AN ASSESSMENT OF EU'S AND TURKEY'S WESTERN BALKAN POLICIES: A CRITIQUE AND PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE COOPERATION

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ABSTRACT

The EU, which is commonly referred as a soft power, is facing various challenges that limit its effectiveness in the international scene, most importantly in the Western Balkans. The transformative capacity of its soft power is not properly utilized in this region. This article explores the challenges to the EU's soft power and evaluates possible ways for the Union to maintain its effectiveness adding new dimensions to its foreign policy in the area–specifically in the Western Balkans region. The primary issue addressed by this article deals with the immediate changes facing the EU as a soft power today. Given the fact that political mechanisms that EU utilized have proved to be ineffective in promoting stability, democracy peace in its area, alternatives should be considered. Meanwhile, a decade ago Turkey has proven its capacity to influence Western Balkan countries by creating and consolidating its soft power through various ways. However under the most present circumstances an economically weak Turkey is nothing but an actor which attempts to strengthen its relationship with Western Balkans countries

Keywords: Western Balkans, European Union, Turkey, Conditionality, Common Security and Defense Policy

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AB VE TÜRKİYE'NIN BATI BALKAN POLİTİKALARININ BİR DEĞERLENDİRMESİ: ELEŞTİREL BİR BAKIŞ VE GELECEKTEKİ İŞBİRLİĞİNE DAİR BEKLENTİLER

ÖZ

Bir yumuşak güç olan AB, başta Batı Balkanlar olmak üzere uluslararası alanda etkinliğini kısıtlayıcı birçok problemle karşı karşıyadır. Bu gölgede yumuşak gücünün dönüştürücülüğü azımsanmayacak ölçüde azalmıştır. Bu makale AB'nin yakın çevresinde ve özellikle de Batı Balkanlar'da uyguladığı yumuşak güç politikalarının önündeki problemler tartışılacak ve Birliğin etkinliğini sürdürebilmesi ve bu etkinliğe yeni boyutlar katabilmesinin muhtemel yolları tartışılacaktır. Makalenin araştırma sorusu AB'nin acil olarak yüzleşmek zorunda olduğu konuların neler olduğudur. AB mekanizmalarının Birliğin yakın çevresinde istikrarı, demokrasiyi ve barışı arttırmakta başarılı olamadığı düşünüldüğünde, alternatiflerin dikkate alınması gerektiği bir gerçektir. Bu şekilde düşünüldüğünde Türkiye on yıl önceki performansıyla Batı Balkanlarda etkili olabildiğini göstermştir. Fakat ekonomik olarak zayıflayan günümüz Türkiyesi on yıl önce olduğu gibi bölge üzerinde egemenlik kurmak değil sadece bölge devletleriyle ilişkilerini güçlendirmek istemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Batı Balkanlar, Avrupa Birliği, Türkiye, Şartlılık, Ortak Güvenlik ve Savunma Politikası

Introduction

In the last decade, the EU has developed into a more capable actor in international relations, managing a plethora of problems emerging on its periphery. However, the EU faces dire challenges that could potentially limit its effectiveness. Its soft power sources, as conceptualized by Joseph Nye[1] has been fading after the global financial crisis. The EU has failed to solve any of the structural problems that led to the Eurozone crisis. Additionally, Germany's economy, the powerhouse of Europe's comprehensive economy, is slowing down due to the US declared trade wars. Italy is already experiencing a recession as a result of Brussels's policies. Ten years after the crisis it is still questioned whether there is light at the end of the tunnel for Greek economy. Furthermore, Brexit and the refugee crisis constitutes, social, economic and financial pressures preventing the further harmonization of

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[1] Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs, New York 2004, p. x.

member states' interests and hence obstructing the success of the EU in global power politics.[2] In a demanding global economic and political environment, the EU now needs to survive with less, while doing better than before. Today, the EU has abandoned ambitions as a global power, withdrawing into self-imposed isolation, and this behavior does not further European interests in global politics. This paves the way for EU to cooperate with other actors. Entering into new multilateral partnerships would help the EU advance its security policies in an ambitious way while managing current challenges in its environment.

