

Regional Security Cooperation in South East Europe in the Aftermath of North Macedonia's NATO Accession

Predrag Jureković and Simonida Kacarska (Eds.)

Study Group Information



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Regional Security Cooperation in South East Europe in the Aftermath of North Macedonia's NATO Accession

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Foreword

Predrag Jureković and Simonida Kacarska

This volume is composed of articles from the 41st workshop of the Study Group “Regional Stability in South East Europe”. The workshop was conducted in Skopje, North Macedonia, from 23 to 26 September 2021. Under the overarching title “Regional Security Cooperation in South East Europe in the Aftermath of North Macedonia’s NATO Accession” experts from the South East European region and other parts of Europe, international organizations and major stake holder nations met under the umbrella of the PFP Consortium of Defence Academies and Security Studies Institutes and the Austrian Ministry of Defence, represented through its National Defence Academy and the Directorate General for Defence Policy. The workshop was supported by the regional partner, the European Policy Institute from Skopje.

With North Macedonia, the third of the six Western Balkan states joined NATO in March 2020. However, three Western Balkan states (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia) remain outside the North Atlantic Alliance for different reasons. In addition, Kosovo is the only Western Balkan state not yet included in NATO’s Partnership for Peace. Against the background of these different security policy situations and open conflict issues within and between the Western Balkan states, the question arises as to where the transition of the security sector in the individual states has reached more than twenty years after the end of the violent conflicts. Furthermore, the state of security relations within the region and how they can be positively developed with the help of the EU and NATO had to be explored.

An official view of the young NATO member North Macedonia on regional security cooperation is represented in this Study Group Information by the keynote speech of the State Secretary in the Ministry of Defence. Then, in the first academic part of this publication, three case studies present the specific situation of individual states with regard to their security policy orientation, security reforms, and their participation in the framework of regional security cooperation. After that, follow two contributions that evaluate the

interplay between socio-political processes and the security sector in the Western Balkan region. The recommendations of the Study Group members are summarized at the end of this publication, in Part III.

The editors would like to express their thanks to all authors who contributed papers to this volume of the Study Group Information. They are pleased to present the valued readers the analyses and recommendations and would appreciate if this Study Group Information could contribute to generate positive ideas for supporting the still challenging processes of consolidating peace in South East Europe.

Special thanks go to Mirjam Johanna Habisreutinger, who supported this publication as facilitating editor.

Abstract

More than twenty years after the end of the violent conflicts in the Western Balkans, regional security perceptions have deteriorated again due to unresolved political conflicts. The security policy orientations of the Western Balkan countries differ. While three of the Western Balkans-6 have now become NATO members – most recently North Macedonia – the other three are outside the North Atlantic Alliance for different reasons.

Against this security policy backdrop, open conflict issues and dynamic geopolitical developments, it is a major challenge for the Western Balkans-6 to advance their own security reforms and strengthen regional security cooperation. Moreover, in the face of undemocratic developments in parts of the Western Balkans, democratic control and participation of civil society organizations in the security sector have deteriorated.

As the contributions to this Study Group Information show, there is therefore still a need for sufficient support from NATO and the EU, in order to achieve a cooperative security environment in the Western Balkans.

Keynote Speech

Dragan Nikolić

It is my privilege and pleasure to welcome everyone to this Workshop, which can take place despite all the restrictions necessitated by Covid-19. I would therefore like to begin by thanking the organizers.

We could not have pulled off this event without the coherent approach and the teamwork shown by the Partnership for Peace Consortium Study Group “Regional Stability in South East Europe”, the George C. Marshall Center, the Austrian Ministry of Defence and the European Policy Institute from Skopje.

Thank you all for your involvement.

We are also delighted and honoured to have with us specialists from the region. The event of the next three days will be wide-ranging and will, I firmly believe, provide a unique opportunity for fruitful and intensive discussions concerning matters of regional cooperation.

Finally, I am very happy that the conclusions developed in the course of this event will be published by the Austrian National Defence Academy and thus be made available to a wider audience.

We live in a time characterised by a total absence of any distinction between global and regional security matters. Global competition, hybrid warfare, terrorism, cyber-attacks, pandemics, artificial intelligence and any number of security challenges have shown that the security of our so-called global village requires global action. In addition, regional differences add a further layer of ambiguity and make the modern security agenda even more complex, nebulous and unpredictable, especially for small fragile states and young democracies in which remembrances of things past are still very much present.

The Western Balkans and South East Europe (SEE) therefore need the EU and NATO as much as the EU and NATO need them. Speaking from the

perspective of a young NATO member, I believe that this relationship should be and is a win-win situation for all sides. However, although the EU and NATO remain strongly committed to the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of the countries in the region (at least as far as declarations are concerned), reality often seems to bear out the opposite to stated intentions.

Despite all this, stalemate is not an option. We representatives from the region have to find a way of bridging this gap. We can find it through joint effort and sincere dedication. The Western Balkans/SEE is a region of strategic importance for NATO. The stability and security of this region contribute to the general stability and security of the Euro-Atlantic area. It should be and is equally relevant for the EU.

During the last NATO summit, the heads of state and government acknowledged that the Western Balkans is a region of strategic importance for NATO and reaffirmed their commitment to NATO's Open Door Policy under Article 10 of the Washington Treaty. North Macedonia's accession last year was another tangible demonstration of this commitment. NATO's Open-Door Policy must therefore continue with the other SEE countries.

In the so-called Graz Format our defence ministers only recently expressed virtually the same idea, namely that by "Committing to the 'Open Door Policy' as an important principle of regional development, they agree to welcome prospective countries, which accept the region's principles and contribute to regional security, to this platform of cooperation after joint decision".

Some EU countries also share this point of view and demonstrated this in joint border controls of migrant flows, regional crisis management, disaster relief, regional education and training, etc. Other countries remain reluctant to do so.

We are thus more than ever obliged to embrace all capacities and capabilities for the wellbeing of our citizens. We should look at challenges and convert them into opportunities. Fake news must be countered and misperceptions resolved.

An attempt at systematizing challenges would probably produce 1) global considerations, 2) common security challenges and 3) security challenges deriving from the region itself.

The security challenges we face are the product of the global competition between as well as the protracted influence of Russia and China in the region of SEE. As most of the countries in the Western Balkans are politically and economically far from stable or resilient they are all prone to becoming a target or springboard for the political and economic interests of the geo-strategic players mentioned above. We should furthermore remember that political interests are always supported by a security agenda. Media influence, fake news, hybrid threats, cyber and other tools thus serve wider interests.

If we add terrorism, foreign fighters (and their return), as well as the probability of another migrant crisis, we face an unenviable situation. The region MUST therefore work together on those security challenges and threats and find a common regional denominator. If it does not, it will increasingly come under foreign influence.

The characteristics of modern, asymmetric security threats and risks mean that no country is safe as these threats quickly spill over from one country to another, or from one region to another. It is therefore practically impossible to make a clear distinction between national, regional and international security. Consequently, we are fully aware of the importance of regional cooperation as the only way forward for our countries. We can witness its increasing importance across all strata of society.

The only response when dealing with contemporary security threats and challenges is enhanced regional security cooperation, because only by developing joint and common capacities and capabilities can we respond effectively.

In the context of contemporary security and political dynamics, we pay particular attention to regional defence cooperation – an important tool for better understanding and confidence-building. Many solutions and models are jointly established to maintain and enhance the security in the region, as well as to build capacities for joint contributions to global challenges.

Common security challenges require the integration of whole of government and whole of society approaches to defence and deterrence with the focus put on the integration of capacities and capabilities, as well as the resilience of societies.

NATO and the EU often talk about these questions, but link them with security investments and joint projects in which small countries can do nothing alone. So how can we react to this development if not jointly and as equals for the common cause of security? All EU-PESCO, military mobility and NATO common projects are opportunities to be taken by all of us, but we must take these opportunities as a confident region, which benefits from cooperation.

Questions raised by the region itself are probably the most urgent waiting to be solved. In the case of the name dispute between North Macedonia and Greece we showed what is possible and we would like to see – sooner rather than later – constructive Belgrade-Pristina talks, which remove religion from official policy and discard once and for all thoughts of border changes.

Why? Because there are numerous opportunities of working together towards regional security and stability. Crisis management and civil-military crisis response, security awareness and confidence building in arms control, military education and training, separation of religion and state, collective regional management in humanitarian crises, assistance and solidarity in pandemics and health crises, etc.

I would also like to emphasize the benefits of Euro-Atlantic integration for the countries from the Western Balkans and SEE as a whole. Euro-Atlantic integration brings security and stability, which are prerequisites for economic growth, a positive investment climate and combating the effects of climate change in the region. When we speak about NATO accession, the greatest effect produced by membership is not military, but rather economic benefits which may differ from country to country, but are always manifested in dramatic economic growth.

NATO, as well as EU membership, will place countries on the map of secure and safe business destinations, at the same time opening the borders to domestic business. Furthermore, the integration into the EU and NATO will

have a positive impact on the development of the infrastructure network that will positively affect economic growth. In addition, other sectors will receive positive impulses.

Maybe there is also an opportunity to work on cooperation as regards the issues of integration. We should help each other and not block the path of progress and rapprochement. And, although some may not agree with me, I am convinced that Open Balkans corresponds to the spirit of EU integration and we in the Western Balkans should not be suspicious of opportunities. The focus needs to be put on what unites us rather than what divides us.

I am confident that my words will spark fruitful discussion in the sessions and days to follow and I would once again like to express my gratitude to everybody involved in organizing and participating in this event, which, I am convinced will produce a common benefit for the region.

**PART I:
SPECIFIC SITUATION OF THE WESTERN
BALKAN SIX IN REGARD TO SECURITY
ORIENTATION, SECURITY COOPERATION
AND REFORMS**

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Security Orientation, Security Cooperation, and Reforms

Christian Haupt

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present an overview of the security orientation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), security cooperation within the Western Balkans region, and some of the ongoing security sector reform initiatives and their challenges. Although a thorough analysis of developments of a political nature could further this overview, such an analysis would take emphasis away from security matters. Instead, this analysis will focus upon some trends rather than specific events.

This paper aims to demonstrate that despite a tumultuous political scene and negative rhetoric between political actors, there is a continuous body of work conducted at the technical level, particularly of an international and regional character.

Furthermore, this paper will also show that although three Western Balkan states (BiH, Kosovo, and Serbia) are not members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), cooperation between them and internal reforms are facilitated and developed with the help of NATO, the European Union (EU), international organisations, and individual countries. This will show that ongoing initiatives lead to positive developments.

Security Orientation of BiH

The security orientation of BiH continues to be centred on participation in Euro-Atlantic integration processes and programmes. Good neighbourly relations and robust regional cooperation remain at the heart of BiH foreign policy.

The main security policy objectives of the country remain the protection of sovereignty and territorial integrity, increasing internal stability through political and economic development, strengthening the rule of law, the economy, and democratic principles.¹

The main defence policy objectives continue to be the development of effective defence capabilities that are interoperable and compatible with NATO member and partner forces. Defence capabilities are aimed at the execution of the main missions of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina (AFBiH) – which are: defence of BiH and its citizens, participation in peace support operations, and assistance to civilian authorities in cases of emergency and disaster response.²

The risks to security remain those that all countries of the region face: mainly asymmetric threats that include terrorism, organized crime, socio-economic and environmental issues, corruption and irregular migration. These are transnational threats that extend beyond the Western Balkans.³

Despite the clear orientation of security relations and participation in Euro-Atlantic processes and programmes, there are some complicating factors that need to be touched upon. Whilst it is clear that Euro-Atlantic programmes and processes remain at the heart of activities, we have seen a shift away of the explicit use of the term ‘integration’ in official language in BiH concerning NATO. This shift has been caused by the opposition of Republika Srpska (RS) to NATO membership – translating to resistance against using the term ‘integration’ in favour of the term ‘cooperation’. This resistance can be most demonstrated in the BiH Council of Ministers (CoM) Decision on Establishing the ‘Commission for Cooperation with NATO’.⁴ The commission was formerly known as the ‘Commission for NATO Integration’, and following a lengthy political deadlock, it was retitled referring to cooperation and not integration. The reasons behind the opposition to NATO membership have been publicly stated many times and remain rooted in the neutrality of Serbia

¹ BiH Security Policy 2006.

http://www.mod.gov.ba/dokumenti/odbrambeni_dokumenti/?id=21743.

