AKP to show itself as the defender of the rights of refugees. It was also a way to try to escape from the increasing criticisms of Western countries with regard to the human rights problems in Turkey. Erdoğan argued that the policies of European countries towards refugees were inhuman and full of hypocrisy (AK Parti İnsan Hakları Başkanlığı, 2018). Therefore, for the AKP leading elite, the refugee crisis was an opportunity to present a positive image of Turkey as opposed to a negative image of Europe. It has been an ongoing process of self-glorification versus creating a negative image of the West since the Gezi Park Protest Movement in 2013.

In addition, the cyclical nature of the AKP discourse on migrants should be noted as well. There has been no consistent approach towards Syrian refugees. Depending on the state of affairs in domestic politics and public opinion, there were different opinions expressed by the AKP politicians. In 2018 Erdoğan stated that if it becomes necessary, Turkish citizenship could be given to Syrian refugees. Referring to the fact that many Syrian refugees work illegally, he stated that if they had citizenship, they could earn their own living without the support of the state. However, this discourse on granting citizenship was from time to time accompanied by an opposite discourse of deporting them to Europe. In recent years, the AKP politicians, especially President Erdoğan, quite often threatened Europe by opening the border gates and letting refugees go to Europe.

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<sup>4</sup> The concept of 'Westernism' can be seen as a counterpart of the notion of 'Orientalism' that was developed by Edward Said in his famous book (1979). In his book, Said analysed how the West constructed a positive image of itself as opposed to the negative image of the East.

The AKP government's threatening attitude towards Europe was realised under two conditions: first, in recent years, Turkey has carried out interventions in Syria with the aim of creating a safe zone and observation points. These military operations were criticised by European countries and the European Union. This has led to tension between Turkey and Europe. For example, such a dispute took place during the Turkish military operation called the 'Peace Spring' in 2019. This operation was criticised by European politicians. In reaction to that, Erdoğan stated that if Europe called this operation an invasion, Turkey could open the border gates and send 3.6 million people to Europe. Second, Turkey resorted to similar rhetoric when it was criticised because of human rights violations by the EU organs. For example, when the European Parliament took an advisory decision to suspend the accession negotiations with Turkey, Erdoğan stated that if they took a further step, Turkey could open the border gates.

This cyclical nature of the AKP's discourse on refugees is noteworthy. Starting with rhetoric focusing on history and religion, perceiving refugees as guests and brothers evolved over time. After a few years, the range of discourse has widened from granting citizenship to letting them to Europe. How can we explain this cyclical nature of discourse? From the perspective of critical discourse theory, it can be stated that the discourse contributed to the construction of identities. On the one hand, discourse created refugees as a group of people in dire need of the Turkish people and the AKP as the benevolent actor that does not perceive refugees as a burden, but guests and brothers. Second, there has been the identity reconstruction of Europe versus Turkey: Europe as the inhumane and hypocritical actor and Turkey as the protector of refugees.

One should also note that Turkey also encourages the voluntary return of refugees to Syria. Turkey justifies its military operations in Syria, with the aim of creating necessary conditions for the return of refugees. In its 2018 election pamphlet, the AKP stated that after the Euphrates Shield (*Fırat Kalkanı*) operation a safe area was established, and there were voluntary returns of refugees from Turkey (AK Parti, 2018).

As it has become clear that most Syrian refugees would remain in Turkey, there has been an increasing reaction of the Turkish people towards the Syrian asylum seekers. As stated before, public opinion polls refer to the increasing distance of the Turkish people towards refugees. There has been an increasing anti-refugee attitude in social media as well. This change in public opinion has repercussions on domestic politics. The AKP started to deviate from its initial discourse of guests, brothers and sisters. In recent



years, it oscillates between granting citizenship and encouraging them to leave Turkey either to return to their homeland or go to Europe.

### **OPPOSITION PARTIES AND SYRIAN REFUGEES: FROM CAUTIOUS HUMANITARIANISM TO CONSPIRACY THEORIES**

This section will try to analyse the attitudes of four major opposition parties towards refugees. The CHP, the MHP, the İyi Party and the HDP will be scrutinised as to how they approach the Syrian migrants, and whether their attitudes have changed with time or not.

First of all, it should be noted that all of these opposition parties, except the HDP, have a distant attitude towards refugees and underline their hope that Syrians would return to their homeland. However, there are differences among these opposition parties as well, which will be described below. The election manifestos and speeches of party leaders will be evaluated.

The CHP, as the main opposition party, is an important actor in domestic politics. The CHP's attitude towards refugees can be called as 'cautious humanitarianism'. The CHP's approach has four fundamental dimensions. First of all, it argues that Syrian refugees should enjoy their fundamental rights, and they should be hosted in Turkey under appropriate conditions. Second, as soon as the civil war in Syria is over, those refugees who want to return to their homeland should be given the opportunity to do so. Third, despite acknowledging the legal rights of refugees, the CHP also underlines the problems that the Turkish people encounter because of the refugee flow. Election manifestos claim that Syrians created unjust competition for the Turkish people. They also noted the financial cost of hosting the refugees. Fourth, the CHP leaders criticise the Syrian policy of the AKP, stating that the wrong foreign policy of the incumbent party has been responsible for the migration of the Syrian people. By calling it 'palace diplomacy' and 'adventurous policy', they argue that the AKP made many mistakes in its Syrian policy from the very beginning of the civil war and the AKP's wrong foreign policy resulted in the refugee crisis (AK Parti İnsan Hakları Başkanlığı, 2018).

The CHP argues that Turkey's Syrian policy needs a fundamental revision. In its election manifesto, it calls for the restoration of diplomatic relations with Syria. After the start of the Syrian civil war, the AKP broke off Turkey's official relations with the Syrian regime and started supporting some of the opposition groups, mainly the Free Syrian Army. However, this

has been a fundamental break with Turkey's traditional foreign policy that prefers to remain neutral in regional conflicts. Therefore, what the CHP has offered regarding Syria, in fact, represented a return to the traditional Turkish foreign policy whose basic pillars were laid down after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

The CHP organised an international conference entitled 'International Syria Conference: Gate to Peace in Syria' on 28 September 2019. Academics, politicians, diplomats, journalists and NGO representatives from Turkey, regional and international organisations attended the conference. In the concluding declaration, it was stated that all the regional countries should concentrate on ending the war in Syria. With regard to Syrian refugees, it was stated that voluntary returns should be encouraged and for those who would continue to stay in Turkey, societal integration plans and strategies should be prepared.

In terms of critical discourse analysis, it can be stated that the CHP constructed the image of refugees as those people who need assistance as well as the ones who create unfair competition for the Turkish people. Therefore, the paradoxical perception of refugees as those people who must enjoy fundamental rights, but at the same time, who creates injustices for the Turkish people, was constructed. Therefore, the term of 'cautious humanitarianism' can be used for the CHP's approach towards Syrian migrants.

The İyi Party has a clear negative approach towards refugees. In its 2018 manifesto, it made clear that Syrian refugees should go back to their own countries. The manifesto stated that 'We will make sure that our Syrian guests would go back to their homeland. We will be fasting together as guests of our Syrian friends in Syria in Ramadan of 2019' (Birlik et al., 2018).

Similar to the CHP, the İyi Party also emphasised the importance of recognising the incumbent Syrian administration that would also contribute to the return of the refugees. It also mentioned that they supported the establishment of safe areas in Syria for the settlement of Syrian refugees.

Prof. Ümit Özdağ, an MP from the İyi Parti and former deputy head of the Party, has been quite vocal with regard to the refugee issue. He argues that Syrians should return to their country either voluntarily or involuntarily. Arguing that there has been an attempt to establish a Greater Kurdistan in the north of Syria with the help of the US, there is an attempt for 'strategic migration engineering'. He claims that Syrian migration is an imperialist trap for Turkey. After dividing Iraq and Syria into pieces, the external powers would impose the same plan on Turkey. If the refugees

remain in Turkey, they will be manipulated by the imperialist powers, and it will lead to a civil war.

In the discourse of the İyi Party officials, Syrian refugees are clearly the other of the Turkish identity. They are being portrayed as a monolithic bloc and opposite of Turkish people and unable to integrate into Turkish society.

The MHP, on the other hand, has not emphasised the refugee issue in its political rhetoric, although it is a nationalist party having a similar electorate base as the İyi Party. In its election manifestos, it has mentioned the problems that refugees create for the economic and social situation in Turkey. It also mentioned the need to take urgent measures to take them to their country. One important point about the MHP attitude was related to the Turkomans in Syria. The MHP leader Bahçeli stated his belief that Turkey should do more to help the Turkomans in that country. However, the refugee issue is not at the top of the agenda of the MHP. This is mainly because of the fact the MHP has become a *de facto* coalition partner of the AKP in recent years. The AKP and the MHP created an alliance called 'People's Alliance' (*Cumhur İttifakı*) in the process of regime change in Turkey from a parliamentary system to a presidential governmental system. Hence, it should be noted that not only the political stance of the party is important when it comes to its approach towards Syrian refugees, but also its position in internal politics and relationship with the AKP.

The HDP is another important opposition party representing the pro-Kurdish position. In recent years, it has also taken votes from the mainstream opposition electorate who are not satisfied with other opposition parties. The HDP is the only political party that clearly supports the lifting of the geographical reserve of Turkey on the 1951 Convention. In its election manifesto of June 2015, it states that all migrant workers should be seen as Turkey's own citizens. In the November 2015 manifesto, the HDP supported providing a decent life for all asylum seekers and refugees. All their accommodation, health, education, and working rights should be recognised. The HDP criticises the AKP's concept of 'aiding' refugees and it supports the concept of 'right'. Hence, what the Turkish state does for refugees should not be in the context of providing assistance to refugees, but in terms of their legal rights stemming from international treaties. However, the HDP approach is also related to its domestic concerns and interests. In its 2018 election manifesto, it claims for education in the mother tongue for refugee children. This can be interpreted not only as a way to help the education of these children but also to promote their own domestic concerns.

## CONCLUSION

This paper analysed policies of the main Turkish political parties towards Syrian refugees that have started migrating to Turkey in 2011 after the beginning of the Syrian civil war. How the AKP and opposition parties have perceived the refugees and what kind of policies they have proposed were analysed.

The main findings can be summarised as follows: first of all, in the case of the AKP, there has not been a consistent refugee policy. The initial 'guests', 'brothers and sisters', 'ensar-muhacir' approach that was very much loaded with historical references and religious motives evolved over time as it was understood that most of the refugees will not return to their homeland since the Syrian civil war was still going on. A cyclical discourse prevailed in the aftermath. President Erdoğan proposed to grant citizenship to refugees, however, the same Erdoğan also stated that after the Turkish military operations in Syria, refugees were expected to return. In addition, he threatened Europe by opening the border gates and letting refugees enter the EU countries. The discourse created a Turkey that provides assistance, but that does not focus on the rights of asylum seekers stemming from international treaties. This study also analysed the discourse of how Turkey presented itself as the defender of refugees but created 'Europe' as the other because of its reluctant refugee policies. Hence, the process of otherisation of Europe by the AKP, in other words, Westernism that already started with the Gezi Park protest movement in 2013, has entered a new phase with the refugee crisis.

The opposition parties, on the other hand, have formulated their refugee policies in accordance with their closeness or distance to the AKP. The CHP, as the main opposition party, has developed a policy of cautious humanitarianism by emphasising fundamental rights of refugees on the one hand but also focussing on their return to the homeland on the other hand. As different from the AKP and the CHP, the İyi Party has formulated a clear anti-refugee discourse. It was stated by the leading figures of the İyi Party that Syrians need to be sent back either voluntarily or involuntarily. The MHP, although a similar party in the ideological spectrum to the İyi Party, has not paid big attention to the issue, simply because it is a *de facto* coalition partner of the ruling party. However, it emphasised the rights of the Turkoman minority in Syria. The HDP is the only political party that underlined the legal rights of refugees stemming from international law. However, it also approached the issue from the viewpoint of their domestic concerns.

As the Syrian civil war continues, there is not any prospect of the return of Turkey's 3.6 million Syrian refugees in the short and medium-term. As the Turkish public has increasingly negative attitudes towards Syrian refugees, this issue can play a bigger role in Turkish domestic politics in the future. The transition from a country with 58.000 refugees in early 2011 to a country with 3.6 million refugees (having the world record) has not been easy for Turkey, and it will not be. During this difficult transition process, not only the Turkish identity is not being reproduced, but also refugees as the other of the Turkish people and refugees as a trump card in the negotiations with the EU are being reconstituted as well. The identity of refugees is being (re)formulated in this process. The fate of the Syrian civil war, the developments in the Turkish political context, and Turkey's relations with the EU will continue to play in this process of the difficult transition from a country created by immigrants to a country hosting a record number of refugees.

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**THE POSITION OF SERBIA  
IN CONTEMPORARY  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**





## MULTIVECTORNESS AS A WAY OUT OF THE IMPASSE OF STRATEGIC VULNERABILITY

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*Abstract:* The Balkans remains a zone of strategic vulnerability aggravated by the struggle of major global political actors for Serbia, a country that has long been trying to preserve a relative political and military neutrality. Despite serious upheavals at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, including the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the bombings by NATO, the “divorce” with Montenegro and the creation of the “Republic of Kosovo,” Belgrade has been managing to balance between two major poles of attraction – the EU-NATO and Russia, which fits into the concept of multivectorness. Given all geographic, historical, cultural and economic determinism of European integration, Serbia’s final choice of the European vector is complicated by two sensitive and problematic matters – the need to recognize the “Republic of Kosovo” and the inclusion in the military and political framework of NATO. Moreover, the first issue entails substantial political and civilizational risks, both for the Western Balkans and the European Union as a whole, let alone a dramatic internal split of the Serbian society over the possible recognition of the newly formed independent Albanian entity. On the other hand, Russia, which has unique image opportunities and, unlike the EU, does not aspire to play the role of an “empire by invitation”, is a natural counterbalance to the Euro-Atlantic pressure on Belgrade. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the existing historical dualism of multivectorness is being disrupted by the emergence of China, a new player in the Balkans. By solely economic levers, Beijing has been solving the strategic problems of penetration into European markets and simultaneously smoothly, but sequentially superseding Russia as Serbia’s main alternative to the West. The article analyzes the tactic employed by Chinese companies and concludes that there has been a growing concealed competition between the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation for the place of the main non-European actor not only in Serbia but in the Balkans as a whole. In such circumstances, by preserving the policy of multivectorness (despite all criticism of the concept), Serbia may find a way out of the impasse of strategic vulnerability, i.e., to achieve a

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prospect, if only short-term, of the status quo of political, military and strategic neutrality.

*Keywords:* Serbia, the EU, Russia, China, NATO, the policy of multivectorness, the Kosovo problem.

## INTRODUCTION

Over the centuries, the Balkans has been a turbulent zone of world politics, which is largely determined by the historical legacy of overlapping cultures, religions, and traditional habitats of its peoples. Currently, the region remains highly prone to instability due to the clashing interests of the leading political actors of today – states, supranational and transnational entities. Some of them are criminal by nature, with the growing activity of representatives of international terrorism (Speckhard and Shajkovci, 2018) and closely-related international criminal world (Benedek et al., 2010).

Today, particular attention of the world community is riveted on Serbia. This middle and the most important country of the Western Balkans occupies a special place in the strategy of Euro-Atlantic integration. The choice of that vector of development is complicated for the Serbian society by a number of highly problematic and sensitive questions. The key matter of principle at stake is the very impossibility for an overwhelming majority of Serbians to accept the territorial and metaphysical loss of Kosovo and Metohija (K&M), the cradle of the Middle-Ages Serbian statehood.

The attitude to the 1999 bombings by NATO is the second major question. The majority of the Serbian society remains firm: “cannot be forgotten, cannot be forgiven.” On the other hand, the political leadership of the country seeks to find a compromise with the alliance within the framework of “ready to forgive, but cannot ever forget.”

The lack of consensus on the matters of such significance for the Serbian society is aggravated by the need to make an unambiguous choice between the European and the Eurasian integration models that have been actively articulated by Brussels. Serbian Prime-Minister Ana Brnabić signed the Free-Trade Agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in Moscow, on 25 October 2019. However, other issues have been troubling Brussels. The Chinese expansion is also fraught with a potential threat to the further development of Euro-Atlantic integration in the region: Beijing views Serbia as the main investment anchor (Conley et al., 2019) as well as the point of attraction (assemblage) of the Balkan limitrophes.

The above-mentioned processes have been unfolding against the backdrop of NATO's internal imbalance and even "brain death" of the alliance (Briefing, 2019, p. 18), as well as the EU transformation. Therefore, the verdict given by the European greats at the summit of the Western Balkans in Poznań in July 2019 – the EU enlargement is being postponed – seems to make sense. The "suspended" political and emotional expectation of a European future does not cancel, however, the "exceedingly strict" requirements from the EU for the potential members of the union. To fulfill them, Serbia, according to Aleksandar Vučić, will have "to climb Mount Everest," (Sysoev, 2018, p. 6.), which is naturally bound to affect the social and political climate in the country.

The analysis of the above-mentioned factors in their complexity helped to articulate a hypothesis: a way out of the impasse of strategic vulnerability and preservation of its historical and cultural integrity and a relative (a characteristic applicable even to the world giants amid global interdependence) independence, as well as the significance of the country as an important balance force on the international agenda, require that Belgrade pursue a policy of multivectorness and military neutrality. Having several toeholds (economic, political, military and cultural) opens up new opportunities, and may allow Serbia to preserve its status as an important regional actor.

### MULTIVECTORNESS AS A POLICY OF SURVIVAL

A story by Milorad Pavić called *The Wedgewood Tea Set* depicts a complex relationship between two characters – a woman and a man whose names are unknown. The story is told by a first-person narrator and finishes in the following way: "Could it be that I actually hated her?.. If the reader has not figured out himself, here is the answer to the riddle. My name is Balkan. Her name – Europe" (Pavich, 2003, p. 366).

The history and the present of interrelations between the Balkans and European countries is fraught with controversy. It would not be an exaggeration to say it is with Serbia that Europe has the most delicate dialogue. Twice in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (the First and Second World Wars), Serbia found itself in the trenches of the war against Europe of the Second and Third Reich and came out of the battles among the victors. Serbia emerged as the center of the Balkan "empires" – Royal (1918-1941) and Socialist (1945-1991) Yugoslavia as a geopolitical outcome of the bloodsheds. The destruction of the latter and its consequences proved to be a national tragedy

for Serbians – they not only suffered a defeat in the Balkan wars of the modern times in Croatia and Bosnia and endured a decade of sanctions and 78 days of the bombings by NATO aviation, but also lost control over Kosovo and Metohija.

The support for Kosovo separatists given by the collective West dramatically upset Serbia's perceptions of its place in Europe, although all Serbians are well aware of the role of the great powers, including the European ones, Austria-Hungary and Italy, above all, in designing the Albanian nation and promoting the concept of "Greater Albania" that came to symbolize the genocide of Serbs during the Second World War. History repeated itself in the new tragedy: the Kosovo problem became the watershed in the Balkan reality and solidified the cultural identity code of the majority of Serbians, as well as their attitude to Great Europe, expressed by M. Pavich in the faraway and cozy year of 1973.

The weak statehood as an outcome of the destruction of the "segment-state" (Roeder, 2007), within which Serbia "vanished" in the Yugoslavianness and as willed by Marshal Tito, "the last Habsburg in the Balkans," lost a significant part of its traditional territories, engendered Belgrade's strategic vulnerability. Quite limited leeway in domestic and foreign policy disposes Serbia (following the example of most post-Socialist countries) towards choosing to be an "empire by invitation" (Lundestad, 1986) ready on strict conditions to take on the burden of a sponsor and protector.

Unlike other "new democracies", Serbia still avoids the final choice of a patron and seeks to pursue a policy of multivectorness allowing it to balance between the interests of the leading world-political actors. With all its limitations and despite existing criticism, the policy of multivectorness, if it involves an ingenious and shrewd game, allows "small nations" (Colomer, 2007) to protect their interests and diminish foreign-policy dependency to the fullest possible extent. At the same time, a vectorial priority invariably remains. For example, for Central Asian countries, it is Russia and China. For the post-soviet countries of the Caucasus, it is Russia, Turkey and the US. In the case of Serbia, it is the EU.

The *European vector* is a rational choice for a number of reasons (politics, geography, economy and culture). The approach was formalized in the Stabilization and Association Agreement ratified by the Parliament of Serbia on 9 September 2008. Serbia's President B. Tadić submitted a membership request to join the EU on 22 December 2009. For Belgrade, that moment marked the beginning of the laborious process of fulfilling all the new conditions of both European and Atlantic integration because the EU

membership was tightly connected with strategic military matters. It may seem that the dual (the EU-NATO) choice to be an “empire by invitation” was made. Belgrade met nearly all the membership conditions, including the normalization of relations with the “Republic of Kosovo” (RK), and signed, in 2015, the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) – a framework agreement that outlined maximum close cooperation with NATO.

However, things are not unambiguous in the Balkans. With the focus on the EU and NATO, Belgrade has not only maintained but also strengthened the cooperative potential with Moscow, and intensively develops relations with Beijing.

*Russia*, although it does not aspire to play the role of an “empire by invitation, is a very important counterbalance vector for Belgrade; it is a traditional ally with which Serbia established, in 2013, “relations of strategic partnership embracing politics, trade, economy, culture, science, technology and education” (Deklaracija, 2013). Taking into account growing tensions in the region, and rising threats to security, special attention is paid to military-technical cooperation.

The nearly religious cult of Russia in general and V. Putin’s in particular, which have developed over the last couple of decades, attach a special quality to the Serbian-Russian relations. V. Putin has been the most popular foreign leader in Serbia for many years, with 57% of Serbians expressing confidence in him, as much as in A. Vučić (Istraživanje, 2019).

Relatively recently, *China*, another important player, has emerged in the Balkans, its presence marked with purely economic interests for the moment. “For the moment” is key here: economic penetration of Chinese companies and investors into spheres that determine the sustainability of a modern country (infrastructure, agriculture, telecommunication and financial networks) will inevitably lead to political penetration. It is just a matter of time.

The 16+1 multilateral format of cooperation proposed by Beijing in 2012 has given a significant impetus to the relations between Serbia and China<sup>2</sup>. The initiative constitutes a part of China’s transcontinental economic and geopolitical vision – the updated version of the Go Out policy intending deeper integration of the country into the world economy, and the ultimate global economic leadership.

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<sup>2</sup> The 16+1 format broadened in April 2019 to include Greece. The move was accompanied by a sale of the controlling stake in the port of Piraeus to the Chinese COSCO company.

China began the construction of the “Balkan Silk Road” with the flagship investment in the port of Piraeus viewing Greece as the gate to Europe through the Balkans. The Belgrade-Budapest 350-km rapid railroad with a budget of \$2.9 billion is the second major project. In 2016-2017, the main part of Chinese investments within the Belt and Road Initiative and construction projects (nearly \$1.8 billion) was given to Serbia to build roads and modernize the energy sector (Zeneli, 2017).

Through economic leverage, Beijing achieves its strategic tasks. Participation in various regional infrastructure and energy project in the Western Balkans will allow Chinese companies to succeed, in the near future, in significantly lowering costs of export of goods to the EU with the mediating role of the Balkan countries that have free-trade agreements with the EU and with economic penetration and consolidation of its positions in the European market. As a result, quite naturally, both the EU and Russia have been increasingly concerned about Chinese penetration in the region. At the moment, there is no direct rivalry between Beijing and Moscow in the Balkans, with each pursuing its own goals that scarcely overlap. Issues emerge in image and positioning, rather than economic matters: China has been gradually and sequentially ousting Russia as Serbia’s main alternative to the West.

The role of *the United States* in the Balkan arena, particularly the Kosovo problem, deserves a special mentioning. Washington has been playing its own game, often in opposition to the policies of Berlin, London and Paris individually, rather than that of Brussels. Serbia’s current politicians, as well as opposition representatives, maintain constant contact with American political structures. Nevertheless, it will be a mistake to speak about a US foreign-policy direction of Belgrade. If anything, Serbia has been using Washington to play the card of internal European discord as well as to counterbalance Moscow.

The above-mentioned foreign-policy multivectoriness may be seen as a way out (if temporary) of the strategic vulnerability impasse inside as well as outside of the country. The former case has to do with freezing the Kosovo problem and the latter concerns, maintaining the consensus about military neutrality. Taken together, both will allow stabilizing the political situation in the country, win some amount of time, and invest efforts into finding new strategic opportunities.

## KOSOVO: THE MAIN SETBACK IN EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

The so-called Berlin Process initiated in August 2014 is being stalled by long-standing regional and common European social, economic and institutional problems. French President E. Macron's deliberations, during his visit to Belgrade in July 2019, on the complex process of integrating Serbia in view of the need to "reform the EU" caused little surprise. Currently, neither Brussels nor the Serbian society is particularly enthusiastic about the prospect of Serbia's membership in the EU. For instance, a survey of the youth from the Western Balkans revealed that Albania and Kosovo, 94.5% and 88.9% respectively, have the strongest support for joining the EU. They are followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina (84.9%), North Macedonia (81%), and Montenegro (77.2%). Serbia with 56.1% holds the last position on the list (Demostat, 2019). It was in January 2018 when the number of those supporting European integration in an all-Serbian survey reached 52% for the first time (Izvestiya, 2018), but that was a gauge of wishes. At the same time, the path to membership grows more complicated every year with new requirements. The recognition of the Srebrenica genocide may become another one (many countries in the EU and Switzerland have already adopted a law on criminal sanctions for its denial). However, that is a prospect. Today, the fate of the Serbian province of K&M is the main obstacle on the road to resume European integration.

The Kosovo problem is the most sensitive for Serbia. Tensions over the self-proclaimed entity have risen due to the so-called "demarcation/compromise" project. The idea, which was initially proposed at a high level by Ivica Dačić a few years ago in *Zëri* magazine published in Albanian, that Serbs should stay in Serbia while "the other part where Albanians reside is to be severed" (Dačić, 2011) transformed into a project of territorial exchange. The demarcation topic entered the modern political discourse in 2018: it is somewhat associated with the name of Oliver Ivanović (a Serbian politician killed on 16 January 2018) who promoted the so-called Cyprus model to resolve the Kosovo problem.

Initially, the main issue was which territories specifically would take part in the exchange. Belgrade and Pristina worked out two plans. Even respective maps were prepared based on the agreements reached by Thaçi and Vučić at the European Forum in Austria in August 2018. Thaçi insisted on the "package" plan that involved a complex territorial exchange: the Serbian communities of Leposavić, Zvečan and Zubin Potok (approximately 1/5 of the K&M territory) would go to Serbia; the southern Serbian communities of Bujanovac (55% ethnic Albanian population) and Preševo



(89% ethnic Albanians) would be part of the RK. Serbia's leader was adamantly opposed to "automatically" including the southern Serbian communities of the Preševo valley into the exchange (Bondarenko, 2019, p. 11). Nevertheless, an agreement was assumed to be signed in early September 2018 in Brussels.

The mere possibility of transfer to Pristina of some Serbian territories provoked a significant concern in the country (many-month protests demanding Vučić's resignation and an early parliamentary election); generated a political split in the RK (Thaçi vs Haradinaj), as well as escalated disagreements within the EU. Angela Merkel strongly opposed the territorial exchange. Vienna expressed unequivocal support for the transfer of territories, which is a logical continuation of Austria-Hungary's policy of constructing an Albanian nation "to use it as a shield against the advance of Greater Serbia" (Toleva, 2018, pp. 500-501).

Nevertheless, it was not the position of the EU and central European countries that played a decisive role in freezing the negotiations and, essentially, led to the removal of the demarcation idea from the agenda. The leadership of Pristina and Tirana agreed on a "common strategy to unite Albanians by 2025" (Vučić, 2018). The growing ambitions of Kosovo Albanians postponed for an indefinite period the prospect of signing a "legally binding agreement" on normalizing the relations between Belgrade and Pristina.

The "Republic of Kosovo" is a heightened danger zone and not only for the Western Balkans but for the entire Europe, which is explained by the irredentist activity of Albanians. In the latter case, the threat stems from the heavy participation of the Albanian segment in international terrorist structures (Ponomareva and Dimitrovska, 2018). A report published by the Department of State notes that Kosovo contributed the highest percentage of militants per capita within the ranks of ISIS (Country Reports, 2018).

Thanks to the EU and the US, Pristina has been given free rein unprecedented for the Balkans. As a result, the centuries-old balance between different peoples that inhabit the region has been offset. M. Geffer defined the situation as "space of absence" that allows finding "space of expansion" (Pavlovskij, 2015, p. 10). Interestingly, it is not only the southern part of the Balkans (as a matter-of-course) but Europe as a whole that constitutes today the space of expansion for the Albanian segment.

The threat that the region poses sets up a new political agenda. By November 2019, as many as 15 countries have recalled their formal recognition of the RK as unduly prompt and violating provisions of the

Helsinki Accords and Resolution 1244 of the UN Security Council. That seems to be just the beginning of the *repulsa consulatus* process.

The diplomatic war over the RK's independence has been unfolding amid growing concern of the EU member-countries over the terrorist threat the region constitutes. For instance, the Alternative for Germany expressed alarm at the problem, and an overwhelming majority of the Dutch Parliament voted for the return to a visa regime for Albanians in April 2019 due to the rising crime rate. Against this background, the pressure on Serbia to recognize the RK appears counterproductive not only for the sake of the letter and spirit of European integration. Also, it is yet another argument for departing from the patronage of the dual (the EU-NATO) "empire" and for choosing a multivector foreign policy.

#### **SERBIA AND RUSSIA: OPPORTUNITIES FOR AND LIMITS TO COOPERATION**

The relations between Russia and Serbia are an entire universe. The relations between Russia and Serbia have always developed based on broad mutual understanding and have been marked by warmth, although not without periods of some estrangement and even enmity. The latter took place amid the emergence of fundamentally new social and political systems when Serbia formed the nucleus of the Royal and Socialist Yugoslavia, while Russia was the driving force of the Soviet project.

Since the breakup of Yugoslavia, the position of Russia has been characterized by pronounced Serbophilia although a lot of decisions, looking back from the distance of several years, seem hasty and strategically ill-considered. For example, the analysis of deciphered records of conversations between Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin from April 1996 to December 1999 allows arguing there was a possibility of an alternative scenario in March 1999 and an alternative solution to the Kosovo problem (Declassified Documents, 2018, pp. 432-436). Nevertheless, Russia of the 1990s is for Serbians associated with the battle march to capture the Slatina Airport and the moral and psychological support of the Russian society for the Serbian resistance activities, rather than with Yeltsin's disgraceful decisions. Today's Russia upholding the principles of Resolution 1244 of the UN Security Council is regarded in Serbia as the main defender of the republic's territorial integrity.

Since 2013, the Russian-Serbian relations have acquired a new quality. The Declaration on Strategic Partnership has not only opened up new

opportunities but also has been defining certain frameworks of the relations. Particularly, such a partnership implies shared assessments of the global transformations; aspirations for constructing a “more just and democratic order based on a collective footing and the rule of international law” (Deklaraciya, 2013). It must be admitted, nevertheless, that the strategic partnership ‘en Russe’, unlike the agreements with the EU and NATO, does not commit Belgrade to institutionally binding moves. Such an approach gives tremendous advantages. At the same time, it does not allow Russia not only to act as a patron but even to designate its strategic and tactical interests.

Military and military-technical cooperation is a special sphere of strategic partnership.

Since 2012, the Russian-Serbian Humanitarian Center (RSHC) has been working in the city of Niš in which Western experts have been trying their best to discern a Russian military base. In fact, the RSHC is a non-profit organization with a dozen full-time employees in charge of prevention and relief of emergency situations. The Center staff members, unlike NATO representatives, do not enjoy diplomatic immunity.

Russia is a major donor for the Serbian army. Serbia’s Armed Forces received on a gratis basis six MiG-29, 30 BRDM-2MS armored patrol and reconnaissance vehicles, and 30 T-72 MS tanks. To that, one should add significant discounts and other preferences when it comes to receiving Russian armament and military equipment. The modernization of Serbia’s army is “a guarantee that the Balkans will be at peace, especially in the context of the formation of paramilitary units in the RK” (M. Vulin).

Belgrade thinks that its policy of military neutrality promotes lasting peace in the Balkans, although it is unrecorded in the country’s fundamental documents – the Constitution and the Defense Strategy. The National Assembly Resolution of 26 December 2007 represents the only institutional framework of military neutrality. Moreover, “a final decision on the matter” is to be made in a referendum. And although a referendum has not been held yet, that does not cancel the declared status and gives the country a chance to develop cooperation with both Russia and the structures of the alliance.

The prospect of preserving Serbia’s neutrality depends on many factors. Firstly, freezing the negotiation on recognizing the RK. Fitting together the Kosovo problem and the status of the Republic of Srpska seems advantageous for Serbia.

Secondly, the radicalization of Pristina’s domestic and foreign policy. Given that the radicals and advocates of the Greater Albania project (A.

Kurti's Self-Determination, I. Mustafa's Democratic League) came to power through the 6 October 2019 parliamentary election, it is significantly easier for Belgrade to develop the tactic of impeding the negotiations. Against this background, the attention of the world media to Albania and the RK as special zones of international terrorism and criminal may have an impact on changing the public opinion in Europe and the world.

The successful growth of strategic partnership is possible with a clever combination of conventional and unconventional approaches. For example, the demand for education in Russia has been traditionally high in Serbia. The high price and lack of grant programs common in Western and Chinese universities are the main limitations. The decision to give grants to Serbian students is made at the level of the Russian President (!). 120 grants were given for the 2019 academic year, while in 2016, there were 85. The political conjuncture will determine the allowance for 2020, 2021 and later on. Amid growing competition for Serbian students, the Russian Federation may once again lose unless it puts forward a comprehensive program of cooperation not only with Moscow's giants (agreements between MSU and MGIMO with the University of Belgrade) but also with regional universities. To achieve maximum efficiency of the partnership, the educational strategy is to be enhanced by technologies that produce results in the short run. These are the media sphere, cinematography, sport and social diplomacy content (non-profit organizations).

Drawing an intermediate conclusion, the following is to be noted. Russia, despite its obviously small economic resource, maintains a considerable scope of influence (the country accounts for only 4% of trade volume, International Trade, 2018) compared to the EU and China. The demand for its initiatives is persistently high. The fact that Russia lacks a long-term comprehensive and clear-cut program is the main constraint on the development of the strategic partnership. Many initiatives are born ad hoc and are not supported by the necessary social, economic, and political infrastructure.

## CONCLUSION

The conducted analysis revealed three key vectors of development of today's Serbia. *Euro-Atlantic integration*, which, despite the apparent decline, remains Belgrade's priority since the 2000s, is the first vector. The choice of the EU as an "empire by invitation" that requires recognizing the RK and joining NATO demonstrates only the following: "the attitude of the Balkans

to Europe and vice versa – Europe to the Balkans – is the cross-cutting clash of the region’s life and the reason for abrupt zigzags of its history and present day” (Vishnyakov and Ponomareva, 2018, p. 119).

*The Russian direction* defined by cultural, historical and political rather than economic factors is the second balancing vector. However, maintaining the presence in the region requires that Russia should invest great effort and put forward proposals for a new agenda. Implementing such an approach implies a clear-cut definition of Russia’s national interests in the region and understanding its foreign-policy goals. That, in turn, is only possible with a comprehensive audit of resources, methods and technologies of power.

*China is the third vector.* While the actors traditionally present in the Balkans refer to history and develop geopolitical strategies, China is stepping up its presence by exclusively economic means. Serbia and other Balkan countries find Beijing valuable due to its financial and fast-speed attractiveness (decisions on the launch of projects are made swiftly) as well as its political neutrality. Chinese companies are willing to work with both “philes” and “phobes”, whatever part of the world their roots belong. China is “entering” the Balkans having a strategy as well as fulfilling tactical tasks. The former involves further Chinese expansion in Europe by modernizing old and constructing new ports and other infrastructure within the Belt and Road Initiative. The tactic is developing the Serbian and Balkan markets, including the end market.

It is China, rather than the EU, that appears to be able to integrate Europes of “different speeds”: the financial support for multilateral formats of the European South; industry- and logistics-specific investments largely in energy, transport and telecommunications infrastructure in the main crossroads of the region (ports, railroads, frontier cities) allow Beijing to be the “coordinator” of key economic processes that, in turn, lay the foundation for new political decisions.

The carried-out research verified the hypothesis: multivectoriness for Serbia is a policy of ending the impasse of strategic vulnerability. Having several toeholds (economic, political, military and cultural) will not only allow Serbia to preserve the status quo in the most sensitive – Kosovo – problem and thus indefinitely postpone the incorporation into the military and political framework of NATO, but also to consolidate its status of an important regional actor and to protect its global political subjectivity.