The Western Balkans is an important area of operation for European Union foreign policy due to its geographical proximity. Countries in this region undertake EU-sponsored economic and political reforms that aim at bringing them closer to the EU. However, like the rest of the world, the transformative power of the EU has lost its potency the Western Balkans. Despite improvements in its political situation since the beginning of the 21st century the overall picture is still pessimistic. In the last decade, the region made little to no progress on some major issues such as the fight against organized crime and corruption. Underdevelopment is additionally remains a major problem, and nationalistic trends continue to be effective. As hostile relations between ethnic minorities and majorities persist, the risk of ethnic conflict evolving into civil war remains a major concern. If these problems are not addressed in a constructive manner, they will threaten both regional stability and, more importantly, the EU enlargement process,[3] which continues with little credibility. France's recent veto to the launch of accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania was a large blow to EU's credibility problem.[4]

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2 Wagner Wolfgang, *Für Europa sterben? Die demokratische Legitimität der Europäischen Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik,* Frankfurt am Main: Hessische Stiftung Friedens und Konfliktforschung, 2004. Available at: https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/29826/report0304.pdf, (Accessed on 27 June 2019). See also: *European Security Strategy: A Secure Europe in a Better World*, Report for Council of the European Union, Brussels, 12 December 2003. Available at: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/reports/78367.pdf, (Accessed on 10 February 2019).
3 Nikolaj Nielsen, "EU Report: Western Balkan States Held Back by Lawlessness, "*EU Observer*, 5 October 2012. Available at: http://euobserver.com/enlargement/117769, (Accessed on 10 April 2019).
4 Ivan Dikov, Looking behind France's Shameful Veto on Albania, N. Macedonia's EU Accession Talks, European Views, Available at: https://www.european-views.com/2019/10/looking-behind-frances-shameful-veto-on-albania-n-macedonias-eu-accession-talks/, (Accessed on 13 November 2019).

In contrast, Turkey for over a decade conducted effective diplomacy in the Western Balkans, proving its capacity to contribute to regional peace and stability. High growth rates in the pre-2013 period as well as economic dynamism of the era have changed Turkey's foreign policy.[5] The country has shifted from a security-oriented policy to a commerce-oriented policy, and its scope has moved from distant partners to the close neighborhood. Turkey's growing influence in the Western Balkans, complemented by the search for a credible alternative to EU enlargement made the emergence of a commerce-based, soft power strategy possible. However, Turkey's golden age of economic prosperity ran out half a decade ago, due to financial and economic challenges it has faced in last couple of years. Moreover, these challenges limited Turkey's capacity to act alone in Western Balkans politics. However, this situation brought even more possibility for EU-Turkey partnership in the region. Furthermore, Turkey promises abundant opportunity to facilitate EU action in the Western Balkans including a regional partnership and cooperation initiative between candidate and potential candidate states of the Balkan region as a new initiative.

This paper asserts that the EU is a soft power in decline. For quite some time, the Western Balkans has been highly regarded as an unchallenged international actor. However, given its recent decrease in soft power capacity, the EU's transformative power in the region has additionally been somewhat curbed. This paper seeks to examine the challenges facing the EU as a soft power in the Western Balkans, evaluating ways for the EU to increase its effectiveness, which will, in turn, add new dimensions to foreign policy in the region. To lay the foundation for this argument, this paper's first section will analyze the efficiency of the EU as a soft power through a discussion of the two major soft power instruments in Unions toolbox: Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) missions and EU membership conditionality. Following, in the second portion of this paper, CSDP and EU membership conditionality will be analyzed in terms of their current efficiency as soft power tools. Finally, given the assumption that the EU as a soft power is in decline, the final portion of the paper analyzes Turkey's position in the Western Balkans which also has shortcomings of its own in the region after the years of the so called "Turkish Activism" in the late 2000's and early 2010's. Reviewing the potential for an EU-Turkey partnership, which would,

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5 İnan Rüma, "Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Balkans: Overestimated Change within Underestimated Continuity?", in Özden Zeynep Oktav (ed.), *Turkey in the 21st Century: Quest for a New Foreign Policy*, Ashgate Publishing, Burlington 2012. p. 134.

in turn, strengthen the effectiveness of CSDP missions and EU membership conditionality in the region. Turkey's shortcomings in the region coincides with the "collapse of the EU's soft power" debates. Turkey's declining influence in the region can be seen as a positive thing as it is slowly seeking an alternative to the decade long unilateral activism in the Western Balkans. This paper argues that a collaborative framework between EU and Turkey can boost the roles of Both EU and Turkey as regional powers in decline which would lead to a win-win situation for both players.