² BiH Defence Policy 2008.

http://www.mod.gov.ba/dokumenti/odbrambeni_dokumenti/?id=21743.

³ Op cit. BiH Security Policy 2006.

⁴ <http://www.sluzbenilist.ba/page/akt/eEeltX3gmohz4nh78h77Y=>.

and their desire to remain outside of NATO, as well as alignment with Russia. However, it is clear that there are other political factors that play a role, as well as the 2017 RS National Assembly Declaration of RS Military Neutrality.⁵ Nevertheless, opposition to NATO membership is not just shared by RS politicians and officials, the RS public are also not supportive and public support remains low. This compares to support for NATO in the Federation of BiH (FBiH) that remains at higher levels.⁶ RS opposition to NATO membership and deeper integration represent an inhibiting factor in the development of security and defence capabilities. Nevertheless, BiH continues to be an active participant in NATO programmes, as described in the next section.

Even if we take the ‘Atlantic’ away from Euro-Atlantic integration and focus on European integration, we can also see some complicating and inhibiting factors. Despite the continuous oral support by BiH politicians, there has been a fundamental lack of substantive political progress in implementing reforms that would further EU integration. The 14 key priorities in the European Commission’s (EC) opinion on BiH’s EU membership application remain largely unimplemented.⁷ The reasons behind the lack of progress remain complicated and go beyond the scope of this paper. Despite this lack of progress, the EU remains fundamentally engaged and is an active partner and contributor to BiH.

Regardless of the progress of BiH along the Euro-Atlantic integration path, it is clear that the country is very much orientated towards NATO and the EU, and the security environment is influenced heavily by this orientation. The whole scope of international cooperation continues to shape the orientation of BiH in a positive manner regardless of reform implementation and integration.

Additionally, current political developments, the ongoing debate about NATO integration, and the lack of progress in EU integration remain macro-

⁵ <https://www.narodnaskupstinars.net/?q=la/akti/ostali-akti/rezolucija-o-za%C5%A1iti-ustavnog-poretka-i-progla%C5%A1enju-vojne-neutralnosti-republike-srpske>.

⁶ <https://balkans.aljazeera.net/opinions/2019/11/23/koliko-je-republika-srpska-zaista-protiv-nato>.

⁷ <http://europa.ba/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/20190529-bosnia-and-herzegovina-opinion.pdf>.

level issues that dominate debate and overshadow developments at the micro-level. Whilst we cannot deny the damaging nature of the lack of development at the macro-level, there is often a distortion in debate and discussion of developments in which positive trends that take place at the micro-level get pushed aside. It is necessary to take these trends into account in order to gain a complete picture. This paper shall discuss some of these in due course, particularly when we look at regional and bilateral cooperation.

International Cooperation

Despite some of the negative factors that can be seen in BiH, it is clear that BiH cooperates with a wide range of multilateral and bilateral actors. This cooperation provides significant assistance and leads to positive results.

As previously stated, despite a lack of political consensus concerning NATO membership, cooperation and engagement in NATO programmes and processes continues. BiH remains an active participant in the Planning and Review Process (PARP) and is committed to develop units to be made available as part of NATO's pool of forces for potential participation in peace support operations through the Operational Capabilities Concept (OCC). BiH has a comprehensive package of Partnership Goals (PGs) that aim to develop capabilities and enhance interoperability. It also engages in other initiatives, such as training events, and the country receives substantial support aimed to complement the implementation of the PGs.

The framework for political cooperation with NATO is provided by the 2019 BiH Reform Programme (RP). The RP was submitted in response to the invitation of NATO to provide an Annual National Plan (ANP). It represents a compromise following RS opposition to take steps in the Membership Action Plan (MAP) and to submit an ANP. Despite the fact that an updated version of the RP has not been submitted to NATO due to ongoing political disagreements, activities still commence and reforms contained in the document remain current as they are multi-year ongoing processes. The document remains a way to secure assistance for the implementation of those reforms, to package those important to NATO, and highlight progress.

The relationship with the EU is also robust. The European Commission assesses in its 2021 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy that progress in meeting the 14 priorities of the EC remains insufficient.⁸ BiH, however, benefits from substantial financial support both inside and outside of Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) funds. In addition, the EU Special Representative (EUSR) in BiH remains an active and central figure and engages heavily with BiH politicians and officials. The Office of the EUSR also provides substantive assistance in many areas. Furthermore, the EU Force (EUFOR) present on the ground is charged with supporting BiH authorities to maintain a safe and secure environment. It provides valuable assistance and cooperates with the AFBiH on collective and combined training, supporting them in their progression towards achieving NATO standards. The security sector also benefits from EU programmes at all levels and in a broad variety of areas.⁹

Although we will examine bilateral cooperation in due course, it is worth noting that BiH cooperates with a wide range of countries in areas that support NATO and EU integration. Just in the area of defence, the BiH Ministry of Defence (MoD) has bilateral cooperation agreements with more than 30 countries covering a large scope of activities. Significant support for the MoD and AFBiH is provided by Turkey, the UK, the US, and others. The US, in particular, is a major donor for the MoD and security sector in general – focusing on equipping and enabling AFBiH units and helicopters. The US has also held multiple training activities, including a major exercise in April this year, which successfully demonstrated the capabilities of the AFBiH. Much of the bilateral support from all recipients is aimed at the BiH PARP and in supporting PGs.

Clearly international cooperation remains a fundamental cornerstone of the security orientation and environment of BiH. Significance assistance is received from NATO and the EU, and much assistance is received bilaterally to help further the objectives of cooperation with NATO and the EU. The NATO Brussels Summit Communiqué issued on June 14, 2021, represents

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/2021-communication-eu-enlargement-policy_en.

⁹ http://europa.ba/?page_id=558.

a strong testimony for the continued commitment of NATO and its members to support BiH as an aspirant country.¹⁰ The EU frequently also provides strong statements of support.

Regional and Bilateral Cooperation

BiH is an active participant in a large number of international organisations and multilateral initiatives. Some of them are the US sponsored Adriatic Charter; the South Eastern Europe Defence Ministerial (SEDM); the Organisation for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP); the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) in Sarajevo; the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre (RACVIAC); the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative (DPPI SEE) in Sarajevo; the Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI) in Sarajevo; the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI); the Balkan Medical Task Force (BMTF); the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for Control of SALW (SEESAC); the Western Balkans Defence Ministers (WBDM); the B9 Chiefs of Defence Network; and the Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe (PCC SEE). A wide scope of activities takes place within the framework of these initiatives.

More specifically, participation in these initiatives has led to a positive influence on security-related developments. For example, facilitated by SEESAC, engagement has led to the Western Balkan Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Roadmap – providing targeted support for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse, and trafficking of SALW.¹¹ In addition, regarding the Article IV Agreement on Sub-Regional Arms Control, the parties have assumed full ownership from the OSCE – active and passive quotas remain, annual information exchange takes place, within 25 years 10,292 weapons have been destroyed, 776 inspections and 129 weapon reduction inspections have occurred, and 1300 assistants and 140 guest inspectors from 29 OSCE participating states have been engaged.¹² These developments not

¹⁰ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm?selectedLocale=en.

¹¹ <https://www.seesac.org/f/docs/publications-salw-control-roadmap/Regional-Roadmap-for-a-sustainable-solution-to-the.pdf>.

¹² <http://www.mod.gov.ba/afoto2016/250821Bilten%202022%20Nasa%20vojska.pdf>.

only have increased confidence building between in the countries of the region, but they have also helped to enhance security throughout the region.

Concerning bilateral cooperation in the region, it stands to reason that Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia remain important bilateral partners. Croatia exercises a large influence, particularly as an important political and economic partner. In the defence sector a robust bilateral cooperation agreement is in place and AFBiH members continue to visit Croatia for officer training and other courses. Montenegro is a participant in regional cooperation initiatives. Good cooperation at the political level takes place through regular dialogue at bilateral and multilateral meetings. North Macedonia is also a participant in almost all regional cooperation formats in which BiH is engaged. Notably, the recent EADRCC Exercise “North Macedonia 2021” took place with the application of the NATO Science for Peace and Security (SPS) funded Next Generation Incident Command System (NICS).¹³ The NICS, initially developed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), was further developed in collaboration with BiH, Croatia, and Montenegro. Serbia continues to play a large role and exercise an influence in the region, particularly concerning RS in BiH. We can see the alignment of many sectors (energy, traffic, and military industry), joint exercises, and disaster response. In addition, countries of the region take part in courses at the NATO-certified Peace Support Operations Training Centre (PSOTC) in Sarajevo. There is also frequent bilateral cooperation taking place at the ministerial level between the MoD, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other agencies. Clearly regional initiatives keep up the pace of dialogue and engagement and lead to positive results.

Security Sector Reform and Challenges in BiH

To gain a deeper understanding of BiH’s security orientation, it is useful to consider some specific reform areas and associated challenges – especially as broadly speaking many of these are taking place within the framework of NATO and EU programmes. Main security sector reform initiatives pertain to the AFBiH, enhancing the capacities of law enforcement agencies, and enhancing emergency and disaster response capabilities.

¹³ <https://eadrcc.cmdrcoe.org/>.

The AFBiH underwent substantial reform starting in 2003 and culminating in 2006 with a NATO-led process resulting in the establishment of the unified AFBiH as a single military force. The period after that has been characterised by consolidation and the development of capabilities. In 2016 a NATO-mandated Defence Review proposal built around increasing efficiency and capacities was agreed, which included a substantial modernisation plan. The proposal is awaiting implementation, although the lack of finance resources continues to hamper the realisation of modernisation. The AFBiH continues to develop capabilities as part of the NATO PARP and this provides for improvements at the technical level. Overall the political situation and other demographic issues hinder the development of the armed forces, but staff remains dedicated and incremental positive progress takes place.

Concerning law enforcement agencies, the BiH Border Police (BP) and the State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA) are seen as long time success stories. However, state-level police agencies remain severely under resourced. The lack of state budgetary resources often leads to the migration of personnel to entity and cantonal agencies. Entity police agencies are responsible for law enforcement at the local level and they remain well-resourced and trained. Therefore, state level police agencies continue to depend on receiving substantial bilateral assistance to equip and train personnel.

Efforts in the area of emergency and disaster response have centred on the development of the state-level capacity for the coordination of actors – particularly in cases where the AFBiH have been asked to provide assistance to civilian authorities. The competence for first-response lies with municipal, cantonal, and entity level authorities – and all have been the recipients of equipment. This was particularly shown during the COVID pandemic where invaluable assistance was provided by NATO, the EU, and countries on a bilateral basis. Initiatives such as the development of the NICS together with NATO have also led to increased capabilities and positive results. We have also seen coordination and cooperation between BiH and its neighbours in responding to emergencies, in cases such as wild-fires that broke out during the summer 2021.

Generally, the implementation of defence and security sector reforms at state level are inhibited by the lack of budgetary resources and are dependent upon

donor support. This remains a long term inhibitor to progress. However, it is also clear that the AFBiH and law enforcement agencies also benefit significantly from regional cooperation and initiatives with neighbouring countries. Whilst cooperation takes place in several areas, a few limiting factors are present that impact results. Naturally the impact of COVID 19 has limited the ability to cooperate and coordinate – leading to a reduction of activities. Political disagreements also can play an inhibiting factor – some of which may be due to foreign influence promoting division instead of developing compromise and cooperation. The lack of financial resources and donor dependency, particularly in BiH, continues to be problematic – leading to a disparity in investment in defence and security between the countries of the region. However, whilst these negative factors have played a limiting factor, cooperation continues and the many initiatives that exist lead to positive results.

Conclusion

The tumultuous nature of the political environment and associated negative rhetoric in BiH often dominates discussion and assessment of security matters. Whilst naturally it would be right to say that political blockades and disagreements have an impact on progress, equally that does not provide a complete picture. Regardless of the blockades at the executive level and the lack of progress on some reforms, clearly BiH is very much orientated and engaged with NATO and the EU. This engagement also has a direct bearing on assistance that is received internationally, bilaterally, and within a regional context. For BiH international cooperation and relations with regional partners remains a cornerstone of its security orientation and environment. Whilst there are some limiting factors, cooperation within the region continues and the many initiatives that exist lead to positive results. Despite all serious challenges and negative public disputes, regional cooperation on the technical level is the daily positive reality, which needs to be promoted and supported.