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## SERBIA, BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

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Abstract: Serbia, a country of 7 million inhabitants that experienced its rebirth in 2006 with the end of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, faces several challenges in 2020. Its Euro-Atlantic integration is progressing gradually, but not as fast as expected. Although the EU accession negotiations show strong cooperation between the Serbian government and the EU, integration into the EU will not take place until 2028. Moreover, official Serbia, still plagued by the 1999 bombings of the whole country, cannot impose the entry into the Atlantic Pact on a reluctant population. This situation places it in a difficult situation, with neighbours already (Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, and Montenegro) or in the process of entering NATO (North Macedonia quickly, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Kosovo later). The neutrality policy pursued by the Serbian governments for several years has led it to rebalance the strong political and economic presence of the West. Relations with Russia are in full swing, with numerous military agreements and the revival of the Turkish Stream gas pipeline, but also through the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) of Russian national companies in the field of transport and energy. China has become a major partner of Serbia, which is leading an all-around industrial and logistical geopolitics in Serbia; the Silk Road project places Serbia at the heart of the deployment of Chinese companies in Europe. Finally, Turkey, through numerous visits by Mr. Erdogan, has become a strong partner. With an important number of military and commercial agreements, Turkey is managing more than 800 societies. In this perspective of the reorientation of interests, what are its strategic interests?

Serbian diplomacy takes up the frameworks and orientations of the Non-Alignment policy, which began at the time of the Cold War. The best example is the number of supports among emerging countries that it found in her ardent defence of Kosovo and Metohija within her territorial framework. More than 54% of humanity and all the greatest nations follow it in this policy: China, Russia, and Brazil. The great Muslim nations, more than half of African countries, and two-thirds of Asian

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countries are in this global fight. In its immediate environment, active diplomacy of integration into old or new institutions seeks to overcome obstacles. In the face of the Albanian provocations and the blockages of Croatia in the process of Euro-Atlantic integration, Serbia has been able to play the card of geopolitical groupings in recent years. Placed as a 'Pole of stability' of the Balkans by some Western powers, it has developed a policy of peace and reconciliation (Bosnia-Herzegovina). From an economic point of view, it wants to be part of existing groups (Little Schengen) or new groups (Bosnia-Turkey-Serbia axis).

In this context, we must evaluate Serbia's position according to the following axioms:

- Will Serbia remain in touch with the Atlantic area (USA, Germany), or will it find its place among its traditional 'allies' (Russia, France)?
- In an increasingly multipolar world, will Serbia be able to use emerging countries (Turkey, Gulf countries) as levers of power?
- Are we really witnessing the emergence of a sustainable pole of stability around Serbia in Southeastern Europe?

*Key words:* EU, NATO, China, Russia, emerging countries, Non-aligned, neutrality, pole of stability

## SERBIA'S ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE EU PENDING

Relations between Serbia and the European Union have experienced periods of closer relations, followed by periods of estrangement. The negotiations had begun well, with the opening in October 2005, at the same time as the negotiations for the EU antechamber for Bosnia and Herzegovina, known as the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. But they were suspended seven months later by the EU, which considered that Belgrade's cooperation with the ICTY was insufficient. Fortunately, the Stabilisation and Association Agreement was signed in April 2008, which came into force in September 2013 (Troude, 2015). Since then, difficult but serious negotiations have led to the opening of 18 out of 35 chapters. But Serbia's integration into the European Union was less and less supported by the population. While in 2015, there were still more than 65% of the citizens in favour of joining the EU as a symbol of economic prosperity, in July 2019, this number decreased to only 53%.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> A public opinion poll conducted in July 2019 showed that Serbia's membership in the European Union would support 53 percent of Serbian citizens, according to the Ministry of European Integration (Za ulazak u EU, 2019).

The regional context has indeed changed in the last fifteen years - Serbia, despite economic difficulties, seems to be the safest country in an unstable environment. That is why the EU appointed it in 2015 the Balkan 'Pole of stability' amid the migration crisis. But there is still a major obstacle for Belgrade - the question of Kosovo. In 2013, the EU forced Belgrade to start a dialogue on an equal footing with what Serbia still considers its southern province, despite a proclamation of its independence in February 2008. In addition to these negotiations showing the uncompromising position of the Priština authorities, Belgrade will face a dilemma at the end of the process with Brussels. It will either sign Chapter 35, allowing it to close accession negotiations, but at the cost of losing sovereignty over its southern region, or it will preserve its territorial integrity by keeping its southern province in its lap and saying goodbye to the EU definitively.

The question today is the future of these discussions between Serbia and the EU. We remember the Croatian pressure on Serbia's accession negotiations in 2015-2016. After several months of intense pressure from Zagreb on Brussels, the stalling on the accession negotiations of Serbia had been lifted, but under very strict conditions. They implied full cooperation of Belgrade with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, reform of the status of minorities in Serbia, although already fairly well protected by a modern Constitution, and finally, in the words of the Croatian Foreign Minister, Serbia would have to guarantee legal protection to all victims for infringement of minority rights, which obviously included the right to damages.

On the other hand, every Serbian leader knows perfectly well that the last chapter will be the most difficult: it is a major obstacle to the recognition of Kosovo's independence. Finally, the EU is constantly pushing back Serbia's accession to the EU: after 2020 and then 2025 as the horizon, Jean Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, declared at the beginning of July 2019 that accession is possible in 2028!

### **A STILL SIGNIFICANT ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES AND NATO IN THE REGION**

After a foreign policy oriented towards China or Russia under S. Milošević, who fell from power in 2000, the leaders of the young Serbian democracy turned to the West. But this new orientation, apart from not being unanimous among the Serbian political world, is still struggling to move forward assertively.

Yet who would have thought, after the NATO bombing in 1999, Serbia would work in joint operations with its soldiers? On 19 June 2003, the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro submitted a formal request to the NATO for admission to the Partnership for Peace.<sup>3</sup> In the same year, it even sent a contingent of 200 soldiers to participate in NATO operations in Afghanistan. On 18 July 2005, Serbia and Montenegro signed an agreement with NATO authorizing the transit of the Atlantic armed forces throughout the territory of Serbia and the use of garrisons along the main roads. Six years after Operation Allied Force in 1999, the Serbian authorities seem to want to integrate the structure that had hit them hard, at all costs, even at the cost of limiting their sovereignty. But since this agreement, no progress has been observed. Serbian opinion is fiercely and overwhelmingly against membership, moreover, since 2012 and the arrival of the Serbian Progressive Party, a pro-Russian inflection has been perceptible. This is why the principle of 'neutrality' is set up as a real dogma in matters of national defence by the Serbian authorities. Even if it does not have an important role anymore, this leads the Serbian Army to perform joint exercises with NATO forces under American domination, as well as with Russian troops.

While more than 72% of the population would have voted against joining NATO, the United States has made the Belgrade government swallow a bitter pill. On 16 January 2015, Serbia signed an Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with NATO, the last step before final membership in the Alliance. But the IPAP stipulates the 'full use of the territory of Serbia' for manoeuvres and provides for the installation of military bases on its soil. It should be remembered that these conditions were considered unacceptable in February 1999 by Slobodan Milosevic and led to the NATO war against Serbia.<sup>4</sup>

We understand better today why, as of 8 June 1999, the troops of NATO intervened in Kosovo and Metohija, the southern province of Serbia. Since that date, Kosovo has been divided into five military zones under French, British, German, Italian, and American control (Marković, 2013). Near the largest US base in Europe (Camp Bondsteel), the Serbian authorities are building military base 'Jug' (South) in close collaboration with the Ohio

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<sup>3</sup> The Republic of Serbia signed the Framework Document in Brussels on 14 December 2006, thereby officially became a participant in the Partnership for Peace.

<sup>4</sup> The intensive bombing between February and June 1999 resulted in more than 2,700 deaths, the majority of them civilians - and this was in contradiction with the rules of NATO, a defensive military alliance which then intervened outside its military zone.

National Guard (U.S. Embassy in Serbia, 2019). Located in the military protection zone near Bujanovac, on the borders of Kosovo, it should serve as an anteroom for the Partnership for Peace. Indeed, the 'Jug' base is intended to be a training centre within the framework of the Partnership for Peace. But some would say that the 'Jug' base is the counterpart to the 'Russian-Serbian Humanitarian Center'. This Russian 'base' located near another city of Serbia, in Niš, has existed since 2012. Since it was planned for the assistance to the countries of the region in the event of natural disasters and emergencies, it is considered by the Americans at least as an advanced point of the Russian presence in their sphere of influence deployed in Serbia, reinforcing an already bloated Balkan system – four bases in Romania, two in Bulgaria and one in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bilbija, 2015).

### THE GROWING INFLUENCE OF RUSSIA

On 9 May 2015, 75 soldiers of the Serbian 'National Guard' paraded for the first time in their history on Red Square alongside the Russian Army on the occasion of the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the victory of the USSR over Nazi Germany. For US Senator Chris Murphy, the growing influence of Russia in Serbia has since posed a threat: 'Russia is marching on Serbia with more influence than ever... We need resources to implement a strategy' against Russia (Robinson, 2015).

Alexei Miller, in an interview given on 9 April 2015 to the Belgrade's newspaper 'Politika', said that Gazprom maintained the South Stream project, but only had to change its course in accordance with the decisions of the EU. Called the Turkish Stream, this pipeline will pass through Istanbul and Thessaloniki. Its 403 km section in Serbia was completed in December 2019. The European sanctions imposed on Russia have enabled Serbia to significantly increase sales of its agricultural products to Russia in 2014, and in turn for Russia to bypass the sanctions. But the EU has launched a real 'milk battle' as punishment. Since spring 2015, to make up for the deficits created by the sanctions against Russia, the EU has been pouring tonnes of low-cost milk into Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> This is how Serbia has become, in recent years, a land of predilection for 'land grabbing', especially in the rich agricultural region of Vojvodina, north of the Danube, where multinational agribusinesses are buying land and old agricultural combines, turning Serbia - whose agriculture is its great wealth - little by little into a supplier of raw materials but also into an outlet for EU agricultural surpluses.

The return of the Russians to this energy race is striking. Since 2007, the Burgas (Bulgaria) – Alexandroupoli (Greece) pipeline has made it possible to avoid Turkey by passing through two Orthodox countries. But above all, the American gas pipeline project ‘Nabucco’, Istanbul-Vienna by Romania, is competing with the Russian gas pipeline project ‘South Stream’. The latter would follow a much safer, and therefore less costly route, as it would pass through Bulgaria, Serbia and Croatia, with which agreements have already been concluded. In February 2007, Putin signed a comprehensive gas transit agreement with Croatia, a country that was not known for its inclination towards Russia, and in 2008 Gazprom merged with the Srbijagas - Gas Company and acquired the NIS oil tanker in Serbia (Troude, 2010).

The Renaissance of the East-West conflict in 2015 is obvious here. The South Stream project has died as a result of EU pressure on one of the newly acceded countries, Bulgaria, which declared in November 2014 that it no longer wanted the Russian gas pipeline. Putin then changed his mind and soon proposed the construction of the ‘Turkish Stream’, which would bring Russian natural gas from Turkey to Southern Europe.<sup>6</sup>

Layout of Turk Stream gas pipeline



Source: Internet

<sup>6</sup> The Memorandum of Understanding for the construction of the Turkish Stream gas pipeline was signed by Gazprom and Botas in December 2014 (New gas pipeline towards Turkey, 2014).

However, the EU is constantly putting pressure on the countries in Southeast Europe that should be involved in this project in order to prevent its construction. Proposal of a hypothetical 'Eastern Ring', blackmail on credits to Greece, and the other revamping of EU-US projects of the 1990s (TAP or TANAP) seem for the moment to dissuade Gazprom and the Russian government from starting major works (Troude, 2019, p. 134). Despite this, the Russian giant has managed to build more than 400 kilometres of gas pipelines across Serbia, completed in late 2019.

Since the Progressive Party of T. Nikolić came to power in 2012 and A. Vučić became president of Serbia in 2017, Serbian foreign policy has experienced a pro-Russian inflection. Frequent visits by heads of state to both countries show this: in January 2019, Putin received a triumphant welcome in Belgrade under the auspices of President Vučić, repeating the official visit with great fanfare under the Nikolić mandate. Vučić paid an official visit on 9 May 2018, the day of the commemoration of the victory against fascism.

Militarily, too, the past few years have been prolific for Serbian-Russian relations. The Serbian government is proud to have six MIG 29 since 2017, which places Serbia as the first air power on the Balkan chessboard. In the summer of 2019, Russia successfully hijacked the military blockade of the EU countries surrounding Serbia and brought in a brand-new column of armoured vehicles; the Serbian army is expected to have 30 of these vehicles and 30 T 72 tanks in the near future. Finally, on 13, 14 and 15 September 2019, the first major Serbian-Russian manoeuvres were successfully carried out, notably with the use of the S-400 missiles.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> On 5 November 2019, the President of the Serbian government, M. Aleksandar Vučić, has decided to cancel the contract under negotiation with the Russian public company Almaz-Antey, specialized in the production of short to long-range air defense systems, in particular, the Pantsir S-1 systems (SA-22 Greyhound in NATO code) and S-400 Triumph (SA-21 Growler in NATO code) affected by the contract. The latter was launched at the end of the exercise 'Slavic Shield 2019' which took place between two stages: the first stage took place during September 2019 when the Serbian and Russian soldiers specialized in anti-aircraft defense participated in joint training at the Russian Aerospace Forces Training and Application Center (Воздушно-космические силы) and the second stage resulted in a 3-day full-scale exercise between 24 and 29 October 2019. According to the Russian agency InterTass, the cancellation of this contract is due to the American pressures accompanied by threats of sanctions which Serbia undergoes, through the American State Department and more particularly Matthew Palmer, the current special representative from the US Department of State for the Western Balkans. Such a position of responsibility underlines the proximity of the former US Secretary of State, Victoria Nuland. Victoria Nuland is nothing less than the wife of Robert Kagan, leader of the American neo-conservatives, co-founder of the former think-tank Project for the New American Century, which brings together persons deeply anti-Russian.

In the field of transport, Russian railways are making very rapid progress by electrifying the Belgrade-Budapest and Belgrade-Bar lines, thus making it possible to connect the Serbian capital more quickly to Central Europe and the Adriatic Sea.

### **SERBIA, A TROJAN HORSE OF CHINA IN EUROPE?**

On 17 June 2016, Chinese President Xi Jinping made a historic visit to Serbia. He signed a number of commercial contracts, but also demonstrated China's choice towards Serbia as a platform for entry into Europe, within the framework of the China-CEEC platform. China, through thermal power plants, roads, steel factories and private companies, intends to transform Serbia into the centrepiece of its entry system in the EU.

The main focus of China's efforts is in the transportation sector. The Chinese have clearly understood the importance of roads in Southeastern Europe, whose control would allow them to extend their economic influence over the EU in the second phase. This presence is important because it lies at the heart of the pan-European network, i.e., at the north-south intersection (Budapest-Thessaloniki) and the east-west axis (Constantza in the Black Sea - Rijeka in the Adriatic). A section of the highway between Szeged (Hungarian border) and Belgrade is under construction.

Chinese national companies have also started to build a part of the Belgrade - Banja Luka highway, on the east/west axis connecting Serbia to the borders of Croatia (therefore the EU) and Belgrade-Bar, in the north/south direction so between Serbia and the Montenegrin coast. After building the Pupin Bridge over the Danube River in Belgrade (Zemun), the Chinese have recently completed the construction of a new bridge over the Sava River, near the city of Obrenovac. In 2013, the Serbian and Hungarian governments announced the construction of a modern railway linking Belgrade with Budapest, which will be realized by Chinese loans and Chinese companies. In addition to the great economic satisfaction of the two sides, this also allows China to move closer to the European Union.

This heavy interference in Serbian transport is coupled with a recent but very intense investment effort in the industry. Chinese state-owned companies are accelerating their grip on the industrial fabric in the former Yugoslavia. In Serbia alone, Chinese investment represented more than \$7 billion at the end of 2018.



Chinese company China Machinery Engineering Corporation is currently involved in the modernization of one part of the Kostolac thermal power plant, and they are also involved in the construction of the new block B (Jelisavac Trošić et al., 2018, p. 23). In the spring of 2016, the Chinese authorities announced the construction of a Chinese auto parts factory in the Belgrade suburbs, and the purchase of the Smederevo steelworks factory for US\$ 51.8 million. The Chinese company HBIS thus holds the only steel complex in the country, perpetuating the maintenance of 5,000 jobs in a region heavily affected by unemployment (Zakić and Radišić, 2019, p. 45). Finally, in 2018, the Chinese group Zidjin bought the copper mining RTB Bor, one of the region's largest ones, thereby perpetuating 5,000 jobs in a poor region. Besides investing in the traditional sector, Chinese companies are taking a keen interest in investments in agriculture and alternative energy.

On the 'Silk Road', the energy and trade corridor between China and Western Europe, the nerve centre is in Budapest. But by betting on Serbia, like the bridge between Zemun and Borča on the Danube called the 'Friendship Bridge', China intends to make Serbia its Trojan Horse at the southern edge of the EU to export its products by land to the largest market in the world. As the Serbian Minister of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications, said in spring 2019: 'We urgently need investment, China offers loans without any conditions, unlike the EU, and ensures rapid realization' (Čubrilo Filipović, 2019). On 21 September 2019, the President of the Republic of Serbia stated that he was satisfied that Serbia had signed a Strategic Partnership with China, and the fact that the relations between the two countries were at the highest historical level.

### **SERBIA AS A FIELD OF CONQUEST OF THE NEW REGIONAL POWERS: THE ARAB EMIRATES AND TURKEY**

Another emerging power to place its pawns in Serbia is the United Arab Emirates, which thus deployed their grip on Belgrade in a few years through massive investments of their sovereign fund 'Eagle Hills'. One example of this is the pharaonic urban project, called 'Belgrade Waterfront', which aims to completely redevelop an abandoned area on the banks of the Sava. This project gives the Emirate full ownership of more than two million square meters in the heart of the Serbian capital.

After the acquisition of the national aviation company JAT in 2013 (transformed into 'Air Serbia' and became a simple Balkan platform of

the global network 'Etihad') and the purchase of cereal lands in the north of the country, the marriage between Serbia and the Emirates seems to be a union for the sole benefit of the Arab nation, which uses Serbia as a Trojan horse in the European Union.

Even better, the Belgrade authorities also seem to be under the influence of consulting firms close to the Emirates. This is how Aleksandar Vučić recruited Tony Blair as a consultant, with the mission of bringing Serbia's standards in line with those of the European Union. However, the United Arab Emirates will pay the consulting fees... and the Tony Blair Associates (TBA) firm maintains close ties with this Gulf monarchy. The TBA will help the Serbian government implement austerity reforms in the so-called priority sectors – measures very similar to those currently imposed on Greece.

For several years, the Presidents of Serbia and Turkey have taken advantage of official visits at the highest level of the two Presidents. Multiple trade deals and technical military deals have helped boost Turkey's economic presence in Serbia. 'Bilateral relations between Serbia and Turkey are at the highest level in the history of relations between the two countries', Erdogan said during his latest official visit to Belgrade (Erdogan Vučiću, 2020). The result is impressive: while there were only 130 in 2015, there are 800 Turkish companies in Serbia in 2020, which employ 10,000 people. They are present in the textile, automotive, and banking sectors. The other development point for Turkey's efforts is infrastructure. In 2018, the Turkish government provided \$400 million worth of works. For example, the Belgrade-Sarajevo highway (with \$285 million investment), which will soon connect Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also the 403-kilometre stretch through the Serbian territory of the Turkish Stream pipeline. During his last visit to Serbia in October 2019, Erdogan, accompanied by a strong delegation of Turkish business leaders, signed agreements with his Serbian counterpart for 17 projects worth \$395 million (Turske investicije u Srbiji, 2020).

## CONCLUSION

The European Union seems to alternate with Serbia between confidence in its role as a pillar of the Western Balkans and distrust of a government considered nationalist and political practices tainted with corruption. Even if the image of Serbia is no longer that of the 1990s, this country, proud of its values and independence, seems to be the scratchy

hair of Westerners in the region. Faced with this delay from the European authorities, the Eurasian and Middle Eastern geopolitics are advancing rapidly. They have not yet filled the level of investment of Western companies in the region, but by controlling a large part of the strategic sectors of transport, energy, industry and armaments, these emerging powers on the Balkan chessboard are quickly catching up to assert itself as Serbia's most loyal partners at the dawn of the 2020s.

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## RUSSIAN VECTOR IN SERBIAN POLITICS: IMPACTS AND OUTCOMES ON REGIONAL RELATIONS<sup>2</sup>

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*Abstract:* The thesis of Russian malignant influence has been one of the key factors of the homogenization of the EU foreign policy since 2014. Although it has been declared that full EU membership is Serbia's strategic goal, in this period, we are detecting Belgrade's intensive collaboration with Russia. The number of bilateral meetings has been increased, the number of interstate agreements has multiplied, military cooperation intensified, and public opinion towards Russia is more positive than negative (which can be seen in the results of opinion polls). Serbia is striving for the EU, but its foreign policy is not at all in line with the proclaimed foreign policy goals of the EU and other key European countries (Germany, France, the UK). To some extent, it can even be stated that Serbia remains the last 'island of Russophilia' west of the border of Belarus. The question is: why? This article first analyzes the historical and political reasons for strengthening Russian influence in Serbia, as well as Serbia's interests to work more closely with Russia, regardless of the EU. Then, the 'character of the Russian vector' on Serbian politics will be examined - its political, economic, and military dimension. The third part of the paper seeks to answer the question: how will it affect regional relations? The fourth part is the concluding considerations.

*Keywords:* Serbia, Russia, Russian Influence, Russian vector, regional security, the Balkans.

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## INTRODUCTION: 'SERBS AND RUSSIANS - BROTHERS FOREVER!'

In the center of Belgrade, one can buy a T-shirt with the inscription: 'Serbs and Russians - brothers forever!' (In Serbian: Срби и Руси – браћа заувек!; In Russian: Сербы и Русские братья навсегда!) In Serbian pop culture, just one similar slogan can be found: Montenegro and Serbia – it is one family! However, relations between the Serbs and Montenegro are specific in everything. They relate to family relations, metanastastic movements and centuries-old common history, which includes belonging to not only one church but also to one culture, and are therefore unmatched by any other bilateral relationship (Cvijić, 1922, pp. 88-110). Also, a phenomenon in itself is that this story of the 'brotherhood of Serbs and Russians' is manifested in the years when a huge 'anti-Russian propaganda' is being carried out (Kjeza, 2016). Except for Belarus, the Donbas and Lugansk, something similar is undetectable west of the Russian border. Even in countries like Bulgaria, which not only had better relations with Russia throughout history than Serbia but who also owed to Russia and the Russians their liberation from Turkish occupation.

Moreover, relations between the Serbs and the Russians, which go beyond interstate relations, concern both church relations and cultural influences, and are historical in nature, long and rich, but it cannot be said that they were good at all stages (Jovanović, 2012, pp. 89-91). Simply, the Serbs and the Russians were not 'always' brothers! In some periods, after the Russo - Turkish War of 1875-1878, these relations were even dramatically poor. Because of support for the formation of Greater Bulgaria, Serbian King Milan Obrenovic turned completely to Austro-Hungary; after the October Revolution, a river of Belogardians led by General Piotr Wrangel poured into Serbia, King Alexander led a fierce anti-communist policy, and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia would remain the last European state to establish bilateral relations with the Soviet Union (in June 1940) (Radojević, 2014, pp. 46-61). Finally, the critical phase in Yugoslav-Soviet relations was in 1948 when, following the Informbureau resolution, Yugoslavia was virtually ousted from the 'Eastern Alliance'. Bad relations between Belgrade and Moscow would continue until May 1955, when the President of the USSR Council of Ministers Nikita Khrushchev visited Belgrade (Dimić, 1998, pp. 23-56). Certainly, from 1918 until the early 1990s, it is impossible to speak of 'pure' Serbo-Russian relations, since Serbia and Russia were parts of larger integrative entities - Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. However, this does not affect the conclusion reached about periods of deterioration of the

relationship. And therefore, it does not affect the hypothesis that the message 'Serbs and Russians - brothers forever!' is a new discourse in the popular culture and political public of Serbia. Pro-western authors rarely miss the opportunity to emphasize that this is based primarily on mythology, more than on real historical facts, often blaming 'Russian propaganda' or 'Russian hybrid warfare' for such results (Abrahamyan, 2015).

As in other European countries, the spread of Russophobia is encouraged by stories of 'propaganda' and 'hybrid warfare'. Yet, in Serbia, such attempts fail completely (unlike in the rest of Europe), so instead of Russophobia, we have evident growth in the Russophile population. This makes one think that neither 'propaganda' nor 'hybrid warfare' is responsible for this, because if it were, then the Russians would have achieved greater and better results in some other countries. Looking from the essential point of view, but also from a statistical point of view, it is impossible that one comprehensive Moscow activity (both 'propaganda' and 'hybrid warfare' are even more complex operations) produces a concrete and positive result in only one case. In Serbia!

The data from the opinion poll (last presented in September 2019) seem almost unbelievable, showing that 39.9% of respondents rate Serbia-Russia relations with the highest possible score 5, while 38.3% rate these bilateral relations with 4. So, almost 80% of respondents have a positive attitude towards relations with Russia (Institute for European Affairs, 2019, p. 5). When asked: is Russia a friend or an enemy? - 87% answered - a friend, 11% - I do not know, and only 2% - an enemy (Institute for European Affairs, 2019, p. 9). Paradoxically, the majority of respondents (25.5%) consider Russia as Serbia's largest donor, while the EU is second (25.3%), and China is third (18.9%). Although they are among the largest donors of various development and social programs, this is not the perception of Serbian citizens of Germany (6%), the USA (1.8%), Japan (1.3%) and Norway (0.6%) (Institute for European Affairs, 2019, p. 10). According to the data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Russia is not among the top 15 donors. Economic cooperation between the two countries, although growing, remains modest. So, Serbia exports twice as much to Bosnia and Herzegovina than to Russia, while the total investment of Russian companies in Serbia is still less than of Austrian companies.

It should be noted that Vladimir Putin is by far the most popular politician in the Serbian public, more than any domestic politician. And in his honor, the residents of Adzinci (part of the Gornji Gaitan, Medvedja municipality), decided to officially change the name of their place to Putinovo

(in November 2018). 'The residents of Banstol, near Indjija, named the Temple of the Blessed Mary dedicated to the Serb victims of the wars of the 1990s and modeled after the Russian churches, the Putin's Church' (Popularan u Srbiji: Putin ima selo, crkvu, rakiju, 2019). The Russians and Putin would have won the elections in Belgrade more convincingly than in Moscow.

Naturally, there is no government or any political structure in Serbia that can ignore this public mood. Anyone who tries to build their politics on the anti-Russian narrative would be marginalized. The project of presenting 'Russian malignant influence' as political and even wider - social danger, generously funded by the EU and NATO, has simply failed in Serbia. For the Serbs, Russia is part of the solution, not part of the problem in political calculations. Why? There are three reasons for a noticeable rise in Russia's popularity among the Serbs.

First, Serbia was bombed by NATO only two decades ago (1999). The consequences of the aggression are not only the material destruction and killings of the people but also political ones: the US initiated a project to create an 'independent Kosovo', which violated Serbia's territorial integrity but also damaged the dignity of the Serbs (Proroković, 2018). A large number of political and propaganda activities that took place both during the period of preparation and implementation of military aggression (1998-1999) and during political preparations for the 'declaration of an independent Kosovo' were based on pure lies and fabricated images.

Possibly, these images served the United States to receive the necessary support for the 'Kosovo project' in its public. But in the long run, this way they have closed the door to the opportunities of growth of not only American but of Western influence in general in the wider Serbian political public (Proroković, 2012, pp. 121-179). Therefore, despite officially proclaimed Western integration policies, which include Serbia's EU membership but also military neutrality, Serbia's attitude towards the Western alliances is relatively unfavorable (the EU's popularity stagnates or declines slightly, while the relation towards NATO remains negative).

In the latest survey of youth (between 15 and 30 years of age) conducted during August 2019, it is noticeable that more respondents oppose EU membership than support it (for 38%, against 40%), and as many as 56% think that 'living in Serbia would be the same or worse if it became an EU member'. According to 33% of respondents, in its foreign policy appearance, Serbia should rely more on Russia, while at the same time, 21% think the EU is the most important ally (Više mladih Srba protiv ulaska u EU, a za savezništvo sa Rusijom, 2019).



Secondly, the success of Russia, the gradual stabilization of the situation in this country, as well as its increasing role in international relations, have not gone unnoticed. To the extent that it could, Russia has protected Serbia's interests during the last Yugoslav wars (1992-2000). It was one of the guaranteeing powers for the peace solution in Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Dayton Agreement), as well as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, which supported the adoption of Resolution 1244, proposing a completely new solution to the 'future status' of Kosovo within the Republic of Serbia and respecting the principles of international law (Proroković, 2012, pp. 440-448). Unlike the western powers gathered in NATO, Russia had a completely different view on the dissolution of Yugoslavia, escalation of the war in Kosovo, the proclamation of 'independent Kosovo', as well as on several other questions concerning regional security (the last in the series, at the time of writing this article, was the adoption of a controversial law in Montenegro that practically legalized the seizure of property of the Serbian Orthodox Church, which Moscow condemned and demanded this to be resolved by new negotiations between state institutions and the Church).

In Serbia, Russia is anticipated as a 'patron', in terms of politics, historical image, collective confidence and individual dignity, which is why there is such a positive mood and spread of Russophilia. The escalation of the Ukrainian crisis and the conflict in EU/NATO-Russia relations only confirmed this belief with the Serbs, because it forced them to decide, and given the relatively weak or average EU rating and the catastrophic rating of NATO, the determination was most often made only in one way. The diplomatic, political or military successes of Russia (Syria, the east of Ukraine, even the referendum in Crimea, construction of the Turkish flow) have only reinforced this commitment.

And thirdly, it is certainly the 'Putin factor'. This is somewhat a global phenomenon, despite the campaign conducted by all key Western media against it, the President of Russia has been recognized and acknowledged as one of the most important politicians of the modern world (Vlahović, 2014). In Serbia, this is manifested in the assertion that he is not one of the most important but the most important politician of the modern world, and Russophilia is often manifested or explained as a 'belief in Putin's political moves'. Combined with the first and especially the second reason, this has an effect and is reflected in the growing popularity of Russia. Hence the slogan: 'Serbs and Russians - brothers forever!'

## **RUSSIAN-SERBIAN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP: ENERGY, TRADE, POLITICS, ARMS**

To some extent, it can even be stated that Serbia remains the last 'island of Russophilia' west of the Belarus border. Does this benefit Russia's foreign policy in Serbia? Undoubtedly - yes! Russia's interest in Serbia has increased since the summer of 2006. It is a period of intense talks on the 'future status of Kosovo' co-ordinated by Marti Ahtisaari, the UN Secretary-General's special envoy (Proroković, 2013, pp. 148-156). Although Ahtisaari's work continued until 2007, and later his role was assumed by the 'Troika', in 2006, it essentially became clear what the proposal of the 'Western partners' would be. It also became clear that they did not provide support for this either in political circles in Belgrade nor in Moscow (All polls showed that most citizens would certainly be against the solution from the Ahtisaari plan, but when it comes to the work of the West in the Balkans there are many examples of avoiding the referendum and ignoring the majority opinion or manipulating their will; and when it comes to the Ahtisaari process, all they needed was the signature of a Serbian official and the decision of one of the competent institutions for it to be applied, the opinion of citizens did not interest them at all.).

Simply, the Ahtisaari Plan meant that Serbia would 'accept Kosovo's independence' with which Belgrade did not agree, and Moscow supported Belgrade in this. It is still unclear, and it is less relevant for the conclusions of this paper to which extent was Vladimir Putin's 'hard line' on the 'Kosovo issue' shaped by the 'lobbying of Belgrade' and to which extent by Russia's strategic goals and geopolitics (Interestingly, until 2006, within the Contact Group, Russia represented a 'constructive partner' thus giving legitimacy to all proposals made by 'Western partners' including the famous Conclusion from 2005 that 'future status of Kosovo' must be based on 'three NO': no to return to the state before 1999; no to the accession of Kosovo to some other state; no to division of Kosovo). It is only since 2006 that Russia's relationship with Serbia has entered a whole new phase, based on Moscow's 'Kosovo policy'. Russia is explicitly opposed to any kind of 'Kosovo Albanians independence' and firmly defends the legal framework defined by UNSC R1244 (paradoxically, but at times Russia did this tougher than representatives of Serbia). The evidence of change in Russia's attitude is also a change in the route of the South Stream strategic pipeline.

According to the first version, the pipeline was meant to stretch across the territories of Russia, Bulgaria and Romania to Hungary. But, by summer 2007, when a 'big energy agreement' supposed to be signed between the two

states, the route has been changed. Romania has fallen out of the game, and Serbia became a key partner in this business, next to Bulgaria (Proroković, 2015, pp. 11–23). Part of the ‘energy agreement’ was the privatization of Serbia’s state-owned oil company by Gazprom which ended successfully, enabling Gazprom to survive on the European market after 2014 (thanks to Serbia’s free trade agreement with the EU), despite a number of political pressures and attempts to reduce the company’s influence in the EU.

Also, after long negotiations in January 2013, an interstate agreement on Russian loan for the reconstruction and development of the 800 million dollar railway infrastructure was signed (*Ruski kredit za železnicu*, 2013). Therefore, in addition to the energy sector, Russia became a guarantee of the development of another area, which was important not only for the economy but also for Serbia’s safety. At the beginning of 2019, the successful realization of this work initiated the signing of a new loan agreement worth 172.5 million euros for the construction of a unified dispatching center for train traffic management in the territory of all Serbia. This loan provided ‘financing of 75% of work’ while the remaining 25% was provided by the government of Serbia from the budget funds. Significance for the Russian side is reflected in ‘encouragement of exports of goods and services’ (Božić Krainčanić, 2019).

In May 2013, Belgrade and Moscow signed the document with the pretentious name ‘Declaration of Strategic Partnership between Serbia and Russia’. The document states that the strategic relations ‘include all spheres of cooperation, including politics, trade, economy, culture, technic and education’ (*Deklaracija strateškog partnerstva Srbije i Rusije*, 2013, p. 2). Still, even after this, the two biggest contracts between the two countries remained those related to energy and railway infrastructure. The scope of foreign trade exchange fluctuated from 2.3 to 3.3 billion euros for the past six years, with the share of oil and oil derivatives in Russian exports to Serbia at 36%, gas 27%, and about 20% import of other necessities (products and services) related to the energy sector. When it comes to Serbian exports, apples make 9%, cheese 2%, strawberries 2% (all three products are among the top ten), and the share of the other agricultural products is about 10%.

Undoubtedly, after the turbulent ‘years of sanctions’ (2015–2017), when there was a partial devaluation of Russian ruble and ‘big economic shock’ in Russia, trade relations are stabilized and the volume of exchanges is growing, which is encouraging, but the structure of import/export is such that it cannot be satisfactory. On the Russian side, the largest share is made of energy, i.e., raw materials, and on the Serbian side of agricultural products.

*Table 1: Foreign trade exchange in goods between Serbia and Russia (2013–2018)*

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Export	1.062,7	1.029,3	724,8	795,12	995,1	1.023,6
Import	1.903,5	2.235,1	1.746,2	1.503,4	1.586,0	2.037,1
Trade	2.966,2	3.364,2	2.471,0	2.298,5	2.581,1	3.060,7

Source: Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia, 2019, p. 2.

Unlike commercial relations, which have stagnated, political relations have experienced two large uplifts: first, during the already described period 2006 – 2007 and second, after 2014. Escalation of the Ukrainian crisis has influenced the EU and NATO to thoroughly change their relationship with Russia, which included establishing the regime of (partial) sanctions and submitting numerous initiatives in different international organizations in order to politically condemn Russia. Never, on any occasion, in any international forum, have representatives of Serbia voted against Russia. In fact, Serbia is the only European country that has not followed any recommendation of the EU and/or NATO and has not introduced any sanctions to Russia (nor against individuals, nor institutions). On the other side, Russia has always and everywhere supported Serbia regarding the ‘Kosovo issue’ as well as on other issues (for example, in July 2015, Russia has put a veto on British motion for resolution on ‘Srebrenica genocide’ that stipulated one interpretation of events in the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina). The role of Russia in the process of withdrawal of recognition of the so-called state of Kosovo also remains ‘hazy’. The first country that has withdrawn the recognition of Kosovo was Suriname, but ‘Namely, when that note was sent to our (UN) mission in New York, Suriname’s foreign minister was visiting Moscow’, said Djukic, who in the past served as Serbia’s ambassador abroad (Did Suriname’s Kosovo decision go via Moscow?, 2017).

Even more visible is the sudden takeoff in intensified and expanding military cooperation. Russia has so far helped (direct aircraft donations and armored patrol vehicles, favorable terms of purchase or credit) by equipping Serbian armed forces with six MiG-29 planes, thirty armored patrol and reconnaissance vehicles (BRDM-2MS) and thirty tanks (T-72 MS). ‘Serbia has already purchased four new, Russian helicopters Mi-35M, and three transport helicopters Mi-17’ (Ikodinović, 2019), as well as one anti-aircraft

system 'Pancir S-1' (which serves to defend from low-flying objectives and because of its tactical and technical characteristics is currently the best tool for defense from such attacks). The curiosity is also the fact that Russia's sophisticated anti-aviation system S-400 only once in history has been transferred to another country's territory because of a joint military exercise: in Serbia in October 2019.

In a strange way, in a resolution dedicated to 'ensuring territorial integrity and sovereignty' from December 2007, which effectively represented the 'political response' of the Serbian National Assembly on the Ahtisaari Plan, the concept of 'military neutrality of Serbia' was established. The topic virtually was not formally talked about until 2018 (although politicians in their public appearances liked to repeat it) when the process of writing new strategies of the Republic of Serbia started: national security and defense strategies. Since 2019, when these documents were adopted, military neutrality has become formalized: 'Development of the partnership cooperation of the Republic of Serbia with NATO, based on the policy of military neutrality through the Partnership for Peace and the monitoring position in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (ODKB) contributes to the stability of the Republic of Serbia. For further development of democracy, stability and prosperity of the region, for the Republic of Serbia, it is important to improve relations with the US, Russia, China, and other traditional partners and major factors of the international community' (Narodna skupština Republike Srbije, 2019, p. 6).

Through tighter military cooperation, Russia is actually keen to ensure Serbia's military neutrality, which at this point in Moscow is seen as a no-entry into NATO. Russian Major General Sergey Lipovoy says, 'Serbia is a Moscow ally in the Balkans and a neutral state, which is why it needs constant protection, especially since it is surrounded by air bases of NATO. Russian and Serbian military cooperation is quite productive. /.../ Serbia is not in the alliance, and that status requires permanent protection, especially since Serbia is literally surrounded by NATO bases in Romania, Hungary, Italy, Bosnia, and Bulgaria. Furthermore, let us not forget the Kosovo separatists who regularly perform provocations against the Serbs and the accession of neighboring Montenegro to NATO' (Ruski general: Srbija je pod ruskom zaštitom, 2019). Looking at the size and quality of military cooperation, this trend has not been seen in Serbian-Russian relations since the beginning of XIX century (The First Serbian uprising) and somewhat in the period just before the outbreak of the Balkan wars in the XX century (First and Second Balkan War).

## RUSSIAN VECTOR: IMPACTS AND OUTCOMES ON REGIONAL RELATIONS

However, despite the excellent and fruitful cooperation between Serbia and Russia in the areas of energy, railway infrastructure, political and military relations, there is somewhat unclear what the Balkan vector of Russian policy implies. To talk about 'equal bilateral relations', given the power of actors (Serbia and Russia), their historical role and position in the ongoing international relations – is not realistic. Nor is it realistic that Russia 'separately projects' its foreign policy activities through some sort of 'special policy' towards one partner of the size and power of Serbia. Also, it is unrealistic that Russia would sacrifice some other, broader interests, for the sake of its relations with Serbia. The documents of The Conception of Russia's Foreign Policy, from 2013 and 2015 (in Russ. *Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации*) have no mention that the Balkan Peninsula is in any way in Russia's foreign policy focus. However, at the same time, it does not mean that the Balkan is a 'distant periphery'. Ever since 2013, it is noticeable that the main goal of this country is to be one of the poles in the emerging multipolar system. 'State policy in the field of national security and socio-economic development of the Russian Federation contributes to the realisation of strategic national priorities and effective protection of national interests. Currently, a stable basis has been created for further dissemination of the economic, political, military and spiritual potential of the Russian Federation, and to increase its role in the formation of the multipolar World' (Konceptiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2016, point 7).

As a result, Russia 'will work to anticipate events and lead them', and in this sense, in point 4, it is said that the aim is to occupy the 'strong and authoritative position in the international community, as it best corresponds to the interests of the Russian Federation as one of the influential and competitive centers of the modern world' (Konceptiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2013, point 2). At the same time, it also noted that 'maximising the potential of the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO) and empowering its global function is carried out in contradiction with international law, by intensifying military activities of the bloc's countries, further expanding the alliance and approximating its military infrastructure to the Russian borders, which poses a threat to national security' (Konceptiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2016, point 15). 'Hence the fierce reaction of the official Moscow even after the announcement that little Montenegro will join this military alliance' (Proroković, 2018, p. 601).

Russia is conducting its bilateral relations with Serbia in a line of its strategies, which are politically and contextually totally acceptable to the Serbian public. Thus, indirectly, it affects the political elite, still well oriented towards the EU and even NATO (see, for example, IPAP agreement between Serbia and NATO). For Russia, it is primarily important to prevent or slow down further NATO expansion and to create a solid basis for further transmission of 'economic, political, military and spiritual potential'. Serbia can play both roles. First, the Serbian population that inhabits Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and other countries in the region can be a solid dam to strengthen NATO's influence in the Balkans. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, due to the existence of the Republic of Srpska, the Serbs are even in a position to formally block the accession of the country into this military alliance, while in Montenegro due to the strong opposition from the population, the referendum was not organized (NATO membership was declared in the Assembly, where from 81 MPs 46 voted, and according to public opinion pools 54%-66% of citizens were explicitly against it.). Despite official claims that 'everything went smoothly' (the mission was carried out – Montenegro joined NATO!), thanks to this resistance, a strong 'anti-NATO lobby' was created in Montenegro even before the state formally joined this military alliance. Just how polarized society in Montenegro is, is best shown by mass demonstrations against the authorities' decision to try to take a portion of the Serbian Orthodox Church's property that began in December 2019. Accordingly, it can easily happen for Montenegro to be the first state to leave NATO!?

NATO is the reason for Moscow's initiative to intensify military cooperation with Serbia as well as the reason for maintaining excellent political relations, which often are not followed by the increasing trade exchanges and expanding economic cooperation. By investing in military cooperation, Russia is essentially helping to maintain Serbia's military neutrality project, which guarantees that Serbia will become a dam for the expansion of NATO interests in the Balkans and by improving cooperation on various political issues, the existing status is maintained. And this status does not permit the arrangement of regional geopolitical order in accordance with the concept of the United States (with the support of other European stakeholders, primarily of Great Britain and Germany).

It is noticeable that such an approach is conducive to Serbian geopolitical interests. The ongoing spatial distribution of power and influence in the region is linked to agreements accepted by Serbia: the Dayton Agreement (1995), Resolution 1244, as well as the invocation of norms of international

law (human rights and freedoms, religious freedoms) that can be guaranteed (issue of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the territory of its canonical jurisdiction). By abandoning these legal frameworks, Serbia risks making its geopolitical position dramatically worse (Proroković, 2012, pp. 719-758). NATO initiatives (or more precisely, the United States initiatives, which then engage the entire NATO in realizing their interests in the Balkans) and the EU, which sought to change the Dayton Agreement, repeal Resolution 1244 and worsen the status of the Serb population in some former Yugoslavian republics, are issues of geopolitical importance, and this is another reason why *resistance* in the Serbian society was created and articulated not only against NATO (or the USA) but also against the EU. Russian support, stemming from the compatibility of views on key issues, was welcomed in Serbia (primarily in intellectual circles and in the political public), thus opening the door to both expanding Russian influence in Serbia and strengthening the Russian vector in regional frameworks.

Map 1: Map of Eparchies of Serbian Orthodox Church (including Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric)



Source: Internet



Relying on the support of the Serbian public, intellectuals, as well as individual institutions (primarily the Serbian Orthodox Church), intensifying political and military cooperation, but also promoting some projects of regional importance in the field of energy (the Turkish Stream pipeline), Russia has over the years created a solid basis for spreading its impulses throughout the Balkan region. Of course, this approach has many disadvantages, first of all, it is reflected in the pronounced antagonization in the region, in which every 'playing on the Serbian card' automatically produces a counter-effect on the other side (among Albanians, for example). However, it should also be emphasized that in designing a new 'Balkan policy', Russia did not have much choice since all other Balkan nations were already in NATO or on the way to joining NATO.

## CONCLUSION

Historically, Serbian - Russian relations have generally been good. For several periods, these relations were entering a *problematic phase*, but in general - the Serbs and the Russians never made war against each other, nor did their actions affect the other party. Since 2006, we have been attending a new phase of strengthening and expanding these relationships. Serbia has found a powerful ally in Russia, who can protect it against the US and leading EU states in an attempt to completely derogate from Resolution 1244, to make a fundamental change to the Dayton Agreement that would lose the Republic of Srpska an equal status (thus, the Serbs in BiH would lose guaranteed privileges) and in resolving a number of other things (primarily identity issues, but also creating one 'correct historical image' of the causes and consequences of the Yugoslav civil war for the West). The intention of the 'political West' is to finally establish a new geopolitical order in the Balkans, in which the Serbian corpus will be fragmented, divided into several states, and also shattered by the construction of new hybrid identities (the construction of a Montenegrin identity on the anti-Serbian agenda, which has no basis in the history, for example).

For Russia, on the other hand, Serbia and the Serbs practically represent the 'only choice' in the entire Balkans in an attempt to achieve a strategic goal: stopping further NATO expansion. Russian influence, which strengthens Serbian resistance, is certainly affecting regional relations currently most visible in Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to a lesser extent in North Macedonia. The interesting thing is certainly the fact that, unlike Western structures that pursue their interests through the

control of elites, Russian structures have paid more attention to influencing some traditional centers of power (the church and its close organizations) and the public in the broadest possible sense. Thus, a workaround has put pressure on the political structures of the Republic of Serbia, which, despite a declarative commitment to EU membership and good relations with NATO, have since 2014 avoided following the EU and NATO decisions against Russia.

For now, we have results, especially if we compare the current situation to 2006. At that time, there was almost no Russian influence in the Balkans, except in the energy sector and culture, and Serbia was facing a complete 'geopolitical collapse'. Everything is different today. And this has consequences not only for Serbia's foreign policy but for regional relations as a whole. Russia has 'returned' to the Balkans. Serbia helped her with this. Serbia has begun a phase of 'geopolitical consolidation'. Russia helped her with this.

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## THE SERBIAN PEOPLE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION: A SAD STORY WITH AN UNPREDICTABLE END<sup>2</sup>

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*Abstract:* In this text, the author analyzes the European Union's attitude towards Serbia and the Serbian people over the last thirty years since the beginning of the breakup of the SFR Yugoslavia. He claims the hostile attitude of Brussels towards Serbia and the Serbian people has not changed since the regime's demise in 2000. By showing examples of EU involvement in the processes of the secession of Kosovo, the separation of Montenegro, support to the work of The Hague Tribunal (ICTY), relations toward the privatization process in Serbia, issues of the position of minorities, etc., the author argues that the process of European integration of Serbia was used as a framework for completing the pre-planned process of the dissolution of the SFRY. Instead of the EU being guided by the normative Copenhagen criteria and the previous enlargement practices, it is actually geopolitical demands, which are detrimental to the interests of the state of Serbia and the Serbian people as a whole, that are dominating in relations toward Serbia.

*Keywords:* Serbia, European Union, Yugoslavia, conditionality, geopolitics, European integration.

### INTRODUCTION

This year Serbia is marking thirty years of the introduction of liberal democracy or party pluralism in Serbia, but also from the beginning of the breakup of Yugoslavia. However, it is also the twentieth anniversary of the so-called democratic changes and the beginning of the European integrations of Serbia. While in the first ten years, Belgrade has had a clear

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<sup>2</sup> This article is a kind of an ongoing project. The first version was published in Serbian in the *Kultura polisa* journal (Đurković, 2014). Over time more and more facts have emerged that corroborate its main thesis, so I have decided to publish a new, updated version, for the first time in English.

geopolitical opposition to the entire Western world, including Brussels, the following two decades have been marked by the Western world's complete dominance of our domestic politics and orientation. During those two decades, European integration has been a clear priority for the Serbian authorities. It seems that the time has come to assess this whole period and evaluate what such status has brought to Serbia. The starting hypothesis is that the policy of the West towards Serbia, even after Milošević, retained the same geopolitical premises and that the framework of the process of European integration of the country was additionally used to implement the same goals.<sup>3</sup>

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The history of the European idea in our region dates long before the contemporary period. In the 1930s, a number of intellectuals or even circles, such as Ćurčin's *New Europe*, were involved in a network of pan-European movements, federations, congresses, leagues for peace and human rights, all of which sought together to make sense of a framework for European peace, development or even a European federation. It was a very wide range of ideas, involving great thinkers such as Živojin Perić, as well as the obscure Dimitrije Mitrović.<sup>4</sup>

The ideology of the second Yugoslavia was opposed to the capitalist world, and its foreign policy orientation was based on balancing between the blocs and pushing its goals through the non-aligned movement. However, archival material and published memoirs show that the process of European integration was followed in great detail, and even with a considerable amount of sympathy. Moreover, Yugoslavia entered into contractual relations with the European Economic Community relatively early, and its economic and technological orientation (especially relations with Germany), as well as the growing diaspora after 1964, and especially full openness to Western popular culture, increasingly directed her to that side.<sup>5</sup> Since 1985, with the government of Branko Mikulić, the arrangement

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<sup>3</sup> Literature on EU conditionality is rather small concerning the importance and decades of practice. For a long time, Grabbe (2006) was treated as a classic in this field, but like most of the literature, it is pretty apologetic and avoiding tricky (geo)political issues. Recently more critical approaches are being heard and published like Džankić et al. (2019).

<sup>4</sup> A nice collection of papers was recently published as an overview of these ideas (Vučinić, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> For the history of relations between the SFRY and the EEC, see: Đukanović, 2017.

with the IMF, the perestroika in the USSR, and the development of civil society movements in the country, a clear orientation of the state towards the West was formed.

The beginning of the process of the breakup of Yugoslavia coincided with the adoption of the Single European Act in 1986, the completion of the European Single Market, and the transformation of the EEC into the European Union. In doing so, Brussels demonstrated its aspiration to grow into a serious regional actor. So in 1991, for all domestic actors in the Yugoslav crisis, including Milošević and the Serbian leadership, it was only natural for the EU to play an important role as an arbitrator, mediator and provider of good services. The last governments of Yugoslavia (SIV, Savezno izvršno veće) pursued a distinct pro-European policy aimed at intensifying economic and political co-operation with Brussels.

The EEC played an important role during the Peace Conference on the Former Yugoslavia: the Council of Ministers on 27 August 1991 formed the Badinter Arbitration Commission. It was composed of five presidents of the Constitutional Courts of European countries whose views provided an international legal framework for the dissolution of Yugoslavia. A European troika composed of the foreign ministers of Luxembourg (Poos), the Netherlands (Van den Broek) and Italy (De Michelis) led the first mission of shuttle diplomacy in this region. However, very early on, the leadership of Serbia and Montenegro realized that the decisions of these external arbitrators were far from the expected objectivity, observance of international law, and respect for the views and interests of all stakeholders. The decision of the new Croatian leadership to deprive the Serbs of the status of a constituent people in that republic and to reduce them to a minority did not encounter any condemnation or opposition from Brussels, as Germany, Austria and Italy stood firmly behind the separatist policies of the new leadership of Slovenia and Croatia. Opinions No. 1 and No. 10 of the Badinter Commission<sup>6</sup>, which proclaimed the dissolution of Yugoslavia and denied the FR Yugoslavia continuity with the previous state, were not accepted by the leadership in Belgrade. Therefore until 2000, the FRY was not a full member of either the UN or other international bodies. It was only the DOS (Demokratska opozicija Srbije) government that accepted these decisions, that is, the complete concept of dissolution and entered international bodies, presenting it as their supposed great success.

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<sup>6</sup> The first three opinions were published in Pellet (1992). The next six (4-10) were published in the same journal in 1993, in No. 4 (pp. 74-90).

Already in 1993, with the new President Clinton, the United States entered the great stage of the Yugoslav crisis and completely sidelined Brussels and European actors. The Dayton Agreement was also physically done on American soil under direct American control. But European actors followed US leadership and, starting from 1992, held Belgrade under various sanctions. In all these processes, Brussels and European states had a distinctly anti-Serb stance. In all wars, they supported Serbia's opponents and orchestrated the Kosovo rebellion, which eventually led to the bombing of the FRY and the physical occupation of the southern province of Kosmet. All of this was in line with their earlier geopolitical ideas of repositioning of the Yugoslav space, which usually came from certain English circles and which were formally promulgated after World War II with the establishment of the then internal borders, and the 1974 Constitution in legal terms.

This project boiled down to the old Austro-Hungarian ideas of creating new nations and states on the fringes of the Serbian ethnic space (Toleva, 2016), connecting them and uniting them on an anti-Serb platform, in order to suppress the Serbs from the sea and push them towards central Serbia. At all times, these moves revolved around the old idea of shrinking the Serbs and Serbia exclusively to the frontiers of the territory before the Balkans wars. For this purpose, all measures that threatened the status of the Serbs in the region were tolerated: they were expelled, deprived of their human and status rights, and brutally exposed to assimilation, forced religious conversion, persecution, etc.

In 1999, Serbia was ruined and devastated, and the bombing caused economic damage estimated at 30 to 100 billion Deutsche marks (Terzić and Pašajlić, 2019). At the same time, the arrogance and corruption of the ruling structure prompted citizens to change. With huge foreign assistance and heavy interference in the internal political process, the regime change happened, and a group came to power that set European integration as its goal and framework for reform, modernization and future transition, as well as foreign-policy and value reorientation.

Despite the hopes of the DOS leaders that democratized Serbia would become a partner of the EU and the Western world without Milošević, relations and attitudes toward the state of Serbia and the position and interests of the Serbian people in the region have not changed at all. Moreover, the West expected the new leadership to reimburse its support for having come to power in different ways, namely that Koštunica, Đinđić and the DOS would adopt and implement the framework for the breakup of Yugoslavia that they had defined. No wonder, over time, the prophetic



speech of Milošević held between the two rounds of the 2000 elections, became a cult one, because it described much more closely the logic of future events than the fairy tales told by opposition leaders.<sup>7</sup>

We should start with the observation that the European Union, in its progress reports on Serbia, always puts geopolitical questions and the assessment of Serbia's adherence to 'the roadmap' at the forefront, and not the Copenhagen criteria, which supposedly should be the basic benchmark for directing and evaluating integration processes. Moreover, there are numerous cases, such as the Brussels Agreement from 2013, in which violations of constitutionality and legality have been encouraged. Two decades after the start of the European integration process, the state of democracy or media pluralism is far worse than it was fifteen years ago or even in the second half of the 1990s during Milošević's rule. Western media and organizations have also begun to talk about this in the last year and a half, but only when the current regime has been seen as trying to avoid completing the total handover of Kosovo.

In this article, starting from the analysis I published five years ago in the book *The Illusions of the European Union*, I will focus on the basic problems that Serbia and the Serbian people have had with Brussels and the leading EU member states after 2000 (Đurković, 2015).

## THE PROBLEM OF TERRITORY AND STATE BORDERS

In all other cases of EU integrations except Cyprus, the EU dealt with states that had non-disputed territories with a central government exercising full control over each part of its territory. In our case, the FRY (with which Brussels started its negotiating relations after 2000) was not regarded as a single political community, although it was recognized as having an international legal personality. Namely, since 1999, Kosmet has been treated as a separate entity, and *de facto* the separatist behavior of Montenegro was supported and facilitated, so it was rounded up as a third separate entity.<sup>8</sup> During the following years, European integrations were used as an instrument for the final decommissioning of the SFRY along its internal borders, as defined in the 1974 Constitution. In the case of Montenegro as

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<sup>7</sup>The whole speech in Serbian with subtitles in English is available at the following link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knv\\_nLcrGtl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knv_nLcrGtl).

<sup>8</sup>In 2003, the EU even formally recommended two-track integration for Serbia and Montenegro.

well as in the case of Kosmet, Brussels has acted in complete opposition to the principle of greater integration and the rapprochement of European peoples (the 'ever closer Union'). While on the one hand, they proclaimed the need for reconciliation and regional integration (including the story of regional ownership), in practice, they supported both separatisms and the further dissolution of the FRY.

### A. Montenegro

Until 2000 and the removal of Milošević, separatism in Montenegro was supported under the alleged justification that a democratic Montenegro was fighting Milošević's authoritarianism and Belgrade's attempt to effectively put Montenegro under its full control. However, Montenegrin nationalism began to flourish just after the removal of Milošević and the coming to power of the Democratic Opposition of Serbia, which in itself included many Đukanović's associates and friends. Already on 29 December 2000, the Government of Montenegro announced in the *Pobjeda* newspaper in Podgorica a new platform for negotiations on the reorganization of the FRY, in which it first came out with the idea of two independent states. Specifically, it was evident at the time that Milošević was just justification and that the processes had a completely different basis, leading to their further advancement after 2000.<sup>9</sup> With the support of the US and Brussels, Đukanović continued his project of building statehood and growing separation from Belgrade, which would eventually lead to the controversial referendum of 21 May 2006, when Montenegro became independent. Along the way, some of the most important moments in which Brussels played a key role should be recalled.

In 2001, there were public altercations between the new federal authorities in Belgrade and Podgorica. There had also been numerous attempts to open up discussions between the DOS and the DPS (Demokratska partija socijalista) on various NGO formats and to begin serious negotiations on the transformation of the federal state. However, all these attempts were obstructed by Podgorica, which opted for the factual

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<sup>9</sup> In a very useful memoir, Momir Bulatović explained that the project of separating Montenegro from Serbia was developed and prepared by the US administration immediately after the Dayton Agreement (Bulatović, 2004). During his first visit to the United States after the Ohio event, he was offered the lead role in the process. When he refused the job, Milo Đukanović accepted.

completion of independence and the promotion of a policy of *fait accompli*. At the end of the year, the then FRY President Koštunica decided to break away with that situation and to ask Podgorica to hold a referendum as soon as possible, at which the citizens of Montenegro would first decide whether or not they wanted to live in a joint state with Serbia at all.

This happened at a very unfavorable moment for Đukanović himself. Two factors went against his plans. In the internal political life of Montenegro after the April elections of 2001, the DPS was forced to rule as a minority government, dependent on the support of MPs of the Liberal Alliance of Montenegro. This eventually led to the brief formation of the LS Technical Coalition government with the pro-federalist Together for Yugoslavia Coalition in Montenegro, which for the first time threatened the survival of the DPS in power. In addition to this unstable majority, Đukanović was also threatened by the high popularity of Koštunica himself and the DOS in Montenegro, which significantly strengthened the attractiveness of the state union's survival. The general impression was that there was no secessionist majority in Montenegro, so, for example, the Serbian Prime Minister Đinđić (who remained fairly neutral throughout the process) said on 2 January 2002 that he expected a referendum to be called soon, which would end in the rejection of Đukanović's option.<sup>10</sup>

Precisely at that moment, the EU intervened in the whole process, preventing a referendum at a time when Đukanović would have surely lost it. In January 2002, Brussels began direct mediation aimed at preventing a referendum and preserving a kind of a loose union between Belgrade and Podgorica. This mediation eventually led to the Belgrade Agreement of 14 March of the same year, and the Constitutional Charter on the New Organization of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, which was adopted in January 2003. This formally ended the existence of the FR Yugoslavia as an independent, sovereign state and instead created a looser state union which, in Article 3 of its Constitutional Charter, defines as its main goals the integration of the community into the European Union and the harmonization of its legislation with the European Union (Constitutional Charter on the New Organization of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, 2003, Article 3). All this effectively enabled Đukanović to consolidate his position and to postpone the referendum for another period.

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<sup>10</sup> For a similar statement, see: Bujošević, 2001.

During the process of negotiating the Constitutional Charter, the 'experts' of the Venice Commission were conspicuously on the side of the Montenegrin negotiators, advocating for a looser union (European Commission for Democracy through Law, 2005).

The next step was the introduction of the so-called double track in 2003, which effectively started treating the European integrations of Serbia and Montenegro as integrations of two separate and divided entities. Following the unsuccessful negotiations between Belgrade and Podgorica on harmonization of the common customs policy towards third countries, Brussels de facto encouraged both sides to give up and keep each other's customs system, which was actually welcomed through the double track of the factual separation of the economic space between Serbia and Montenegro. So, instead of helping to consolidate and reintegrate the community that it had facilitated, which would have been one of its obligations according to the European standards, the EU supported and legalized its actual dissolution.

Moreover, the acceptance of the double track was one of the three key conditions for the issuing of a positive feasibility study in spring 2005 (ISAC/dw, 2005). A shocking second condition was the acceptance of the Constitutional Charter Amendment Agreement, which had been signed only two years earlier. The EU pressured Serbia to accept Đukanović's fraud and refusal to abide by a signed 2002 agreement, which stipulated that elections for the State Union Parliament needed to be held before calling a referendum. At that time, I was part of the state administration and had the opportunity to see firsthand the brutal conditioning of Brussels, first of all in the figure of Stefan Lehne, at the time Javier Solana's Assistant of the High Representative for Foreign Policy. Belgrade was forced to forgo elections, which would have surely consolidated the State Union and diminished Đukanović's legitimacy and to agree to Montenegro holding a referendum first.

All this resulted in a shameful role of the EU during the referendum of the following year when everything was done to facilitate Montenegrin separation. From the behavior of the mediator Miroslav Lajčak, through setting the threshold at only 55% of voters in favor of independence, then through the unilateral action of the chairman of the referendum commission, another Slovak, František Lipka, and tolerating all electoral irregularities, including announcing the alleged results five minutes after the referendum ended.<sup>11</sup> So, everything that Brussels did after 2000 in the case of Montenegro

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<sup>11</sup> This shameful role was played by Belgrade's Marko Blagojević, who followed the regularity of the referendum in front of the 'objective' NGO CESID.

was contrary to their principles and led to the further disintegration of the former Yugoslavia.

After the separation of Montenegro, Đukanović's regime was supported in all of its actions to undermine the Serbs' rights. The EU is completely indifferent to the fact that the Serbs, who make up a third of Montenegro's population, live in that country without any rights. Moreover, Belgrade, through its demands for improving regional co-operation, is asked to forget about the Serbs outside Serbia and to accept their violent assimilation into new surrounding nations.

## B. Kosovo

Discussing the normative framework of enlargement in my book *The Illusion of the European Union*, I also cited the previous practice of enlargement as the basis for Brussels' expected attitude towards the candidate. From this perspective, the Cyprus case had to be a template for treating the Kosovo case in Serbia's integration process. As it is well known, since 1974, the Nicosia government has not exercised any factual control over the northern part of Cyprus, which survives as the unrecognized Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. During the accession process, there were no double tracks in Cyprus, but the entire territory was treated as part of a sovereign and integrated state. Also, there was no violently imposed negotiation or insistence that the problem must be 'solved' at all costs to speed up integrations. Moreover, after the failed peace initiatives, Brussels simply registered the fact that the conflict could not be overcome because the Turks from northern Cyprus did not want to return to the sovereign jurisdiction of the Nicosia regime. It left the factual state of division in the field and accepted the entire territory of Cyprus into EU membership.<sup>12</sup>

In the case of Kosovo, which is, in fact, very similar to the Cyprus problem, Brussels did precisely the opposite. Moreover, European officials were often willing to claim that the Cyprus case was the reason they did not want the same thing to happen again and to let Serbia get full membership with a part of its territory that it did not actually control.

The essential difference in the different treatment of these two very similar cases lies in the different histories of their occurrence and the different position of the stakeholders in them; the interests of the most

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<sup>12</sup> For more information on the integration of Cyprus in the EU, see: Shaelou, 2010.

serious great powers were also important. The partition of Cyprus was made by the Turkish state to the great resentment of the Western allies, which even imposed an arms embargo on it. However, because of Turkey's great strategic importance for the US and NATO foreign policy, this factual division is partly tolerated, but only insofar as it does not anger another ally, Greece, who is otherwise still allocating big money for international lobbying in favor of maintaining the integrity of Cyprus and fighting for the reintegration of the entire island under a single government.

In the case of Kosovo, however, the partition of Serbia arose after the war that NATO and all the major Western powers had jointly launched against Serbia. From the beginning, the goal was separation, and Serbia had neither the means of lobbying nor any opportunity to prevent that factual separation. Even after 2000, Brussels fully put into operation these earlier policies, doing the opposite of what was done in the Cyprus case or in all other cases in which it had contributed to resolving the minority issue peacefully through some form of autonomy in the domicile country as an indisputable international legal entity.

So, in fact, we have witnessed that even after 2000, Kosovo received continuous assistance to become a fully-fledged state, and later the same actors would argue that a 'changed situation on the ground' was crucial, so a return to the old state of things was not possible. Even the pogroms of 17 March 2004 and the forced displacement of the Serbs, with the destruction of hundreds of churches, religious sites, all traces of Serbian culture and even cemeteries, were evidently tolerated.

Moreover, just after the pogrom, Brussels and the major European powers also participated in the revision of the previous normative framework, which was defined by the thesis 'standards before status'. The objective was to achieve certain standards in the field in a number of areas, such as the return of refugees, home reconstruction, institution building, etc., and only then to start considering status. However, since 2004, the rhetoric has been changing rapidly, and already the following year, pressure began to be exerted to resolve the status issue as a matter of urgency. Already in November 2005, the Security Council appointed Martti Ahtisaari as the main mediator in the negotiations, and Albert Rohan was delegated on behalf of the European Union as his deputy. Negotiations began in Vienna in February 2006, and after a farce that lasted until November of the following year, the negotiations were officially finished without success. Throughout the period, it was clear to all participants that the West was merely seeking some form of independence with minority protection for the

Serbs in an independent Kosovo, and that there was no factual negotiation. All Belgrade's proposals were rejected, and the Kosovo Assembly declared independence on 17 February 2008, which was immediately recognized by all major Western powers which had previously played the role of allegedly 'objective negotiators'.

It should be noted that participation in these Vienna negotiations was imposed on Belgrade as another condition for the continuation of European integration, especially as part of the struggle to sign the Stabilization and Association Agreement.<sup>13</sup> After independence was recognized and supported by as many as 22 out of 27 EU member states, Brussels continued its pressure on Belgrade to slowly align its Kosovo policy with the Ahtisaari plan and to actually accept independence. The acceptance of the arrival of the EU mission EULEX followed, which took over operational control of Kosovo by replacing the United Nations mission in accordance with the Ahtisaari plan. The Tadić's Administration also accepted the factual integration of the Serbs south of the Ibar into the state system of independent Kosovo, but in 2011, it refused to do so with four northern municipalities. That is why, with the help of the West and Brussels, a new administration was installed instead of Tadić, with Nikolić and Vučić at the helm.<sup>14</sup> They also accepted the agreement on integrated border management that established a real border between Serbia and Kosovo, and the Brussels Agreement, which opens space for the full reintegration of four municipalities into the system of the Kosovo government. This was a key condition for obtaining candidate status and for opening formal membership negotiations with Brussels.

As a key EU country (others follow), Germany soon began demanding that Belgrade and Pristina sign a good neighbor agreement, and there are more and more voices explicitly stating that Serbia will have to formally, before its eventual admission into the EU, recognize Kosovo's independence.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> At that time, the author was part of the cabinet of the Serbian Prime minister and witnessed the constant pressures coming from the Contact group, of brutal political conditionality and faking of the negotiations.

<sup>14</sup> On the very day of the election on May 20, 2012, the European Commission published on its website a note congratulating Nikolić on winning the elections three hours before the voting was over (Gaf EU, 2012).

<sup>15</sup> Moreover, we also remember the famous performance of German Ambassador, Andreas Zobel, who publicly warned Serbia in 2006 that if it did not recognize the independence of Kosovo, it could even lose Vojvodina and Sandžak. Western officials have never issued such 'warnings' to any other candidate country (E. V. N., 2007).

## THE HAGUE TRIBUNAL

Until 2011 and Mladić's extradition, co-operation with The Hague Tribunal (officially the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, ICTY) was the first and key condition for the continuation of Serbia's European integration. Although this complex set of issues was governed by the rule of law provisions, it was essentially a geopolitical condition *par excellence*. Brussels and the so-called *international community* accused the entire political and military leadership of Serbia, the Republic of Srpska and the Republic of Serbian Krajina in the 1990s, at a time when the Serbs refused to accept the dictated geopolitical repositioning of the Balkans and therefore entered into direct conflict with the West. As a result, Brussels demanded that the new authorities be apprehended and handed over to an 'independent and objective' tribunal in The Hague.

The same court acquitted Ramush Haradinaj (military leader of UCK, the Kosovo Liberation Army) and Naser Orić (Bosniak military commander of the Srebrenica region, guilty for massive crimes over Serbian civilians), and in the end, no one was convicted of the crimes in the Operation Storm\*. This kind of pressure and conditioning in the case of Croatia was comparatively milder and more measured. In the Bobetko case, they let the former Commander-in-Chief of the Croatian Army eventually die in Zagreb, and Croatia did not suffer any consequences for not extraditing him. Only in the case of Gotovina, there were more serious pressures and conditions, but in the end, the whole process was completed without a final conviction, and Croatia became a member of the Union without major problems.

In the case of Serbia, however, The Hague Tribunal was stressed as the first and foremost condition, despite all other major economic and political problems in the country. This clearly defined Brussels' priority in relations with Serbia: ending the war with Serbia, accepting full defeat, and punishing gravely the 1990s Serbs' leadership. A positive feasibility study was obtained primarily after a series of extraditions of military and police leaders conducted by Koštunica's cabinet in early 2005. EU candidate status was obtained several months after Mladić's extradition.

Now, however, it is suggested that further conditions of integration will be the introduction of the consequences of their trials (and such an interpretation of recent history) into school textbooks. For example,

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\* Military operation of the Croatian Army in July 1995, in which hundreds of thousands of Serbs were cleansed from Croatia, the former the Republic of Serbian Krajina.



textbooks in Serbia would have to teach children that an act of genocide was committed in Srebrenica in 1995, which would mean that the children are being taught the Western version of what happened in the former Yugoslavia.<sup>16</sup> I am not aware of any other case in the forty-year-long history of its enlargement practice in which Brussels has conditioned the entry of a country by changing its school curricula and revising textbooks.

### CHANGING CONSCIOUSNESS

Closely related to the previous point is the now (in)famous and often repeated condition of Germany, as the most dominant force in the Union, on the so-called 'change of consciousness' in Serbia and among the Serbs. At the 2010 NATO conference, the then German ambassador to Belgrade, said the following: 'I have to criticize the authorities in Serbia for using terms such as NATO bombing' themselves! Imagine walking down Prince Milos Street and asking your child, "Dad, who did this?" You will answer him: "NATO"! So what do you expect that kid to think about NATO? In contrast, as a young man in Germany, I watched the ruins in my city - but I didn't hate the one who did it because there were those who could tell me why it was done' (Maas, 2010).<sup>17</sup>

Mr. Maas then demanded that the Serbian leadership work to change the consciousness of its citizens, after which they would accept the 1999 illegal bombing as something that was done in our interest. He, therefore, equated Milošević's behavior with that of Hitler's Germany and demanded that Serbia should internalize and adopt this 'fact' as part of its collective memory. In early 2012, German parliamentarians demanded that the authorities in Serbia also help change the consciousness of the Kosovo Serbs.

As in the previous segment, this is about accepting defeat and internalizing the dictates of the victor as part of its altered consciousness, and not about the Copenhagen criteria. In all this, it is easy to recognize the recurrence of the legacy of frustration over the defeat of Germany in the two

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<sup>16</sup> On 16 November 2012, Minister Rasim Ljajić spoke openly about it after the acquittal of Gotovina and Markač. He resignedly said that the cooperation with ICTY would be reduced to the technical level and that all the programs discussed, such as, for example, the introduction of the ICTY verdicts into textbooks, would be suspended for the time being.

<sup>17</sup> He stated this at the pro-NATO conference held in Belgrade on 28 October 2010. Though all newspapers reported about it at the time, today it is all unavailable after serious internet forensic that someone has done.

world wars. All this again has nothing to do with the current practice or normative demands of EU enlargement.

### VENICE COMMISSION

The behavior of the Venice Commission during two important 2006 processes was extremely biased, and at the least strange and unusual. The Venice Commission is an organ which is a kind of the Council of Europe subsidiary body and which - formally speaking - is not really part of the structure of the European Union. However, during the process of preparing the referendum in Montenegro and during the discussions regarding the adoption of the 2006 Constitution of Serbia, it has worked closely with the Union bodies, which politically addressed these processes in accordance with the 'legal' recommendations and opinions of the Venice Commission. Its opinion on the 2006 Constitution of the Republic of Serbia remained a kind of lasting testament based on which the Brussels authorities, since its adoption, have sought to change that Constitution.

In the run-up to the Montenegro referendum, the Venice Commission and Brussels came up with the rather strange figure of 55% as the supposedly sufficient majority to legitimately determine Montenegro's readiness for independence<sup>18</sup>. At the same time, they revoked the voting rights of Montenegrin citizens living in Serbia.