Security Orientation, Security Cooperation and Reforms in the Western Balkans Six: The Case of Kosovo

Lulzim Peci

Introduction

Kosovo, as the last country that emerged out of the Former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, more than 13 years after of the Declaration of Independence is still struggling for the full inclusion into the international community and integration in the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union. The country's membership into the United Nations is blocked by Russia and China that enjoy the status of permanent members of the UN Security Council, whereas prospects for joining NATO and EU are blocked by their respective four and five member states that do not recognize the independence of Kosovo. Furthermore, Kosovo's prospects for full membership and participation in the regional security and defence initiatives are particularly bleak due to the non-recognition by Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia that are obstructing the country's ambitions in this field.

These circumstances have shaped a bumpy road of Kosovo's international and regional security cooperation, as well as of the country's reforms of the security and defence sectors, which were accompanied with political instability and frequent changes of national governments. However, Kosovo's political and security orientation towards NATO and EU that was shaped since the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the peaceful resistance against Serbia in the beginning of 1990's, has never been challenged by other political options.

In order to understand the regional context of Kosovo's security orientation, this paper will firstly discuss shortly the historical and contemporary security orientations of the Western Balkans countries. Subsequently, it will briefly analyse Kosovo's participation in the regional security and defence organizations and initiatives, and finally it will presents a state of play of the reforms of country's defence and security sector.

A Short Background of Security Orientations of the Western Balkans Countries

During the last century, individual countries of the Western Balkans have had different experiences with alliances and the status of neutrality. In the First Balkan War (1912), Serbia and Montenegro were part of the Balkan League Alliance, together with Bulgaria and Greece, and against the Ottoman Empire, whereas in the Second Balkan War (1913), Serbia, Greece, and Romania, formed an alliance against Bulgaria.¹ On the other hand, on July 29th, 1913, the London Conference of Ambassadors agreed to recognize Albania's statehood, and to guarantee its neutrality, which was systematically violated by the warring powers of the Triple Alliance and Triple Entente, a part of which was Serbia as well. Thus, the codification of rights and responsibilities of neutrals, through the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, which gave hope that in the case of war the smaller European states could protect themselves through legal neutrality, proved to be illusionary.² Furthermore, during the period between the two World Wars, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was part of Little Entente, together with Czechoslovakia and Romania, as well as part of the Balkan Pact Agreement, with Greece, Romania, and Turkey.³

After the Second World War, Albania was a founding member of the Warsaw Pact, created in 1955. Albania formally left the Pact in 1968, after which it turned to strengthening an alliance with a distant protector – China – which provided Tirana with an increased independence of manoeuvring in foreign and domestic affairs.⁴ According to Biberaj, this unequal alliance of Albania with China that lasted until 1978 was a classic case of a small state in search

¹ For further exploration on the topic of the Balkan Wars see, for example, Hall, 2000; and Schurman, 2010.

² Fried, M.B. (2012). The Cornerstone of Balkan Power Projection: Austro-Hungarian War Aims and the Problem of Albanian Neutrality, 1914-1918. *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol.23, No.3, p.425.

³ Wandycz, P. S. (1981). The Little Entente: Sixty Years Later. *Slavonic and East European Review*. Vol. 59. No.4, pp.548-64.

⁴ Crump, L. (2015). *The Warsaw Pact Reconsidered: International Relations in Eastern Europe, 1955-1969*. London: Routledge. p.61.

for security.⁵ After the break-up with Beijing, Tirana entered into a phase of deep isolation that lasted until the end of the Cold War. On the other hand, after the break-up with Stalin, in 1948, the Socialist Yugoslavia, in search for security, undertook a major foreign policy shift, from the alignment with Soviet Union, to becoming militarily aligned with NATO, by signing the Treaty of Friendship and Collaboration with Greece and Turkey of 1953, while retaining simultaneously its internal communist political system. Furthermore, in 1961, Yugoslavia became a founding member of the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) – a neutralist organization – by continuing to preserve its non-neutral military status. Soon after its foundation, two thirds of the UN members joined the NAM, which was seen as a sensible third way during the Cold War.⁶

The end of the Cold War and the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia found the region in completely new geopolitical circumstances. Albania, which was coming out from a long isolation, was making efforts to return to the West, by becoming the first country to apply for NATO membership, on December 16, 1992,⁷ and Croatia turned to the West, and particularly to the United States, given that only Washington could guarantee the military and diplomatic power to change the balance of force against Federal Yugoslavia.⁸ In this regard, in 1998, the US Ambassador William Montgomery drafted the Roadmap to Partnership for Peace for Croatia, which helped to focus the US programs in the country.⁹ Also, the Parliament of North Macedonia issued a declaration for joining the Alliance in 1993,¹⁰ Bosnia and Herzegovina was divided along ethnic lines between the pro-US and pro-Serbian orientated entities, and the Federal Yugoslavia was viewed rather as a rogue

⁵ Biberaj, E. (1986). *Albania and China: A Study of an Unequal Alliance*. Boulder: Westview Press.

⁶ For further exploration of the topic of Non-Alignment Movement see, for example, Bott, at al., 2016.

⁷ Kola, P. (2003). *The Search for Greater Albania*. London: Hurst & Company. p.295.

⁸ Miller, R.F. (1997). *Tudjman's victory: Croatia, the UN, NATO and the US*. *Nationalities Papers. The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*. Vol. 25. Issue 3. p.512.

⁹ Wheaton, K.J. (September 2000) *Cultivating Croatia's Military*. *NATO Review*. <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2000/09/01/cultivating-croati-as-military/index.html>.

¹⁰ Georgijeva, L. (2010). *Macedonia and NATO: Uneasy Path to Membership*. *Security Dialogues*, Vol. 1, No.1. Skopje: University St. Cyril and Methodius, Faculty of Philosophy. Institute of Security, Defence and Peace. p.336.

state.¹¹ On the other hand, Kosovo, as a political entity under a de-facto occupation by Serbia, was oriented towards the US, and the West, in general, and during the 90's, in its endeavors and struggles for independence and for finding an acceptable compromise with Belgrade and the West, it proposed the neutrality of its own in relations between Albania and Serbia, guaranteed by the international community.¹² However, the countries that emerged out of Yugoslavia in the first decade of the XXI century, namely, Montenegro, in 2006, and Kosovo, in 2008, even prior to their independence had clarified their ambitions to join the Alliance, whereas Serbia adopted the policy of military neutrality in 2007.¹³

Against this background, it can be concluded that the aspirations of the Western Balkans countries to join NATO were driven from their past and present constellations, from the prevailing perceived threats to their sovereignty and territorial integrity, and from the lack of capabilities to tackle them unilaterally. In this regard, the national security choice of these small countries also fits the classical argument of the alliance theory, that weaker states align with bigger powers, in this case NATO, with the aim of protecting themselves from potential aggressors and for achieving security and stability.¹⁴

On the other hand, Serbia's national security choice of military neutrality is an exception from general aspiration of Western Balkans countries to join NATO. The main motivation of Serbia to declare its military neutrality in December 2007, was the looming declaration of independence of Kosovo, and NATO's real or perceived role in this process, and was driven by the collective memory on Alliance's intervention in 1999, at the same time when the continued presence of KFOR is considered to be the only guarantee for the protection of Kosovo's Serbs. This ambivalent policy towards NATO, according to Ejodus, is the reason why Serbian officials, ever since, have been

¹¹ Mertus, J. (2001). Serbia: Reimagining Europe's Outlaw Nation. *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 54, No. 2.

¹² Der Spiegel. (1992, June 8). Interview with Ibrahim Rugova. Da spielen wir nicht mit. <https://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13681757.html>.

¹³ Litavski, H. (August 2012). The Controversies of Military Neutrality of Serbia. Belgrade: The New Century. Quarterly of the Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies, p.2.

¹⁴ Liska, G. (1962). *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. p.13.

deploring NATO’s intervention, but opposing the reduction of KFOR troops in Kosovo.¹⁵ Serbia feels secure in its regional environment, and does not perceive NATO any longer as a security threat. However, on the other hand, according to Bechev, Serbia’s “military neutrality” has solidified the alliance with Russia¹⁶ and, as a result, it has had numerous joint ventures in defense matters, such as Joint Centre for Reaction to Emergency Situations, joint military exercises, sales of arms, and Serbia’s observer Status in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).¹⁷



Fig.1. The relations of the Western Balkans countries with NATO¹⁸

However, after the NATO membership of Albania and Croatia (2009), Montenegro (2016), and the North Macedonia (2020), the geopolitical landscape of the Western Balkans and of Kosovo’s neighbourhood has changed dramatically. Kosovo, as an aspirant country for NATO’s membership, is now bordered with three NATO members, and the “military neutral” Serbia. On

¹⁵ Personal correspondence with Dr. Filip Ejodus, July 2019.

¹⁶ Bechev, D. (2017). *Rival Powers: Russia in Southeast Europe*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. p.62.

¹⁷ Ibid. pp.187-191.

¹⁸ Clingendael Institute Policy Brief, *Kosovo’s NATO Future: How to Square the Cycle?*, December 2020, p.2.

the other hand, due to the non-recognition by four NATO members, Kosovo remains the single country in the region that has not joined the Partnership for Peace, and its outlook for NATO membership at this particular point of time is rather bleak. As a consequence of this bleak outlook, Kosovo's external security continues to remain dependent on the highly expensive Alliance's Kosovo Force (KFOR) Mission.

Kosovo's Participation in the Regional Security and Defence Organizations and Initiatives

Kosovo's participation in the regional defence and security organization initiatives remains very limited due to the non-recognition by the countries of the wider region. In terms of defence initiatives and organizations, Kosovo participates in a limited capacity in the Adriatic Charter,¹⁹ and Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre (RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation),²⁰ whereas it is fully excluded from all the activities of the South East Europe Defence Ministerial (SEDM).²¹ In terms of regional security cooperation, Kosovo's participation is limited mainly within the framework of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC),²² where it enjoys full membership, but it is excluded from all the activities of the Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe,²³ and from the South East European Law Enforcement Centre.²⁴

In this regard, Kosovo joined the US Adriatic Charter with an observer status since 2012. Since Charter's aim is "full integration into European and trans-Atlantic economic, security and defence institutions" of its members, Kosovo was eager to join this initiative. Due to its aspirations to get closer to

¹⁹ For the background of the Adriatic Charter see: Fact Sheet, Adriatic Charter, U.S. Department of State, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/112766.htm>.

²⁰ For further information, see the RACVIAC official web-site: <https://www.racviac.org/>.

²¹ For further information, see the SEDM official web-site. <https://www.sedmprocess.org/web/sedmp/home>.

²² For further information, see the RCC official web-site: <https://www.rcc.int/pages/96/participants>.

²³ For further information, see: <https://www.pccseesecretariat.si/index.php?item=9&page=stati>.

²⁴ For further information, see: <https://www.selec.org/>.

NATO and to expand its involvement in the regional defence initiatives, Kosovo has in 2012 also applied for membership in the Adriatic Charter, but its application continues to remain pending due to the opposition of Bosnia and Herzegovina that enjoys the full membership in this initiative since 2008. Nevertheless, Kosovo participates in the conferences of the Charter at the presidential and ministerial level, and the level of Chiefs of General Staff.²⁵

On the other hand, Kosovo's status within RACVIAC – Center for Security Cooperation, remains rather complex. In this organization there are categories of participation as member countries, associate members and observers. Given the fact that a large number of member states, as well as associate members, are non-recognizing states, Kosovo's status in this organization is at the level of an observer, simply as a participating country. Furthermore, Kosovo participation in the RACVIAC activities that entail military component is blocked by the non-recognizing countries, and its participation is limited to the civilian component, by excluding here the civilian staff of the Ministry of Defence. In addition, the appearance or participation of Kosovo in a number of RACVIAC activities has been faced with direct confrontations by Serbia, which tries to block or sabotage its involvement in the activities of this organization.²⁶

Within the Regional Cooperation Council, in terms of security cooperation, Kosovo participates in the Regional Platform for Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism leading to Terrorism and Foreign Terrorist Fighters – CVE-FTF Platform,²⁷ Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG),²⁸ Migration, Asylum and Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI), and the South

²⁵ Agon Demjaha, Kosovo's Participation in Regional Organizations and Initiatives, Policy Paper, KIPRED, October 2014.

http://www.kipred.org/repository/docs/Kosovo's_Participation_in_Regional_Organizations_and_Initiatives_359638.pdf.

²⁶ A note from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora of the Republic of Kosovo, September 2021.

²⁷ For further information see: https://www.rcc.int/working_groups/33/regional-platform-for-countering-radicalization-and-violent-extremism-leading-to-terrorism-and-foreign-terrorist-fighters--cve-ftf-platform.

²⁸ For further information see: https://www.rcc.int/working_groups/50/integrative-internal-security-governance--iisg.

East Europe Cooperation Process (SEECp),²⁹ which, among others, cover also the justice and home affairs.

Nevertheless, Kosovo's international security cooperation has been enhanced through the cooperation with the European Union by signing the "Working Arrangement establishing cooperative relations between the law enforcement authorities of Kosovo with the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol),"³⁰ which entered into force on July 28, 2020. This agreement marks the major achievement in international police cooperation, given that Kosovo has failed three times in its bid to get the Interpol membership.³¹

Reforms in the Defence and Security Sector

The reforms in the security and defence sector during the last ten years were not marked with some significant success. The main reason for the slow pace of reforms was the political instability caused by five national elections that took place from 2010 to 2021, and six governments that were established during this period.³² This political instability had a major negative effect in both, legislative and policy agendas, related to the reforms in security sector.

In this regard, it has to be mentioned that Kosovo still has an outdated Security Strategy, adopted in 2010,³³ as well as Analysis of the Strategic Review

²⁹ For further information see: <https://www.seecp.info/>.

³⁰ For further information see: Working Arrangement establishing cooperative relations between the law enforcement authorities of Kosovo and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, July 2020. https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/working_arrangement_establishing_cooperative_relations_between_the_law_enforcement_authorities_of_kosovo_and_europol.pdf.

³¹ Radio Free Europe, Kosovo Fails For Third Time To Win Interpol Membership, November 20th, 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/kosovo-fails-for-third-time-to-win-interpol-membership/29610709.html>.

³² For further information on national elections in Kosovo see: Central Election Commission of Kosovo, <https://www.kqz-ks.org/an/zgjedhjet-e-pergjitshme/>.

³³ Kosovo Government, Strategjia e Sigurisë së Kosovës [Security strategy of Kosovo], 2010, https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/repository/docs/STRATEGJIA_E_SIGURISE_E_REPUBLIKES_SE_KOSOVES.pdf.

of the Security Sector of the Republic of Kosovo,³⁴ adopted in 2014. The process of drafting of a contemporary national security strategy has been initiated in mid-2018, and was completed in the beginning of 2019, but it failed to be adopted by the Kosovo Assembly due to the early elections of that year.³⁵ The last Kosovo Government has drafted in the end of 2020 the new Security Strategy of Kosovo 2021-2030, but its adoption has not been followed yet by the incumbent Government.³⁶

Nevertheless, in despite of the lack of these fundamental national security documents, the Ministry of Interior of Kosovo has adopted more than 25 strategic documents over the last six years. In recent years, the reforms were focused on the Integrated Border Management, the Communications of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, fighting of Organized Crime and Narcotics, the Development of the Academy for Public Safety, the Control of the small calibre and light weapons, the Development of the Police Inspectorate, the Community Safety, the Fighting of Terrorism, and on the Sustainable Integration of Repatriated Persons.³⁷

But, on the other hand, Kosovo has failed to address the request of the European Union to separate the clearance from the Kosovo Intelligence Service, for being conducted by an independent body, which request was dated ever since 2015.³⁸ Furthermore, the reform of intelligence has been impeded by frequent changes of the directors of the Kosovo Intelligence Agency (KIA). Regardless of the fact that the mandate of the Director of KIA is five

³⁴ Kosovo Government, Analysis of the Strategic Review of the Security Sector of the Republic of Kosovo, 2014, https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/repository/docs/Analysis_of_Strategic_Security_Sector_Review_of_RKS_060314.pdf.

³⁵ Personal communication with a former high level official of the Kosovo Government, November 2019.

³⁶ Kosovo Government, Draft Security Strategy of Kosovo, 2021 – 2030, December 2020, <https://konsultimet.rks-gov.net/viewConsult.php?ConsultationID=40992>.

³⁷ Ministry of Interior Affairs of Kosovo, Strategic Documents, <https://mpb.rks-gov.net/f/39/Strategic-documents>.

³⁸ European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document, Kosovo 2015 Report, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2015/20151110_report_kosovo.pdf pp.9-10.

years, KIA has experienced changes of six directors during the 12 years of its existence.³⁹

However, the major reforms have been accomplished noticed in the field of defence with the transition of the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) into a defence force, and with the transformation of the Ministry of the KSF into the Ministry of Defence. It should be stressed, however, that the process that brought to the enhancing of the mandate of the Kosovo Security Force with the component of protecting the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Kosovo was rather long. Initially, on July 8th, 2013, the North Atlantic Council issued a declaration on the full operational capability of the KSF.⁴⁰ This declaration opened the door to the Kosovo Government to change the mandate of the Kosovo Security Force, which was also envisaged by the Ahtisaari Plan.⁴¹ In 2014, the Kosovo Government completed the “Strategic Security Sector Review” that proposed the transformation of the KSF into a defence force,⁴² but the struggle of domestic actors and international partners of Kosovo for enhancing the mandate of the KSF was completed only four years later, on December 14th, 2018, with the approval of a package of laws by the Assembly of Kosovo that granted defence competences to the KSF and created the Ministry of Defence.⁴³ The creation of the armed forces and of the Ministry of Defence of Kosovo has been met with a harsh reac-

³⁹ Koha Ditore, Drejtoret e deritanishem te AKI-së, vetëm njëri çoi mandatin deri në fund, April, 15, 2021, <https://www.koha.net/arberi/266738/drejtoret-e-deritashem-te-akise-vetem-nje-coi-mandatin-ne-fund/>.

⁴⁰ NATO, “Kosovo Security Force now self-sustainable,” July 8th, 2013, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_101890.htm?selectedLocale=en.

⁴¹ UN Security Council, Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement, Article 5.3, March 36th, 2007, <https://reliefweb.int/report/serbia/comprehensive-proposal-kosovo-status-settlement-s2007168add1>.

⁴² Kosovo Government, “Strategic Security Sector Review”, 2014, http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/repository/docs/Analiza_e_Rishikimit_Strategjik_te_Sektorit_te_Sigurise_se_RKS_06032014.pdf.

⁴³ Official Gazette of Kosovo, Law on Ministry of Defense, March 5th, 2019; Law on Kosovo Security Force, March 5th, 2019; and Law on Service in the Kosovo Security Force, March 5, 2019, <https://mod.rks-gov.net/?page=2,73>.

tion from Serbia, which was claiming that this move could lead to tragic consequences,⁴⁴ as well as of Russia that “shared concerns of Serbia over Kosovo Army”.⁴⁵ In addition, the NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg also expressed his regret “that the decision to initiate a change of the Kosovo Security Force mandate was made despite the concerns expressed by NATO.”⁴⁶

Nevertheless, these decisions of Kosovo authorities for the development of its defence sector were immediately supported by NATO’s key members. like the United States, Germany,⁴⁷ Great Britain,⁴⁸ and Turkey.⁴⁹ Furthermore, in despite of the hostile positions of Serbia and Russia, and their “apocalyptic” projections on the consequences of the creation of Kosovo’s defence forces for the security and the stability in the region, as well as of some concerns of Kosovo’s allies, the development of Kosovo forces has not been accompanied with any internal or external instabilities.⁵⁰

Against this background, in the end of 2020 the Kosovo Government completed the drafting of the “Defence Strategy of the Republic of Kosovo”, which envisaged three general tasks for the Kosovo Security Force, namely defence of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Ko-

⁴⁴ Deutsche Welle, Kosovo votes to establish national army, December 14th, 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/kosovo-votes-to-establish-national-army/a-45949207>.

⁴⁵ Balkan Insight, January 17th, 2019, Putin shares Serbia’s concerns over Kosovo Army, January 17th, 2019, <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/01/17/putin-shares-serbia-s-concern-over-kosovo-army-01-17-2019/>.

⁴⁶ Jens Stoltenberg, Twitter Post, December 14th, 2018, <https://twitter.com/jensstoltenberg/status/1073529583427833856?lang=en>.

⁴⁷ EU Observer, Kosovo has right to own army, Germany and U.S. say, December 14th, 2018, <https://euobserver.com/foreign/143720>.

⁴⁸ Oculus News, Britain supports the establishment of Kosovo Army, December 15th, 2018, <https://www.ocnal.com/2018/12/britain-supports-establishment-of.html>.

⁴⁹ AA, Turkey hails Kosovo move to establish national army, December 17th, 2018, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/turkey-hails-kosovos-move-to-establish-national-army/1341624>.

⁵⁰ Florian Qehaja and Ramadan Ilazi, Busting myths about KSF transition into a defence force, KCSS Policy Paper, June 2021, <http://www.qkss.org/en/Policy-Papers/Busting-myths-about-KSF-transition-into-a-defence-force-1430>.

sovo, military support of the civilian authorities, and participation in international missions.⁵¹ However, this strategic document for Kosovo's defence reform has not been adopted yet by the Kosovo Assembly, due to the change of the Government in March 2021 as a result of national elections of February 14th, 2021.

As a result of the development of defence capabilities and strong partnership with the United States, on March 9th, 2021, Kosovo sent a military platoon to Kuwait that marked the country's first ever international peacekeeping mission. According to Kosovo's Defence Ministry, these troops "will operate under the Central Command of the American forces responsible for a geographic zone, including the Middle East, part of South Asia and North-eastern Africa".⁵²

Finally, in regard to the parliamentary oversight of security and defence forces, the EU Commission's Kosovo Country Report 2020 has noticed that there have been some improvements of the parliamentary oversight of security forces, intelligence and Kosovo Security Force, but the main remark remains the insufficient parliamentary oversight of these institutions' expenditures.⁵³

Conclusion

Ever since the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the peaceful movement for freedom and independence, in the beginning of the 1990's, Kosovo's security orientation toward the West is rooted deeply. Nevertheless, almost 14 years after the declaration of independence, Kosovo still suffers from the lack of full integration in international community and from bleak prospects for joining NATO and the EU. The country is integrated only partially into the regional security and defence cooperation organizations and

⁵¹ Kosovo Government, Strategjia e Mbrojtjes [Defense Strategy], Point 4.1.2. December 2020, <https://konsultimet.rks-gov.net/viewConsult.php?ConsultationID=41022>.

⁵² Associated Press, Kosovo sends troops on peacekeeping mission for the first time, March 9th, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/army-kuwait-middle-east-kosovo-pristina-531dcfadd6ad5eadb72462b5bba8ed25>.

⁵³ European Commission, Kosovo* Report 2020, Brussels, October 6th, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2020-10/kosovo_report_2020.pdf.

initiatives, due to the non-recognition by a number of countries of the region.

On the other hand, with the creation of the Ministry of Defence and the upgrading of the Kosovo Security Forces to the mandate of a defence force, in 2019, Kosovo has completed its security and defence architecture as an independent and sovereign state. In the last years, the reforms of the security sector and the parliamentary oversight of security and defence institutions has lagged behind due to the political instability caused by frequent changes of national governments and legislatures.

Recommendations:

- NATO should follow the example of EU in building practical relations with Kosovo in order to prepare the country for membership in the Alliance. In this regard, building a second track mechanism of the Planning and Review Process of the Partnership is of crucial importance for speeding the reforms and interoperability of Kosovo armed forces with those of the Alliance.
- In parallel, Kosovo should enhance bilateral security and defense cooperation with the United States and the European partners.
- Kosovo should use the benefits of membership in the Regional Cooperation Council, in order to join and participate in the regional security and defense initiatives that function under its umbrella.
- The current Kosovo Government that enjoys stable parliamentary majority should move forward especially with adoption and implementation of the National Security Strategy and Defense Strategy, taking over the mandate of clearance from the Kosovo Intelligence Agency and delegating it to an independent governmental body.
- The Kosovo Parliament should increase its capacities to exercise a meaningful oversight of the expenditures of the security and defense institutions of the country.