But even besides this process of the territorial shrinking of the state covered in the first part of this text, the 'Venetians' continued to interfere with the order of Serbia. The opinion delivered at a session of 17 and 18 March 2007 adopted by Brussels as a landmark for the future revision of the constitution, is filled with extremely unexpected and malicious remarks that affect the territorial and institutional structure of the state, as well as the identity of the state and the Serbian people as its majority. For example, in item 12 of this opinion, the Commission condemns Article 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, which specifies that the official language of the Republic of Serbia is the Serbian language and Cyrillic script. Allegedly, with such a provision and omission to include the Latin script explicitly in official use, Serbia is threatening minority rights (European Commission for Democracy through Law, 2007).

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<sup>18</sup> The Canadian Supreme Court in 1998 passed a ruling in which it defined a *clear majority* as a necessary condition for the secession of Quebec. 55% could hardly be accepted as such a clear majority.

This statement, as well as other remarks (e.g., regarding autonomy), carries a pronounced politicization, as rightly pointed out in expert analyses by Vladan Kutlešić (2007) and Slobodan Antičić (2007), among others. I will not repeat their arguments here, but the reader can look up these texts (as well as the opinion itself) and see for himself the malicious comments and the unfounded remarks that serve to further condition Serbia. It is particularly interesting to put this opinion in a comparative framework. Kutlešić (2007) notes: 'In this connection, it is interesting that, as far as constitutions are concerned, the Commission has declared its opinion on the constitutions of the following countries: Georgia, Montenegro, Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Armenia, Chechnya, Liechtenstein, Azerbaijan, Romania, Croatia, Slovenia, Mozambique, Belarus, the Republic of Srpska and Serbia. The above list is interesting for two reasons: first of all, because during that same period the constitutions were changed, adopted or amended in other, at least formally similar states: Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Russia, and their constitutions were not subjected to consideration by this commission. Second, and perhaps more important, is that in the same period, ten other so-called old European democracies adopted new constitutions (Switzerland 1999, Finland 1999, Greece 2001 and the Netherlands 2004) or changed their existing ones (e.g. Italy repeatedly until 2002, Belgium and Ireland repeatedly until 2004 and France in 2005) but their constitutions were not subject to review by this commission'.

We note, therefore, that the constitutions of only three countries that have recently become members have gone through the analysis of the Venice Commission. We also see that the Commission avoids giving opinions on the constitutions of the existing EU member states as well as on those candidates that are not 'adequate' for evaluation because of the geopolitical interests of the major Western powers.

## MINORITY ISSUES

In 2005, at a time when the Serbian administration was struggling to get a positive feasibility study, one of the biggest obstacles was the issue of Roma readmission. Unlike the Hague condition that dominated the media, negotiations on this issue were conducted far from the eyes of the public. Very few documents and traces were left about all this, and the author of this text has not been able to access the data on the official or unofficial number of people that Serbia had to accept and provide them with social welfare in order to accomplish this step in European integration. From direct

conversations with the people who ran the Office for Minority Affairs in the administration at the time, I learned that the Brussels pressures were brutal and that they were not without grounds for speculation that Brussels sought the readmission of not only Roma from Serbia but also of many that did not have any Serbian documents.

Generally speaking, although the FR Yugoslavia adopted a very liberal Minority Law immediately after the regime change on 5 October 2000, and although Serbia today has one of the 'most progressive' minority policies in Europe, which includes remarkably wide rights for national councils, minority language education, etc., this country constantly suffers the pressures as if it were truly endangering certain minorities. The European Parliament (2012) has repeatedly tabled and adopted resolutions on alleged threats to minority rights in Serbia or criticized Serbia's inadequate attitude to the minority issue. We have also seen from the remarks of the Venice Commission that it is maliciously seeking any reason to reprimand Serbia and warn against its minority rights policies.

At the same time Bulgaria, for example, does not recognize national minorities at all; Croatia has become a full member despite refusing to address the issue of occupancy rights and return of the Serbs; and the ethnic Serbs in a number of neighboring non-EU countries cannot receive even a portion of their minority rights in Serbia. This geopolitically inspired flexibility on behalf of Brussels is best exemplified by the cases of the Baltic republics, which since 1990 have systematically violated and denied human and ethnic rights, above all those of the Russian minority, but also of all other minorities living in the territory of those states. They have been living without citizenship, regular passports, the right to vote in elections and the right of protecting their ethnic and national identity for more than two decades. All this has never been condemned by Brussels, and fifteen years ago, these countries were given full EU membership despite their radical discrimination against a large number of their citizens (Гапоненко, 2012).

## PRIVATIZATON

In mid-June 2011, the Brussels Administration sent a letter to the Government of Serbia requesting an examination of more than twenty privatizations carried out in Serbia since 2000. In the coming months, 24 'controversial privatizations' crystallized, and the next two governments in Serbia were also asked to investigate and make a resolution on those issues (D. C. V., 2013).

Privatization has been associated with some controversy in almost all Eastern European countries, but I do not know of an example that Brussels called for a reconsideration of privatizations as a condition for the advancement of integration. The aim everywhere was to strengthen the private sector and to bring the market economy into operation as soon as possible, and any backward move, as a rule, could only slow down this process. In any case, a very selective choice of contentious privatizations is evident. A foreign company was involved in only one case (Sartid). In all other cases, the potential culprits (besides members of the administration) are major Serbian tycoons. At the same time, there is no mention of the potentially controversial privatizations whose actors were Croatian and Slovenian companies, for instance. A very well-known and suspicious transaction from 2005 was Agrokor's purchase, under suspicious circumstances, of a two-third ownership stake in the edible oil manufacturer Dijamant.<sup>19</sup> However, if it is known that the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has repeatedly invested its capital in Agrokor, then it becomes clear why the Brussels Administration overlooks the illegalities of this company and puts pressure on the big Serbian tycoons.

## CONCLUSION

Therefore, besides the standard conditions, Serbia also faces a number of conditions that are not imposed on other candidates. Knowing the history of enlargement and the case of Turkey, for example, one comes to the logical conclusion that geopolitics in the process of Serbia's European integration is much more important than the current normative and inherited enlargement practices, and that this thesis cannot be simply rejected by the standard claim that the EU has lifted the ladder after 2004<sup>20</sup>. For those who have any doubts concerning general attitudes still dominating toward the Serbs, we recommend any overview of the western propaganda during the nineties and after.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The prosecutors and the police have repeatedly tried to tackle the suspicious sale of shares outside the stock market, but the investigation never ended.

<sup>20</sup> The developments around Ukraine and the way in which the EU-Ukraine treaty was signed on 27 June 2014, are extraordinary evidence of the revived geopolitical background of the EU enlargement policy.

<sup>21</sup> For example, Vuković (2018) offers a comprehensive collection of media, political and academic narratives.

Serbia is treated as a defeated adversary, and the 'European' framework is used to complete the geopolitical re-arrangement of the space that Serbia resisted in the 1990s. However, various elements that lead to the undermining of the identity of the majority of people and the state are also added to this.

The process of European integration of Serbia is undoubtedly taking place as a process of permanently setting new atypical conditions, leading to further destabilization and weakening of the state, instead of strengthening it in accordance with the Copenhagen criteria. The goal is obviously to keep us in the process as long as new conditions are constantly being put in place.

However, there are logically three issues that cannot be heard in the Parliament or the relevant debates of our political elite:

1. In particular, in the light of current French attitudes toward enlargement, is the goal of the great Western countries at all for Serbia to ever become a member?

2. What is the geopolitical and identity price that Serbia is prepared to pay, knowing what the real conditions for potential membership are?

3. What are the practical consequences of Serbia's possible withdrawal from Eurointegration?

All these dilemmas become even more pronounced when the Republic of Srpska, as a state entity of the Serbian people, is included in the equation. As is well known, conditionality in the process of European integration of Srpska and BiH is reduced to 'building a more efficient state', which is a euphemism for additional centralization and transfer of competencies from the level of Banja Luka to the level of Sarajevo.

Finally, the area inhabited by the Serbian people, but also of all other nations in the Balkans, is being vacated (depopulated) at the moment and becoming demographically and security threatened as EU countries take away all the labor force they need. This is all part of the European integration process, in which countries have to come to terms with being left without population. Another part of the story is the compulsion to embrace an anti-family value system that logically leads to a decline in natural population growth. In the book *The Illusion of the European Union*, I cited as my main argument against European integration the very system of values and normative policies that the EU is forcibly exporting to our countries (Đurković, 2015). Suffice it to say that the creation of a family policy in the EU is dominated by Sweden and its suicidal legacy of policies initiated by Alva Myrdal.

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## CONTROLLED CHAOS STRATEGY AND INSTRUMENTS FOR ITS REALIZATION IN SERBIA: COMMUNICATION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECT<sup>2</sup>

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*Abstract:* The author deals with the communication procedures and psychological mechanisms used in hybrid wars and color revolutions and their potential application in the Republic of Serbia. In the first part of the paper, the focus is on the vague relation between the terms 'hybrid war' and 'color revolution' with the term 'controlled chaos'. The author takes the latter term as the broadest framework within which to consider the activities of hybrid war and color revolutions, deemed to be instruments for the controlled chaos strategy realization. The second part of the paper discusses the basic communication procedures and psychological mechanisms underlying them, which are used for information and psychological management of societies and gives examples of their application in specific societies. In the last part of the paper, the author explains why contemporary Serbian society is suitable for the realization of controlled chaos. The author argues that its most pronounced weakness is the national and state identity crisis and the associated 'idea of the future' and points out measures that could be taken to develop the state's 'immunity' to potential controlled chaos activities.

*Keywords:* controlled chaos, hybrid war, color revolution, Serbia.

### INTRODUCTION

Armed combat and gun-related violence, which resulted in enormous human and economic losses, have been, until recently, a fundamental way

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of restructuring the world. The events of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, however, marked the transition to a new form of redistribution in the modern world. In it, unconventional forms and methods of conducting armed combat are increasingly becoming instruments of geopolitical competition, most commonly referred to as 'hybrid wars', 'color revolutions' and 'controlled chaos'. The latter gained importance after the publication of *Chaos Theory and Strategic Thought* text by Steven Mann, an American expert in foreign policy, in 1992, in which he stated that '...We can learn a lot if we view chaos and reorganization as opportunities, and not pursue stability as an illusory goal...' (Mann, 1992 in: Prav, 2016) and that the system needs to be brought to a state of 'political criticality'. According to Mann, given certain conditions, it (the system - S. A.) will then unavoidably enter chaos and transformation. Mann also writes that if we 'give the US advantage in communications and growing global mobility capabilities, the virus (in the sense of an ideological infection) will be self-replicating and will expand chaotically. Therefore, our national security will be preserved'. And further: 'This is the only way to establish a long-term world order. If we cannot accomplish such an ideological change in the whole world, we will have only sporadic periods of calm between catastrophic transformations' (Mann, 1992 in: Prav, 2016).

The other two terms mentioned above were sporadically used at the end of the past and the beginning of this century, and more frequently since 2010. Until then, for example, the term 'hybrid war' was not formally used in US military departments as the concepts of 'irregular war' and 'asymmetric war' (Цыганков, 2015, p.17) were considered sufficient to describe changes in the security environment. However, the point of view whose authors find it to be a completely new phenomenon that will become the war of the future (Бжезинский, 2005) has gradually crystallized. It is the first time the NATO alliance has officially referred to it in point 13 of the conclusion of the Declaration of the Alliance Summit held in Scotland in 2014. It, among other things, states a military alliance needs to prepare itself for participation in new type wars - 'hybrid wars' (Бартош, 2014 in: Грачилов, 2015, p. 137).

In the academic community, the term 'hybrid war' was first used by constructivists who tried to highlight its nature and characteristics. From their point of view, the essence of 'hybrid war' is that it is a conflict between political communities because of symbols (hypotheses, languages, identities, interests, etc.). However, before addressing the ambiguous relationship between these interrelated concepts, let us emphasize they are considered in the context of traditional and alternative approaches to the study of war

and armed conflict. But also the causes of their public politicization present in the media and academic literature are analyzed. The topic of this paper will be discussed in the first sense.

### **HYBRID WARS AND COLOR REVOLUTIONS - INSTRUMENTS FOR REALIZING A CONTROLLED CHAOS STRATEGY?**

Similar to the title of this chapter, but not in question form, is the title of text by V. A. Achkasov which was part of the collection *'Hybrid Wars' in the chaotic world of the 21st century* published by Moscow State University (2015), probably the most extensive edition in the Russian Federation devoted to this issue (Ачкасов, 2015, pp. 242-258). It (the subtitle) expresses an almost undivided assessment of Russian authors dealing with the phenomena of the hybrid war and color revolutions that these are activities related to global politics, that is, the geopolitical rivalry of their organizers, and not revolutionary events in the narrow sense of the word or civil or war conflicts concerning unresolved issues in a political community and/or its relations with neighboring communities. They place them within the aforementioned conceptual framework of the controlled chaos theory and bind primarily to 'American idea factories' (Маноїлю, 2015, p. 263) such as the RAND Corporation, certain universities, NATO, etc.

In contrast, in the US and European political discourse on hybrid wars, the Russian Federation and its international activities<sup>3</sup> take a special place. There are numerous documents discussing propaganda campaigns and the information war being waged by Russia to weaken the institutions and, in general, the ideological cohesion in the West. Thus, recently, the RAND wrote about the Russian digital war in Eastern Europe (Helmus et al., 2018), pointing indirectly to the importance of the European space for Russia in the geopolitical game. To counter these campaigns, the European Council formed the East StratCom Task Force in 2015<sup>4</sup>. Still, in the context of this chapter, devoted to the theoretical aspect of the paper, the 2017 document of the European Council for Foreign Affairs, *Controlling Chaos: How Russia Manages Political War in Europe*, is of importance. It summarizes that intending

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<sup>3</sup> In addition to the Russian Federation, in the context of hybrid war analysis, particular attention in the West has been given to the activities of Iran, China and North Korea.

<sup>4</sup> The official website of the European Union states that the East StratCom Task Force was 'set up to address Russia's ongoing disinformation campaigns' (Questions, 2018).

to weaken the EU and NATO, and to create a more conducive environment for itself, Russia uses a wide range of actors, from officials and the media, through military threats, to business lobbies and spies (Galeotti, 2017, p. 1). To create controlled chaos, according to this document, countries undertake those activities that, so coordinated, in other documents, such as the aforementioned conclusion of the 2014 NATO summit, are called hybrid wars. According to the alliance experts, these include a wide range of direct combat and covert operations that are, by a unique plan, realized by armed forces, partisan units, and other irregular formations with the participation of civilian components. These operations are closely related to propaganda campaigns, cyber-attacks, and local separatist actions. Information operations (operations and instruments of information-psychological warfare), according to A. V. Manoylo, one of Russia's most prominent contemporary scholars of the field, and the techniques of controlled chaos have been used successfully in hybrid wars and color revolutions (Манойло, 2015, p. 271).

The latter refers to the 'fine application of psychological mechanisms and communication techniques successfully masked to look like an "uncontrolled process"' (Ананченко, 2018, p. 24) since these are not 'classical' revolutions, triggered by the 'objective development of a historical process' (Манойло, 2015, p. 271). Unlike revolutions, these actions do not result in changes to the social order but are carried out with the aim of bringing about regime changes in political communities through nonviolent citizen actions. Coming to power, conditionally, of a new social group, only brings changes in the political course and a change in foreign policy priorities. The shift of political elites, however, has a limited character: power is passed from the hands of one group, which has held a dominant position in the government system, into the hands of a coalition of other, diverse segments of the elite. The results of these actions boil down to changes within the ruling elite that result from the unlawful seizure of power. The 'color revolution' is nothing more than a 'vivid metaphor that leads to delusion and hides an externally organized coup' (Ананченко, 2018, p. 24).

From this very brief overview, conditioned by the limited scope of the paper, it is clear different authors see the relationships of key concepts used in this paper differently.<sup>5</sup> However, what they have in common are the communication procedures that make up a kind of 'connective tissue'. After

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<sup>5</sup> The interpretation of the relationship of these terms is reminiscent of the interpretation of the relationship between the concept of 'propaganda' and concepts close to it such as 'political communication', 'political marketing', 'public relations', 'public diplomacy' and

all, the aforementioned Mann refers to it as – ‘give the US advantage in communications ...’ (Mann, 1992 in: Prav, 2016). They, according to Manoylo, can be decisive in compelling an opponent to capitulate, and the combat operations of armed forces can play a service role in the sense that they supply information warfare organizers with the PR material necessary for information attacks on the consciousness and subconsciousness of the enemy by inflicting direct damage (using information weapons) or to covertly manage its consciousness and behavior (Манојло, 2015, p. 263). This paper aims to point out the basic psychological mechanisms and communication procedures that possibly could be applied to carry out the above-mentioned activities in the Western Balkans or the Republic of Serbia.

### **Communicative procedures and psychological mechanisms applied in controlled chaos realization**

Based on the above, one could also conclude no war in history has ever happened that was not a hybrid one. In other words, there was no armed conflict that was not accompanied by intense persuasion about it, whether interpersonal communication and spreading rumors or the use of mass media. This view is grounded, but what seems to differentiate between the hybrid wars of today and the earlier armed conflicts is the intensity of persuasion that came to the fore with the development of communication technologies, primarily through the development of mass media and the internet. The difference does not seem to be in whether in the modern armed conflict, as in the previous wars, the front line is evident or not, but rather a pronounced combination of soft force (persuasion) and hard force (use of physical force). In short, modern wars are hybridized by the use of modern means of communication. Do we have a better example than the combination of political persuasion and armed combat on a daily basis in the event of NATO attacks on Serbia in 1999, when strong propaganda activity that had been waged against Serbs in the former Yugoslavia for a decade or so was ‘supplemented’ by bombing military and civilian targets from the air, only to be followed by the overthrow of power holders by civil protests?<sup>6</sup> Or the even

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the like (Slavujević, 2009; Атлагић, 2011), which are also closely related to the topic of this paper. Terminological harmonization does not seem to be over since the term ‘hybrid chaos war’ has started to be used recently.

<sup>6</sup> For more details on the propaganda preparation of NATO military activities against Serbia during 1998, see Radojković, 2018.

more plastic example of the events in Kiev during the protests at the Maidan when the sniper fire kindled the aggression of the mass gathered in a civilian protest against the authorities, which in itself makes up the material for pronounced persuasion carried out through the mass media and the internet.

Political persuasion aims to make the person to whom the message is addressed to behave following the intentions of the one who sends the message. The aim, therefore, is not to stay at the level of attitudinal gaining of the individual, but to ensure his or her support in terms of doing or not doing. To do this, it is necessary to activate the appropriate psychological mechanisms of the individual through communication. In other words, for people to take to the streets and create a mass, they would need to develop a stimulus, a motive for some behavior. And it develops when people have some unrealized expectations. In the so-called young democracies and political systems of the non-western type, the stereotype of a corrupt official who uses his position in the system of government to enrich himself at the expense of other members of society is often constructed. Deception and theft are distinguished as a feature characteristic of all members of the group, most often during election campaigns when the image of a corrupt official is transferred to a political party or movement to which he belongs. A stereotype is formed by which the process of information processing is then managed. It is basically a psychological mechanism of simplifying the image of the world based on which the propaganda figure of the enemy develops, which, in a milder form, takes the form of finding the culprit. The effectiveness of the mechanism described above is particularly enhanced by the informal style of communication through the Internet. The message structure, quick access to information and emotionally charged images are attracting an increasing number of users, giving the political process a new emotional backdrop and transforming it into an entertaining performance. From this point of view, the behavior of social network users is reminiscent of crowd behavior. The starting point for this comparison is anonymity as a characteristic of the process of communicating on social networks. Why is an individual in the crowd willing to undertake activities he would individually turn away from? The anonymity of a man in the crowd releases him of responsibility for the results of the action.

The basic psychological mechanism that activates in the crowd is the so-called emotional contagion. Researchers of contemporary color revolutions point out that rhythm is what enhances this mechanism. Thus, unless the goal of the protest organizer is to encourage the crowd to engage in some kind of aggressive action, its aim remains to bring people to a certain

emotional state using rhythm when the individual ceases to control the information that enters his consciousness. He or she does not analyze them rationally, and the so-called mechanism of suggestion can be applied then. But if the intention is to turn the crowd into an aggressive crowd, then it is necessary, first, to bring the emotional state to a level where the individual cannot control himself and when he develops the need to express his emotions in the form of action. The only thing left is for the individual to be suggested what to do (Ананченко, 2018, p. 50).

In initiating destructive political behavior in the realization of controlled chaos, it is common to use another propaganda figure - the so-called sacrificial figure. It is especially suitable for crowd management. The purpose of its use is not only to catalyze the protest mood but also to personalize the responsibilities of the 'first man', the leader of the regime. That is why it is important in controlled chaos realization to establish a public associative link between the leader or the political system itself and its sacrifice. In this way, information and psychological narrowing of responsibility are achieved - from the political order as a whole to its leader, which is necessary for enhancing the mobilization potential of protests and accelerating society polarization. This, again, opens the space for attribution as a psychological mechanism - the leader and the system are no longer just corrupt but also criminal. From this follows the political order leader dehumanization and the willingness to take radical actions against him. This, in terms of communication, ends with slogans such as those known - 'Antichrist died on Christmas' dedicated to the execution of N. Ceaușescu on December 25, 1989, 'Sloba Saddam', 'Yanukovych - our Gaddafi', etc.

Applying the sacrificial propaganda figure is today current in protest activities in Hong Kong. There, the slogan 'Reclaim Hong Kong, revolution of our times' also pays tribute to Edward Leung, who used this slogan in his election campaign and is currently serving a six-year prison sentence for rioting and assaulting a police officer during the so-called Fishball Revolution of 2016. Though not physically present at the demonstrations, Leung has become a kind of spiritual leader for protesters, offering guidance and inspiration from behind bars (Hui, 2019). He becomes a celebrity fabricated by the work of specialists in the so-called fame game, and as such, serves for impression management in the political sphere through his image. In the same way, Nelson Mandela was used by the media to awaken people's sympathy in the activities of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. As in the case of Edward Leung, Mandela did not play the role of compassion manager. He was given the media role of



an absent performer. The role was designed and played instead of him by anti-apartheid movement activists (Lou, 2013, p. 157). In Hong Kong, Leung's role is played by activists of the movement against Hong Kong's reintegration into China.

Sacral sacrifice is one of several basic psychological and communication mechanisms undertaken to manage the space of meaning and symbols to realize the controlled chaos strategy. One of them is the transformation of mass perceptions of social and political reality. This is basically about a gradual reframing - a change in the coordinate system through which social and political processes are perceived (Ананченко, 2018, p. 54). Thus, in Serbia, the state and national question, which dominated the political and electoral offer in the first half of the 1990s and which represented the pledge of future prosperity, was replaced by social issues and the country's accession to the EU as an instrumental value, that is, a way of achieving terminal value - a better life (Slavujević and Atlagić, 2015). The story of the relative backwardness of the country has been replaced by the story of its absolute backwardness compared to the advanced world. This is accompanied by polarization not only at the level of ideological and political views and views of daily social issues but also at the level of moralizing motives. The representatives of the governing structures are presented primarily as fraudsters and thieves, at various levels - from frauds they commit at the economic level to vote-stealing. It follows that it is the moral obligation of every honest man, regardless of his or her own views on the world of politics, to oppose immoral and criminal authority. In such circumstances, when polarization on the 'we-they' line becomes crucial in political discourse, the possibility of reaching an agreement at the level of sense is zero. Any attempt to cooperate with the government becomes synonymous with betraying the 'revolutionary ideals' of its opponents.

In the self-identification of 'our' as opposed to 'their' in the physical and virtual space of protest activities, performance culture plays an important role (Ананченко, 2018, p. 54). In addition, it has the function of psycho-emotional mobilization, but its entertaining role is to release the demonstration participants of feelings of fear and a sense of responsibility, to translate the protest activity into a form of play, to highlight the non-violent character of the action and thus to attract what as many supporters as possible. So, for example, in Serbia in 2000, protests against the then authorities had a pronounced musical form.

Particularly noteworthy in the context of this analysis is the psychological character of activities that fall under the 'controlled chaos' and

are related to the crisis of the national and state identity and, in correlation with it, 'ideas about the future'. Namely, most countries in which political lives of the last two decades activities that fall under 'color revolutions' or 'hybrid war' could be identified are basically divided societies that, at the time these activities took place, lacked an effective consolidation model of national identity. The dividing lines in these societies are deep - ethno-religious, socio-cultural, territorial-tribal... The internal conflict in these societies is the basis for carrying out the aforementioned activities, the results of which cannot be reduced only to regime change. Delegitimization of power and regime crisis is, in most cases, an introduction to the systemic collapse of state institutions that can result in the loss of state territory or state dissolution.

### **Vulnerabilities of contemporary Serbia and its ability to counteract chaos**

The aforementioned crisis of the national and state identity and the associated 'idea of the future' are undoubtedly the greatest weaknesses of contemporary Serbia. Among the unresolved issues, it has been facing since the breakup of Yugoslavia that make it a 'fertile ground' for the realization of the controlled chaos idea, the most serious is the ethnic-cultural one. Different ethnic and cultural segments of present-day Serbia - on the one hand, Orthodox Serbian and on the other, primarily Muslim - Albanian and Bosnian - are in such positions that they do not intend to make concessions for one another. The majority Orthodox Serbian segment was not able to impose their identity attitudes, symbolism, and meaning on their opponents for a longer period to ensure their ethnic-cultural model the status of general national identity. This became more than clear, first by the refusal of the majority Muslim population in Bosnia and Herzegovina to stay in truncated Yugoslavia, and then by the secession of Kosovo and Montenegro's exit from the state union with Serbia. Serbia simply did not have an 'unconditional veto' that could take on an integrative role in critical situations. However, at the moment, it is not without integration potential in the Western Balkans (Лобанов, 2017, p. 223) and it lies primarily in the activities of the Serbian Orthodox Church, which is an institutional platform for the symbolic integration of the Serbian national space. Consequently, the attempt to limit its operations, as in the case of the adoption of a legal solution in Montenegro declaring its property state-owned, can be viewed, among other things, as a new fight in the modern hybrid Balkan war. This is one of the indicators that could show the preparation of activities for the

potential realization of controlled chaos in Serbia. In addition, there are illegitimate sanctions, trade embargo, financial and economic restrictions, setting up barriers to the operations of local companies in the region, barriers to free movement of citizens and capital flow, forming lists of officials and citizens of Serbia with restricted movement in neighboring countries, etc. as additional indicators. These measures have recently been implemented through Kosovo, but also Croatia. Such measures aim to slow down the pace of country development and lower the standard of living and to exert pressure on the government or to initiate changes in government by forming a broad protest movement. Establishment of instability centers near borders that would endanger its national security (as in the case of a possible threat to the constitutional position of the Republic of Srpska within Bosnia and Herzegovina or in the case of migrant crisis escalation) and deepening tensions along ethnic division lines (especially in southern Serbia and the Raška region) can also be indicators of preparation for the realization of controlled chaos in Serbia.

In societies where there is no clear 'identity policy' at the state level, the 'idea of the future' in the minds of citizens is also vague. A kind of multiplication of the identity crisis is at work - the amorphousness of national and state attitudes and symbols in the mass consciousness has been 'supplemented' by the absence of a national consolidation strategy on the part of authorities. In these conditions, the implementers of controlled chaos introduce into the mass consciousness their own utterly simplified symbols and meaning. The vacuum of national identity is supplemented by the construction of a 'first-hand idea of the future'. In the Serbian case, it is identified primarily in 'European values'. Combining the aforementioned psychological mechanisms, a multiplicative effect that enables the informational and psychological management of society is achieved.

How, in the case of contemporary Serbia, to counter these tendencies? Doing this by identifying indicators pointing to the preparation of a 'controlled chaos' realization, like the ones mentioned above, and acting prophylactically, is not enough. It is necessary to establish a complex system of political, economic, legal, informational, psychological, pedagogical and organizational measures that will develop state 'immunity' and act preventively. What this system should be based on is the formulation of a clear Serbian position in cultural policy and international relations (Копривица, 2018, p. 440). Lack of it today seems to be most easily seen in the gap between proclaimed military neutrality and Serbia's foreign policy orientation to join the European Union as part of the informal trade empire

- *Pax Americana*, with NATO being its defense mechanism. Until this broad intellectual platform is formed, we can speak of overcoming the state and national identity crisis at the level of popularization of the value of belonging to the Serbian people and its tradition, which will be internally implemented through the school system and the mass media, that is, the products of mass culture. When it comes to the region, in areas where it is not possible to do it this way or through the operation of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the role should be taken on by non-governmental organizations and funds of a wide range of activities, which will, directly and indirectly, exert informational propaganda influence on the population of neighboring countries to promote the importance of Serbia and the Serbian people. From the point of view of managing the space of meaning and symbols, it is the same activity of formatting mass ideas of social and political reality in Serbia, that is, establishing a coordinate system through which it will be perceived. 'Technically,' use of a particular psychological mechanism in communication will be identical to that used or being used at the expense of Serbia. Economic growth is the key condition to realize this. In the spirit of the old maxim - 'Winning is the best propaganda', economic successes can quickly boost propaganda activity to counter the information challenges from a range of controlled chaos measures.

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## CONTEMPORARY RELATIONS OF SERBIA AND CHINA IN A CHANGING WORLD<sup>2</sup>

*Abstract:* The contemporary relations of the Republic of Serbia with the People's Republic of China (hereinafter: Serbia and China) are conditioned by many political, legal, economic and social factors. Although these factors determine the mutual relations between the two countries, in the end, these factors do not limit the great opportunities for developing good and friendly relations imbued with mutual respect and trust. Even more so, in the historical and international legal sense, the relations of the two countries are characterized by the continuity of diplomatic relations established on 2 January 1955 between the then Federal People's Republic Yugoslavia and the People's Republic of China. Serbia as the successor state of SFR Yugoslavia continues to treat China as one of its most important partners in international relations, which is manifested through the foreign policy course, according to which China is one of the main 'pillars' of Serbia's foreign policy alongside the European Union, Russia and the United States. Hence, the mere mention of 'pillars' in Serbia's foreign policy orientation indicates that China is a key player in international politics for Serbia and a great power with which it should build its relations and deepen its friendship in accordance with the already established policy framework on the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. This approach should come as no surprise since the development of Serbian-Chinese relations at the bilateral and multilateral levels (especially at the UN, regional international organizations and political forums, such as the '17 + 1' cooperation mechanism between China and Central and Eastern European countries) contributes to a better strategic positioning of Serbia and China in the world of global change.

*Keywords:* Serbia, China, contemporary international relations, foreign policy determinants, strategic partnership.

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## INTRODUCTION

Today's world is marked by globalization as a comprehensive and multilayered process of transformation of the international community. This transformation is taking place in parallel with efforts to democratize international relations, which presupposes increased social interdependence in economic, political, legal, scientific and technological, cultural, religious and humanitarian fields (Dimitrijević and Vučić, 2016, p. 9). In international relations, increased interdependence has led to a change in the international community based on traditional assumptions about state sovereignty. This is certainly the most obvious in the economic sphere where, regardless of the political system to which states incline, states strive to gain equal access to world markets in order to achieve their economic development. This development is not possible without the internationalization of the world economy and the division and transfer of functional competences between state and non-state actors.<sup>3</sup> The justification for these processes lies in the neoliberal concept of social integration, which explains the increasing dependency between different actors in international relations (Haas, 1964; Riphagen, 1977, p. 122). Based on these doctrinal assumptions, globalization is imposed as a necessary process of social development that removes the differences between the goals of domestic and foreign policy, and which then reconciles the conflict that exists between domestic and international competences in different spheres of social activities, including economic activities. Hence, in new world's political circumstances, through the process of globalization, countries improve trade, technology and communications, remove tariffs and trade barriers, improve transparency and permeability of national borders, all with the aim to accelerate economic activities and improve living conditions not only for their own well-being but for the benefit of all mankind. In this sense, this process can help remove restrictions on the movement of goods, services, people, and ideas. Consequently, while globalization in the economic sphere involves the liberalization of cross-border trade cooperation, capital markets, investment and production, the importance of globalization is much broader because it integrates human behaviour and connects social activities through the dynamics of intensified political, economic, legal and other integration at regional, continental and planetary level (Pečujlić, 2005, p. 17). In this context, the international system

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<sup>3</sup>The functional division of competences encompasses the integration of the theory of international relations and its functionalist approach.



of governance is transformed into a *New World Order*, which through the multiplication of actors in international relations and the humanization of international law, seeks to satisfy the common interests of the entire international community. This process, in itself, requires further liberalization, integration and legitimization of state policies in the wider international space (Allot, 1998, p. 409; Koskenniemi, 1989, p. 21).

The process of globalization has not bypassed Serbia and China. In the past decades, both countries have sought to improve the structure of their economies and increase the quality of economic growth through strenuous social, political, economic, and legal reforms. Both countries were involved in the process of globalization through a series of political decisions and reform measures that contributed to the radical changes in the economic system and the transformation of the then existing pattern of economic development. On the one hand, China could not take on a leading role in the global economy without opening up and entering the world markets, intensifying its industrial and trade business, stimulating scientific and technological development and enhancing the international economic cooperation that brought accelerated economic growth and an increase in the overall standard of living. On the other hand, without reconstruction and restructuring of destroyed industrial capacities, without rehabilitation of the banking sector and stimulation of investment business, Serbia would not be able to re-industrialize and thus win a more favourable position in international economic relations. The aforementioned progress in both countries was accompanied by appropriate and well-planned development policies and comprehensive foreign policy activities, which gradually led to their strategic repositioning in contemporary international relations. Consequently, this repositioning was greatly aided by the establishment of numerous interstate links and connectivity with other international actors (especially international governmental and non-governmental organizations, transnational corporations, forums for international cooperation, etc.), which facilitated the deepening and transformation of bilateral and multilateral cooperation into strategic partnerships. In this respect, the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between Serbia and China established in 2016 represents a higher level of a strategic partnership initiated and validated in 2009 and 2013 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2009, 2013, 2016). The Comprehensive Strategic Partnership is based on traditionally good and friendly relations between the two countries, on mutual respect, equality, non-interference, mutual understanding and support for an independent path of development that includes independence in internal and foreign policy in accordance with their own circumstances (Obradović, 2016, p. 128;

Tanjug, 2016).<sup>4</sup> As globalization poses unprecedented challenges to the contemporary world, Serbia and China have responded to these challenges with a solid form of connectivity to create an environment necessary for the optimal development of their economies and the achievement of their foreign policy goals and priorities.

The study that follows is based precisely on this thesis on the development of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Serbia and China in the Age of Globalization. Specifically, the study analyses the general, specific and unique foreign policy determinants through which the author wishes to confirm the validity of the initial hypothesis that the current strategic cooperation between Serbia and China depends not only on spatial, temporal and institutional factors, which are evidently asymmetrical, but also from the global economic factors that can, in perspective, contribute to deepening this cooperation.

## **GENERAL FOREIGN POLICY DETERMINANTS OF SERBIA-CHINA RELATIONS**

The factors that determine Serbia's current foreign policy stem from the country's past and present development. The historical development of Serbia before and within Yugoslavia, and then the development of Serbian statehood after the Yugoslav breakup, had a great influence on Serbia's contemporary relations with other states. The significance of this development is great because despite its great historical difficulties and temptations, Serbia has managed to preserve the nucleus of its territory and population, and to a large extent the international relations of the former Yugoslavia, whose positive and negative effects determine its foreign policy position in the modern world. Therefore, Serbia's current relations with China deserve serious attention because they are conditioned by the political determinants of the Yugoslav-Chinese past, as well as the socio-economic variables that have arisen from the internal development of the two countries. An analysis of these factors provides a good basis for considering the effects of foreign policies so far. However, before determining their concrete significance, it is necessary to analyze the geopolitical and economic

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<sup>4</sup> The strategic partnership was established in August 2009, during the visit of then Serbian President Boris Tadić to China. In August 2013, the Serbia-China Partnership was confirmed to be extended to the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in June 2016 through a joint statement by former Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

factors that determine the position of Serbia and China in contemporary international relations. In this regard, the following analysis begins with an analysis of the general facts about China in order to proceed with an analysis of the essential parameters relating to Serbia, which together condition their foreign policy position.