Albania's Internal and External Security Threats

Ledion Krisafi

Background

In the last two decades, Albania has emerged one of the most stable countries in the region. Compared with the current situation in Montenegro, the frequent ethnic problems in North Macedonia, the authoritarian regime of Aleksandar Vučić in Serbia, the from time to time Albanian-Serb confrontation in Kosovo and the total system block in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania at the moment looks like a beacon of peace and stability. Of course the appearances deceive in many cases. In the last two years Albania has gone through a troubled political period with the opposition boycotting the Parliament in 2019 and then boycotting the local elections in the same year, which left the political scene wide open for the Socialist Party government of Edi Rama to take all. But the April 25 elections, won again for a third time by the Socialist Party, have returned the political balance in the country. The Democratic Party in opposition received almost 40 % of the votes compared with 48 % of the Socialist Party and it returned after two years in the Parliament. The next local elections will also return the political balance in the local level. But the political situation, while considerably damaging for the country, is little compared with the problems facing Montenegro, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Also in the external aspect, Albania is not facing the same threats and problems like the other countries in the region. There is no Russian influence or any sympathy for Russia; the Chinese investments are low and the Turkish policy of the Albanian government seems more a pragmatic approach than a real feeling for Turkey. At the moment it is difficult to pinpoint to a real security threat to the country.

Internal

Islamic Radicalism

The wars in Syria and Iraq changed the internal security landscape of Albania. Hundreds of Albanian citizens went to fight in Syria and Iraq, with other hundreds who wanted to leave. At the same time, dozens of Muslim clerics were arrested in Albania for propagating religious hate against other religions and for recruiting people to go and fight in Syria and Iraq. In many cases whole families left Albania to live in the newly proclaimed ISIS Islamic Caliphate in Syria and Iraq. A part of those that went to fight in Syria and Iraq met their death there, while their wives and children remained stuck for months in the camps in Syria, with dozens of them rescued by the Albanian government only recently.

Even though the danger of Islamic radicalism has waned in the last two years, during which the Islamic Caliphate in Syria and Iraq was destroyed and ISIS lost its territorial base, the prospect of radical elements should not be dismissed. At the moment Islamic radicalism doesn't show to be a threat to Albania's security, but the potential as a threat is not very far away. The Muslim Community of Albania, in some cases does not have the capacities to control all the Mosques and Imams in the country. Therefore, as has happened before, certain imams may preach a radical version of Islam, filled with hate speech against the other religions and as has happened before may recruit people to become part of international terrorist organizations.

At the moment, Islamic radicalism is more a potential threat than a real threat. Because of Albania's Muslim majority population, combined with rural poverty and marginalization, it has the potential to fuel Islamic radicalism.

Corruption

The highest internal security threat in Albania is corruption. In the 2020 Corruption Perception Index Albania was on the 106th place from 180 countries, lower than countries like Tanzania, Sri Lanka, Colombia, Suriname, Burkina Faso, Morocco, etc. In an October 2021 poll by Euronews Albania, 83 % of Socialist Party voters said that the Socialist Party government is a lot or totally corrupted. This number shows that even people who have voted for the

Socialist Party have no faith that it can tackle corruption. In the last eight years, since the 2013 Corruption Perception Index, the numbers and evaluation of Albania has not changed much.

Even though the web platform E-Albania has managed to curtail considerably the corruption in the low levels of the state administration, which was almost endemic before E-Albania, the corruption in the highest levels remains a big problem. In the last years Medias have documented dozens of cases dubious procurement practices where a considerable number of tenders have no competition and in those which two or more companies are participating, the winner is already determined. The Albanian Prime Minister itself declared that 70 % of the tenders are problematic.¹ Journalists have also shown that in major infrastructure projects there is a preference for 2-3 companies close to the both major political parties.

At the same time, in many cases the government enters into Private-Public-Partnerships with companies for road infrastructure projects which have a total cost much higher than the same investment but with different procedures.² While the World Bank has estimated the cost of kilometer per road in Albania to a maximum of 6 million EUR, for roads of the highest quality, in some cases the government has estimated as much as 14 million EUR for kilometer per road.³ Many journalists and experts think that the difference between the World Bank estimation and the Albanian government's estimation is explained by corruption.

¹ Gazeta Tema, Rama: 70% e tenderave me probleme për hartimin e kritereve. Kush nuk reflekton shkon në SPAK, 13 Korrik 2021, <https://www.gazetatema.net/2021/07/13/rama-70-e-tenderave-me-probleme-per-hartimin-e-kritereve-kush-sreflekton-per-rekomandimet-shkon-ne-spak/>.

² Monitor. Al, Faturat e shfrenuara të PPP-ve, kostot sa dyfishi i referencave të Bankës Botërore. <https://www.monitor.al/faturat-e-shfrenuara-te-ppp-ve-kostot-sa-dyfishi-i-referencave-te-bankes-boterore/>.

³ Ibid.

Why Corruption is a National Security Threat?

The later announcement by the White House said:

“Corruption corrodes public trust; hobbles effective governance; distorts markets and equitable access to services; undercuts development efforts; contributes to national fragility, extremism, and migration; and provides authoritarian leaders a means to undermine democracies worldwide. When leaders steal from their nations’ citizens or oligarchs flout the rule of law, economic growth slows, inequality widens, and trust in government plummets.”⁴

In the case of countries like Albania where the independent institutions are still not stable enough to really function independently, corruption has the potential to further disrupt their work and to directly threaten the stability of the state. Corruption in Albania weakens state institutions when in many cases those institutions are bypassed in order to favor individuals or companies close or supported by the government or the Municipality Mayor; it undermines the democratic processes in the country where the corrupt system does not have any motivation to change and become more transparent and democratic because the material benefits in that case would disappear. Corruption at the same time undermines state security, where the personnel is recruited not on merits but on corrupt practices. Corruption in the intelligence services and other similar agencies undermines the work against external threats, violent extremism, terrorist threats, etc.

Most of all, in Albania corruption has undermined the public trust in the state institutions. This has direct consequences for the perception of security. A general public that distrusts public institutions because of corruption tends to feel less secure.

External

China

China is not a new actor in Albania. In the period 1960-1978 China was Albania’s main international partner and the country’s main economic support. In the oil industry for example, there is still plenty of Chinese technology

⁴ Memorandum on Establishing the Fight Against Corruption as a Core United States National Security Interest.

being used. But since the fall of the communist regime in Albania, relations with China have been relatively modest. Especially in the years 2013-2015 the new Socialist government of Edi Rama was engaged in several high level meetings with Chinese officials and China pledged to bring major investments to Albania, especially in the area of infrastructure, but until now none of those projects has materialized. The reasons are two-fold: first, the experience of other countries in the region and the world with Chinese investments (problems with debt for example) have stopped the Albanian government for going further in this relation; second, the Albania-US strategic relationship has been strengthened also economically in the last years, which has eliminated a close relationship with China. For example, Albania signed an agreement with the United States on 5G technology, despite the offers from China.

At the moment, there is only one significant Chinese investment in Albania: the Bankers Petroleum. The oil concession was acquired in 2016 by the Chinese Geo-Jade company from another foreign company; therefore it was not negotiated directly with the Albanian government.

In 2020 after a visit from the US Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment, Keith J. Krach, the Chinese company which held the Rinas Airport concession withdraw and the concession was acquired by an Albanian company. This came after months of public expression of discontent from high officials in the Albanian government towards the Chinese company's management of the Rinas Airport and even with the presence of too many Chinese flags in the airport.⁵

Relations with China remain cordial and Albania continues to participate in the Chinese-initiated 17+1 format with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, but there is no perspective of investments or an increased Chinese presence in Albania. Therefore, China remains a small presence economically, culturally and politically in Albania and it does not represent any security threat to the country.

⁵ <https://sot.com.al/politike/belinda-balluku-shperthen-ndaj-kinezeve-te-rinasit-ju-dinite-valevitni-vetem-flamuj-do>.

Russia

Contrary to the other countries in the region (with the exception of Kosovo), which have some kind of relations with Russia but also groups and organization inside the countries that are sympathetic to Russia, this is not the case in Albania. Furthermore, Albanian-Russian relations are at the lowest point in their history. There is very little diplomatic contact between the two countries, there are no Russian investments in Albania and the trade between Albania and Russia is minimal. Furthermore, Albania followed the EU decision to impose sanctions against Russia, which had a further negative impact on Albania's meager trade with Russia. While Albania's sanctions against Russia were directed towards Russian investment, banks and Russian citizens, similar to EU sanctions against Russia; Russian's sanctions against Albania were directed towards agricultural products that Albania exports to Russia, thus inflicting a not inconsiderable financial damage to Albanian agricultural exports.

At the moment, Russian political, economic or cultural presence in Albania is almost non-existent. There are two main reasons for this: first, historically Czarist Russia at the beginning of the XXth century, especially during and after the First Balkans War, was the main country against the creation and the boundaries of the new Albanian state. It was Czarist Russia's role that determined Albania's new boundaries in 1913 leaving out of them Albanian-majority areas in Kosovo and Western Macedonia. This historical legacy continues today with Russia's strong stance against Kosovo's independence and full support for Serbia's policies against Kosovo. This historical and contemporary stance has created in the Albanian people a strong anti-Russian feeling.

Second, since the fall of the communist regime in Albania in 1991, all the Albanian governments have established a very close and strategic partnership with the United States. The relationship with the US has been so close that in many cases it excludes the possibility of relations with other countries, in this case Russia. In some cases, this policy has gone as far as having nothing to do with Russia. Concerning Russian investments, the Albanian governments have not forbidden them publicly but have tried to hamper every attempt of possible Russian investments or possible Russian acquisition of Albanian-based companies or possible Russian participation in public tenders.

Therefore, the possibility of any organizations, groups or political parties, showing pro-Russia feelings is almost impossible. But this situation has turned Russia into the ‘bogeyman’ of Albanian politics. Every political party which tries to discredit its rival accuses it of showing pro-Russian feelings, or some kind of remote collaboration with individuals close to Russian political or business life. At the same time, everyone who shows any remote sympathy for Russia or any remote possibility of collaborating with Russia is immediately labeled as a traitor.

The most recent report by the Albanian Intelligence Service show that the attempts of Russian influence have increased, but they are still of a very low level.⁶ Also the report stressed that Russia has no influence or contact with the political class in Albania.

In view of the above, at the moment Russia does not present any security threat to Albania.

Turkey

Totally different is the situation with Albania-Turkey relations. In the last years, Turkey has been transformed into a kind of insurance for Albania. At the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, the Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama said that “even if the world turns upside down, we have Turkey”.⁷ He further described Turkey as being the last option C, if the options A and B fail.⁸

Rama’s words are a perfect illustration of the current Albania-Turkey relations. Both countries have maintained excellent relations throughout the last three decades. Turkey in the 90s served as a good security and geopolitical balancer for Albania towards the supposed or real threats from Serbia and

⁶ Raporti sekret i SHISH: Rusia ka shtuar tentativat për të rritur ndikimin në Shqipëri, <https://tiranapost.al/raporti-sekret-shish-rusia-ka-shtuar-tentativat-per-te-rritur-ndiki-min-ne-shqiperi>.

⁷ “Në rast se do përbyset bota, kemi planin C të garantuar me Turqinë”, Rama sqaron a do vijë dita që do ketë mungesë ushqimesh, <http://www.panorama.com.al/ne-rast-se-do-permyset-bota-kemi-planin-c-te-garantuar-me-turqine-rama-sqaron-a-do-vije-dita-qe-do-kete-mungese-ushqimesh/>.

⁸ Ibid.

Greece at the time. But in the last five-six years, the relationship that Prime Minister Rama has built with Turkish President Erdoğan has turned into a personal relationship dissimilar to anything else in the last three decades. When Albania is in need, Rama goes to Turkey.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to talk about a significant Turkish influence in Albania. Turkey at the moment doesn't influence political decisions in the country, even though during the last elections this year Erdoğan showed a preference for the current government by donating the construction of a big Turkish-Albanian hospital in Fier in just two months before the elections. At the same time, the Albanian government has acted cautiously with the issue of Gülen-supported organizations or schools in Albania.

At the moment, Albanian government's stance towards Turkey seems highly pragmatic: it tries to get as much as possible in investments, receive quick help and support in times of disasters as after the November 2019 earthquake or during the pandemics with the vaccines, while trying to give as little as possible.

What does this relationship with Turkey mean for Albania?