China is located partly in Central and partly in East Asia. Its land territory covers 9,326,410 square kilometres, making it the second-largest country on the Asian continent and the third-largest country in the world, just behind Russia and Canada. In addition, China is the most populous country in the world. It has over 1.433 billion inhabitants, or 1/5 of the world's total population and 1/3 of Asia's total population (Šehić et al., 2007, p. 78; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019, p. 17). There are 56 different ethnic groups in China, of which Han is the most numerous (about 91.5%). Due to the different topography, climate and economic conditions of life, population density varies from developed eastern regions to less-developed western China. Despite striking demographic and economic disparities between regions, China has been able to achieve significant economic growth and social development after implementing planned reforms and opening up to the world, so that with its economic potential, China has ranked second in the world with a progressive GDP growth rate (International Monetary Fund, 2019).<sup>5</sup> This unprecedented progressive trend in recent social history has led China to become the largest trading power in the world, with the largest export potential. China's economic driving force has contributed to expanding its militaristic capabilities (including nuclear capabilities), increasing its international position in the world for a relatively short period. China today plays an irreplaceable role in regional relations, and its economic and military potential in the near future secures it the place of a 'potential great power' (Global Fire Power, 2019; Perlo-Freemen, 2014).<sup>6</sup> According to the socio-political order, China represents a secular state and republic according to the form of government. Despite numerous reforms and political and social transformations, China maintained a specific form of society with

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<sup>5</sup> China's nominal GDP in 2019 is projected to reach 14.216 trillion US dollars, which is 10,153 US dollars per capita, while GDP based on purchasing power parity (PPP) stood at 27.331 trillion US dollars which is 19,520 US dollars per capita.

<sup>6</sup> By total military potential, China ranks third out of 137 countries in the world for which official data are available. China has the largest composition of the regular army. According to budget allocations, China is second in the world.

more socialist than communist characteristics. Hence its economic system and market modes of business incline more to the capitalist than to the communist economic system, which China emphasizes on a daily basis as its advantage and peculiarity through the phrase ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’ (Darlington, 2018). Therefore, the 1982 Chinese Constitution (amended in 1988, 1993, 1999 and 2004) precisely emphasizes the People’s Republic of China represents a ‘socialist state under a working-class democratic people’s power based on an alliance of workers and peasants’ (Darlington, 2018). Internally, China’s political system is based on democratic centralism, embracing the principles of equality and unity and mutual assistance between different national communities (The State Council of the PRC, 2014). These principles are being implemented throughout China, which is administratively divided into 22 provinces, 5 autonomous regions (with minority peoples), 4 government-administered municipalities (called mainland China), as well as 2 separate administrative areas.<sup>7</sup>

In analyzing the key foreign policy determinants that condition Serbia’s position in international relations, including the development of its relations with China, the following facts should be taken into account. Today’s Serbia is a small continental country that covers an area of 88,361 square kilometres. Its geographical position in Southeast Europe and partly in Central Europe (in the Pannonia Plain) determines its strategic importance in the Balkan Peninsula.<sup>8</sup> This is further evidenced by the fact that Serbia is connected to the pan-European transport corridors (with the corridor VII or the Danube corridor, and then also with the land transport corridor X connecting Serbia

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<sup>7</sup> The Chinese provinces include Anhui, Fujian, Gansu, Guangdong, Gansu, Guizhou, Hainan, Hebei, Heilongjiang, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Jilin, Liaoning, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Shandong, Shanxi, Sichuan, Yunnan, and Zhejiang. The Autonomous Regions of China include Guangxi-Zhuang, Nei Mengu - Inner Mongolia, Ningxia-Hui, Xinjiang-Uygur, Xizang Tibet. The municipalities under the direct administration of the Chinese Government are Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing, and Tianjin. Hong Kong and Macau are within the regime of special administrative regions. China regards Taiwan as its 23rd province over which it has no effective control, but which, under the Constitution, is ‘part of the sacred territory of the People’s Republic of China’.

<sup>8</sup> Although Serbia is a land lock country, it is connected to Central Europe by large river routes and basins. Namely, the valleys of the Morava River in the north-south direction, as well as the Sava and Danube in the north-west-southeast direction, represent a morphological connection between the Balkans and the Central European Plains. Through its northern province of Vojvodina, which lies around the Danube River Basin, Serbia is connected by a large network of river routes to the Black, North and Baltic Seas, and through the Rhine-Main to the Atlantic Ocean.

with Hungary in the north, Croatia, Slovenia and Austria in the west, Bulgaria and Turkey in the east and Macedonia and Greece in the south). Serbia is at the crossroads of strategically important east-west, north-south and south-east European routes. Therefore, although it has limited human capacities (about 8.7 million people live in Serbia, including the territory of Kosovo and Metohija), and very limited economic potential (which directly determine its military potential), its geostrategic position enables it to integrate more and participate in all major regional and international geo-economic projects (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019, p. 21; International Monetary Fund, 2019; Global Fire Power, 2019; Law on the budget of the Republic of Serbia, 2019).<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, its strategically important position enables Serbia to be the 'gateway to the Balkans', i.e., the 'bridge between East and West', which Serbia certainly is, taking into account all those variables and fluctuations in international relations that existed in the past, but still exist and are clearly an excellent prerequisite for optimal international positioning and sustainable socio-political, economic and cultural development.

In terms of political order, Serbia is a republic dominated by parliamentary democracy. By economic order, Serbia is a capitalist state. According to the current Constitution of 2006, 'The Republic of Serbia is a state of the Serbian people and all its citizens, based on the rule of law and social justice, the principles of civil democracy, human and minority rights and freedoms and membership of European principles and values' (Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, 2006). The territory of Serbia is unique and indivisible, and the borders are inviolable. The state power in the territory is limited by the Constitution in such a way that the Constitution guarantees the rights of citizens to provincial autonomy and local self-government. In that sense, Serbia formally has two autonomous provinces: Vojvodina and Kosovo and Metohija. Following the escalation of armed conflicts and NATO intervention in 1999, the territory of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija was placed under the United Nations administration, and soon thereafter internationalized. Due to inconsistent implementation of the established goals of internationalization,

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<sup>9</sup> According to IMF data, Serbia's nominal GDP in 2019 is projected to reach 51.523 billion US dollars, which is 7,397 US dollars per capita, while GDP based on purchasing power parity (PPP) stood at 129.298 billion US dollars, which is 18,564 US dollars per capita. By total military potential, Serbia ranks on 79 places of 137 countries in the world for which official data are available. According to the Budget of the Republic of Serbia for 2019, for military needs is allocated 907 million US dollars, which is 1.75% of Serbian GDP.

i.e., the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo has worsened the political and inter-ethnic situation over time, which led to the unilateral declaration of independence of the southern Serbian province by Kosovo Albanians on 17 February 2008. Serbia treats this separatist act as contrary to its legal order and international law and does not accept any violation of its territorial integrity or change of internationally recognized borders. In order to reach an acceptable and lasting solution for the status of Kosovo and Metohija after internationalization, and with the aim of exercising basic human rights, including freedom of movement, Serbia, with the intervention of the international community, has accepted the establishment of border crossings on its administrative line with the southern province (Dimitrijević, 2007; Dimitrijević et al., 2012).

Although, according to the analysis of general foreign policy, Serbia is a 'small state', it is an important political factor in the Balkans, given its geostrategic position. Such a syllogism stems from the premise that Serbia is located at the crossroads of Southeast Europe, on important land and river routes that enable it to communicate well not only in the east-west direction but also in the north-south direction. Also, such a syllogism stems from the fact that Serbia represents a 'piedmont' between Central Europe and the Middle East. Its geographical position, natural and human resources, socio-political system and orientation in international relations enable it to accelerate its economic development and integration into real economic trends whose personification is the European Union, with which China also strives to establish stable, long-term and inclusive relationships and whose market it is particularly interested in. Given these facts, it is clear that China has an interest in deepening and expanding strategic cooperation with Serbia.

In the context of the analysis of the current relations between Serbia and China, the aforementioned conclusion is logically imposed, primarily because of the historical experience that Serbia has, which indicates a lesser or greater degree of influence of the great powers on its foreign policy orientation (Gleni, 2001, p. 362). Namely, it cannot be disputed that in the previous historical period, Serbia has been building its independent foreign relations in search of allies, which were often great powers. The same need exists today when Serbia seeks to achieve its own foreign policy priorities, strategically important economic and social goals. This, of course, does not mean that Serbia should accept one's domination, but that it should cooperate with great powers through constructive and functional forms of cooperation based on equality, mutual understanding and benefits. Such a conclusion holds for Serbia's relations with China. As China formally

supports Serbia's independence and is focused on developing friendly cooperation based on respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law, it is clear that Serbia-China relations are based on equality, mutual benefit and trust.

Starting from the fact that the dynamics of geopolitical changes in the world require a new positioning of Serbia in international relations, deepening cooperation with China represents its foreign policy priority. The new foreign policy course includes a rethinking of the international environment and the ability to pursue vital national interests.

In the continuation of the study, the author paid attention to specific foreign policy determinants, which in his opinion may influence the further direction of the development of mutual relations.

### **Specific foreign policy determinants of Serbia-China relations**

The fact that the diplomatic relations between the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia and the People's Republic of China were established on 2 January 1955 greatly contributed to China's strategic positioning towards Serbia. Even more so, since China considers Serbia a successor to Yugoslavian non-aligned foreign policy and a country that remained neutral in the military-political regrouping after the end of the Cold War. In addition, China's foreign policy orientation towards Serbia is also conditioned by the new political course that the Serbian government has set after the democratic changes since the beginning of the 21st century. Namely, after these changes, parliamentary democracy was introduced in Serbia, which is an important factor in the democratization of the country and its opening to the world. The new Serbian government has made further efforts since 2000, with the aim of establishing strategic relations with China, while simultaneously expanding and strengthening cooperation with the European Union, the United States of America and Russia (Isac Fund, 2013). In doing so, Serbia has identified these partners as the main pillars of its foreign policy, while affirming that China represents as important a political actor to it in international relations as other great powers. This foreign policy orientation is imbued not only with a voluntaristic assessment of overall international relations, but also with an opportunistic appreciation of China, which is increasingly acting not only for its own benefit, but also in the common interest as a responsible power and global player in solving major international problems. In a

globalized world, China considers not only the personal interests and needs of the current generation of the world's population, but also the interests of other countries and the needs of future generations. Thus, for Serbia, cooperation with China is a key factor in achieving its most important foreign policy goals. In this regard, Serbia supports China, which in international relations does not strive for hegemony and imperialism, but advocates multilateralism in which the United Nations should play a primary role.

China's relationship with the world is characterized by the application of the *Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence*, which involves the principles of mutual respect, territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, as well as peaceful coexistence.<sup>10</sup> These five principles of peaceful coexistence represented a political base for establishing friendly relations with countries that did not accept China's ideological commitment to communist rule. (United Nations, 1958, pp. 57-81; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2019; Keith, 2009; Baijlie, 2014). Thanks to these principles, deeply embedded in the Chinese Constitution and the United Nations Charter, China has been able to establish and develop diplomatic relations with over 170 countries (including Serbia). This fact is not negligible given China's real ability to achieve a key foreign political goal - building a peaceful, stable and prosperous international order framed by the principle of 'harmony without uniformity', which seeks to overcome differences in social systems and ideologies in order to promote equality in international relations. That is certainly one of the preconditions for achieving the international development goals, more precisely formulated in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and Agenda for Sustainable Development. (Qingmin, 2014; Dimitrijević, 2018, p. 68; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2015; United Nations, 2000; 2015). Achieving this foreign policy goal will entail enormous temptations and obstacles, such as rivalries with other great powers (most notably the United States of America), then multiple

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<sup>10</sup> The concept was first proclaimed by former Chinese Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai when he met with an Indian delegation in the early 1950s to regulate Tibet issue. This concept is also colloquially called the precepts of *Pancha Sila*, and is incorporated into the China-India Agreement on Tibet, concluded on 29 April 1954 in Beijing. More recently, the principles have also been upheld in numerous official announcements and bilateral treaties (for example, in a final statement from the Asian and African Conference in Bandung in 1955; in the 1972 Shanghai Joint China-US Communication; in the China-Japan Peace Agreement of 1978, etc.).



internal tensions (regarding Tibet and Taiwan, and more recently Xinjiang and Hong Kong), and then the regional crisis (for example, in North Korea, Afghanistan, Syria, Iran, etc.). Of course, neither the territorial disputes with neighbouring countries (sovereignty on islands in the South and East China Sea), nor defining the land border with Bhutan and India, nor modern asymmetric security challenges (such as poverty, pandemics, natural disasters, environmental pollution, terrorism, international crime, etc.) cannot prevent China from trying to seek solutions peacefully and with high standards of strategic management (Almond, 2018; Bhutia, 2015; Heath et al., 2016, pp. 3-16; White House, 2017; Putten and Shulong, 2011, p. 218; Swaine, 2019; Yang, 2010, pp. 141-159).

For Serbia, as well as for China, the preservation of independence, national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and thus international peace and security, are the foreign policy priorities. In line with these priorities, both countries are developing defensive military doctrine and a neutral attitude toward military-political blocs (Hongjun, 2013, p. 9; Buzan, 2004, p. 70; Mitrović, 2008, p. 26; Resolution of the National Assembly of Serbia, 2007). Given this foreign policy and military orientation, it is clear why Serbia respects the *One China Policy*, which promotes the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the whole of China, including Taiwan. It is also clear why China, as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, insists on protecting Serbia's territorial integrity and does not accept the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo and Metohija. It is well known that China is committed to upholding the consistent implementation of Resolution no. 1244 of the United Nations Security Council, and to use its influence in this body to allow Serbia an optimal position in the negotiations on the political status of the southern province. For pragmatic reasons, China insists on a peaceful settlement of the dispute and a compromise that would guarantee equal rights to all peoples living in Kosovo and Metohija. In this way, China refuses to follow the plans of the predominantly Western powers for the territorial redesign of Serbia and seeks to maintain the stability of the existing order by insisting on respect for international law and the general principles of the United Nations Charter (Dimitrijević et al., 2012; Trud, 2007, p. 165).

From the previous analysis, it would be possible to draw appropriate conclusions. Thus, while Serbia considers China to be its most important strategic partner in Asia, its economic relations with China are characterized by mutual asymmetry in all comparable economic parameters (Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia, 2019; Statistical

Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2019).<sup>11</sup> However, this does not mean that there is no room for further growth and development of these relationships. This also comes from China's view that Serbia is one of its key partners in the Southeast European region. For China, Serbia is an active functional factor for integration with the European Union, whose huge common market of high purchasing power may be an ideal space for its investment and placement of products and services. Therefore, China supports Serbia's aspirations for full membership of the European Union and encourages its economic transition towards market liberalization. The process of globalization and internationalization of the world economy are contemporary trends that have not bypassed Serbia and China. Both countries seek to follow general trends and integrate into the development of the world economy. Neither can achieve economic growth if left isolated from the world. As China has achieved remarkable achievements in economic development over the past four decades of reform and opening up to the world and has become not only a driver of global economic growth but also a major supporter of world trade and investments, China's economic potential provides Serbia with a chance to achieve its strategic economic interests, above all, in the renewal and development of industrial capacity and the improvement and encouragement of technological progress. Due to the lack of financial resources that would enable the realization of the aforementioned economic interests, Serbia, using its liberalized market and good political relations with China, attracted considerable Chinese investments in the previous decade (for example, in infrastructure, energy and ICT sectors), which should lead to the gradual

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<sup>11</sup> According to data of the National Bank of Serbia, the total net inflow from China during the period from 2005 to 2013 amounted only to EUR 20 million. From 2010 to 2017, inflows based on investments of Chinese residents in the Republic of Serbia amounted to USD 341.4 million. According to the Serbian Bureau of Statistics and Serbian Chamber of Commerce official data, in 2016, there was an increase in bilateral trade between the two countries. Thus, imports from China amounted to USD 1,522.9 million, while exports from Serbia to China amounted to USD 25.3 million. In 2017, there was further growth. The imports amounted to USD 1,775.1 million, while exports from Serbia was USD 62.2 million. In 2018, there was a successive growth of imports from China so that it was amounting to USD 2,167.5 million, while exports from Serbia to China also recorded a growth of USD 91.7 million. Comparing these indicators, it can be seen that the coverage of exports by imports increased from 1.7 in 2016 to 4.2 in 2018. This further suggests that the foreign trade exchange between the two countries has gradually increased year by year. According to the latest statistical indicators for 2019, China as the strategic partner of Serbia occupies the fourth place in the foreign trade exchange of Serbia with the world (right behind Germany, Italy and the Russian Federation).

optimization of its economic system (Dimitrijević, 2017). Whether this will actually happen depends on several determinants. First of all, it depends on the Chinese economic strategy, whose main constant is the increasing expansion of exports, the procurement of energy and natural resources for sustainable economic growth and consequently, the global economic positioning and significant logistical and financial support of state-owned banks to foreign companies.<sup>12</sup> If the aforementioned determinant also takes into account the economic constant that China's economic cooperation with Serbia in terms of size, value and structure is a small part of its economic exchange with the world, then it could be concluded that the achievement of strategic economic interests through cooperation with China's represents a real economic challenge for Serbia (Babić, 2016). However, if the parameters of economic cooperation between Serbia and China are analyzed more closely, it can be concluded that this cooperation is on the rise, not only for the realization of its own economic interests but also for the successful conduct of the foreign policy of both countries. On the one hand, China's foreign policy promotes peace, development and cooperation at the global level, and on the other hand, Serbia's foreign policy promotes Serbia's constructive role in the regional integration of East and West. In this regard, Serbia seeks to increase its influence and importance in economic relations with China and bases its business prospects on the adaptation of the economic structure at the macro and micro levels through the optimization of industrial capacities and various types of investments to achieve a balanced and sustainable economic growth and development. In order to improve its economic system, Serbia is intensively developing cooperation with China. This cooperation is needed for Serbia to continue its integration into the international division of labour through the global value chain, resulting not only from proprietary forms of foreign direct investments (FDI), but also from the so-called non-equity investments (portfolio investments), which enable proportional participation in foreign export (Kozomara, 2014, p. 109). With co-ordinated and joint Serbian-Chinese participation in global value chains, Serbia could realize its development strategy and achieve progressive economic growth and stability. However, this requires that all Chinese investments in Serbia enjoy adequate legal certainty. As these guarantees

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<sup>12</sup> China is developing this model of economic cooperation with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEEC) through which it seeks to penetrate EU markets. In doing so, China grants soft loans through state-owned banks to major infrastructure projects.

exist (for example, with regard to the equal status of domestic and foreign investors, freedom of investment, national treatment, legal certainty of transferring profits abroad, etc.), it is believed that this creates a good climate necessary for achieving economic priorities to the foreign policy agenda (Law on Foreign Investments, 2014; Politika, 2019).

Based on the analysis of specific foreign policy determinants related to Serbia-China economic cooperation, further conclusions could be drawn regarding the comparative advantages that Serbia has over other developing countries with which China is cooperating. Thus, if it is possible to simplify the analysis, these advantages as foreign policy variables are manifested through Serbia's clear commitment to joining the European Union and the World Trade Organization. Then, the benefits could be seen through relative macroeconomic stability, competitive financial risk, the restructuring and privatization process implemented, rapid development of the capital market, a liberalized tariff and tax legislation, a significant level of fiscal, regulatory and financial incentives, a highly skilled and relatively inexpensive workforce, developed telecommunication and transport infrastructure, etc. The existence of a free trade agreement (FTA) with the European Union, the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and special agreements with Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Turkey and other countries, the adopted strategy for stimulating and developing foreign investment, a harmonized legal framework for foreign investment with European and international standard, and complete visa liberalization between Serbia and China - may also represent comparative advantages for future Serbia-China economic cooperation, particularly in agriculture, transport and energy, as well as production capacity of the automotive, telecommunications, mechanical, chemical and textile industries, with a view to placing them on third markets. In addition to these comparative advantages, there are also some challenges for the further development of Serbian-Chinese cooperation related to macroeconomic imbalances. This imbalance greatly contributes to the 'accelerated pulse' in relations and directly affects the dynamics and structure of FDI inflows into Serbia, as well as the volume and structure of Serbian exports to China. The prediction of the development of strategic relations between Serbia and China, therefore, requires a rethinking of the ways in which this negative tendency arising from asymmetric bilateral economic cooperation could be stopped. From the analysis of selected macroeconomic parameters, it can be concluded that there is still a chance to transform the volume and structure of Serbian exports to China in line

with the accelerated inflow of Chinese investment. This transformation would be a clear indication of the strengthening of the economic potential needed for the gradual re-industrialization of the Serbian real sector, and thus for the promotion of 'win-win' economic cooperation. The financial basis for such developments could come in part from the rational accumulation of foreign investment and then from the planned distribution of revenues, which would lead to the consolidation of economic relations and the pursuit of common interests arising from the effective implementation of China's development strategy. (Kozomara, 2014; Dimitrijević and Jokanović, 2016). Considering that China has enormous development potential and that it approaches planning and achieving its strategic development goals in a holistic way, that is, through sectoral integration and market adaptation of different countries, regions, sub-regions and even continents - it is clear that its development strategy has global significance and that it is a unique determinant of its relations with the world. In this connection, in the next part of the analysis, it is necessary to explain the content and scope of this strategy symbolically named: the 'New Silk Road'.

### **A unique foreign policy determinant of Serbia-China relations**

The importance of establishing the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between Serbia and China has had positive effects not only on optimizing Serbia's foreign policy position in international relations but also on implementing the foreign policy goals of China's the 'New Silk Road' development strategy. In this sense, the analysis of contemporary Serbo-Chinese relations requires the realization of the significance of this unique determinant of foreign policy, which conditioned not only these relations but also the entire international relations in the Age of Globalization. Generally speaking, the development strategy of the 'New Silk Road' is an ideological concept of China's foreign policy aimed at preserving world peace and ensuring the common, harmonious and prosperous development of the entire world. Unlike the geopolitical strategies of the great powers, mainly based on the division of spheres of interest, China's 'New Silk Road' strategy is focused on mutual interests and cooperation in order to achieve mutual benefits. Since 1978, when it embarked on economic structural reforms and the implementation of an 'Opening-up Policy', China has sought to strengthen its position in international politics and to contribute actively to globalization through its involvement in international economic integration

processes (Hongyuan et al., 2012, p. 128).<sup>13</sup> Continued social reforms are contributing to the achievement of this 'Chinese dream', to which China is building a new vision of international relations based on the promotion of political, economic and cultural cooperation and social progress between different civilizations. Hence, despite the significant post-Cold War geopolitical changes, strong political influence in international processes and marked opportunism in international relations, China remains a connecting factor in solving major international problems. Faced with new challenges and opportunities, China, as the world's second-largest economy with almost a fifth of the world's population, has pledged internationally to expand good relations with all countries of the world, regardless of their size, ideological and political orientation and the level of economic development. This new, pragmatic approach has determined China's new position in the *Global Economic Governance and the New World Order* (Dimitrijević, 2018).

China today advocates for greater and balanced cooperation between developed and developing countries, it promotes cooperation in the South-South and South-North directions, and it is also working to fulfil its commitments globally. This positioning emerged from a new foreign policy course that replaces the prevailing concept of 'peaceful rise' with the concept of 'peaceful development' as a precondition for adapting the Chinese model of development to the process of globalization. (Jiabao, 2007; Nye, 2011, p. 11).<sup>14</sup> In doing so, China has expanded its earlier foreign policy priorities of

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<sup>13</sup> The concept of the 'New Silk Road' emerged from strategic reflections on social development in the 1990s. At that time, Deng Xiaoping confirmed his vision of economic reforms based on China's coastal development (especially through special economic zones in coastal provinces, open coastal cities, eastern comprehensive development zones). In this idea, there was no provision for the development of the inland parts of China. Therefore, at the beginning of the 21st century, China made deeper reforms to coordinate the development of all of its regions by adopting the concept of market economy. With the implementation of regional development strategies of the 'Develop the West', 'Revitalize the Northeast' and 'Rise of Central China', and with the establishment of innovative 'state pilot zones for overall reform', China has greatly managed to balance its regional development and improve competitiveness, which enabled it to continue with the implementation of comprehensive economic reforms and the rapid opening of its internal market. This was particularly visible in the period after China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. This period represented a period of major changes since China opened up in all its economic sectors, expanding and deepening its ties with the world, which enabled it to make a bigger impact on foreign direct investment, as well as to strengthen its own export-oriented trade and overseas investment.

<sup>14</sup> Such tactics, in foreign policy practice, was accompanied by a gradual growth of Chinese 'hard power' with an attractive narrative about the growth of 'soft power', which in the

regional development and stability to be much more receptive goals of peaceful and harmonious development of the world, which in the meantime have become the basis of its new foreign policy doctrine, whose personification is precisely the development strategy of the 'New Silk Road'. Symbolically named after its historical model from ancient times, this development strategy is covered by appropriate foreign policy framework initiatives, namely: the 'Silk Road, Economic Belt' and the '21st Century Maritime Silk Road' (*Belt and Road Initiative*) (The Decision, 2013; People's Daily, 2013; Dimitrijević and Jokanović, 2016; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2013).<sup>15</sup> As a novelized ideological concept of China's foreign policy, the development strategy of the 'New Silk Road' is rather abstractly defined without clear geographical, temporal and functional parameters, which does not diminish its global geo-economic significance. Especially since this strategy is based on the ideas of a common and peaceful coexistence, 'win-win' cooperation and comprehensive, balanced and sustainable development (Petrović Piroćanac, 2013). Such a foundation is certainly complementary to China's view that regional integration contributes to economic globalization and that greater connectivity between different regions accelerates the development of global supply, industrial

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doctrine of international relations is explained by the premise that China, by 'smart power', seeks to convey the idea of its 'peaceful rise' to eliminate the possibility of a countervailing balance of power.

<sup>15</sup> The New Silk Road development strategy, through its framework foreign policy initiatives, was first proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping during an official visit to the countries of Central Asia: Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, and then to Indonesia in October 2014. In his speech in Astana and then on the 13th Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Bishkek, President Xi emphasized the need of 'jointly building the 'Silk Road Economic Belt' with innovative models of cooperation', between China, Central Asia and Europe. To implement this Initiative, President Xi suggested that it would be necessary to start work first in specific areas in order to connect them within the entire region. In his later speech in the Indonesian Parliament and on the 10th anniversary of the ASEAN-China strategic partnership, he emphasized the importance of stronger regional integration and maritime cooperation, as well as the promotion of regional interconnectivity for the improvement of the maritime economy, environmental protection, science, technology and security. In this regard, he pledged for the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank with the purpose of financing infrastructure projects along the maritime routes. Also, he stressed that China is fully prepared to cooperate with the ASEAN countries and, in that respect, he supported the effective use of the China-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation Fund to develop partnerships in the field of maritime cooperation and joint construction of the '21st Century Maritime Silk Road'.

and value chains (Dimitrijević, 2018; Yi, 2015). This conclusion comes from specific programmatic documents such as a strategically important act of the National Development and Reform Commission and the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Commerce published under the title 'Vision and Actions on the Joint Building Silk Road, Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road', from 28 March 2015 (National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, 2015). Referring to the previously proposed *Belt and Road Initiative*, this act essentially defines the development plans of the 'New Silk Road' strategy which includes guidelines for all-round opening and improving economic, financial, cultural, scientific and technological cooperation with the countries of Asia, Africa and Europe to achieve overall progress, regional security (especially in Central Asia), internal political stability and economic prosperity. To implement this act, the National Development and Reform Commission adopted the 'Action Plan for Harmonization of Standards along the Belt and Road (2015-2017)' on 22 October 2015 (National Development and Reform Commission, 2015). Bearing in mind that the Action Plan reaffirms the goals of the 'New Silk Road' development strategy, it also represents a long-term vision of developing China's relations with the world (Escobar, 2015; Compilation and Translation Bureau, Central Committee of Communist Party of China, 2016, p. 210; Dimitrijević, 2018).<sup>16</sup>

The model of development embodied in the aforementioned strategic acts points to the overcoming of an 'Opening-up Policy', and a reform direction that rests solely on structural reforms. Over time, due to the accumulated social problems and uneven internal development, it became obvious that China needs to carry out broader economic reforms by introducing a proactive approach to foreign direct investment to develop its manufacturing and export capacities to further enable foreign markets. With the promotion of the *Belt and Road Initiative*, China has also begun promoting its FDI, which is part of its global economic strategy and Policies of 'Going Out' and 'Bringing in', which should enable faster flow of goods, services, labour and capital, increase productivity, and a more cost-effective allocation of funds to broadly integrate regional markets and align

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<sup>16</sup> Implementation of this development strategy under the Action Plan should be in phases, with the gradual accession of states to the *Belt and Road Initiative*. The first stage encompasses the period until 2021 when the CPC celebrates its anniversary, and the other stage encompasses the period until 2049 when China celebrates its birthday.



countries' economic policies along the 'New Silk Road'.<sup>17</sup> In this regard, the implementation of the 'New Silk Road' strategy should contribute to greater involvement of participating countries in the activities of international and regional organizations and financial institutions in order to integrate them more fully into the development goals of the *Belt and Road Initiative*.<sup>18</sup> This positioning does not exclude the possibility of establishing innovative models of cooperation between states or between states and international organizations in order to participate in *the Belt and Road Initiative*. After all, this is illustrated by the example of the formation of the '16+1' mechanism (which in the meantime has grown into the '17+1') between the countries of Central, East and Southeast Europe (CESEE) and China which cover various areas of cooperation, starting with infrastructure, finance, trade, transport, agriculture, energy and telecommunications, to scientific, technological, cultural, educational and medical cooperation and people-to-people exchange. This mechanism of cooperation is of great importance for the development of Serbian-Chinese relations because through it Serbia has become a major 'hub' for Chinese FDI in Serbian transport, infrastructure, energy, metallurgy, ICT and other industrial sectors. In this way, the '17 + 1' mechanism gave impetus to the establishment of Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation, which encouraged new Chinese investments in Serbia, which according to official figures amount to over USD 10 billion (Zakić and Radišić, 2019).<sup>19</sup> In this regard,

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<sup>17</sup> In essence, the 'New Silk Road' strategy seeks to overcome the weaknesses of the current global economic order and accelerate the revitalization of a large part of the world that covers a wider area with more than 4.6 billion people with a production capacity of 21 trillion US dollars (almost one-third of world GDP).

<sup>18</sup> In this regard, it does not exclude cooperation with existing organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), ASEAN plus China, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC), the Asia-Pacific Dialogue (APD), the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum, the Strategic Dialogue between China and the Gulf Cooperation Committee, the Economic Community of Brazil, Russia, India, China and the South African Union (BRICS) and financial institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the (BRICS) New Development Bank (NDB), the China, Central & Eastern Europe Investment Co-operation Fund (CEEFund) and the Silk Road Fund (SRF), which represent a counterpart to the transatlantic system monetary economies carried out by the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

<sup>19</sup> Of particular importance in this regard are Chinese investments in 'Smederevo' steelworks, in the 'Mining Smelter Basin Bor', in the construction of the Zemun-Borča bridge, in the

Chinese investment has become a key impetus for economic growth in Serbia. On the other hand, the rapid attractiveness of Chinese investments has also brought with it greater indebtedness of Serbia and its responsibility in the international financial market. To avoid possible macroeconomic imbalances, Serbia generally would have to pay more attention to the structure of total FDIs and their sectoral distribution in order to achieve stable and sustainable economic growth through this form of capital. Finally, if Serbia wants to increase its influence and importance in international relations based on economic cooperation with China, its business with China must be built not only on past successes and achievements, but also on potentials that will be grounded on improving its real economic capacity through different types of investments.

## CONCLUSION

The changing world geopolitical circumstances justify the new strategic positioning of Serbia and China in international relations. In this regard, pursuing the current foreign policy priorities of the two countries involves examining the international environment and monitoring their vital national interests. Assuming that Serbo-Chinese relations should contribute to the faster political consolidation, economic development and social progress, the study analyzed the general, specific and unique determinants of Serbo-Chinese relations. Namely, using appropriate scientific methods, the author of the study wanted to demonstrate the validity of the initial hypothesis that the current strategic cooperation between Serbia and China depends not only on spatial, temporal and institutional factors, which are obviously asymmetrical, but also on global economic factors that may contribute to deepening this cooperation. In this regard, the author has come to some conclusions that may be relevant for formulating the principles and goals of future cooperation. Thus, Serbia, as the successor state of socialist Yugoslavia, should maintain the continuity of traditionally good relations with China, but also working to constantly improve them in line with the opportunities offered by the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. As a kind

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construction of the Belgrade-Budapest fast railway on the part of the international Corridor 10, in the construction of parts of the international corridor 11, in the construction of a new Block 3 of the thermal power plant Kostolac 'B', in the construction of the Block 3 Thermal Power Plant 'Nikola Tesla B' in Obrenovac, in the modernization of the integrated system of telecommunications and the construction of the Innovation Center for Digital Transformation, etc.

of political instrument, the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership should facilitate the cooperation and development of friendly relations between the two countries at different levels and different social fields. This is all the more so since both countries are in the process of regrouping into a new multipolar system of international relations and reconciling their own national interests, which are more precisely defined in their foreign policy doctrines. Finally, the study shows that Serbia and China do not have to change their good practices and foreign policy priorities, among which the development of 'steel cooperation' is not only a common interest but also a significant objective of their mutually beneficial foreign policy. This policy is framed by the unique development strategy of the 'New Silk Road' and the Belt and Road initiative, whose directions in interstate relations define the '17+1' cooperation mechanism as a new form of foreign policy that deepens earlier ideological concepts of global economic development and reform of world society in a 'community of common interests, destinies and responsibilities' or in other words, into a 'community of the common future of mankind' (Permanent Mission of the PRC to the United Nations Office at Geneva, 2018).

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## THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA AND THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE<sup>2</sup>

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*Abstract:* In 2013, President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, launched the One Belt One Road Initiative, later abbreviated as the Belt and Road Initiative. Surprisingly or not, the initiative became widely accepted. The Republic of Serbia was among the countries that warmly welcomed it and decided to join. This article gives an insight into the results that Serbia has achieved participating in this initiative so far. Besides, the author tried to determine if this political decision had influenced the Republic of Serbia's position in international relations and if it did to what extent. Although the BRI was launched in 2013, the time context of this paper starts earlier in order not to neglect Serbia and China's bilateral relations that have been ascending for decades. The quality of their relations was never conditioned by undeniable disproportion in population, territory or economic strength. Their linkage was based on mutual understanding and respect for the international law norms and principles.

*Keywords:* The Republic of Serbia, The People's Republic of China (PRC), the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), 17+1 form of cooperation, multilateralism, international relations, international law.

### INTRODUCTION

When speaking about the quality of bilateral relations between countries, one would usually claim that it is conditioned either by territorial closeness, belonging to the same civilization, or at least similarities in the size of territory and/or population. Nevertheless, in practice, distinctive cases might be found. Such is the case of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of Serbia. These two countries and their bilateral relations are an

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example proving that even in the case when none of the factors given above are existent, political relations may be at the highest level.

However, one should not jump into the conclusion that it has been the case ever since. Although the then Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) of which Serbia was one of the constituent republics recognized the People's Republic of China immediately after its proclamation in 1949, the two countries established its relations in January 1955.<sup>3</sup> The reason for this postponing was ideological and directly connected with a position towards the then Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), which highlights the influence of the changing nature of the world in this regard. (Petranović, 1988). Practically, that meant that the Communist Party of China (CPC), or the Chinese government, during the well-known Informbiro case when Yugoslavia openly opposed USSR, supported Moscow.

The situation changed when China started nurturing aspiration to become both the most influential state and the communist party in its own sphere of influence. A particular problem appeared when Moscow realized that such a sphere tended to include not only the Asian countries but even European ones.<sup>4</sup> Distance between Beijing and Moscow was constantly growing.

Knowing this, the process of the warming up of relations with Yugoslavia was not surprising - it was expected. Yugoslavia, or Tito, led wise politics. As one of the prominent leaders of the Non-Alignment Movement, during the Brioni islands meeting, Yugoslavia initiated a declaration aimed to support China's application to join the Organization of the United Nations (OUN) (Petranović, 1988, p. 372).

Equally important for the development of further relations and particularly their quality was that the two countries shared principles of international law and peaceful coexistence. The decades that followed and further development of overall international relations proved the thesis given above. Processes that started to unstoppable convert once bipolar world order and the diminishing of the communist block significantly affected relations between Serbia and China (Obradović, 2016, p. 125). The

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<sup>3</sup> After the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, several new states were formed. First, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), then the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro and finally, in 2006, the Republic of Serbia. These changes have never affected bilateral relations between Serbia and China. China treats Serbia as the successor state of the former SFRY, which in terms of international law means one-sided Chinese recognition of the international law subjectivity of the former Yugoslavia.

<sup>4</sup> Albania, for instance.

most significant event that created milestones in China's and Serbia's relations was the case of the severe breaching of international law and illegal bombing of the FR Yugoslavia in 1999. Namely, on 7 May 1999, one of the NATO missiles hit the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade and killed three Chinese journalists while 20 of the employees were wounded.

The diplomatic battle that the two countries, together with the Russian Federation (RF) led at the international stage, especially within the OUN, made their mutual connections even tighter. Formalization of this ascending direction was the signing of agreements aimed to create strategic partnerships.

### SINO - SERBIAN RELATIONS IN THE 2000s

The big change in Serbia's foreign policy happened after 5 October and the fall of Slobodan Milošević. Newly formed government push its effort in renewing cooperation with the European Union (EU), setting the accession to this organization as a *sine qua non* of the country's future and Serbian citizens' prosperity (Lađevac, 2008).

The beginning of the process of normalization of relations, renewal of political dialogue and cooperation with the EU was symbolized by the first visit of the President of FRY, Dr. Vojislav Kostunica, to the Biarritz European Council on 12 October 2000 (Lađevac, 2008, p. 59). A month later, Serbia-EU relations were institutionalized by signing the Framework Agreement for the implementation of EU assistance and support programs for the FRY. In this manner, the FRY accessed to the Stabilization and Association Process, which was expected to be finalized with achieving full EU membership.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, in the forthcoming period, Serbia faced many problems that heavily burdened its relations with the EU. In the beginning, it was the problem regarding the existing relationship between Serbia and Montenegro as federal units of the FRY. Their relations were severely disrupted during 1998 and 1999, and contrary to expectations, after the October changes in 2000, the situation in the mutual relations between the two republics was not improved, but it worsened. Finally, two republics split apart after the referendum held in Montenegro in 2006.

The second problem was Serbian (non)cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia or the Hague Tribunal. This

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<sup>5</sup> The Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) is the European Union's policy towards the Western Balkans, established with the aim of eventual EU membership. The SAP was launched in June 1999 and strengthened at the Thessaloniki Summit in June 2003.

problem even caused the decision of the EU Council of Ministers to suspend negotiations with Serbia (Lađevac, 2008, p. 62). Subsequently, the negotiations were resumed on 13 June 2007, and the signing of the agreement was expected by the end of the year. However, as the negotiations on the status of Kosovo and Metohija went further, new problems began to emerge. The first crisis occurred when the EU decided to send its mission to the territory of Kosovo and Metohija. Tensions have continued to grow after the unilateral declaration of Kosovo's independence on 17 February 2008. The problem got even bigger when a certain number of the EU member states decided to recognize this 'country'. However, both the EU and Serbia, on each side, have made great efforts in trying to overcome this crisis. The diplomatic activity was not without results, so the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) was finally signed on 29 April 2008 (Lađevac, 2008b, p. 13).

Unfortunately, it was not a 'happy ending' story for Serbia on its European path. Not only that Serbia faced the full meaning of the conditionality politics or colloquially speaking stick and carrot method, but it even had a problem more - a problem that was unknown to the previous pre-accession countries. The year 2008 brought the world economic crisis that severely hit not only all countries, but the world financial system as a whole.

Suddenly, Serbia could not be granted the European funds planned to be invested in the economy devastated for decades. At that point, Serbia was forced to make changes that were necessary to revive the economy and improve the living standard of its citizens.

Based on several decades-long excellent relations, Serbia and China decided to further improve them by signing the Agreement on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. This document was signed during the visit to Beijing of the then Serbian President, Boris Tadić, in August 2009. In the Joint Statement signed by the Chinese President Hu and Serbian Tadić, the commitment to each other's basic national goals was expressed (Joint Statement, 2009). Serbia reaffirmed its commitment to the One-China policy and opposition to 'Taiwan independence'. China reaffirmed its respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia and fully upheld the official Serbian stance on the secession of Kosovo from Serbia.

Shortly after the establishment of the strategic relationship with China, President Tadić defined the substantial shift in Belgrade's foreign policy that has been captured in the innovative 'four pillars of diplomacy' doctrine (Petrović and Đukanović, 2012). To accommodate the strategic partnership and reflect China's importance for Serbia, Beijing was placed on the list already containing Brussels, Moscow and Washington as the major

international places of reference for Serbia. On the other hand, strategic partnership meant that Serbia became China's only strategic partner in Southeast Europe.

Based on the strategic partnership, the two countries elaborated a four-point proposal on developing the Sino-Serbian strategic relationship (Hu Jintao, 2009). Firstly, there was a need to have more political exchanges. President Hu said the two sides should maintain high-level exchanges, promote inter-governmental, inter-parliamentary and inter-party exchanges and cooperation. Secondly, there was a need to increase economic and trade exchanges. In that respect, both sides should take joint measures to actively tap the potential, cultivate new growth points, maintain the sustained and stable development of bilateral trade and gradually improve the trade balance in the development process. There were several fields indicated as the fields of special interest in which China was willing to enhance cooperation with Serbia. Those were the fields of infrastructure, petrochemicals, energy, and high-technology. Thirdly, enhancing people-to-people exchanges in areas of culture, education, health, sports, science, technology and tourism. Special encouragement should be given to the youths, non-governmental groups and local governments in order to carry out exchange activities in various forms in a bid to enrich bilateral ties. Finally, the fourth was a proposal to strengthen multilateral cooperation.

As this formal precondition was fulfilled, the intense diplomatic activity followed in order to boost trade and investment relations between China and Serbia. Numerous delegations started to be exchanged and high officials' forums or meetings started to be organized frequently.

Not only that Belgrade authorities promoted Serbian economic environment as friendly and easy to invest, but Chinese businesspeople were also attracted to Serbia because of its free-trade agreements with the EU, CEFTA and EFTA countries as well as Russia and Turkey (Ladevac et al., 2019, p. 60).

The first big project that followed after concluding the Strategic Partnership was the agreed construction of the Serbian-Chinese Friendship Bridge over the Danube River.<sup>6</sup> The total worth of the project was EUR 170

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<sup>6</sup> The new bridge was opened by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and his Serbian counterpart Aleksandar Vučić on 18 December 2014. Although the official name of the bridge is Mihajlo Pupin's Bridge, it is also known as the China-Serbian Friendship Bridge or, the shortest, Chinese bridge.

million, and as such, it was a capital project. The majority of the project EUR 145.5 million was financed by a loan from China's Exim Bank with a low-interest rate of 3% and a grace period of 3-5 years.

This project was carried out by China's state-owned heavyweight China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC), while the participation of Serbian companies was contractually set to 45% of the value of the project. For the CRBC, this project had special value being its first project of this kind in Europe. By then, this company only had been active in the Asian and African markets.

### **The Belt and Road Initiative and Sino-Serbian relations**

In 2013, Chinese President, Xi Jinping, proposed the 'One Belt, One Road' initiative as the form of an extension of sporadic smaller projects which China implemented along the ancient Silk Road route in the old days (Lađevac and Đorđević, 2016, p. 66). The financing of the project would be entrusted to new institutions – the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Silk Road Fund, as well as through new mechanisms to be established, and which would be supervised by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

As expected, this initiative caused different reactions. Some of them were positive, estimated that could enable the economic progress of countries on the route of the road, while others were negative. Behind such perception was the fear that China's enormous economic development accompanied by an enormous military budget could create a kind of security dilemma. There were a lot of them who also believed that behind the promotion of this project were hidden motives aimed to turn China into the main superpower (Lađevac and Đorđević, 2016, p. 66).

The same comments, if not even worse, caused China's decision to promote cooperation with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, at first called 16+1, later 17+1.<sup>7</sup> That project was even labeled as the Trojan horse in the EU yard (Đorđević and Lađevac, 2016, p. 63).

Serbia decided to enhance its relations with China, following the conclusion of the Strategic Partnership, by joining to the 16 + 1 cooperation platform and the Belt and Road Initiative, as well. This decision had far-reaching significance and contributed to the country's economic strength.

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<sup>7</sup> First 16+1 Summit was held in 2012 in Warsaw, Poland.

It is well known that Serbia has not yet recovered from the consequences of the turmoil events of the 1990s. Above that, the global economic crisis has limited the opportunities for attracting foreign investment. In that sense, the offer that came from China, not only to Serbia but to all the countries in our region, was timely and one would be irresponsible to reject it.

In the initial phase of cooperation between Serbia and China, all projects implemented in Serbia within the framework of the Initiative were criticized. Initially, projects were mainly in the field of infrastructure and energy, such as works on the Corridor XI, construction of the bridge on the Danube River, works on the construction of block three at the Kostolac Thermal Power Plant and similar (Zakić and Radišić, 2019). The main objections were that these projects were not investments, but strictly credit lines. As one might expect, critics have neglected the interest rate of these loans and the terms of their repayment. They were also prone to intentionally neglect the fact that either roads or bridges would remain in Serbia, and that citizens and the economy would multiply benefit from the upgraded capacities of the domestic energy sector (Lađevac, 2018, p. 60).

The Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation in Infrastructure Projects, also signed in 2009, gave an impetus to intensify economic relations, which resulted in reaching agreements on cooperation in several capital infrastructure projects in the Republic of Serbia among which the most significant is the Agreement on the Construction of the Belgrade-Budapest railway.

Being situated on the Corridor X, precisely at its Xb part, it will connect not only Belgrade and Budapest, but actually, the North Macedonia and Greece, connecting the Greek port of Piraeus with Central Europe and, at the same time, connecting the Middle East with Europe. Since the notable significance of this project recognized not only by Hungary and Serbia but also by China as a creator of the BRI, this idea was developed during the Summit within the framework of the 16 +1 cooperation held in Belgrade in December 2014. The three respective governments signed the Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation on the Hungarian-Serbian Railway Project. Based on the MoU, the three parties agreed to conduct all necessary preparatory activities such as the work on a Feasibility Study, a detailed general agreement that defines the value of investments, contractor, contracting terms, etc. The project officially commenced by signing documents between the PR China, the Republic of Serbia and Hungary, on 25 December 2015 in Suzhou. The documents defined principles and models of joint cooperation and determined the sequence of further activities.



In June 2017, at the trilateral meeting in Budapest, the Protocol on the reconstruction and modernization of the railway Belgrade – Budapest was signed. Statement of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán at the opening of China-CEEC 16+1 summit hosted in Budapest on 27 November 2017, regarding issuing of a public tender for the Hungarian stretch of the Budapest-Belgrade rail line represented the fulfillment of the basic precondition to start working on this project on the Hungarian side as well. But, despite that, the project is moving extremely slowly. The European Commission continuously examines separate agreements signed by both Serbian and Hungarian authorities. The main focus is on Hungary, an EU member state that is subject to the full rigour of European procurement law. As a prospective member of the bloc, Serbia is subject to looser rules. Thanks to that fact, it is expected that Serbia would have fewer problems in project realization. It is obvious that the EU does not support partner relations between Serbia and China, but it is also true that apart from the usual politics of conditionality it will not introduce some other measures against Serbia, while Hungary's failure to comply with EU tender laws may be punished by fines and proceedings to reverse infringements. According to EU officials, the investigation was assessing the financial viability of \$2.89 billion and looking into whether it had violated European Union laws stipulating that the public tenders must be offered for large transport projects.

However, apart from projects funded through loans, the Belt and Road Initiative also offers direct investment projects.

The first example of different forms of investment represents the case of the Smederevo Steel Company. Like many other companies, this steel company has been in a major crisis since the dissolution of the SFRY. Previous attempts to privatize the company have been unsuccessful, so the first clue that a Chinese company might make the acquisition has been welcomed. In 2016, the acquisition was made by the HBIS Group. The value of this acquisition was \$50 million, with an additional investment commitment. Namely, the HBIS Group additionally has committed to retain almost 5,000 employees and modernize its production facilities. The business results that they reached were extremely high. According to the data for 2018, the Smederevo Steel Company is the largest Serbian exporter with an export value of EUR 749.5 million. As expected, the ironworks is constantly observed by the EU. To protect EU based manufacturers, the EU even introduced quota systems for third-country producers.

During 2018 one of the biggest news was that Serbia finally, and it proved to be successful, ended the multi decades-long problem with the Bor

Mining and Smelter Basin. Precisely, China's Zijin Mining acquired a 63% share in Bor Mining or, in specific figures, \$1 billion and 260 million. At the same time, Zijin also acquired rights to exploit copper deposits from the Canadian company Nevsun which decided to withdraw. Zijin took over all the deposits of Nevsun within only three days, paying about \$1 billion and 661 million. The estimated value of this site is approximately \$100 billion, which significantly increases the profitability of the Bor Mining itself. The realization of this project is immense when considering the fact that the Bor Mining and Smelter Basin employs 5,000 workers. Zijin pledged to keep all jobs in the first three years. However, given the expected growth in exploitation, a more likely scenario is the creation of additional working places that will eventually lead to the revival of eastern Serbia.

The trend of Chinese capital flow in the Republic of Serbia continued in 2019. At the end of March, Shandong Linglong opened a tire factory in Zrenjanin. A total of \$900 million has been invested in the construction of the factory, and it is initially planned to employ 1,500 workers, with the potential to further increase the number. Due to a production plan of 35,000 tires daily, or about 13 million per year, the company expressed its interest in investing in road construction in order to transport its products faster to its customers in Western Europe. Equally interesting is the fact that Shandong Linglong is interested in investing in the construction of a residential settlement in Zrenjanin for employees and factory management.

## CONCLUSION

Apart from the challenges that inevitably follow each type of relation, the realized projects within the Belt and Road Initiative have positive records so far. Future perspective is even brighter, knowing that the establishment of cooperation was demanding by itself, considering disparities between China and Serbia. But the crucial point was obeying to the leading principles of the Belt and Road Initiative: joint discussion, co-construction and sharing; works on creating an open, inclusive, balanced and benefits-sharing framework of regional economic cooperation; practicing the new approach of sharing power and responsibility, as well as pursuing both benefit and righteousness.

The strict following of these principles will lead to the realization of the key objective of the BRI's 'five ways of connectivity': policy communication, infrastructure connection, smooth trade, accommodation of funds, people-to-people connection.

Still, Serbian stakeholders should bear in mind that Chinese partners are receptive to exceptional business ideas. Thus, there is a need for pushing forward domestic industrial transformations and upgrading, the necessity to overcome the role of plain consumer and take the role of innovator and manufacturer. Such change would naturally lead to a more open, inclusive and diversified type of cooperation that would easily assure stable finances and would even welcome third parties willing to invest.

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## THE EU GLOBAL STRATEGY - A POSSIBLE FRAMEWORK FOR DEEPENING COOPERATION WITH THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA IN THE DEFENCE DOMAIN<sup>4</sup>

*Abstract:* This paper deals with the research question of how the implementation process of A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy in the area of security and defence affects a possible deepening of cooperation with the Republic of Serbia in the defence domain. The authors analyse the EU's Implementation Plan on Security and Defence, the Commission's European Defence Action Plan, and the EU-NATO Joint Declarations to identify opportunities for improvement of cooperation between the Republic of Serbia and the European Union. The tested general hypothesis within this research is the following: the EU Global Strategy implementation has a positive impact on defence cooperation with the Republic of Serbia, and also for engagement within the Common Security and Defence Policy, and provides concrete deliverables through several different ways thereby enhancing the integrative capacities for the EU membership. Taking into consideration the above-mentioned, this paper seeks to find out how the implementation of the EU Global Strategy can trigger deeper cooperation with the Republic of Serbia in the area of defence using: (1) actions proposed within the Implementation Plan on Security and Defence – such as to set capabilities development priorities, adjust structures, tools

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and instruments as well as to take forward partnerships; (2) opportunities provided by the European Defence Action Plan for supporting investments in joint research and the joint development of defence equipment and technologies; and (3) facilities for cooperation with the European Union and NATO in the framework of EU-NATO Joint Declarations in the areas of hybrid threats, operational cooperation, cyber security, defence capabilities, industry and research, exercises and capacity building. Through a detailed analysis and modelling of different circumstances and factors, we can conclude that almost each of the above contents in certain segments provides positive conditions for enhanced cooperation between the Republic of Serbia and the European Union.

*Keywords:* the European Union, the EU Global Strategy, the EU Security and Defence, the Republic of Serbia, Defence Cooperation, PESCO, CARD, EDF.

## INTRODUCTION

The renewal process of the European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) started in 2013 when significant work was undertaken by the Commission, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the European Defence Agency and the Member States.<sup>5</sup> Following this trend, in December 2013, for the first time since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the European Council held a thematic debate on defence to identify priority actions for deepening cooperation in the mentioned domain.<sup>6</sup> It was very important due to the fact that Europe's strategic and geopolitical environment has been evolving rapidly since 2003 when the *European Security Strategy – A Secure Europe in a Better World* was adopted. Also, on the other side, defence budgets in Europe were constrained and European defence markets were fragmented. Accordingly, the European Council invited the High Representative, in close cooperation with the Commission, to assess the

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<sup>5</sup> Beginnings of a Common Foreign and Security Policy, including also beginnings of a common defence policy, were introduced by the Treaty of Maastricht on 9 December 1991.

<sup>6</sup> During the meeting on 19/20 December 2013, the European Council has identified a number of priority actions within three areas: (1) increasing the effectiveness, visibilities and impact of the Common Security and Defence Policy; (2) enhancing development of capabilities and (3) strengthening Europe's defence industry. Thus, the European Council is committed to delivering key capabilities in four critical domains: air-to-air refuelling, surveillance drones, satellite communications and cyber defence (European Council, 2013, paragraphs 4 and 11).

impact of changes in the global environment and to submit a report in the course of 2015 (European Council, 2013, paragraph 9). In line with this task, the strategic review titled *The European Union in a changing global environment – a more connected, contested and complex world* was presented in June 2015. This document called for a new common, comprehensive and consistent EU global strategy, taking into account that the world has become more dangerous, divided and disorienting since the adoption of the *European Security Strategy* in 2003 (Missiroli, 2015, pp. 123-152). Thus, the High Representative finally received a clear mandate to produce a completely new strategy on foreign and security policy in close cooperation with the Member States and submit this document to the European Council by June 2016 (European Council, 2015, paragraph 10b).

New EU strategy, *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe – A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy* was presented in June 2016 by the High Representative. The European Council welcomed the presentation of the *Global Strategy* and invited the High Representative, the Commission, and the Council to take the work forward to implement in practice this strategic document (European Council, 2016a, paragraph 20). A better world where Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free, including a period of peace and stability unprecedented in European history (*European Security Strategy*), has been changed into more complex, more connected and more contested (the *EU Global Strategy*). Thus, as Dyson and Konstadinides (2013) noticed, the balance of power and balance of threat are becoming more and more important drivers of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy, which implies that neorealism is also becoming a more tailored theoretical framework to understand EU's security and defence cooperation in comparison with constructivism and institutionalism. In practice, as Biscop pointed out, the *EU Global Strategy* represents a return to realpolitik in the original sense of the term in order to achieve ideals in a realistic way (2017, p. 31).

In accordance with the recommendations given by the European External Action Service, the implementation package of the *Global Strategy* in area of security and defence consists of three major pillars: (1) new political goals and ambitions for Europeans to take more responsibility for their own security and defence; (2) new financial tools to help the Member States and the European defence industry to develop defence capabilities; and (3) set of concrete actions to improve cooperation between the EU and NATO. Within the mentioned package, concrete

tools such as the *Implementation Plan on Security and Defence*, the *European Defence Action Plan*, and the *EU-NATO Joint Declarations* provide a solid opportunity for enhancing defence cooperation among the Member States. In addition, the implementation process of the *EU Global Strategy* can also have a positive impact on deepening cooperation in the defence domain between the European Union and third countries, including the Republic of Serbia. This fact poses at the same time security challenge and a great opportunity for the Republic of Serbia within changing European security and defence structure and the changing of the world as a whole.

## IMPLEMENTING THE GLOBAL STRATEGY: DEFENCE AND SECURITY PACKAGE

### Strategic Reflection and Development of the Global Strategy

The *European Security Strategy – A Secure Europe in a Better World*, adopted on 12 December 2003, was the first European Union's document which defined security environment, identified security challenges, and the subsequent implication for the European Union.<sup>7</sup> Five years later, French President Sarkozy raised a proposal 'to equip the European Union with a bolder security strategy that would progressively affirm its position as a first-rank player for peace and security' (European Parliament, 2016a). Hence, the EU Member States agreed to examine the implementation of the *European Security Strategy* in order to propose a possible way for improvement. The process ended in a very modest way, adopting the *Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy* in December 2008 with the recommendation given by the European Council that the European Union needed to be still more capable, more coherent and more active (European Council, 2008, paragraph 30).

The renewal process of drafting a purely new strategy officially started in 2014 with the assessment of the EU's global environment. During the drafting process of the *Global Strategy*, many institutes, think-tank organizations and other relevant actors provided a lot of efforts to define

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<sup>7</sup> *European Security Strategy – A Secure Europe in a Better World*, in accordance with the statement given by Missiroli, has never truly been a strategy: '... it is still a moot point whether this document was truly a strategy in its own right or a rather general doctrine, a combination between a fresh appraisal of the new security environment and a broad set of policy guidelines and recommendations' (Missiroli, 2015, p. 10).



the European Union's security environment.<sup>8</sup> The conclusions were almost the same with assessments that the world is becoming more and more complex, and instability is coming from the South and the East. Also, the threats are not purely military, and in the contemporary circumstances encompass cyber and hybrid warfare, piracy, terrorism, migration, jihad extremism, large-scale regional conflicts – especially in the MENA region, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and threats to energy and environmental security.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, the end of the Cold War and also the financial crisis in 2008, with austerity measures, have had a negative impact on the defence budget and military capabilities in the European Union's Member Countries. Also, the world's economic centre of gravity is moving to Asia. Thus, the United States' pivot to the Asia-Pacific region is getting more and more important for state administration in Washington, D.C. In accordance with the Report of CEPS Task Force, all the above-mentioned has eroded the European Union's role as a security actor in a multipolar world and made the Common Security and Defence Policy the weakest link in the European integration project (Centre for European Policy Studies, 2015).

To appraise and address the contemporary EU's global environment, the strategic review named *The European Union in a changing global environment – A more connected, contested and complex world* was presented by the High Representative during the European Council meeting in June 2015.<sup>10</sup> Also, as mentioned before, during this meeting, the High

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<sup>8</sup> One of the most comprehensive is a study issued in 2014 by the European Union Institute for Security Studies within the *Chaillot Paper series – A changing global environment*. This study explores changes in a global environment through thematic (human, physical, technological and systemic environment) and through geographic (Eastern, Southern, Further South and Further East environment) lenses (Missiroli et al., 2014).

<sup>9</sup> As Keohane emphasizes: 'Until recently, all EU military efforts were focused on international security beyond the EU's borders, and were carried out through the Common Security and Defence Policy framework, housed within the EU's foreign policy structures. This is changing slightly, due to the migrant crisis and the threat from terrorism, which are simultaneously an internal and external security challenge' (Keohane, 2016, p. 31).

<sup>10</sup> The document *The European Union in a changing global environment* identifies three main features of the global environment: (1) A more connected world, whereby a surge in global connectivity and human mobility challenges traditional approaches to migration, citizenship, development and health, while at the same time facilitating crime, terrorism and trafficking; (2) A more contested world in which fragile states and ungoverned spaces are expanding, as a result of instability and violence triggered by poverty, lawlessness,

Representative was tasked to prepare the *EU Global Strategy* in close cooperation with the Member States and to submit it to the European Council by June 2016 (European Council, 2015, paragraph 10b).

As recommended by Bakker et al., the new *Global Strategy* should replace the current European Union's way of 'constructive ambiguity' in developing defence cooperation with a real political commitment (2016, p. 7). It means that almost seventy years after French Prime Minister Pleven proposed his plan to establish the European Defence Community, the European Union and the Member States need to formulate and conduct an effective model for defence cooperation and integration to cope with current security challenges and austerity.

Taking into account the above-mentioned, many scholars have proposed several models of deepening European defence cooperation and integration. Andersson et al. (2016) illustrate five possible futures of European defence from 'Bonsai armies' through 'Defence Clusters' and 'Peace operations' to 'European NATO' and 'European Army' with remarks that any future European arrangement depends on the capabilities, resources, and cooperation. Also, the Centre for European Policy Studies in its report *More Union in European Defence* proposes a brand new framework - the 'European Defence Union which calls for a unified strategic process, more effective institutions, an array of more integrated armed forces, a common budget and a single and comprehensive defence market' (2015, p. 6). Apart from the scholars' point of views, the European Parliament in November 2018 proposed that the European Defence Union should be launched as a matter of urgency, in two stages and based on a system of differentiated integration: (1) activation of the Permanent structured Cooperation and (2) implementation of the *EU Global Strategy* as a whole. In addition, the European Commission proposed three scenarios which are illustrative in nature and do not prejudice the final legal and political European Union's position: (1) Security and Defence Cooperation - in accordance with this scenario, the European Union's Member States would cooperate on security and defence more frequently than in the past; (2) Shared Security and Defence - within this scenario the Member States would show far greater financial and operational solidarity in the field of defence, building

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corruption and conflict-ridden electoral politics: (3) A more complex world where power is shifting towards other regional players in the developing world and is increasingly shared between state and non-state actors (European Parliament, 2016a, pp. 3-4).

on a broader and deeper understanding of respective threat perceptions and convergence of strategic cultures; and (3) Common Defence and Security – in line with this scenario, the Member States would deepen cooperation and integration towards a common defence and security which means that such a security and defence union would be premised on the global strategic, economic and technological drivers, as well as a political push from European citizens for common European security and defence (European Commission, 2017).

In any case, expert discussions and political talks of the European Union's security and defence have always been like a double-edged sword. It was also the case during the process of drafting the *Global Strategy*, primarily when we are talking about the EU's level of ambitions and strategic autonomy as one of the key concepts in this document. Due to the fact that the Member States were deeply divided regarding the EU's level of ambitious, strategic autonomy, including also a full spectrum of defence capabilities, all here mentioned concepts were vaguely defined in the *Global Strategy*. In addition, the ambitious approach of the European Union was also opposed by the United States of America in order to preserve NATO and transatlantic bond. In *EU Defence Cooperation: Progress Amid Transatlantic Concerns*, Brattberg and Valašek comment that 'terms like strategic autonomy, European army, and sovereignty risk are reinforcing certain U.S. leaders' perception that new EU defense initiatives are being designed to undermine the centrality of NATO in European security' (2019, p. 14). Owing to that, the level of ambition and strategic autonomy were mentioned in the *Global Strategy* related to the priorities of the EU's external action only as 'important for Europe's ability to promote peace and security within and beyond its border' (European External Action Service, 2016, p. 9).

To promote European shared interests, the *Global strategy* pursues five priorities: (1) the Security of the European Union; (2) State and Societal Resilience to European East and South; (3) an Integrated Approach to the Conflict; (4) Cooperative Regional Orders and (5) Global Governance for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (European External Action Service, 2016, pp. 9-10).

As Biscop noticed: 'The pursuit of the first three priorities especially clearly reflects the modesty or realism imposed by principled pragmatism, by emphasising our own security, the neighbourhood, and hard power, and by no longer emphasising democratisation' (2017, p. 31).

### **The Implementation Process of the Global Strategy in the Security and Defence domain**

To translate the *Global Strategy* into concrete aims, priorities, objectives and procedures, Bakker et al. (2016) mentioned three very important recommendations: (1) peer pressure, assessment and accountability; (2) alternative formats and (3) financial incentives. Also, Giegerich observes the language of the *Global Strategy* does not allow for the European Union to be niche actor, due to the fact that accepting a niche role would mean accepting that the vision of the European Union as an international actor with global responsibility for peace and security has failed (2016, p. 28).

In order to implement the *Global Strategy* and move from a shared vision to common action, decisive steps have been taken on security and defence. In line with the mentioned major pillars within the implementation package in the security and defence domain, the European Union has taken three main actions to foster deeper cooperation in the defence domain and adjust structures, procedures, tools, and instruments accordingly. First, the Council of the European Union developed the *Implementation Plan on Security and Defence* on 14 November 2016 in order to set out the level of ambition and the way forward in the future development of security and defence policy (Council of the European Union, 2016c). Second, the European Commission adopted the *European Defence Action Plan* on 30 November 2016 to help the Member States to boost research and spend more efficiently on joint defence capabilities, thus fostering a competitive and innovative defence industrial base and contributing to enhancing European citizens' security (European Commission, 2016). Third, the European Union and NATO signed two *EU-NATO Joint Declarations* on 8 July 2016 and 10 July 2018 to give new momentum and new substance to the Strategic Partnership between these two organizations (European Council, 2016b and 2018). These three actions are complementary and mutually reinforcing. As mentioned in *The European Union and CSDP – State of Affairs*, the first gives the main direction and charts the way ahead in security and defence, the second helps provide the instruments needed to promote defence-related cooperation, and the third places these efforts in the larger context of EU-NATO cooperation (Iklody, 2017, p. 42). Also, this approach is in line with the recommendation given by Bakker et al. that deepening defence cooperation should be based on a system of 'positive' peer pressure, no 'naming and shaming', but 'naming and praising' (2016, p. 8).

There are several detailed analyses regarding the implementation process of the *Global Strategy* such as *Walking the Strategic Talk – A Progressive EU Foreign Policy Agenda For the Future* (Pirozzi and Ntousas, 2019), *Security and Defence: A Glass Half Full* (Koenig, 2018) and *The European Union's Global Strategy – Three Years on, Looking Forward* (European External Action Service, 2019). All of these studies pointed out that significant progress has been achieved within the implementation process of the *Global Strategy* and proved that the *Global Strategy* is rather a compass for concrete actions than a theoretical concept.

### *The Implementation Plan on Security and Defence*

The *Implementation Plan on Security and Defence* was adopted by the Council of the European Union on 14 November 2016 with the aim to set out proposals to implement the *Global Strategy* in the security and defence domain. Also, this document further elaborates a new level of ambition aims to develop a stronger European Union in the area of security and defence. In line with this, the European Union should contribute to: (1) responding to external conflicts and crises, (2) building the capacities of partners, and (3) protecting the Union and its citizens. In this sense, Europe's strategic autonomy entails the ability to act and cooperate with international and regional partners wherever possible, while being able to operate autonomously when and where necessary (Council of the European Union, 2016c, paragraphs 5 and 18). Bilčík (2016) advocates the view that the *Implementation Plan on Security and Defence* should utilise the growing political consensus around EU security measures to push for concrete and credible defence initiatives.

In order to implement the level of ambition, several actions were proposed by the *Implementation Plan on Security and Defence* such as: to move forward with revision process of the Capability Development Plan; setting up the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence; address the gap at the strategic-level for the conduct of non-executive military CSDP missions; provide political guidance in view of a comprehensive review of the Athena mechanism; and provide full use of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (Council of the European Union, 2016c, paragraphs 26, 30, 32, 36, 37).

In line with Article 42 (6) of the *Treaty on European Union*, the Member States whose military capabilities fulfil higher criteria, and which have made more binding commitments to one another in this area with a view

to the most demanding missions shall establish the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) within the Union framework. The Permanent Structured Cooperation was introduced by the *Lisbon Treaty on the European Union* in 2009 in order to provide defence cooperation in smaller committed groups and pursue the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Since then, the PESCO has been a 'sleeping beauty'.

According to the Council Conclusions on 14 November 2016, the Permanent Structured Cooperation would aim to gather as many Member States to join in stepping up their security and defence commitments as an inclusive effort to strengthen the CSDP (Council of the European Union, 2016b, paragraph 17). After that, in June 2017, the Council agreed on the need to launch an inclusive and ambitious Permanent Structured Cooperation with concrete collaborative projects and initiatives (Council of the European Union, 2017b, paragraph 8). Officially, the PESCO was triggered by the Council on 11 December 2017 while the first initial list of the seventeen projects was adopted on 6 March 2018 (Council of the European Union, 2017c; 2018a). Until now, there have been two more waves of extending the PESCO projects - seventeen additional projects approved on 19 November 2018 and an additional thirteen projects on 12 November 2019 (Council of the European Union, 2018b; 2019b). The next call for PESCO projects would take place in 2021 in order to ensure better coherence and synchronisation of the European Union's defence initiatives and focus on more substantiated projects.

Almost all scholars and practitioners agreed the PESCO was a prominent example of how the European Union's Member States started cooperating in unprecedented ways to strengthen their defence within concrete projects. The Permanent Structured Cooperation provides a binding framework in order to improve joint defence investment, cooperation and operational readiness among the participating Member States, individually responsible for fulfilling the commitments they have made to one another. It means that the PESCO 'breaks with the previously dominant voluntarism in European defence and introduces a legally binding character of defence cooperation' (France et al., 2017, p. 4.).

In May 2019 the Council assessed the contributions made by the participating Member States within the PESCO framework and encouraged them to advance the work and focus on the swift and effective implementation of the projects in which they participate in order to deliver tangible outputs and products, with a view to fulfilling the more binding commitments (Council of the European Union, 2019a). In this

sense, Blockmans argues that for the successful PESCO implementation, the European Union should overcome at least three key challenges: (1) raising the level of ambition while ensuring inclusivity; (2) maintaining credibility in case participating States do not comply with their commitments; and (3) ensuring coherence with the many other building blocks in Europe's defence architecture (2018, pp. 1811-1824).

On the other side, to keep and further improve positive political momentum in European defence cooperation, some scholars, for example, Besch argues that the European Union should avoid the PESCO since reviving this mechanism would likely take too much time to agree on participation criteria (2016, p. 8). Also, most Member Countries still associate the PESCO with 'its toxic history as a stillborn instance of European defence cooperation' (2016, p. 8). Instead of the PESCO, Besch proposes that the European Union should consider deepening defence cooperation among the Member States within NATO's Framework Nations Concept (2016, pp. 31-32).

The Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) was created in 2017 to deepen cooperation in the defence domain (Council of the European Union, 2017d, paragraph 10). In the same document, the Council highlighted that the CARD would be implemented voluntarily, and the importance of bringing greater transparency and political visibility to the European capability landscape. Due to the fact that the CARD should serve as a link among the Member States' national defence planning and the European Union priorities, the Council recommended that the first full CARD must be implemented based notably on the revised Capability Development Plan priorities as well as other existing processes and tools as of 2018 (Council of the European Union, 2017d, paragraph 13). The Council in May 2017 endorsed the modalities to establish the CARD and launched the Trial Run (Council of the European Union, 2017e, paragraphs 19-22). In accordance with these modalities, the CARD pilot project was completed in 2018, and the first full CARD cycle based on the new European Defence Agency's Capability Development Plan was launched in autumn 2019.

Regarding the *Global Strategy*, the European Defence Agency 'has a key role to play by strengthening the Capability Development Plan, acting as an interface between the Member States and the Commission, and assisting the Member States to develop the capabilities stemming from the political goals set out in this Strategy' (European External Action Service, 2016, p. 46). The European Defence Agency's Steering Board endorsed the

Capability Development Plan (CDP) on 28 June 2018 and approved development priorities. In line with the European Defence Agency's approach, the CDP should provide a full capability picture to support decision-making processes at the European Union's level and national levels regarding capability development. In addition, the CDP should prioritise military capabilities that need to be addressed and developed by the Member States and underpins the identification of cooperative activities that can be implemented by the Member States in the cooperation framework of their choice, including under the Permanent Structured Cooperation and the European Defence Fund. Also, the CDP is an output-oriented, and this is further reinforced by the Strategic Context Cases and corresponding implementation roadmaps, with a view to support the Member States in the implementation of the European Union's Capability Development Priorities (European Defence Agency, 2018).<sup>11</sup>

The Council approved in March 2017 the Concept Note on the operational planning and conduct capabilities for the CSDP missions and operations and established a Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) within the EU Military Staff in Brussels, which will be responsible for the operational planning and conduct of non-executive military missions at the strategic level, working under the political control and strategic guidance of the Political and Security Committee (Council of the European Union, 2017d, paragraph 5). As mentioned in *The European Union's Global Strategy – Three Years on, Looking Forward*, the MPCC is the first-ever unified command centre for the European Union's military training missions. It works closely with its civilian counterpart to ensure maximum coordination between military and civilian missions. Also, by the end of 2020, the MPCC should be ready to also run one executive military operation, of the size of an EU Battlegroup (European External Action Service, 2019, p. 34).

The High Representative in June 2018 proposed a European Peace Facility (EPF) to allow financing of all Common Foreign and Security

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<sup>11</sup> Set of the EU Capability Development Priorities was proposed by the EDA and approved by the Member States as follows: (1) Enabling capabilities for cyber responsive operation; (2) Space-based information and communication services; (3) Information superiority; (4) Ground combat capabilities; (5) Enhanced logistic and medical supporting capabilities; (6) Naval manoeuvrability; (7) Underwater control contributing to resilience at sea; (8) Air superiority; (9) Air mobility; (10) Integration of military air capabilities in a changing aviation sector; and (11) Cross-domain capabilities contributing to achieve EU's level of ambition (European Defence Agency, 2018, p. 3).



Policy external action with military and defence implications and to enhance the European Union's ability to safeguard European security interests and prevent conflict, build peace and strengthen the security around the world. In line with this proposal, the Foreign Affairs Committee drafted a recommendation concerning the European Peace Facility. This recommendation was adopted by the European Parliament in March 2019 in order to establish the EPF and yield synergies and efficiency gains by providing a package approach to the operational funding of external action that already exists today, and where funding from the European Union's budget is not possible (European Parliament, 2019).