It serves mainly two purposes: first, Turkey is a friendly country geographically relatively near Albania which has the potential to help the country in times of difficulties. The last years have shown that Turkey has been more than prompt to help Albania. The Albanian government has found quick support for economic, cultural, social, educational projects in Turkey.

Second, Turkey as in the 90s, serves as a geopolitical balancer. In this case against Greece. Albania and Greece have still many open issues between them like the maritime border, the Greek military cemeteries in South Albania, the Greek minority in the country, the issues of Chameria and North Epirus, the Greek 'state of war' law from 1940 against Albania, etc. All these issues tend to create tensions from time to time, which until now have remained only in words and not in deeds. But Albania's relation with Turkey serves to show Greece that the country has a strong partner ready to help even militarily if it is necessary. In a certain way, Turkey serves as a deterrent that the tensions created by the open issues between Albania and Greece to remain in words and not transformed into real threats.

Despite the close relationship described above, Turkey does not serve as an alternative to the European Union for Albania's future. The country is firmly established in its path towards the EU. At the same time, Turkey does not come even near the kind of influence that the United States has in the Albanian politics. In this view, this relationship with Turkey enhances and does not threaten Albania's security.

Conclusions

The security threats to a country change with the passing of time. Twenty years ago, Albania's security threats were different from now. At the time there was little talk of 'third actors' like Russia, China, Turkey, but nowadays these countries with their increased activity in the Balkans have become possible security threats.

Nevertheless, at the moment Albania's security threats come mostly from inside than from outside. Islamic radicalism continues to be a potential threat more than a real threat while corruption remains the main security threat which has the potential to weaken state institutions, disrupt democratic processes in the country and jeopardize directly the work of its intelligence and security agencies. Successive governments have failed to tackle the problem, while it has almost become systemic and difficult anymore to improve the situation.

On the other hand, external threats seem very few. China which is considered a threat by the United States has little presence in Albania, which is firmly on the side of the US in each policy towards China; while Russia has no presence at all in Albania and the government is doing anything possible to maintain this status-quo with Russia. Only Turkey from 'the third actors' has a well established and very close relationship with Albania, but in this case from Albania's point of view this relationship doesn't jeopardize Albania's Euro-Atlantic orientation and at the same time it enhances Albania's security rather than it threatens it.

**PART II:
SOCIO-POLITICAL PROCESSES AND
THE SECURITY SECTOR**

Socio-Political Processes and the Security Sector: The Role and Situation of Civil-Society in the Western Balkans

Michael Schmunk

“The EU welcomes the Western Balkans partners’ commitment to the primacy of democracy and the rule of law, especially the fight against corruption and organized crime, good governance, as well as respect for human rights and rights of persons belonging to minorities. Their effective implementation of reforms rests on these foundations. Civil society and independent media play a crucial role in the process of democratization.”

Sofia 2018 Western Balkans’ Summit Declaration¹

“An empowered civil society and independent and pluralistic media are crucial components of any democratic system and we welcome and support the role they play in the Western Balkans.”

Brdo 2021 Western Balkans’ Summit Declaration²

“A sustainable modern democracy requires a strong and vibrant civil society – I mean the term in its broadest sense, encompassing the professional, cultural and business world and incorporating an understanding of the importance of human rights, gender equality and other issues.”

Paddy Ashdown³

When it comes to the regular ticking off of the Western Balkans’ accession to-do lists, in Brussels, EU capitals and elsewhere, for more than 20 years now, progress in one crucial area has not yet significantly occurred: the creation of a strong, influential civil society. The effect has been devastating: Not very democratic, mostly traditional power political groups and “leaders” claiming to protect the interests and rights of their ethnic group, remain widely uncontrolled while executing state power. To a large extent, among others, state capturing and societal frustration with “the system” paralyze the EU aspirants.

¹ EU Western Balkans Summit, Sofia Declaration, 17 May 2018, paragraph 4.

² EU Western Balkans Summit, Brdo Declaration, 6 October 2021, paragraph 2.

³ Paddy Ashdown: Swords and ploughshares: Bringing peace to the 21st century. London, 2007, p. 111.

Everyone on the aspirants' side for EU membership as well as on recipients' side, the EU and its member states, knows very well that in the next enlargement round, probably different from enlargements in former times, only sound democracies and states with a professional, independent judiciary will be accepted. Paddy Ashdown, the former High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, was one of those who rightly identified the role of civil society-building in a post-conflict as the *conditio sine qua non*:

“A sustainable, well-functioning state is made up of two elements: efficient democratic institutions which make it work, and a civil society strong enough to protect these from the abuse of power and from the actions of an over-mighty executive. Without a civil society performing this function, even the most perfect of institutions bequeathed by the wisest foreign intervener will become corrupt over time.”⁴

Civil society organizations and NGOs, independent and pluralistic media and journalists, critical think tanks, human rights advocates and democratic opposition parties in Western Balkans' parliaments have, over the past 20 years, faced humiliation, intimidation, hostilities, obstruction, smear campaigns, banning and even criminalization.

This has been all the more puzzling and surprising as, in particular from the EU Commission and from EU member states, but also from other Western partners (USA, Canada, Norway, Switzerland, etc.) significant funds have been provided to strengthen and to empower the institutions concerned. However, as the annual EU Country Reports⁵ try to suggest, traditionally left in uncertainty, “progress” has not really lived up to the expectations.⁶ Though the overall legal and regulatory framework for civil society seems to be broadly in line with the EU acquis, in practice, aspiration and reality often largely diverge. Every year, billions of Euros have been transferred from Brussels and from other donors to the Western Balkans Six (WB 6) – with “democratization” and “civil society” being among the most important areas of funding. But who has been receiving all of this money? What happened

⁴ Paddy Ashdown, *ibid.*

⁵ See the six EU Country Reports, Brussels, 06.10.2020, SWD (2020) 350-356 final (also published on the website of <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2020/10/06/european-commission-publishes-2020-wb-country-reports/>).

⁶ Compare the critical view of these reports at Thomas Brey: Neustart für den Balkan. Die Politik von EU und USA ist gescheitert. In: *Internationale Politik* 75 (2020) 3, pp. 76-81 (80).

to it? Has there been any spending transparency? Any control, any evaluation from the EU and other donors? These are also the cardinal questions the WB 6 institutions concerned have been asking time and again. Clear, factual answers remain to be provided.

Generally speaking, civil society NGOs, etc. are the central building blocks and core actors of the Western type of a true democracy.⁷ Democratic civil society organizations and a truly open society create more political conflicts and tensions in a country, though, from a democratic and civil rights perspective, fruitful controversies end mostly in compromises acceptable to a majority and more resilience. In most of the EU's member states and its partners overseas, civil society has been playing a dominant role as the "*Gegenmacht*" (countervailing power) against the state and government, occasionally and partly even more prominent and more influential than the democratically elected parliaments.⁸ Free media and the independent civil society can exercise in our societies an enormous political power no state or government can neglect.⁹

In the Western Balkans, in former Yugoslavia and in Albania, as history shows, such a civil society culture has never fully materialized. The autocratic if not dictatorial leadership structures regarded this type of an open, civil society and independent media as a threat to their or the county's socialist-communist totalitarian rule. The collapse of Tito's Yugoslavia and Enver Hoxha's Albania did not really put an end to this anti-democratic understanding of rulership. Thus, the post-war leaders, most of whom had emerged from the Albanian disintegration after Hoxha's death and from the post-Tito secession conflicts, "revolutionary" leaders, guerrilla commanders, "liberators", etc., only reluctantly if at all, have allowed some limited activity to civil society. Most importantly: just as the value of an independent media and a free, full-fledged opposition in parliament, the value of civil society as an equal partner in the democratic process has never been acknowledged.

⁷ A critical view concerning the (democratic) role of NGOs can be found in Patrice C. McMahon: *The NGO game. Post-conflict peacebuilding in the Balkans and beyond.* Ithaca and London, 2017.

⁸ To my knowledge, there is no trenchant English translation for this German political term.

⁹ This, unfortunately, does not work everywhere in the 27 EU member states, looking at the performance of Poland, Hungary and a few others.

True democratic civil society organizations therefore remain rare. Interestingly enough, there have been numerous institutions, emerging out of the former Albania and the former Yugoslavia that call themselves “civil society” groups or movements. According to a recent study of the “*Global Initiative*”, based on figures of the national civil society-NGO registers of the WB 6, the numbers of registered NGOs are:

Albania	> 11.000
BiH	> 25.300
Kosovo	> 9.400
Montenegro	> 5.700
North Macedonia	> 16.900
Serbia	> 34.300 ¹⁰

However, only a very small number of those have met the standards of the respective EU *acquis*. The majority of those NGOs have emerged from both socialist-communist and nationalistic traditions and has been overwhelmingly apolitical, with ethnic, cultural, identitarian and socialist elements. Quite a few among them are so-called government-organized non-governmental organizations (GONGOs),¹¹ sponsored by authoritarian rulers, with quite often dubious political intentions. Only very slowly, but increasingly successfully though, civil society groups, independent think tanks, etc. have come together, established networks, exchange and multifold cooperation – those from the EU and transatlantic area, but also, most importantly, from the WB 6 themselves – a process that should be given priority in targeted EU’s funding programs.

One, if not the key area and role for civil society activities, are the budgets for the security sector, police and special police, intelligence, and partly the judiciary. In historically autocratic states though, exactly those institutions stood far above the society and communist-socialist “parliaments”. They

¹⁰ Kristina Amerhauser and Walter Kemp: Stronger together. Bolstering resilience among civil society in the Western Balkans. Global Initiative Report, Geneva, February 2021, pp. 5 and 25; <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/WBalkans-CSOs-web.pdf>.

¹¹ See, among others, Wikipedia ‘Government-organized non-governmental organization’, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government-organized_non-governmental_organization.

were unassailable and only responsible to the autocratic ruler or the communist party structures. To effectively criticize, control and even hold them accountable, it requires a really skillful, empowered civil society (“*Gegenmacht*”) supported by the media, (academic) think tanks, and, if otherwise not possible, by international support (OSCE; Council of Europe; EU; NATO; European and Human Rights courts, etc.). Even in consolidated democracies, this has not been an easy job for civil society organizations, but it works, with the support of investigative journalism and research. In Germany, above all, it is, according to constitutional law, the parliament itself that controls the activities of the armed forces: the Germany army happens to be a “*Parlamentsarmee*” (parliament’s army). The police are controlled by the parliaments of the 16 German federal states (“*Länder*”), etc. In the Western Balkans, however, even today, the culture of not being responsible to the overall society still characterizes the security forces and parts of the justice system. This, with a highest priority, must be addressed in the “democracy” and “rule of law” chapter negotiations regarding EU accession.

What should, what could still be done? There has not been a lack of serious, profound suggestions from within the WB 6 and from European institutions. The European Economic and Social Committee, e.g., that represents organized civil society in the EU, annually holds its “Western Balkans Civil Society Forum”, regularly resulting in a Final Declaration, full of relevant suggestions.¹² Against the background of my longstanding diplomatic experience in the Western Balkans and in other post-conflict societies, I recommend the following:

1. The EU Commission, after consultations with the organized democratic and independent civil society, relevant think tanks and other donors, should establish a transparent and easily accessible steering unit to support and directly fund democratic civil society NGOs in the WB 6, flanked within the accession processes by strong conditionality vis-à-vis WB 6 governments. It has to be made clear to WB 6 rulers that those civil society organizations are a *conditio sine qua non* for successful future EU

¹² Most recently: The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), Final Declaration, 8th Western Balkans Civil Society Forum, Skopje 30 September – 1 October 2021; [www.FINALDECLARATION – 8th Western Balkans Civil Society Forum | European Economic and Social Committee \(europa.eu\)](http://www.FINALDECLARATION-8thWesternBalkansCivilSocietyForum|EuropeanEconomicandSocialCommittee(europa.eu)).

accession. Rather than undermining, discriminating and even criminalizing organized democratic society actions, WB 6 governments should pro-actively support those NGOs wherever and with whatever possible.

2. EU Heads of State and Government should decide to organize future EU Western Balkans summits so that high level civil society conferences with their participation will take place as regular side events – in order to allow the voice of civil society to be heard and its proposals to be included into the summits' final decisions.
3. From the very beginning, in the aftermath of the breakdown of then Albania and Yugoslavia, many international organizations and NGOs, e.g. the German political foundations, stepped in to assist the Western Balkans states in building true, sustainable democracies and a “*Rechtsstaat*” (the rule of law). In the last decade or so, mostly because of the lack of funding and the resistance of the rather autocratic rulers and governments, this assistance has been reduced. Making a fresh attempt, with the help of Brussels and other donors, close partnerships between EU and other civil society NGOs and the respective NGOs of the WB 6 should be established, well-funded and anchored in the accession processes.