The EPF is constituted as an off-budget fund, worth €10.5 billion for the period of seven years from 2021 to 2027, builds on and merges existing mechanisms (the African Peace Facility and the Athena mechanism) into a single fund with the following aims: (1) facilitating the European Union's military operations by providing a permanent fund with an enhanced scope of common costs compared to the Athena mechanism; (2) expanding the European Union's scope for financing peace support operations to third states and international organisations on a global scale; and (3) broadening the European Union support for the capability-building activities of armed forces in partner countries (Council of the European Union, 2018c). In accordance with the current intentions, the EPF would raise the share of operations' common costs to a maximum of 35–45%, instead of 10–15% covered by the Athena mechanism.

### *The European Defence Action Plan*

The European Union's Member States spend more than 210 billion Euros on defence and have about 1.5 million troops.<sup>12</sup> Despite the fact that the European Union has the second-largest defence budget, this community is too far from being the second military power in the world. The main reason for this ineffectiveness is the fact that within the European Union exists a lot of duplication of capacities, including weapons, combat platforms, and systems. In this sense, the European

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<sup>12</sup> In accordance with Besch, the United Kingdom accounts for about a quarter of EU Member States' defence spending and about a quarter deployable European troop (2016, p. 7). Apart from that, the UK's departure from the European Union means that some 80% of NATO's budgetary and military contributions will come from non-EU Member Countries (Bilčík, 2016, p. 12).

Union should provide more value for its money. Thus, Mattelaer pointed out that the European dimension of defence planning begins with industrial aspects and setting appropriate financial incentives (2016, p. 37). The European Defence Agency in Defence Data calculated that in 2014, 77.9 percent of all equipment procurement took place at the national level (European Defence Agency, 2017). Owing to that, the *Global Strategy* identifies a number of priority areas for joint investment and development, which implies a more innovative and competitive industrial base and represents one of the main drivers to the *European Defence Action Plan* (European External Action Service, 2016, p. 45).

The Commission in November 2016 launched its *European Defence Action Plan* (EDAP) in order to support Europe's defence industry and the entire cycle of capability generation, from research and development to production and acquisition. The EDAP has three main pillars that address different but complementary needs along the capability development cycle, focusing on technologies and products: (1) launching a European Defence Fund; (2) fostering investments in defence supply chains; and (3) reinforcing the single market for defence (European Commission, 2016, p. 5). The EDAP should enhance cooperation among the Member States, including also promotion of greater pooling of national defence resources and strengthening the European internal market in the defence domain.

The European Defence Fund (EDF) consists of two distinct but complementary financing structures ('windows'): (1) A 'research window' to fund collaborative defence research projects at the European Union's level; and (2) A 'capability window' to support the joint development of defence capabilities commonly agreed by the Member States (European Commission, 2016, pp. 5-6). This is in accordance with Giegerich's proposal that financial incentives should focus on two points: first, kick-starting cooperation through seed funding and, second, maintaining capabilities through cooperation (2016, p. 28).

In the preparatory phase, two pilot programmes were established for the period from 2017 to 2020 with the aim to test the future European Defence Fund that will be implemented for the next Multi-annual Financial Framework from 2021 to 2027. First, the Preparatory Action on Defence Research was established with 90 million Euros to support collaborative research and technology projects from 2017 to 2019. Second, the European Defence Industrial Development Programme was established with 500 million Euros to co-finance joint industrial projects

in the development phase from 2019 to 2020. For the next Multi-annual Financial Framework from 2021 to 2027, the European Defence Fund is worth 13 billion Euros, divided into 4.1 billion Euros for research and 8.9 billion Euros for development (European Commission, 2018).

The main purpose of the European Defence Fund is to incentivise cooperative projects among the Member States, such as joint defence research, capability development and procurement, and generate real financial incentives for systematic defence industrial cooperation in research and capability development, including also the collaborative projects launched in the PESCO framework.<sup>13</sup>

### *EU-NATO Joint Declarations*

Some scholars and policy makers advocate an approach that the European Union should keep continuity in relying on NATO in order to build its own defence capacities.<sup>14</sup> In any case, as stated in *The EU and NATO – the Essential Partners*, a momentum for renewed cooperation between NATO and the European Union has emerged in the last few years (Lindstrom and Tardy, 2019).

The European Union and NATO signed the Joint Declaration during the NATO Summit in Warsaw in July 2016 in order to provide new impetus and new substance to the strategic partnership through the seven areas of cooperation: Countering hybrid threats; Operational cooperation in the maritime domain; Cyber security and defence; Defence capabilities; Defence industry and research; Exercises; and Supporting partners' capacity building efforts (European Council, 2016b). In line with the Joint Declaration on cooperation from Warsaw in December 2016, the Council of the EU and the North Atlantic Council endorsed a common set of 42 actions for practical implementation in seven mentioned areas and introduced a monitoring mechanism (Council of the European Union,

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<sup>13</sup> Normal projects get 20% financial support while the PESCO projects receive 30% from the European Defence Fund.

<sup>14</sup> Thus, Mölling proposed the interrelated steps: '(1) transfer NATO's Framework Nations Concept into the EU; (2) apply the Framework Nations Concept principles to the EU Battlegroups; (3) turn the EU Battlegroups into a European Combat Brigade (a sort of 'EU Very High Readiness Joint Task Force', or EU VJTF) by increasing their size and capabilities; (4) then earmark this EU VJTF for operations (in the east) in support of the EU assistance clause (Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union)' (2016, pp. 39-40).

2016d). After that, in December 2017, a new common set of 32 proposals was adopted to consolidate progress and ensure further advances in all areas listed in the Joint Declaration (Council of the European Union, 2017a). As Blockmans observes, these 74 actions ‘...are an attempt to banish ghosts from the past in coordination between the two Brussels-based organizations’ (2018, p. 1792).

After that, in 2018, the second Joint Declaration was signed between the European Union and NATO with the aim to provide swift and demonstrable progress, in particular in: military mobility; counter-terrorism; strengthening resilience to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear-related risks; and promoting the women peace and security agenda (European Council, 2018, paragraph 6).

## **THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA AND THE EUROPEAN UNION - COOPERATION IN THE DEFENCE DOMAIN -**

### **Drivers of Deepening Cooperation between the Republic of Serbia and the European Union**

Several main drivers of deepening cooperation between the Republic of Serbia and the European Union could be identified in line with the current circumstances. The most important are the following: Serbia is an EU candidate country, the Ministry of Defence and the Serbian Armed Forces are very active players within the framework of the CSDP, and Serbia is a militarily neutral country.

The Republic of Serbia belongs to the community of the EU candidate countries, with a significant contribution to the European Union’s Common Security and Defence Policy. The partnership between the European Union and third countries within the CSDP has several different aims, such as participation in non-executive missions and operations, preventing or managing a crisis in the most proper way, capacity building, enhancing the resilience of a particular country or region, and improving dialogue.

Participation of the Republic of Serbia in the activities of the CSDP is of particular importance for the improvement of its national security and defence. The Serbian Armed Forces take participation in one EU operation NAVFOR-Atalanta and three non-executive missions EUTM Somalia, EUTM Mali and EUTM RCA, and in this way develop very close cooperation with the European Union. In addition, Serbia is developing

capacities to enable it to participate in civilian missions under the Common Security and Defence Policy. Moreover, Serbia is a part of the European Union's Battlegroup – HELBROC, which consists of Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus, and Ukraine.

In line with the *Defence Strategy of the Republic of Serbia*, military neutrality is a defence interest of the Republic of Serbia which is pursued by fulfilling the following goals: (1) not joining politico-military alliances; (2) integral engagement of defence system actors and defence capacities; and (3) creating conditions for defence based on its own strengths and capacities (Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Serbia, 2019, p. 15). Stojković and Glišić (2018) show that Serbia does not have a long tradition of military neutrality through a detailed analysis of previous Serbian military alliances with other countries, and explain the problem with defining Serbia's military neutrality due to the fact there is no official document which defines what this neutrality means in practice. Therefore, Serbia has close links with different military alliances and important partners, which has brought some peculiarities within the Serbian defence policy and the concept of military neutrality (Stojković and Glišić, 2018).

### **The Global Strategy Implementation and Fostering Defence Cooperation with the Republic of Serbia**

The implementation process of the *EU Global Strategy* can trigger deeper cooperation with the Republic of Serbia in the defence domain through some actions within the *Implementation Plan on Security and Defence*, the *European Defence Action Plan* and the *EU-NATO Joint Declarations*. In the framework of the *Implementation Plan on Security and Defence*, we can say that all respective contents have a positive impact on deepening defence cooperation between the Republic of Serbia and the European Union.

In accordance with the Council conclusions from November 2017, third states may exceptionally be invited by project participants within the PESCO, in line with general arrangements to be decided in due time in accordance with Article 46 (6) of the *Treaty on the European Union*. In this case, third states would need to provide substantial added value to the PESCO project, contribute to strengthening the PESCO and the CSDP and meet more demanding commitments, while fully respecting the principle of decision-making autonomy of the EU and its Member States. Besides, this will not grant decision powers to such third states in the

governance of the PESCO. Moreover, the Council in the PESCO format will decide if the conditions set out in the general arrangements are met by each third state invited by the respective project participants (Council of the European Union, 2017f, paragraph 2). In this context, the European Union looks forward to the adoption as soon as possible of a Council Decision on the general conditions under which third states could exceptionally be invited to participate in individual PESCO projects.

Despite the announcements given by the European Union and clear intentions of most Member States, the decision on third states' participation within the PESCO projects has not been made until now. The European Union's Member States are deeply divided regarding this matter. On the one side, there is a group of the Member States which speak in favour of a flexible approach, such as Benelux countries, Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Sweden, Finland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Portugal. Likewise, France, Germany, Italy and Spain, as the most active countries within the PESCO, have a different approach giving more importance to the political dimension of the PESCO, including the existence of ambitions among third states regarding European defence cooperation and European integration.

The Republic of Serbia is interested in joining some PESCO projects, and for this reason, pays full attention to possible third states' involvement. Germany has already asked the question about possible Serbian engagement within the PESCO project - the European Medical Command. Taking into account that military medicine represents the most significant Serbian brand in the CSDP missions and operations without any doubts, Serbia is able to provide substantial added value to this concrete PESCO project, and also contribute to strengthening the PESCO and the CSDP. Apart from the mentioned project, Serbia should also take part in some other projects within the PESCO such as European Training Certification Centre for European Armies, Cyber Threats and Incident Response Information Sharing Platform, Helicopter Hot and High Training, and European Medium Altitude Long Endurance Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems. These proposals are based on contemporary requirements arising from the reform process of the Serbian Armed Forces, ongoing acquisition projects, and from an already established level of cooperation with European countries.

The Coordinated Annual Review on Defence was created primarily to deepen defence cooperation among the Member States. In the framework of NATO's Partnership for Peace Programme, Serbia regularly

participates in the Planning and Review Process with the aim to provide greater transparency and synergy in defence planning and capability development. The mentioned engagement could be very helpful for better understanding the CARD and possible participation in this mechanism in the foreseeable future.

The Capability Development Plan's mid-term perspective and longer-term perspective could provide a significant framework for defence planning and capability development in the Serbian Ministry of Defence. In addition, the CDP is an output-oriented and reinforced by the Strategic Context Cases and corresponding implementation roadmaps in order to support the European Union's Capability Development Priorities. In accordance with the European Defence Agency's approach, the Strategic Context Cases highlight in particular the major challenges to the coherence of the European capability landscape in each of the European Union's Capability Development Priorities in the short, medium and long term and provide connections between capabilities and development. The Republic of Serbia signed in December 2013 the Administrative Arrangement with the European Defence Agency and has already joined several concrete projects in line with the Capability Development Plan.

The Republic of Serbia participates in four of the six CSDP operations/missions and the EU Battlegroup HELBROC. Based on a significant contribution to the Common Security and Defence Policy, the European Union accepted the nomination of the Serbian officer for the liaison with the Military Staff in Brussels at the end of 2017. It was the first military officer in this position from a third country community. As the Serbian Ministry of Defence noted on its website, the nomination of the liaison officer represents a step further in strengthening the relations, deepening cooperation and establishing more efficient communication in the field of the EU CSDP, which is in accordance with the efforts made by the Republic of Serbia towards full membership in the European Union. Also, the Military Planning and Conduct Capability provides a new opportunity for secondment posts for Serbian military officers in the foreseeable future and further deepening defence cooperation between the Republic of Serbia and the European Union.

One of the aims of the European Peace Facility is related to expanding the European Union's scope for financing peace support operations to third states and international organisations on a global scale. This can be a trigger for further and more active Serbian contribution in the CSDP

operations/missions and more prominent engagement in the concept of the EU Battlegroups.

As already mentioned, the main purpose of the European Defence Fund is to incentivise cooperative projects among the European Union's Member States, including also the collaborative projects launched in the PESCO framework. The Republic of Serbia as a third country with the possibility to participate in the PESCO projects could be a reliable partner to take some advantages established by the *European Defence Action Plan*.

Under the framework of the *EU-NATO Joint Declarations*, the Republic of Serbia has the opportunity to improve cooperation with these two organizations, primarily in two areas of cooperation – exercises and supporting partners' capacity building efforts. The Serbian Armed Forces conduct several exercises with the EU and NATO every year in order to improve interoperability and conduct pre-deployment training. In addition, NATO trained Iraqi medical officers in cooperation with Serbia in December 2017 within the framework of the Defence Capacity Building Initiative.

## CONCLUSION

The *Global Strategy* announced that the European Union would 'systematically encourage defence cooperation and strive to create a solid European defence industry' (European External Action Service, 2016, p. 11). Furthermore, the broad European project in the defence domain is supported by over 70% of the European Union's citizens (Centre for European Policy Studies, 2015, p. 2). In order to speed up the implementation process of the *Global Strategy*, the European Union recalls the need for fostering greater and more systematic European defence cooperation to deliver key capabilities, including through EU funds. Almost all scholars and policy makers agree with the statement that the Permanent Structured Cooperation and European Defence Fund are the most important game-changers in deepening defence cooperation within the European Union. Also, the coherent implementation of the PESCO, EDF and CARD is key to increasing the efficiency and output of defence cooperation.

As enshrined in the *Defence Strategy of the Republic of Serbia*, improvement of national security and defence through the process of European integration, while respecting the specificity of the Republic of Serbia, is the defence interest, which is achieved by fulfilling the following goals: (1) strengthening cooperative security with the European Union;



(2) participation of the Republic of Serbia in the activities of the CSDP; (3) achieving the required level of capability for participation in the CSDP civilian missions; (4) enhanced scientific research and military-economic cooperation with the European Union (Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Serbia, 2019, p. 14). As noticed by Bakker et al., the CSDP is coming closer and closer to the EU's borders and this trend is making an arc of instability (2016, p. 1). In this contemporary environment, cooperation between the European Union and partners, including Serbia, is getting more and more important.

Based on analysis of over thirty official European Union's documents and twenty academic research papers we can conclude and confirm our general hypothesis that the *EU Global Strategy* implementation has a positive impact on defence cooperation with the Republic of Serbia, and also for engagement within the Common Security and Defence Policy, and provides concrete deliverables through several different ways thereby enhancing the integrative capacities for the EU membership. The above could be particularly visible within the Permanent Structured Cooperation and the European Peace Facility. In addition, Serbia should also improve cooperation with the European Defence Agency, taking into account that the role of the mentioned agency is getting more and more important for implementing the Permanent Structured Cooperation, the Coordinated Annual Review of Defence and the European Defence Fund.

Deepening defence cooperation between the Republic of Serbia and the European Union could have a positive impact on providing capacities needed for engagement within missions and operations within the Common Security and Defence Policy framework. This conclusion is primarily relevant regarding the Capability Development Plan and the European Peace Facility.

Finally, improving defence cooperation with the European Union paves the way to Serbian membership to the European community and especially supports negotiation process within the Chapter 31 – the Common Foreign, Security and Defence Policy related to the EU missions and operations.

Nevertheless, the Republic of Serbia should be aware that deepening defence cooperation with the European Union and some other partners cannot be a substitute for the robust national efforts. Due to the fact that the *Global Strategy* implementation process in practice requires synergy with NATO, the Republic of Serbia should also keep continuity with NATO cooperation under the Partnership for Peace Programme,

especially using mechanisms such as the Planning and Review Process and the Operational Capabilities Concept.

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**ALIGNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA  
WITH THE COMMON FOREIGN, SECURITY  
AND DEFENSE POLICY OF THE EU:  
OBLIGATIONS, ACHIEVEMENTS,  
AND CHALLENGES<sup>2</sup>**

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*Abstract:* As an EU candidate country, Serbia has obligations to show its willingness to align with the Union's common positions and joint actions in the CFSP/CSDP, support its positions in international organizations, take part in EU military and civil missions, and impose sanctions and other restrictive EU measures. Explanatory and bilateral screening meetings between Serbia and the European Union in the area of the Common Foreign, Security and Defense Policy were held in 2014. However, the European Commission Screening Report for Chapter 31, which covers this area, has not yet been adopted. Meanwhile, relations between the European Union and the Russian Federation have been significantly damaged by the Ukrainian crisis, and mutual sanctions were imposed. In such a complex international environment, Serbia wants to demonstrate its commitment to European integration while trying not to disrupt traditionally good relations and political and economic cooperation with Russia. Apparently, the consequences of the changes in international relations on a global level have affected the process of Serbia's alignment with the EU in the area of the Common Foreign, Security, and Defense Policy. Unfortunately, if the current state of affairs persists, this could affect the overall integration process and Serbia's European perspective.

*Keywords:* Republic of Serbia, European Union, EU candidate country, accession negotiations, CFSP/CSDP, national interest, Russia.

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## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

A reliable enlargement policy of the European Union is crucial for continuing the reform process started in the countries concerned, as well as to the public support of the Member States for the enlargement process. The Republic of Serbia's strategic goal to become a full member of the European Union was confirmed by applying for membership on 22 December 2009, and it was granted EU candidate status on 1 March 2012. The accession negotiations of the Republic of Serbia with the European Union were formally opened in January 2014.<sup>3</sup>

This paper examines the alignment of the Republic of Serbia with the European Union in the field of the Common Foreign, Security and Defense Policy. In doing so, it analyzes how these relations have evolved since Serbia was granted candidate status for EU membership and how these relations have changed since the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis. In this context, some of the reasons for the deadlock in the negotiations between Serbia and the EU in the field of the Common Foreign, Security and Defense Policy, as well as possible ways of overcoming them, were highlighted. In order to contribute to further discussions on this topic, a brief overview of Serbia's EU accession negotiations and the basic elements of the CFSP/CSDP were given first, with a focus on the innovations introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon and a Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy. Special consideration was given to Serbia's status as an EU candidate country and its engagement in the EU Common Foreign, Security and Defense Policy. To determine the quality and level of integration with the EU in this area, the European Commission's annual reports on Serbia have been analyzed. Attention has been paid only to those parts of the Reports related to Chapter 31, starting from 2012, that is, from the moment Serbia received the status of the official EU candidate. First, steps and measures implemented by Serbia to align its foreign and security policy with the Common Foreign, Security and Defense Policy of the EU were identified. Thereafter, key challenges and constraints regarding the alignment in this area were addressed. To this end, the National Security Strategy and Defense Strategy of the Republic of Serbia and the National Programme for the Adoption of the *acquis*, besides the annual progress reports of the European Commission, have been examined. The analysis of these documents sought to identify and determine the key

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<sup>3</sup> The negotiation process is a period during which an EU candidate country aligns its national legislation with the *acquis communautaire* to be ready for full membership.



reasons why Serbia's compliance with EU Council decisions and declarations in the area of CFSP/CSDP is in constant decline, although EU membership is a foreign policy priority of the country. On this occasion, the international context was also taken into account, i.e., the fact that the disruption of relations between the European Union and the Russian Federation led to a decrease in the degree of alignment with EU measures in the area of CFSP/CSDP. This has affected, inter alia, Serbia's international position, which was manifested by the apparent stalemate in negotiations with the EU on Chapter 31. However, it should not be overlooked that such a situation was a consequence of the fact that Serbia did not adapt its policy to the EU sanctions against Russia, but also the restrictive measures against China, Venezuela, and some countries in the African continent. Bearing in mind that in official documents adopted by the RS Government this policy has been explained by the need to maintain good relations with countries that support the protection of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country and its position on the status of Kosovo, it can be expected that Serbia's adjustment to the Common Foreign, Security and Defense Policy will remain very demanding. Finally, the need to obviate this negotiation deadlock through closer and more open cooperation and engagement of both Serbia and the European Union was highlighted.

## OBLIGATIONS

To meet the membership criteria, Serbia is required to align its laws and policies with the *acquis communautaire*. The accession negotiations are not negotiations in the true sense of the word because the content of the EU *acquis* is not negotiated since the candidate country is obliged to adopt and fully apply them.<sup>4</sup> (Međak, 2016; Ateljević, Forca, Župac, 2015) There is no exception to the Common Foreign, Security and Defense Policy. In fact, this area is becoming an increasingly important part of EU conditionality. The negotiating framework provides, inter alia, that the candidate country must gradually align its foreign policy positions with the other EU Member States

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<sup>4</sup> The *acquis communautaire* contains, inter alia, the objectives and principles upon which the Union is founded, and the future Member State is expected to uphold the values on which the Union rests. Besides, the EU accession implies the candidate country is gradually aligning with the EU policies and legal framework. This is necessary not only for the candidate country to join the Union but also to function effectively in the EU legal order upon accession.

and follow a specific direction of the EU foreign policy. This should enable the foreign policy of the former candidate country to be fully harmonized with the EU foreign policy when it becomes a full member. That principle implies the candidate country must take care that its foreign policy does not conflict with the EU Common Foreign, Security and Defense policy.<sup>5</sup>

Over time, the European Union has established a framework for increasing competence and capacity development in the area of the Common Foreign, Security and Defense Policy (Jović-Lazić and Lađevac, 2008; Jović-Lazić, 2006). The Treaty of Lisbon represents the latest step towards the institutionalization of the EU foreign policy and the CSDP (Đurđević-Lukić, 2010; Novičić, 2010; Prolović, 2010). The EU is trying to find its place in the changed world order, and this is evident in the area of foreign and security policy, whose importance is reinforced by the Treaty of Lisbon. With the new institutional set-up, the Union gained legal personality, and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy became the Vice-President of the Commission simultaneously. The European External Action Service is established as the Union's diplomatic service composed of representatives of the Commission, the General Secretariat of the Council and staff appointed by the Member States. Presently, EU Delegations around the world ensure the presence, diplomatic, and political activities of the Union (Brommesson D. and Ekengren A, 2020, pp. 193-195). The changes introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon were intended to enable the EU to lead a more coherent foreign politics. It introduced a 'mutual assistance clause' implying that in cases of armed aggression, an EU Member State under attack may seek assistance from the other Member States, which, in accordance with the UN Charter and their obligations as NATO members, would be obliged to assist with all means at their disposal. This article also states the above provisions do not call into question the 'specific character of the security and defence policy of certain member states', such as the neutral status of one of them (Article

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<sup>5</sup> The harmonization process involves the progressive alignment with the EU *acquis* in the area of CFSP/CSDP, which comprises international agreements, decisions and conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council and the Council of the European Union, as well as the foreign policy declarations adopted thereunder. In this way, the EU defines its relation to certain issues. These acts lead to joint activities, measures and unique EU diplomatic actions which include, *inter alia*, the imposition of sanctions and restrictive measures. Besides enforcing UN sanctions, the European Union independently applies restrictive measures most often to protect the European values and principles that govern it, and which are enshrined in its founding acts.

42(7) TEU). In addition, mutual assistance involves not only defense but also civilian and military assistance from the other EU Member States. The Treaty of Lisbon also provides for a 'solidarity clause' which states that the EU and its Member States must act together in a spirit of solidarity if a Member State is the object of a terrorist attack or the victim of a natural or man-made disaster (Article 222 TFEU). Finally, it is interesting to note, the Treaty of Lisbon clearly insists on the unity of the Member States, emphasizing that the Member States 'actively and unreservedly' support the Union's foreign and security policy 'in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity' and will be consistent with the Union's activities in this field. The Member States should also refrain from any activities contrary to the Union's interests or which might hinder its 'efficiency as a cohesive force' in global politics (Article 24(3) TEU). Thus, as can be seen from an analysis of these provisions, consistency in the EU internal and foreign policy is considered as crucial for a more coherent, effective and credible EU foreign and security policy, while the Member States are expected to speak with one voice and pursue the solidarity-based policy.

The main interests and principles on which the EU should base its further presence and activities in the world are outlined in the Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy from 2016. This document starts from the fact that the international environment has changed and indicates the danger that the EU as a project that brought peace, stability, and prosperity could be called into question. It is said to be threatened by the various challenges, instabilities and crises that the EU faces, both domestically and internationally. These changes affect, *inter alia*, the Union's need to adjust its internal and foreign policies and to act jointly to protect its principles, values, and interests in the world (Barbé and Morillas, 2019, pp. 753-754). The main foreign policy priority of the EU is, first of all, preserving its security, while the Member States are expected to pursue the policy based on mutual assistance and solidarity, which is an integral part of the founding treaties (EU GS, 2016, pp. 9-10).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The EU also expresses its clear intention to increase its contribution to the collective security of Europe by working closely with partners, starting with NATO. One of the foreign policy priorities is the integrated approach to conflicts, which provides the EU is actively involved in all stages of the conflict cycle: it works on prevention, reacts responsibly and decisively to crises, invests in stabilization, and avoids premature termination of engagement in the event of a new crisis. Finally, this document states that the EU is committed to a global order based on international law, human rights protection, and sustainable development (EU Global Strategy, 2016, pp. 9-10).

Thus, the size and scope of EU external actions outlined in the Treaty of Lisbon and the Global Strategy contradict the frequent, open remarks of Eurosceptics claiming the EU has no foreign policy at all. It is indisputable the Union has a clear intention to become a more coherent international actor and decision-maker in the area of foreign and security policy, thereby increasing its effectiveness in dealing with international problems and managing international crises. The EU wants to be at the forefront of global efforts to build stability and develop multilateral cooperation (Davis Cross, 2016, p. 42). For example, the Union today not only coordinates its foreign policy internally but also externally with non-member countries. In multilateral forums, the European Union encourages non-EU countries to join its agreements, thereby demonstrating their adherence to EU norms and standards. Although the EU cannot and does not impose legal sanctions in the case of non-compliance with the common foreign and security policy issues, non-compliance with EU statements is frequently perceived as politically dubious in Brussels. For example, in its questionnaire, the Commission requested Serbia to submit a list of EU statements it did not comply with (Marciacq and Sanmartín Jaramillo, 2015, p. 204). Serbia's relations with Russia and concerns over Russia's efforts to establish and maintain influence in the Western Balkans is another key issue, especially for Poland and the Baltic States, which share borders with Russia (Baun and Marek, 2013, p. 210). Put differently, there are concerns among some Member States that, after Serbia's accession to the Union, Russia may use the position it has in this country to continue to pursue its policy within the EU. So, basically, it is a matter of the extent to which Serbia will be able to integrate into the EU Common Foreign, Security and Defense Policy, and support the Union's unique foreign policy measures and actions, given the limitations of its political and economic ties with Russia. This issue has become especially important and obvious after the EU imposed sanctions on Russia following the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis.<sup>7</sup>

Considering the *acquis* in the field of the Common Foreign, Security and Defense Policy has evolved significantly in recent years, the issues related to the alignment of the policy of EU candidate countries in this field have become increasingly important and demanding. The extent and depth of changes in national foreign policies also depend on how different it is from the foreign policy of the Union. This is conditioned by the nature of the EU

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<sup>7</sup> For more detailed information about the Ukrainian crisis, see: Jović-Lazić and Lađevac, 2017, pp. 112-141.

candidate country's previous foreign policy views, its national interests and other country-specific factors. (Baun and Marek, 2013, p. 14). In some cases, the accession process requires far-reaching changes in the candidates' foreign policy, as it involves not only the adoption of the *acquis* in this area but also implementing additional and sometimes politically sensitive measures to bring their foreign policy in line with that of the Union. This includes, *inter alia*, the cancellation of all international agreements that fall under EU competence, as well as the acceptance of international obligations and the adjustment to EU restrictive measures and sanctions. Harmonization of EU candidate countries with EU pre-accession requirements is regularly monitored by the European Commission and the High Representative. On an annual basis, the European Commission publishes reports on the progress made by the EU candidate country on its path to the Union. These reports are divided into sections devoted to the progress and expectations that the EU has of the candidate country in each of the negotiation chapters individually.

Thus, candidate countries have a greater obligation to comply with EU standards in the field of the Common Foreign, Security and Defense Policy than the existing EU member states. Conditionality enables the Union to force the candidate country to change its foreign policy and ensure it becomes a functional member of the EU upon accession. This, as Christophe Hillion concludes, leads to a certain loss of autonomy of the candidate countries in creating their own foreign policy. However, given that the Member States continue to enjoy broad autonomy in the field of the Common Foreign, Security and Defense Policy, this indicates that once they become members, former candidates will have the opportunity to shape European norms, thereby gaining more autonomy in foreign policy, at least compared to its pre-accession situation (Hillion, 2017, pp. 265-268).

## ACHIEVEMENTS

In Serbia's pre-accession negotiations with the European Union, the Common Foreign, Security and Defense Policy is covered by Chapter 31. This chapter is often classified as political and includes legally binding international agreements concluded by the European Union, EU Council decisions, restrictive measures, as well as political declarations and EU statements which the candidate must adopt or with which it must align its foreign policy. Explanatory and bilateral screening meetings were held in July and October 2014. They basically opened the process of critical

assessment of the EU *acquis* in the area of CFSP/CSDP. However, more than five years later, the EU Council has not yet adopted the Draft of the European Commission's Screening Report on Serbia regarding Chapter 31. Without the Screening Report for Chapter 31, Serbia is not in full capacity to comply with the EU in this area. However, by analyzing the European Commission's annual progress reports, i.e., parts of the reports devoted to Chapter 31, information can be found what the EU considers as positive steps of Serbia and what as negative in this process.

Thus, the European Commission Reports state Serbia and the EU have a regular political dialogue regarding the issues covered by this chapter. Accordingly, a mechanism for consultation on the Common Foreign, Security and Defense Policy was established between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia and the European Foreign Policy Service (EEAS), and regular meetings are held at the regional level. Serbia has established an institutional framework to facilitate its participation in the Common Foreign, Security and Defense Policy and demonstrate a clear willingness to participate in EU crisis management missions. The legal basis for its participation in multinational operations is the Law on the Engagement of the Serbian Armed Forces and Other Defense Forces in Multinational Operations outside the Republic of Serbia borders, adopted in 2009. Moreover, in 2011, Serbia and the EU concluded the Agreement on Security Procedures for the Exchange and Protection of Classified Information and the Framework Agreement for Serbia's Participation in EU Security and Defense Missions, which sets out the general conditions for Serbia's participation in EU crisis management operations. Serbia ratified these agreements in February 2012, creating the preconditions for members of the Army and other defense forces of the RS, together with representatives of the Member States, to participate in EU-mandated multinational missions, which has a beneficial impact on the overall process of its European integration. Since 2012 and 2014, the Republic of Serbia has actively participated in EU military crisis management missions/operations under the Common Security and Defense Policy. Since 2012, members of the Ministry of Defense and the Army of the Republic of Serbia have participated in the European Union Naval Forces Mission (ATALANTA), the EU's Somali Security Force Training Mission (EUTM Somalia). Since 2014, Serbia has participated in the EU Security Force Training Mission of Mali (EUTM Mali) and the EU Military and Security Force Training Mission of the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA) (SR, 2019, pp. 91-93).

Based on the European Commission's reports, it is clear the European Union greatly appreciates Serbia's participation in its peacekeeping operations. In recognition of Serbia's participation in the Union's operations and missions, Serbia has been given the opportunity to appoint a liaison officer to the EU Military Staff. The National Liaison Officer was appointed in November 2017, which was assessed as a step forward in strengthening relations, deepening cooperation, and establishing more effective communication in the area of the EU Common Security and Defense Policy. Also, the participation of the Serbian Armed Forces members and other defense forces in multinational operations outside the Republic of Serbia is in accordance with the national, security, defense, and foreign policy interests of the country. Thus, the Ministry of Defense is organizing training for officials from different sectors who will be able to participate in EU missions on behalf of Serbia (NPAA IR for 2018, 2019, p. 126). From 2017, Serbia also participates in EU battle groups, that is, in the EU HELBROC Battle Group. This group is led by Greece, with military units from Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus and Ukraine. The note on Serbia's joining the technical agreement on founding the EU HELBROC Battle Group was signed on the sidelines of the meeting of the EU Military Committee held in November 2016, and the first engagement of the Serbian Army units is planned for the first half of 2020 (NPAA, 2018, p. 1221).

The development of the Republic of Serbia's capacity to participate in the Union's civilian missions is one of the important issues in Chapter 31, given that these missions are a crucial aspect of the EU Common Security and Defense Policy. EU civilian missions are established according to the United Nations Security Council resolutions and/or a decision of the EU Council, and their engagement is planned upon the needs and requests of the Union. Although there were no legal obstacles to the deployment of members of the military and other forces to multinational operations, the current legal framework did not envisage the deployment of civilian experts from Serbia to international civilian peacekeeping missions (Milenković & Ignjatović & Novaković, 2017, str. 49). To strengthen Serbia's capacity for participation in civilian missions, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted in May 2017 a Report on the need to establish a national legislative framework and institutional capacities for civilian participation in multinational operations. The Action Plan for Developing Civil Contributions of the Republic of Serbia to the EU, the OSCE and the UN Multinational Operations was adopted in June next year (NPAA IR for 2018, 2019, p. 126). Serbia is preparing a framework for participation in civilian missions under the CSDP, which includes, inter alia, the establishment of a

national base of civilian experts for participation in national operations, under the mandate of the European Union, the OSCE and the UN. In 2018 and 2019, the institutions of the Republic of Serbia held several cycles of courses for civilian participation in multinational operations (NPAA IR for 2019, 2019, p. 121).

Also, Serbia is cooperating with the European Defense Agency. The legal basis for cooperation is the Administrative Agreement between the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Serbia and the European Defense Agency of December 2013. Through this cooperation, realized within the framework of various projects, the adoption of the best European practice and effective integration of the Serbian defense industry into the European defense-technological industrial base is expected. It should contribute, inter alia, to improving Serbia's military and defense capabilities by increasing the productivity of the domestic defense industry, the research potential of Serbian institutes, as well as technological modernization and preservation of its weapons and military equipment production (NPAA, 2018, p. 225).

As regards the prohibition of arms proliferation, arms control and arms exports, Serbia is included in some international export control treaties and anti-proliferation instruments, as mentioned in the European Commission Report. It has fulfilled its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and developed an active legislative and administrative structure. In addition to the storage system, a national registry and database system for small arms and light weapons were created. Serbia ratified the Additional Protocol to the Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency regarding the implementation of safeguards under the Non-proliferation Treaty in July 2018. The European Commission positively evaluates the fact that Serbia does not have bilateral immunity agreements which derogate from the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, and that it agrees with the EU common positions on the integrity of the Rome Statute, together with the relevant EU principles on bilateral immunity agreements. The European Commission also welcomes the fact that Serbia respects the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and supports EU measures and documents for conflict prevention. (SR, 2019, p. 92). Serbia adopted a law on international restraint measures in 2016 to establish a legal framework for the application of international sanctions, which was one of the obligations of the negotiating Chapter 31.

Finally, it is important to note that the European Commission reports on Serbia for years 2012 and 2013 showed a high percentage of Serbia's compliance with EU decisions in the area of the Common Foreign, Security



and Defense Policy. In the European Commission Report for 2012, Serbia's level of compliance with the EU policy in this area is estimated at 99%. More specifically, Serbia joined the relevant declarations and decisions of the European Council in 69 out of 70 cases. It was then concluded that Serbia had significantly improved compliance with EU declarations and Council decisions in the area of the foreign, security and defense policy, and that alignment with the EU in this area was on the right path (SPR, 2012, pp. 62-63). The Report adopted next year states that, when called upon to do so, Serbia complied with 31 of the 35 relevant EU declarations and decisions, which represents 89% compliance. It was further noted that, at the same time, Serbia had taken a step closer to the Collective Security Treaty Organization by obtaining observer status in its Parliamentary Assembly in April 2013 (SPR, 2013, p. 59).

## CHALLENGES

Besides the aforementioned measures, which provided a visible degree of Serbia's compliance with the EU in the area of the Common Foreign, Security and Defense Policy and the fact that Chapter 31 is usually not too demanding, it has nevertheless become a particular challenge for Serbia. This was largely influenced by the Ukrainian crisis, having profound consequences on EU-Russia relations. In response to the annexation of Crimea and the destabilization of the neighboring sovereign country, the Union has introduced a series of restrictive measures against Russia. EU leaders canceled the Summit with Russia scheduled for June 2014. As part of the suspension of political relations, the EU Member States have decided to suspend regular bilateral summits with Russia. Bilateral talks on visas, a new EU-Russia basic agreement, as well as preparations for participation in the G8 Summit in Sochi, were also suspended. In addition, the Union froze the assets and banned travel to certain Russian and Ukrainian officials. Due to the situation in Ukraine, the EU has imposed far-reaching economic sanctions on Russia, to which Russia has responded with counter-sanctions.

Although the European Commission's Screening Report for Chapter 31 is the subject of closed debate between the Member States within the EU Council, it is speculated that Serbia's decision not to join the sanctions imposed on Russia because of the crisis in Ukraine represents a major obstacle to its adoption and further negotiations on this Chapter. In other words, as international relations have become more complicated, the

Member States are trying to reach a consensus on certain issues within the EU in order to implement a unitary foreign policy.

The European Commission's 2014 Progress Report states that when invited, Serbia complied with 28 of 45 EU Council declarations and decisions in the area of the common foreign and security policy. This is a decline in compliance to 62% compared to 89% during the 2013 reference period of the Progress Report. Serbia generally supported Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, but the Report noted that it was absent from the vote on the UN General Assembly resolution on the territorial integrity of Ukraine. It further states that when called upon to do so, Serbia did not join the Council's decisions imposing restrictive measures in the context of the illegal annexation of Crimea to Russia and events in eastern Ukraine. The conclusion of this part of the Report emphasizes that Serbia's alignment with EU declarations and Council decisions in the area of foreign and security policy has significantly decreased compared to previous years and should be improved. (Serbia 2014 Progress Report, p. 61) These changes in the European Commission's assessment of the progress made by Serbia in Chapter 31 show that the Ukrainian crisis has affected Serbia's assessment as a candidate country.

Starting from 2015, the European Commission's annual Progress Reports on Serbia in the part regarding Chapter 31 clearly state that the Member States, besides conducting political dialogue in the context of foreign, security and defense policy, must be capable of joining EU declarations, participate in EU activities and apply agreed sanctions and restrictive measures. In this context, there is also a clear recommendation from the Commission that Serbia should implement its law imposing international sanctions, including restrictive EU measures, and monitor its implementation, as well as to advance the accession to EU declarations and Council decisions on the common foreign and security policy. The European Commission's 2015 Progress Report states that when invited, Serbia complied with 26 of 40 EU Council declarations and decisions. Considering the compliance percentage was 65%, this is not a significant change from the previous year. As in 2014, Serbia did not comply with the Council's decisions, including restrictive measures imposed by the EU on Russia over the illegal annexation of Crimea and events in eastern Ukraine. However, as noted in this report, Serbia also did not comply with the Council's decisions on Bosnia and Herzegovina or Moldova (SR, 2015, p. 70). The European Commission's 2016 Report positively evaluated the fact that Serbia had adopted Law on Implementation of International sanctions in

February, including restrictive EU measures. However, it is further stated that following already established practice, Serbia has not joined the Council's decisions involving restrictive EU measures relating to Russia or issues affecting Russia's interests. Besides, Serbia has not joined the Council's decisions on China, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova and Zimbabwe. As a result, Serbia's accession rate regarding EU declarations and Council decisions in the area covered by Chapter 31, has dropped to around 59%. It is further stated that in September and October 2016, Serbia did not join the EU decisions on South Sudan, Syria, and Burundi (SR, 2016, p. 80). The European Commission's 2018 Progress Report on Serbia reiterates that when Serbia was invited, it complied with 34 of 65 EU declarations and Council decisions, which represents an accession rate of close to 52%. Among other things, Serbia did not join the EU restrictive measures against Russia and Ukraine. Besides, it is noted that Serbia has ratified the Co-operation and Joint Action Agreement between its Ministry of the Interior and the Russian Federal Security Service. The report recalled that 'Serbia has to ensure that the implementation of this agreement does not violate its obligations under the EU accession negotiations, which concern, *inter alia*, data protection and the exchange of classified information.' (SR, 2018, p. 85). The latest 2019 Annual Report of the European Commission reiterates that Serbia is expected to 'improve alignment with EU declarations and Council decisions on the Common Foreign and Security Policy' and to apply the law introducing international restraint measures, including restrictive EU measures, and to monitor its implementation. Moreover, it is noted that Serbia has continued to fail to comply with EU restrictive measures that affect, *inter alia*, Russia and Venezuela. Serbia, when invited, complied with 46 of 87 relevant declarations and decisions of the Council, representing a compliance rate of close to 53% (SR, 2019, p. 103).

The answer to the question why Serbia did not join the aforementioned EU declarations and measures can be found, among other things, in the National Program for the Adoption of the Acquis, adopted by the Government of the Republic of Serbia on the proposal of the Ministry of European Integration in 2018. As the primary reasons, this document states economic and political reasons. In doing so, it states, Serbia has maintained the consistent position it has had since the start of the SAA alignment process, meaning that 'all accession decisions are carefully considered, taking into account all state and national interests.' Therefore, the generally lower percentage of accession to EU declarations under the CFSP is a result of the fact that it is in the political and economic interest of Serbia to maintain traditionally good historical and cultural ties and relations with these

countries, as well as with those who support the territorial integrity of the RS and act in accordance with such a position in the international forum. Thereby, our country recognizes that the support given by Russia and China as the permanent members of the UN Security Council is of paramount importance. In this document, we can also find an explanation that because of the cooling of EU-RF relations after the Ukrainian crisis, Serbia did not join a large number of declarations, whether political or imposed by restrictive RF measures. As noted, the reason is the fact that Russia is an important economic and political partner of Serbia and that any possible accession to EU sanctions would adversely affect its bilateral relations with Russia (NPAA, 2018, p. 1275).

Taking into account that since the escalation of the Ukrainian crisis, the level of adoption of EU regulatory acts in the field of the Common Foreign, Security and Defense policy is noticeably lower, Djukanovic points out that, although the political elite tries to maintain the illusion of intensive and good relations with both the EU and Russia, space for Serbia's maneuver is reduced. Because of the difficult social and economic situation and the dependence of the Serbian economy on the EU, this does not allow Serbia to develop, as an alternative, additional close relations with the Russian Federation (Đukanović, 2015, p. 88).

Closer cooperation with the EU in the area of CFSP/CSDP is in accordance with the Stabilization and Association Agreement, which is the basic legal document governing cooperation and relations between Serbia and the EU until accession. It envisages Serbia's readiness to align its position with the EU policy in various fields, including specific requirements for the Common Foreign, Security and Defense policy. Article 10 of the Stabilization and Association Agreement implies, inter alia, a greater approximation of the views of the parties in international matters, including those relating to the common foreign and security policy through the appropriate exchange of information, and in particular on matters that may significantly affect the parties. Besides, common positions on security and stability in Europe are envisaged, including cooperation in areas covered by the common external security and defense policy.

The Defense Strategy of the Republic of Serbia adopted in September 2019 states that the country's defense interest is to improve national security and defense through the process of European integration while respecting the specificities of the Republic of Serbia. It is further envisaged that this defense interest will be pursued by strengthening cooperative security with the EU, with particular attention being paid to strengthening individual

security and promoting regional stability. It also expresses Serbia's commitment to hold security and defense consultations with the EU on issues of common interest, with the possibility of joint actions within the CSDP, which would be based on the common European values. In addition, it is emphasized that Serbia's participation in the CSDP activities is of particular importance for improving its national security and defense. It stresses that Serbia will continue to participate in EU military operations and civilian missions, and also intensify its participation in the organs and integrated structures of the common security and defense policy. It is further stated that the planning, preparation and operationalization of the participation of the Serbian Armed Forces and other defense forces in EU combat groups will continue, as it is assumed to be important for improving Serbia's national security and defense. Bearing in mind that both the military-neutral Union Member States and non-EU and NATO member states take part in this concept, it is concluded that Serbia's military neutrality is not an obstacle to its further integration into the EU (DSRS, 2019).

The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, also adopted in 2019, states that European integration and EU membership are Serbia's national interests and strategic orientation. This document states, among other things, that Serbia is 'firmly committed to contributing to the EU Common Foreign, Security and Defense Policy as part of the accession process, and to integrate into the concepts of that European policy'. It further states that Serbia 'endorses the European values and foreign policy objectives expressed in the basic documents of the European Union, as well as the main guidelines of its foreign policy actions based on those values.' (NSSRS 2019). The document stipulates that Serbia, in its foreign policy orientation, will strive to pursue a policy in accordance with the goals and principles set out in the EU Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy. It also states the participation of the military and civilian capacities of the Republic of Serbia in EU missions and operations is an important element of foreign policy, thus contributing to the world, European and regional security and respect of international law, and expresses its readiness to enhance mutual trust and shared responsibility in dealing with security challenges. Finally, it is indicated that under the Stabilization and Association Agreement and the Negotiating Framework, Serbia will continue to gradually align its foreign policy with the Union's positions in the period leading up to the EU accession. Therefore, at the time of membership, it will be fully harmonized with its foreign policy. Hence, from the above-stated, it follows that Serbia will support all initiatives in line with the EU Common Foreign, Security and Defense Policy in international

relations. However, bearing in mind that the key Serbia's national interest is the preservation of sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, it is necessary to focus on the part of the Strategy related to the national security policy which states that 'continuation of cooperation with key international actors and all Permanent Members of the UNSC is of strategic importance.' In doing so, the relations with China, Russia and the USA are particularly important. Based on these provisions of the Strategy, it can be concluded that in order to preserve territorial integrity and sovereignty, Serbia does not wish to support decisions, declarations and measures concerning the internal issues or important interests of the countries supporting Serbia's position on Kosovo and Metohija (Ibidem). Therefore, given the national interests of the Republic of Serbia and its complex position in contemporary international relations, it can be expected that adjusting to the European Union within the framework of the negotiating Chapter 31 will be a very demanding and complex challenge.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

Based on the official documents it has adopted, it should be certain that EU membership is one of the national interests of the Republic of Serbia. However, despite Serbia's officially declared willingness to align its foreign policy and security capacities with EU standards, as well as to lead external policy in line with the Union's positions, cooperation under Chapter 31 has become more complex. Although there is no screening report, it is possible to outline Serbia's commitments under this Chapter, based on the European Commission's annual reports on Serbia's progress towards European integration. In recent years, the percentage of alignment with the EU foreign policy declarations and measures has decreased. This is primarily due to the fact that after the Ukrainian crisis, relations between the European Union and the Russian Federation have deteriorated, which has made Serbia's position in international relations significantly complicated. Namely, the harmonization with the EU in the field of the common foreign and security policy has also started implying the imposition of sanctions on Russia, a traditional ally of Serbia, and one of the key international actors, who constantly and actively supports it in protecting its territorial integrity and sovereignty, which is the basic national interest of the Republic of Serbia.

Bearing in mind that Serbia maintains close relations with both the European Union and Russia, the further development of their relations will greatly influence Serbia's degree of alignment with the EU Foreign, Security

and Defense policy. In this context, it will be important how permanent and unique the position in the Union itself will remain when assessing Russia's policy regarding the Ukrainian crisis. In any case, the further pace of Serbia's pre-accession negotiations will depend, first of all, on the further development of the international situation. This will certainly be influenced by the development of the situation at the national level as well, i.e., whether the country's basic directions and long-term foreign policy will remain unchanged. When conducting foreign policy, it should also be considered that some EU Member States see Serbia's policy of balancing between the European Union and Russia as an indication of future problems. So, basically, it is a matter of the extent to which Serbia will be able to integrate into the EU Common Foreign, Security and Defense Policy, and support the Union's unique foreign policy measures and actions, given the limitations of its political and economic ties with Russia. Although Serbia's position not to join certain restrictive EU measures is valid and understandable, I could agree with the opinions expressed in the Book of recommendations of the National Convent on the European Union that it should select one or two genuinely key points that it does not agree with, but should actively support all other activities and measures envisaged by the Common Foreign, Security and Defense Policy. In this context, it is stressed that the Republic of Serbia should analyze the declarations and measures with which it could have complied in the previous period, without jeopardizing its relations with those countries on which its key national interest probably currently depends. Besides, while it cannot affect the current international environment by improving bilateral relations with the EU Member States, Serbia can improve its position in EU negotiations. In this way, Serbia could reduce the potential negative effects of tensions that exist, primarily due to the Ukrainian crisis, between the European Union and the Russian Federation. On the other hand, the European Union and its Member States, by harmonizing their position on Serbia and providing a clear perspective on membership, could help to consolidate changes in the country. Therefore, the EU should create the conditions for Serbia to receive a screening report as soon as possible in order to focus on the issues covered by this Chapter and to encourage it to become more involved in cooperation within the EU Common Foreign, Security and Defense Policy.

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## THE ANALYSIS OF MAIN MACROECONOMIC INDICATORS – A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SERBIA AND THE SELECTED SEE COUNTRIES<sup>3</sup>

*Abstract:* The analysis of the main macroeconomic indicators is important to show the overall state of the economy, predict its stability and enable investors, above all, to respond in a timely manner to sudden or unpredictable events. Accordingly, it can be said that the main macroeconomic indicators describe the state and efficiency of each national economy. The main objective of the paper is to present the current economic situation in the observed countries by looking at macroeconomic indicators: real GDP, unemployment rate, consumer and producer price, gross foreign direct investment, and total government debt. The subject of the paper is focused on comparative analysis of major macroeconomic indicators in the selected SEE countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia). In order to get a clear picture of the current state of each of these economies, the secondary data for 2018 and the first two quarters of 2019 will be used in the analysis, all with the task of presenting any problems that may exist and their possible solutions. Comparing Serbia's position vis-à-vis other SEE countries, it can be concluded that it has transformed into a growing economy with low inflation, fiscal surpluses, declining public debt, lowering external imbalance, and a recovery in the labour market. It is expected that the growth trend will continue in the coming period, which will result in even better economic development and increased openness to new investments.

*Keywords:* GDP, unemployment rate, FDI, government debt.

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## INTRODUCTION

Macroeconomic policy is a set of government activities aimed at achieving the most important economic goals. Therefore, the basic goals of each country's macroeconomic policy are directed towards economic growth, high employment, as well as price and balance of payments stability. In addition, particular attention is paid to the budget deficit, which may influence the reduction of purchasing power to some extent and also the share of public debt related to gross domestic product. When it comes to macroeconomic policy, it is nowadays accepted that all activities are directed towards maintaining the overall balance and stimulating economic growth. For macroeconomic policy to be effective, it is necessary to ensure the sustainability of the factors that determine it, which primarily refers to the coherence of goals and instruments, as well as the reality of the goals themselves, coherence of macroeconomic policy measures, selection of the most effective measures, and timeliness in undertaking them. It is very important that economic policymakers, as the main subjects, adopt adequate measures and realize the set economic policy goals.

In the coming period, structural and institutional reforms should gradually strengthen the potential growth of countries that have not yet become EU members, helping them prepare for the accession process. Certainly, one of the main goals of these countries is to maintain macroeconomic and financial stability, which would contribute to better implementation of structural and institutional reform programs to achieve faster and more inclusive growth, job creation, and a better standard of living.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between economic growth and macroeconomic indicators has long been a popular issue of debate in the literature on economic development (Tas et al., 2013). Accurate and timely information on the current state of economic activity is an important requirement for the policymaking process (Sédillot and Pain, 2003).

The main goals of each country's macroeconomic policy today can be reduced to economic growth, high employment, price stability, and the balance of payments (Petrović et al., 2013). Josifidis (2010) presented three variants of macroeconomic goals in their research: (a) price stability, low unemployment, high and sustainable economic growth, (b) high output growth, steady output growth, low unemployment and low inflation, and

(c) high level and high output rate, high level and low unemployment and price stability. Macroeconomic indicators – especially inflation, gross domestic product growth, public deficits and unemployment – stand central in economic governance. Policy-makers use them to assess their economies' health (Mügge, 2016).

Intuitively higher government saving rate (measured as the percentage of budget surplus in GDP) is likely to affect economic growth positively through two channels: (1) countries which have higher government saving rates also tend to have greater overall savings and investment, and therefore grow faster; and (2) higher government saving indicates sound overall macroeconomic management, which lowers risks for investors and increases investment leading to a higher rate of economic growth (Ciftcioglu and Begovic, 2008).

Economic growth is characterized by increasing the scale of aggregate production and consumption, defined as a gross domestic product. GDP reflects the market value of all goods and services in all economic sectors for consumption, export and accumulation. Therefore, this indicator is the major macroeconomic indicator that reflects the results of the functioning of the economy (Ableeva, 2014). The objective behind a calculation of GDP per capita is to quantify the average amount of goods and services available to each person in an economy (Angeles, 2008). Real GDP tends to underestimate the increase in real domestic income and welfare when the terms of trade improve (Kohli, 2004).

Forecasters commonly predict real gross domestic product growth from monthly indicators such as industrial production, retail sales and surveys, and therefore require an assessment of the reliability of such tools (Diron, 2008). The government's calculation of real GDP growth begins with the estimation of nominal GDP, which is the market value of the millions of goods and services sold in the market to households, firms, governments, and foreign buyers (Feldstein, 2017).

One of the main goals for most developing countries is to achieve stable and long-term growth and maintain political stability. In order to make it feasible, each country should attract more foreign direct investment, which would contribute to the development of the country in a certain period (Domazet and Marjanović, 2018b).

One of the key economic performances is the unemployment rate. Unemployment reacts simultaneously with the economy as a whole. It decreases and increases in line with the business cycles. Unemployment is seen as a situation in which working-age persons cannot find employment

with their qualifications. Unemployment occurs on an equal footing in both developed and underdeveloped countries, where the standard of living is low. As Veselinovic (2013) cites the underutilisation of the human potential of a country, it has a direct impact on its national economy and gross domestic product, which, among other things, results in a low standard of living and poverty. In the opinion of Su (2014), the results of the Granger causality analysis show that the unemployment-related search indices can improve predictions of the macroeconomic indicators. It suggests that unemployment-related searches can potentially provide valuable, timely, and low-cost information for macroeconomic monitoring.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

Since the development of each economy is greatly influenced by an actively driven macroeconomic policy, this paper will seek to present the current state of national economies of Southeast Europe when it comes to certain macroeconomic indicators. The aim is to show the mutual relationship and position of each of the countries observed through a comparative analysis of the selected indicators. The analysis is focused on (a) real GDP and the unemployment rate in the domain of Economic activity, (b) consumer prices and producer prices in the domain of Prices, wages and exchange rates, (c) gross foreign direct investment in the domain of Foreign trade and capital flows, and (d) total government debt in the domain of Government finance. The analysis was performed based on the available secondary data, i.e., data available in Eurostat Databases and the National Statistical Institutes of each of the countries observed. The period covered by the analysis referred to 2018 and the first two quarters of 2019.

The first part of the analysis was aimed at presenting Real GDP in the selected SEE countries in the observed period. Real gross domestic product (GDP) is a macroeconomic measure of the value of economic output adjusted for price changes (i.e., inflation or deflation), respectively, is an inflation-adjusted measure that reflects the value of all goods and services produced by an economy in a given year, expressed in base-year prices. Based on the results presented in Table 1, it can be seen that in the first two quarters of 2019, Real GDP was in the range of 2.4 (Croatia) to 4.5 (Romania).

According to Kuzmanović (2007), gross domestic product (GDP) represents the total production of goods and services that have been achieved in the national economy over one year, regardless of ownership.

Also, GDP is defined as the most famous and commonly used macroeconomic aggregate of the National Accounts System.

*Table 1. Real GDP (% change, YoY)*

	Q1 2018	Q2 2018	Q3 2018	Q4 2018	Q1 2019	Q2 2019
BiH	3.5	3.9	3.1	3.9	2.8	2.6
Croatia	2.5	2.9	2.8	2.3	3.9	2.4
Montenegro	4.5	4.9	5.0	4.8	3.0	3.2
North Macedonia	0.9	3.0	3.0	3.7	4.1	3.1
Romania	4.3	4.1	3.7	4.0	5.0	4.5
Serbia	4.9	4.9	4.1	3.4	2.7	2.9
Slovenia	4.3	3.7	4.6	3.8	3.3	2.5

Source: Authors based on Eurostat and National Statistical Offices of SEE countries

Table 1 shows the Real GDP (% change, YoY) for 2018 and the first two quarters of 2019, where it is seen that it varies from country to country. Looking at the second quarter of 2019, and excluding Romania, which has the highest Real GDP (4.5%), the other analyzed countries are in the range of 2.4% to 3.2%. In the first semester of 2019, economic growth in Bosnia and Herzegovina slowed slightly, the main reason being the increase in the foreign trade deficit. It is characteristic of Croatia that the economy has been continuously growing for 19 consecutive quarters, and this represented one of the highest growth rates of the GDP for the first quarter of 2019 among the EU member states. The main drivers of growth in 2019 were a large increase in public investments. When it comes to the real GDP growth rate of Montenegro, the positive economic trends which contributed to the significant real GDP growth of 5.1% in the previous year, continued their positive trend in the first half of 2019. A high amount of uncertainty for the process of the EU accession has led to oscillations in the North Macedonian economy, which was reflected through the growth of the Real GDP, and then there was a decrease in 2019 of 24%, thus reaching 3.1 in Q2. Although the dynamics of real GDP in Romania was positive, with an annual growth of 4.1% in 2018, the pace of economic growth is slowing down. The overall



2019 real GDP growth is predicted to reach 4%. In Serbia, the real GDP growth was 4.4% in 2018. Through the first two quarters of 2018, the Serbian economy has continued to grow. The last two quarters of the same year resulted in the real GDP drop. That trend continues in the first quarter of 2019, and in 2019 the real GDP is expected to be 3.5%. Slovenia's economic growth continued to be driven primarily by investment, but export growth also accelerated in the first part of 2019, particularly exports of medicinal and pharmaceutical products.

Table 2 shows the unemployment rate in the observed period for the selected SEE countries. The unemployment rate is the share of the labour force that is jobless, expressed as a percentage. When the economy is in poor shape and jobs are scarce, the unemployment rate can be expected to rise. When the economy is growing at a healthy rate and jobs are relatively plentiful, it can be expected to fall.

*Table 2. Unemployment rate (registered, % pa)*

	Q1 2018	Q2 2018	Q3 2018	Q4 2018	Q1 2019	Q2 2019
BiH	37.3	36.1	35.7	34.8	34.3	33.0
Croatia	12.1	9.5	8.5	9.2	9.4	7.3
Montenegro	16.1	14.4	14.1	16.1	15.0	14.3
North Macedonia	21.6	21.1	20.8	19.4	17.8	17.5
Romania	4.8	4.3	4.0	4.2	4.2	4.1
Serbia	14.8	11.9	11.3	12.9	12.1	10.3
Slovenia	9.0	8.1	7.9	8.0	8.3	7.5

Source: Authors based on Eurostat and National Statistical Offices of SEE countries

In the last quarter of 2018 and the first two quarters of 2019, there was a constant increase in the number of employees in Bosnia and Herzegovina in almost all areas. Due to the increase in the number of employees, unemployment has been steadily declining in the mentioned period. In 2018, the lowest survey unemployment rate was registered in BiH and amounted to 18.4%. In the second quarter of 2019, the unemployment rate in Croatia

reached only 7.3%, which is another record low unemployment level in the post-crisis period. The fall of unemployment is partly a result of increased economic growth and new job openings as well as active labour market policies. The number of employed persons in Montenegro in the first six months of 2019 was 8.9% higher than in the same period last year, while the number of unemployed persons in the first half of 2019 was 17.6% less than in the same period last year. The highest growth was recorded in the sectors of professional, scientific and technical activities, construction and accommodation services. Gender inequality is one of the challenges of the Macedonian labour market. In the past ten years, the activity rate of women remained significantly lower (44.3% (women) and 69.3% (men)). Although the employment rates of women are continuously increasing since 2012, the differences between the genders are deepening because those of men are rising more intensively. In the first half of 2019, in Romania, the number of employees economy-wide descended (annual change of 1.4 % in Q1 and 1.1 % in April-May, down from 1.6% in the second half of 2018). From a structural perspective, a disturbing evolution was the deceleration owed to the private sector, amid the slower hiring pace in market services and industry downsizing (especially in the automotive sector). When it comes to Serbia, the employment rate dropped in the last quarter of 2018 and then remain steady in the first quarter of 2019. In the second quarter of 2019 rose by 49.2%. At the end of the second quarter of 2019, unemployment in Serbia was 9.5%. Although the unemployment rate has been significantly reduced, it is still higher than in the developed countries of Europe. In the first six months of 2019, employment in Slovenia continued to rise, albeit at a slower pace than in previous years. A large share of enterprises continues to face a shortage of appropriately skilled workers due to a mismatch between the skills of young people entering the labour market and the skills sought after by employers. Employment growth is expected to slow down in the next period under the impact of weaker growth in economic activity and, increasingly, demographic trends.

Table 3 shows the percentage of change in consumer and producer prices over the observed period for the selected SEE countries. There are two inflationary measures, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and the Producer Price Index (PPI). CPI is a measure of the total value of goods and services consumers have bought over a specified period, while PPI is a measure of inflation from the perspective of producers (Ülke and Ergun, 2014).

Table 3. Consumer and producer prices (% change, yoy, pa)

		Bosnia and Herzegovina	Croatia	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Romania	Serbia	Slovenia
Consumer prices	Q1	0.8	1.0	2.7	1.5	3.73	1.6	1.3
Producer prices	2018	3.2	1.3	-0.6	0.8	3.5	0.8	2.2
Consumer prices	Q2	1.4	1.9	3.2	1.5	4.53	1.8	1.9
Producer prices	2018	0.8	2.4	1.1	-0.2	6.1	3.0	2.1
Consumer prices	Q3	0.9	1.9	2.7	1.6	4.56	2.4	1.9
Producer prices	2018	2.3	3.7	2.0	-0.8	6.4	3.6	2.4
Consumer prices	Q4	1.7	1.3	1.8	1.2	4.3	2.0	1.9
Producer prices	2018	2.5	2.0	2.9	-1.0	4.87	1.1	1.6
Consumer prices	Q1	1.0	0.5	0.5	1.2	4.1	2.4	1.3
Producer prices	2019	1.4	1.5	0.9	0.2	5.6	1.7	1.1
Consumer prices	Q2	0.6	0.7	0.5	1.2	3.9	2.3	1.6
Producer prices	2019	0.6	1.5	1.1	0.9	4.2	0.7	0.9

Source: Authors based on Eurostat and National Statistical Offices of SEE countries

Inflation measured by the Consumer Price Index in Bosnia and Herzegovina was 1.2% in 2018. In the first two quarters of 2019, there was a slight fall in the price level, so in the second quarter of 2019 inflation was 0.6%. The highest price increase in the first two quarters of 2019 was in the sections of alcoholic beverages and tobacco (4.2% y/y; influenced by the increase in excise taxes) and transportation (2.9% y/y). In Croatia, the consumer price index (CPI) fell significantly in the first two quarters of 2019 compared to 2018 (to 0.5% and 0.7% respectively) as anticipated, thanks to tax measures that came into force from 1st January 2019. Namely, the VAT reductions from 25% to 13% on various unprocessed food products (meat, eggs, fresh fruits, and vegetables, etc.) subdued the rise of prices of these products that are a significant part of the consumer basket. The low consumer prices in the Eurozone also contributed to a rather low inflation rate in Croatia in the first half of 2019. The consumer and producer price index saw a stable increase in the observed period in North Macedonia. The largest increase in production prices was recorded in the fourth quarter of 2018, where an increase of 26.6% is realized since the previous quarter. From there on out,

the producers' prices fall for a significant percentage of 25%, and remain stable in the last two quarters. On the side of the demand, the biggest increase of the consumer price index in the observational period is noted in the first quarter of 2019, where the index went down 0.9 percentage. Inflation in Romania in 2018 stood at 4.1%, the highest in the EU. Annual consumer price growth remained strong in the first and second quarters of 2019, around 4%. However, it is expected to decelerate in the third quarter. Inflation evolution synthetically reflects the uncertainty around the perspectives of the economic environment and the construction and implementation of economic policies. In Serbia, consumer prices are higher inter-annually in the two-quarters of 2019, then the lower limit on the targeted inflation of the National Bank of Serbia for the same year. When we analyze the contribution of consumer prices by purpose, we can see that the share of unprocessed food is the biggest, and processed food has the smallest share in the whole contribution of customer price growth. In June 2019, consumer prices in Slovenia grew on average by 1.8% at the annual level. In the first half of 2019, inflation was primarily driven by domestic factors. In addition to favourable economic conditions and rising household consumption, inflation continues to be driven mainly by higher prices of services.

Table 4 shows gross foreign direct investment over the observed period for the selected SEE countries. Foreign direct investments are considered to be an effective means to raise comparative advantages of one country, where it requires the internationalization of business, in which the main actors are multinational companies (Domazet & Marjanović, 2018a).

*Table 4. Gross foreign direct investment (EUR million)*

	Q1 2018	Q2 2018	Q3 2018	Q4 2018	Q1 2019	Q2 2019
BiH	144	72	124	59	129	203
Croatia	533	496	90	-157	343	-28
Montenegro	138.38	265.24	184.58	269.92	181.76	193.0
North Macedonia	294.2	126.4	41.2	77	220.3	118.7
Romania	850.49	601.02	909.35	282.95	444.82	313.86
Serbia	723.5	682.1	598.1	1,184.2	800.5	994.9
Slovenia	284	216	483	311	847	44

Source: Authors based on Eurostat and National Statistical Offices of SEE countries

In the first half of 2019, gross foreign direct investment in Bosnia and Herzegovina stood at EUR 332 million, a 53% increase compared with the same period last year. However, in addition to significant shifts, relatively favourable business and investment climate have not been created and an institutional environment built to attract foreign investors, which is one of the key constraints on economic development and growth in the coming period. The significant growth of investments in Croatia will be pronounced in 2019 (8%) owing to the large infrastructure projects. The main sources of growth are attributed to the increase in gross investment in fixed assets and domestic consumption, albeit at a much slower pace than in the previous quarter. In the first two quarters of 2019, the net inflow of foreign direct investment in Montenegro is 48% more than in the same period of the previous year, as a result of an increase in inflows from equity investments and a decrease in the total outflow. When it comes to North Macedonia, the financial account of the balance of payments in 2018 recorded significant net inflows, mainly in the form of foreign direct investments, as well as borrowing on the international financial markets. Due to the reduced external borrowing of the economy and offsetting the positive effects of FDI inflows with net outflows on some of the short-term financial flows, in 2019, the deficit had to be financed mainly by foreign reserves, which led to their reduction. The FDI-to-GDP ratio in Romania rose above 2% and covered an important fraction of the trade deficit. In the first seven months of 2019, the number of newly established foreign capital companies increased, with 3,348 new companies having a share capital totalling 13.59 million US dollars, a 37.4 increase over the January-July 2018 period. The growth of foreign direct investment in Serbia is the result of two main factors. The first is to strengthen the European economy, which has boosted investor confidence and triggered the investment expansion, especially in manufacturing. Another reason is the efforts made to attract FDI through promotional activities, reform of the commercial environment, and investment packages tailored for large foreign companies. Serbia, which has the highest inflow of foreign direct investment in the region, saw a 44 percent growth in 2018. In the first six months of 2019, FDI inflows amounted to approximately EUR 1.8 billion. Over the last five years, there has been a growing trend of FDI, which contributes to the fact that the net inflow of these investments is more than sufficient to cover the current account deficit. FDI inflow strengthened further in Slovenia, including via privatization and takeovers in the insurance and non-financial activities. Slovenian outward FDI was on a significantly lower level. Year on year (YoY) growth in investment has

strengthened slightly from the end of 2018. Gross fixed capital formation increased by 10.0% and 6.9% YoY in the first two quarters of 2019.

Table 5 shows the total government debt over the observed period for the selected SEE countries. Government debt can be categorized as internal debt (owed to lenders within the country) and external debt (owed to foreign lenders). Less creditworthy countries sometimes borrow directly from a supranational organization (e.g. the World Bank) or international financial institutions.

*Table 5. Total government debt (eop. % of GDP)*

	Q1 2018	Q2 2018	Q3 2018	Q4 2018	Q1 2019	Q2 2019
BiH	26	25	25	24.5	25.4	23.4
Croatia	80.5	75.8	75.4	74.1	75.4	75.5
Montenegro	57.1	66.5	66.3	67.6	66.2	65.2
North Macedonia	39.8	40.1	40.1	40.5	38.2	38.4
Romania	34.5	34.3	34.2	35.0	34.1	34.2
Serbia	56.3	56.8	56.8	54.5	50.9	51.4
Slovenia	75.6	72.9	71.4	70.4	68.1	67.7

Source: Authors based on Eurostat and National Statistical Offices of SEE countries

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the budget surplus trend continued in 2019 (KM 726 million in the first semester of 2019). A positive trend in government finance has contributed to the reduction of domestic government debt, which has been reduced by 8% over a period of one year. The total government debt in 2019 was just over 25%. The level of total public debt in Croatia slightly increased in the course of 2019 reaching 75.4% in the first quarter, mainly due to the new government bonds issued. In May 2019 the total government debt amounted to HRK 286.8bn, which is up by HRK 2.1 billion, compared to the level at the end of 2018. In Montenegro, the total government debt (without deposits) at the end of June 2019 amounted to 65.2% of GDP. External debt was 54.6% of GDP, domestic debt was 10.66% of GDP, net government debt at the end of June 2019 amounted

to 61.4% of GDP. The majority of sovereign debt is serviced at fixed interest rates (74.9%) so that the interest rate structure of sovereign debt can be assessed as favourable. The total public government debt has increased at the amount above 5.4 billion euros, but relatively, as the percentage of GDP in Q2 of 2019 declined by 0.2 %. Improving the efficiency and equity of public spending as well as strengthening revenue mobilization remain priorities for fiscal policy to reduce the high debt levels, create fiscal buffers to mitigate risks and improve the delivery of public services in North Macedonia. Romania's government debt in accordance with the EU methodology was at 35% of GDP at the end of 2018, which is much lower than the ceiling of 60% set by the Maastricht Treaty. The Government informed the European Commission that it projects end-2019 public debt at RON 362.6 billion, some 10% up from one year earlier. Such a rise accounted for around 1% of the GDP. Serbia has an almost stable external foreign debt trend from 2017 until the second quarter of 2019. The average percentage change in that period was approx 1 %. The decline in public debt has continued, and most likely, by the end of 2019 debt to GDP will be around 50%. Good fiscal prospects reflected on the level of interest rates on government debt. In Slovenia, the debt-to-GDP ratio decreased further in 2018. Supported by economic growth and active public debt management, it stood at 70.1% and was 4.0 percentage points down compared to 2017.

## CONCLUSION

One of the main goals for each national economy and, therefore, economic policymakers is to maintain a general macroeconomic balance. This objective is achievable if trends in macroeconomic indicators are viewed quantitatively and qualitatively, with a timely response to their movements. However, the choice of macroeconomic instruments is not the same for each country. Unlike developed countries, which rely on fewer instruments such as fiscal and monetary policy, other countries, in addition to mandatory fiscal policy (public spending and taxes) and monetary policy (money supply and interest rate), must be guided by income sharing and exchange policies with foreign countries. If one policy is not properly managed, it can have consequences in the form of restrictions on the other policy, all of which may adversely affect the country's macroeconomic situation. Therefore, the goal of macroeconomic policy is to provide sustainable economic stability in the country and thus prepare the conditions for economic growth.

As one of the major macroeconomic aggregates, GDP is suitable for analyzing the state of the economy of a particular country. Macroeconomic and financial stability, better investment and business environment, as well as the realization of infrastructure projects are factors that can contribute to investment growth.

One of the key issues for each country is the percentage of employment in the working-age population. In addition to the level of gross domestic product, this is certainly the most consistent indicator of the efficiency of an economy. Faster employment growth than GDP growth reflects a fall in labour productivity and rising labour costs. This scenario reflects a decrease in the competitiveness of a country's economy.

Real GDP in Serbia in the first two quarters of 2019 was about 2.8, while in other countries, it ranged from 3.1 to 4.8 (except for BiH, which has 2.7). The real GDP growth in 2018 compared to the previous year was 4.4%, while in the second quarter of 2019, it was 2.9 percent over the same period last year. By activity, in the second quarter of this year, compared to the same period of 2018, the most significant real growth of gross value added was recorded in the construction sector (16.8 percent) and information and communication (8.2 percent). Given that the unemployment rate in BiH is 33.6, in North Macedonia 17.6 and Montenegro 14.6, in Serbia it stands at 11.2 but still lags behind Romania (4.1). Compared to the second quarter of 2018, the number of unemployed in Serbia has been reduced partly due to higher employment and partly due to a decrease in the labor force contingent. Further effort is needed in the coming period to bring this rate closer to the EU average. Serbia attracted a significantly higher amount of FDI relative to the countries observed. If activities that contribute to a favorable investment climate continue, it can be expected that in 2020 it will be the leader in the region when it comes to FDI inflows. According to the results presented, the total government debt in Serbia is just above 50% of GDP, and the country is no longer threatened by the imminent threat of a public debt crisis.

The monetary policy goals in 2020 in SEE countries will continue to be focused on price stability and stable exchange rate, continuous stability of the financial system, supporting macroeconomic stability, and deepening of the financial intermediation level.



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