As the moderator of the respective civil-society panel, I am grateful to the organizers of this conference and to the editors of this book that they included this very important topic for post-conflict society-building into this workshop. I have learnt in decades of cooperation with organized democratic civil society, as a diplomat, how much civil society can contribute to the establishment of a true post-conflict democracy. The two following studies from the region will explain this further, in more detail and in more depth.

Socio-Political Processes and the Security Sector in Montenegro

Milena Bešić

The Social Context and the Political Situation

Resistance to democratisation is universal, reflected in a reluctance to open up to the public and most evident in the security and defence sector. Montenegrin society is thus a political society *par excellence* as there is almost no question which is not viewed through the prism of political separatism and often partisan political interests. Instead of directing attention to developing an autonomous civic public, strengthening critical thinking, decreasing society's polarisation, nationalism and cleric-nationalism, our society is being led by political leaders who worsen interpersonal relations, incentivise social divisions and also neglect European standards and values, which would be in the interest of the democratisation of society. The absence of social dynamics and the constant evasion of attempts at solving the key political and economic problems, together with oligarchical tendencies and clientelism being the desired political behaviour, followed by corruption, nepotism and ideological criteria governing personnel selection, have for a long time contributed to the condition Montenegro and its society find itself in today.

After 30 years of party-political rule, the new political majority has brought new social challenges to Montenegrin society. Despite the long-awaited change in Montenegro's political life, crucial changes have still not taken place at the desired speed or with the desired results, not even in the security sector.

The coalition agreement, which states that the government will fully implement all necessary reforms required both for Montenegro's EU accession and the strengthening of its NATO membership, depoliticise key government institutions and combat crime and corruption, is, above all, only declarative, given the absence of political will among the parliament majority.

Foreign influence and that of diplomatic representatives in Montenegro became obvious in the government's make-up, as the only constituent of the current parliamentary majority – URA – is in charge of the security sector, despite the aspirations of the pro-Serbian and pro-Russian Democratic Front.

Additionally, the poor efficiency and effectiveness of the executive and legislative branches has been made evident by partisan politics and attempts at interfering in the processes of the two government branches. Furthermore, the judicial branch still has not fully achieved independence and responsibility.

On the political scene, with a high level of discordance between major political forces and partisan-oriented interests in relation to basic social and political questions, every expectation of solving crucial citizens' questions is impossible. The new government's social and political reforms have a substantial problem – *ad hoc* decisions.

Despite many factors, such as the influence of pro-Russian media, the prolongation of the EU negotiation process, a change in government etc., it is encouraging that Montenegrin citizens, when asked about Montenegro's foreign policy, are, for the most part, pro-Western oriented – or to be more direct, citizens are more in favour of Montenegro relying on Western partners in its foreign policy.

Even though supporters of the government as well as the government itself regard NATO as a force which carried out a military intervention against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the new political constellation as well as increased cooperation with the Alliance has affected attitudes concerning Montenegrin NATO membership. Our last political public opinion poll showed that an increasing number of citizens support Montenegro's membership in the Alliance (44,7 %) and that the percentage of those who are against it is decreasing (34,5 %).

After three decades of rule by President Djukanović's DPS, structural changes are required – especially in the security sector. This is why the public's expectations are focused on depoliticizing the institutions, true reforms and sustainable solutions.

Key strategic security interests of Montenegro include, *inter alia*, the development of an efficient and sustainable national security sector, prevention and suppression of threats and challenges which may affect the security of Montenegro and its allies as well as building resilience, civil preparedness and crisis management capabilities. However, the domain of foreign policy as well as security and defence policy includes the key strategic orientations of Montenegro's geostrategic and geopolitical position since the restoration of its independence in 2006, including the cornerstones of its foreign policy: European Union accession, further integration into NATO, as well as reinforcing regional cooperation, in compliance with its security policy and the defence principles pursued as a fully-fledged NATO ally as of 2017.

The Role of Civil Society in Relation to Relevant Security Policy Processes

The long-term role civil society organizations (CSOs) play in maintaining a democratically-managed security sector through active engagement on oversight issues is sometimes de-emphasized in developing countries. Therefore, CSOs have a vital role to play not only in established democracies but also in post-conflict, post-authoritarian and undemocratic states, in which the activities of CSOs can still affect the decision-making of elites that monopolize the political process.

However, fully-fledged civilian oversight and civil participation in relevant processes are often met with institutional and political resistance by members of the security sector. Civil rights are thus curtailed and public oversight of the security sector considerably restricted, or not established in the first place.

Democratic oversight assumes the active engagement of democratic institutions, principally parliament and its committees, civil society, the media, the government executive and the security sector in formulating, implementing, monitoring and reforming security policy.

In this context, in Montenegro the role of CSOs in relation to relevant security policy and decisions is visible within the following:

- Civil control of the police is the purview of the Council for Civic Control of Police Work. The Council is a body which evaluates the exercise of police powers to protect human rights and freedoms. The Council consists of five members, two of whom are representatives of non-governmental organizations dealing with human rights. Citizens and police officers can turn to the Council. The Council makes assessments and recommendations and submits them to the minister, and the minister is obliged to inform the Council about the measures taken. There is a need for greater proactivity. More proactive action on the part of the Council regarding public complaints about police practices will contribute to a strengthening of the accountability mechanism in the police, and is necessary to further strengthen the impartial action of this body.
- Recently, an Ethics Committee which monitors the application of the Code of Police Ethics was established. It consists of five members, two of whom are representatives of non-governmental organizations, pursuant to the Law on Internal Affairs. The police has been accused of numerous violations of the Code one of which was tried by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg. A proactive approach is important to emphasize cooperation with a wider range of CSOs and should be fully transparent.
- In 2020, the NATO Council was established as an advisory body to the government, whose tasks are to consider, propose and coordinate political, military, legal, financial and other professional activities of the state bodies of Montenegro as a member of the Alliance. As with the two bodies mentioned previously, two representatives of non-governmental organizations are part of the Council.
- Cooperation between the Parliament of Montenegro and the civil sector is constantly promoted and strengthened. This is confirmed by the increasing participation of civil sector representatives in the meetings of the working bodies, especially with regard to consultative hearings. These working bodies include a Security and Defence Committee in whose meetings CSO representatives participate, but can only comment if invited to do so. However, CSOs may also directly address the working bodies by following the form on providing opinions by civil society representatives.

- Although it was expected to be established in 2019, the Ethics Committee to monitor the application of the Code of Army Ethics still has not been set up.

The Security Sector Challenges in Recent Critical Developments and Different Political Influences

The political situation and relations between parliament and the government are quite unique. The Montenegrin government was shaken by obligations or 'blackmail' during the whole year and is still on shaky ground. The final outcome will largely depend on the political intentions of the URA, since Democratic Montenegro and the Democratic Front agreed on the principles of government reconstruction approved in principle by the prime minister. In such a political and social environment, there is room for different influences, especially by those who still do not regard Montenegro as an independent country.

Recent events in Montenegro show that since Montenegro changed the government and parliamentary majority there has been ever stronger Serbian political influence, which emboldens internal political polarisation.

Regardless of the recommendations made by security sector institutions such as the Police and National Security Agency (ANB) concerning the enthronement of the new Metropolitan of the Serbian Orthodox Church, political influence of the pro-Serb parties was decisive in holding the event in Cetinje. Apart from national political influence, the influence of Serbia through the Democratic Front is highly visible. In that context, I would like to mention that the Serbian president also said that the Serbian media were correct when they reported that the enthronement of Metropolitan Joanikije in Cetinje had been cancelled, but that the Government of Montenegro had changed its mind during the night.

It is clear that security sector reform depends on political stability, but at the same time the success of security reforms depends on reducing political influence, increasing accountability and transparency, and involving civil society. This not only means non-governmental organizations and the media, but

also the academic community, whose support was for the most part inexistent in the initial stages of the reform. For Montenegrin security institutions the role of the civil society will thus be crucial in the achievement of social legitimacy.

The Government of Montenegro should furthermore amend the Law on Free Access to Information so that any exemption from the right of access is proportionate to the objective of protecting the public interest in accordance with the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents, ratified by Montenegro. This includes exceptions that protect the intelligence and security sectors.

The focus should be put on improving the security sector reporting and planning system. The levels at which the public can be reached in terms of data availability should be clearly defined. This also applies to the levels at which a certain level of external oversight can be approached in regard to institutions that have access to confidential information.

Democratic Control of the Security Sector and the Human Rights Aspect

In Montenegro only a few CSOs work in the security sector field; this shows that CSOs do not have the impact on the security sector which they should have. However, think tanks including CEDEM are very active, especially when it comes to checks and balances, transparency and parliamentary oversight. When it comes to real democratic control of the security sector I would say that parliamentary oversight of the security sector began with the new parliament, whose majority does not agree very often with the government's decisions. The Security and Defence Committee is very active and many consultative hearings have taken place.

However, the dialogue between civil society and the security sector has to be improved. This dialogue mostly exists in the field of ethics, where CSOs struggle to strengthen the capacities of security sector representatives, as well as to promote and enhance the application of ECHR case-law.

Security sector public relations mostly rely on statements given by the institutions themselves and their representatives. Although there are many initiatives in this field, there is huge room for improvement as it is mostly one-way communication vis-à-vis the public. However, CSO oversight is evident in human rights issues, which was most noticeable during the first two waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, when many human rights were violated such as the right to freedom of expression and the right to access information. CEDEM in coalition with human rights CSOs organises various activities, such as press conferences on key findings, and on strengthening capacities of security sector representatives in order to protect and promote human rights. It also works with the ECHR to develop a guide to the articles of the European Convention of Human Rights in order to prevent human rights violations.

It is very important to mention that the role of Ombudsman institution in this area has to be strengthened regarding advocacy and capacities. In 2018 and 2019 CEDEM implemented the project aiming at “Strengthening the Institutional Capacity of the Ombudsman for Oversight of the Security Sector” based on EU good practices. However, on the government side there was no willingness to establish a department which would be in charge of security sector oversight.

CEDEM has also enjoyed a cooperation with parliament and its Security and Defence Committee for the purpose of providing better information on the Committee’s work and with the aim of preparing the publication “Security Sector Reform in Montenegro – Parliamentary Oversight, Transparency and Gender Equality”.

**PART III:
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Policy Recommendations

“Regional Stability in South East Europe” Study Group

Executive Summary of Recommendations

- **EU:** Accession negotiations should be started without further delay with both Albania and North Macedonia.
- **EU/US:** EU summit participants should seek to include civil-society’s positions wherever possible into conclusions about the WB.
- **EU/US:** Parliamentary bodies in charge of democratic oversight of the intelligence, security and defence sector need more support in the WB.
- **EU/US:** Full political support must be provided to the High Representative in BiH in the Peace Implementation Council (PIC).
- **BiH institutions:** A new strategy of BiH for the prevention and fight against terrorism has to be adopted.
- **NATO:** Kosovo should be invited to join the PfP.
- **EU/US/WB countries:** Kosovo should be included in all regional co-operation programs.
- **EU:** Formal negotiations should start with Serbia on Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) issues.
- **Serbian government:** Refrain from interfering in the domestic politics of neighbour countries on the basis of controversial slogans like “Srpski svet” (“Serbian World”).
- **EU/US:** Cooperate with domestic actors in Montenegro to consolidate the political situation.
- **EU/US/WB countries:** The numerous additional regional initiatives should be scrutinised to show unnecessary duplications with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).

Situation Analysis

With North Macedonia, the third of the six Western Balkan (WB 6) states joined NATO in March 2020. However, three Western Balkan states (Bosnia and Herzegovina/BiH, Kosovo as well as Serbia) remain outside the North

Atlantic Alliance for different reasons. Kosovo is the only Western Balkan state not yet included in NATO's Partnership for Peace. Against the background of this diverse security-policy situation, paralleled by open conflict issues within and between the Western Balkan states, the status and sustainability of the transition of the security sector in the individual states more than twenty years after the end of the war deserves closer examination. Furthermore, the state of security relations within the region and how they can be positively developed with the help of the EU and NATO must be explored.

The launching of the "Open Balkan" initiative while promoting regional cooperation, has also created a dividing line between the countries that support it (Albania, Serbia and North Macedonia) and the rest of the region which opposes the initiative. While the initiative has its merits, it is interesting to see it function in the face of harsh opposition from the latter group of countries, and witnessing the challenges of stream-lining this effort with the "Berlin Process". Much space remains to foster regional cooperation between the WB 6 in various areas. Stagnation in the EU accession process has implications for the state of play of democracy in the region. Montenegro and Serbia are the countries negotiating accession, yet with no visible progress recently.

Despite delivering on their obligations, Albania and North Macedonia are in a limbo as their negotiating frameworks have not been adopted due to the Bulgarian and other vetos. The EU has also not adopted a decision regarding visa-free travel for Kosovo, although the Commission has assessed that the conditions were fulfilled a long time ago. These circumstances increase the region's fragility and significantly decrease the potential for substantive democratic reforms. At the regional level several key trends and challenges can be identified. As to the trends, regional cooperation seems to be more effective than bilateral cooperation, as the latter can be burdened with disputes. Similarly, technical cooperation is more advanced than political cooperation in the region. Regional security cooperation is led from outside of the region, i.e. mostly by EU and NATO efforts. As for the challenges, the key topics are 1) terrorism threats due to the radicalisation of the youth, 2) widespread disinformation, linked also to the radicalisation issue, 3) a potential migration crisis, also as a result of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, and 4) energy

security. All of these challenges are also shared in the broader European context, pointing to the need of the EU to deal with the region in its own policies as well.

Current Challenges per Country

Kosovo

Due to non-recognition by four NATO members, Kosovo remains the only country in the region that has not joined Partnership for Peace (PfP) and it is the second country in the Euro-Atlantic sphere together with Cyprus which is not partner in the PfP, with Kosovo being blocked by non-recognising EU member states. Current outlook for NATO membership is bleak. Kosovo's external security continues to depend on the highly expensive KFOR mission.

Kosovo's participation in regional security and defence initiatives and organisations, remains very limited due to the non-recognition of countries in the wider region. It participates in limited capacity in the Adriatic Charter (status of observer, full membership blocked by BiH) and the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre (limited to civilian component, participation in the activities entailing military component are blocked by nonrecognising countries). It is fully excluded from all activities of the South East Europe Defence Ministerial.

Kosovo's international security cooperation has been enhanced through the cooperation with the EU, by signing a working arrangement establishing cooperative relations between the law enforcement authorities of Kosovo with EUROPOL. Kosovo has an outdated security strategy as of 2010. The previous Kosovo government has drafted the new security strategy 2021 – 2030. However, its adoption has not been followed by the current government.

From a geographical point of view, the southern border of Kosovo is secure. However, the northern border with Serbia is not and carries potential security risks. In terms of parliamentary oversight, the parliament lags behind in terms of oversight of expenditures of Kosovo security institutions.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The complex situation in BiH continues to impede the possibility of progress for regional and security cooperation. The appointment of the new High Representative has been opposed by Republika Srpska, in a continuous line of boycotting state institutions. The 2016 defence reform which defines the structure of the armed forces has still not been implemented. The implementation of the reform program 2021 as a key document for cooperation is also blocked. The EU integration process is not disputed, but there is slow progress in meeting the pre-conditions to be granted candidate status coupled with enlargement fatigue on the side of the EU. At the regional level there are ambivalent relations with neighbouring Croatia and Serbia and good relations with Montenegro and North Macedonia.

Security cooperation is slowly moving forward. Due to objection from the BiH entity Republika Srpska the new Commission formed by the Council of Ministers in BiH is tasked with NATO cooperation, instead of integration. EUFOR's engagement in the security sector has not been publicly disputed, but Republika Srpska could change its stance and Russia may not want to enlarge the mandate to EUFOR. There is some progress in PfP programs, with newly set 35 partnership goals which determine the cooperation of NATO and BiH in the security sector.

Albania

Albanian citizens perceive that there are no real threats to the country, mainly because of Albania's membership in the NATO alliance. There is a paradoxical situation with Greece, which remains the only country in the region with which Albania has direct unresolved issues, such as the state of war from 1940 that is still in power, although both countries have signed joint peace agreements and are NATO allies. These create a certain sense of insecurity and threat in Albanian public, Greece, however, has been very supportive of Albania. In terms of security issues with other foreign actors, Albania has strong ties with Turkey illustrated by the new military agreement with Turkey in 2020; in 2021 Albania was part of military training in Anadolu for the first time. There is no Russian influence, investment or warm feelings in Albania towards Russia, and the Chinese presence has decreased in Albania in the last years.

Serbia

Serbia cooperates both with the West and Russia (extensive security cooperation with Russia and Belarus, as well as participation in a number of military exercises such as the “Slavic brotherhood”). This is evidenced by the purchases of military equipment from both sides, sending signals to every potential partner. In terms of regional cooperation, Serbia has engaged in “vaccine diplomacy” as it obtained vaccines the earliest in the region, which it also used to exert influence.

Serbian foreign policy has only been partially harmonised with European foreign policy due to non-alignment with EU positions related to Russia and China. At present, Serbia participates in three missions within the Common Security and Defence Policy. There have been only few reforms in the security sector and there have been many reports pointing towards politicisation and state influence coupled with no parliamentary oversight. The latest example of such tendencies is the draft law of internal affairs, recently proposed by the minister of interior.

Its Europeanisation process is not moving forward, as the country has so far opened 18 negotiating chapters out of 35, but only 2 chapters have been closed, with no progress made the last two years. The erosion of democratic governance is very serious, leading to authoritarian tendencies in Serbia. The work of the civil society is under attack from the government and there is a tendency to criminalise NGOs. Cooperation between the state and the civil sector is almost non-existent or limited. The EU is aware of all this but does not provide much support for NGOs.

The Belgrade – Pristina dialogue is moving backwards and the two sides are further apart than they were in 2012. The more Serbia loses control over Kosovo, the more it can increase activities and seek benefits and political gains in Republika Srpska and Montenegro. These activities already take place, such as support for BiH Presidency Member Dodik’s statements concerning separatism, although Vučić, Serbia’s President, is very careful of what he says on his commitment to the territory of BiH.

North Macedonia

Since joining NATO in March 2020 North Macedonia has shown that it is on a good path in terms of democratic processes and security issues and has become a constructive partner that is trying to have good relations with neighbour countries. North Macedonia is also involved in economic cooperation initiatives, such as the Open Balkan initiative. However, despite these developments, the bilateral issue with Bulgaria is a barrier for North Macedonia to start the accession negotiations with the EU. This blockade is a significant threat to the overall support in the public for EU integration and NATO membership, as shown in recent polls and is likely to undermine future reform efforts overall.

Policy Recommendations

General Recommendations

- **EU:** Accession negotiations should be started without further delay with both Albania and North Macedonia.
- **EU/US:** Full political and legal support and flanking should be given for the work of the civil society, the independent media, independent think tanks and the democratic opposition in the parliaments in the Western Balkans.
- **EU/US:** EU Western Balkans summits, at least, should organise high-level civil-society conferences as privileged side events in order to allow the voice of civil society and the other institutions mentioned above to be heard on the summit subjects addressed. EU summit participants should seek to include civil society's positions wherever possible into their conclusions and declarations.
- **EU/US:** Security-oriented international organisations, NGOs, and other stakeholders should support the development of the capacity of parliamentary bodies in charge of democratic oversight of the intelligence, security, and defence sectors.

With reference to Bosnia and Herzegovina

- **EU/US:** The EU institutions and member states, as well as the US need to provide full political support to the High Representative in BiH in their capacity as PIC members.
- **BiH institutions:** The BiH entity Republika Srpska must accept the decision of the Peace Implementation Council concerning the election and instalment of the new High Representative.
- **BiH institutions:** In order to adequately respond to modern security challenges, risks, and threats, the new security policy of BiH needs to be adopted as soon as possible.
- **BiH institutions:** With the assistance of security oriented international organisations, NGOs, and other stakeholders a new strategy of BiH for the prevention and fight against terrorism needs to be adopted.

With reference to Kosovo

- **Kosovo government:** Kosovo should enhance bilateral security and defence cooperation with the US and key European partners.
- **NATO:** NATO should follow the example of EU in building practical relations with Kosovo in order to prepare the country for membership in the alliance. This is of crucial importance to speed up reforms and establish compatibility of the Kosovo Security Force with those of NATO.
- **NATO:** Kosovo should be invited to join the PfP.
- **EU/US/WB countries:** Kosovo should be included in all regional co-operation programs.

With reference to Albania

- **Albanian authorities:** The abrogation of the “state of war” law between Albania and Greece would create a friendlier atmosphere between the two countries and hence increase the security in the region.

With reference to Serbia

- **EU:** The EU should start formal negotiations in Chapter 31 on Foreign, Security and Defence Policy as a way of engaging with the country on these topics.
- **EU/US:** The EU and the US should provide more financial and public support for the operations of independent civil society in Serbia.
- **Serbian government:** In the context of the repeated stressing of the term “Srpski svet” Belgrade should refrain from interfering in the domestic politics of neighbour countries, in particular BiH and Montenegro.

With reference to Montenegro

- EU/US: The EU and US should engage with domestic political actors in Montenegro to prevent further destabilisation and the use of religion for political ends. A consolidated political situation is necessary to implement security sector reforms.
- Montenegrin institutions: Should take a proactive approach in promoting the benefits of NATO and EU membership in line with the commitment to their membership and integration in both.
- Montenegrin institutions: Should take a proactive approach regarding the links between human rights and the security sector.

With reference to North Macedonia

- EU/US: The EU member states and US need to provide continuous support to the implementation of the Prespa Agreement as an example to the region on how to solve difficult bilateral disputes.
- EU: The EU should recognise North Macedonia’s advanced position of its alignment with EU legislation in its accession negotiations.

With reference to the Regional Cooperation Council:

- EU/US/WB countries: The RCC is a regional cooperation institution. For that reason, the numerous additional regional initiatives should be scrutinised to identify any doublings of non-delivering programs.

List of Abbreviations

AFBiH	Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina
ANB	National Security Agency
ANP	Annual National Plan
BiH	Bosna i Hercegovina/Bosnia and Herzegovina
BP	Border Police
CEDEM	Centre for Democracy and Human Rights
CoM	Council of Ministers
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
CVE-FTF	Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism leading to Terrorism and Foreign Terrorist Fighters
DPPI SEE	Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South Eastern Europe
DPS	Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro
EADRCC	Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Center
EC	European Commission
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
EU	European Union
EUROPOL	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation
EUSR	EU Special Representative
FBiH	Federation of BiH
GONGO	Government-Organized Non-Governmental Organizations
IISG	Integrative Internal Security Governance
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
ISIS	Islamic State
KFOR	Kosovo Force
KIA	Kosovo-Intelligence Agency
KSF	Kosovo Security Force
MAP	Membership Action Plan
MARRI	Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NAM	Non-Alignment Movement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NICS	Next Generation Incident Command System
OCC	Operational Capabilities Concept
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PARP	Planning and Review Process
PCC SEE	Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe
PESCO	Permanent Structured Cooperation
PGs	Partnership Goals
PSOTC	Peace Support Operations Training Centre
RACVIAC	Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance
RAI	Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RP	Reform Programme
RS	Republika Srpska
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SEDM	South East Europe Defence Ministerial
SEECF	South East European Cooperation Process
SEESAC	South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for Control
SIPA	State Investigation and Protection Agency
SPS	Science for Peace and Security
UN	United Nations
URA	United Reform Action (Montenegro Political Party)
WB 6	Western Balkans Six
WBDM	Western Balkans Defence Ministers

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The accession of North Macedonia to NATO in March 2020 was NATO's last enlargement step in South East Europe/the Western Balkans to date and generally. Hence, the regional security situation remains heterogeneous. Three out of six Western Balkan countries are not NATO members, including Serbia as a military neutral country.

On the basis of case studies, this publication analyses the Western Balkan states' security sectors and their ongoing transition – more than twenty years after the wars ended. Against the backdrop of increasing geopolitical challenges for EU and NATO, the analyses focus on the state of security relations within South East Europe and on the question of how these can be positively developed, given that conditions in the Western Balkans are still complex.

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