The Role of Soft Power in the EU

The concept of "power" is fundamental to the discipline of International Relations. It is used in terms of an actor's ability to influence the others within the international system. Traditionally, *hard power* - defined as the use of military and economic means to influence the behavior or interests of other political bodies- has been the primary currency of international politics. States primarily utilized their "*hard power*" tools in order to influence the other states. However, since the end of the Cold War the traditional perception of power is being increasingly challenged by the structures and dynamics of the new world order. Soft power is conceptualized by Joseph Nye in 1990 in his book, *Bound to Lead,* which reasserts American hegemony. According to Nye, given the decrease in hard power *utility* in the developing world order, soft power is the new weapon for U.S. utility, given cultural attraction, ideology, and international organizations. Since then, the term has become increasingly important in the International Relations. In Nye's book, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Nye describes Soft Power as 'the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments'.[6] Nye claims three main sources of Soft Power as being attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideas and policies".[7]

The EU's role in international affairs has been the subject of numerous academic debates. It is generally accepted that the EU is a distinct kind of power in its international relations, lacking certain basic military capabilities and a fully developed security strategy that includes hard power

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[6] Joseph S. Nye, Jr. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs, New York 2004, p. x.
[7] Nye, *ibid.*, p. x.

alternatives.[8] The EU has had several attempts to establish its own army in order to have hard power capacity in world politics. France, particularly, has had an active role in attempts to establish a common security and defense system. France's efforts included a supranational army within the Union against the U.S.S.R. and iron curtain states. However, in the 1950's, these attempts failed, due to a change in global, political conjecture. Subsequently, the EU deprioritized its aim to create an immediate collective defense structure against the U.S.S.R.[9] As a result of this, a supranational European Army under the command of the EU became impossible. As a consequence of this failure, EEC countries joined NATO, and consequently, the EU became involved with the Western European Union (WEU), which includes the Federal Republic of Germany and Italy.[10] As a result, emphasis was placed on the usage of civilian instruments as it pertains to the EU's utility. In the 1970's, Duchêne used the term civilian power. Three decades later, Ian Manners coined the term, normative power, to describe the EU's power in its international affairs. Given the theoretical concepts of Duchêne and Manners, the term soft power is an empirical one, originally used in the US foreign policy debates. Nevertheless, today, the term is widely used in international relations to describe other similar actors as well, such as the EU.

The factors that characterize the EU's actions in World politics include trade, cooperation or association agreements, aid, monetary assistance, institutionalized dialogue, and the promise of EU membership.[11] As François Duchêne suggests, Europe's power is directly proportionate to its ability to expand stability and security through the application of economic and political force.[12] The EU's soft power capacity depends on the adequacy of its resources.[13] However, the 2008 Eurozone crisis has posed a serious threat, contributing to the shrinking of the financial resources of the EU. In

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[8] See: Robert Kagan, "Power and Weakness", *Policy Review*, No. 113 of the Hoover Institution, June 2002. Available at: https://www.hoover.org/research/power-and-weakness, (Accessed on 20 December 2018). See also: Steven Everts and Daniel Keohane, "The European Convention and EU Foreign Policy: Learning from Failure", Global Politics and Strategy, Volume 453, 2003, pp. 167-86.

[9] Stephan Keukeleire and Tom Delreux. *The Foreign Policy of the European Union*. Macmillan International Higher Education, 2014, p. 41.

[10] Keukeleire and Delreux. *ibid.*, p. 41.

[11] Karen E. Smith, Still, "Civilian Power EU?", *Working Paper of the European Foreign Policy Unit*, 2005.

[12] Francis Duchêne, "Europe's Role in World Peace", in Richard Mayne (eds.), *Europe Tomorrow: Sixteen Europeans Look Ahead*, Fontana, London 1972, pp. 32-47.

[13] Nye, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

addition, the EU has become an influential international actor with its normative power based on an emphasis on 'global common good'[14] and policy-making devoted to humanitarian causes. However, the Syrian refugee crisis undermined the EU's image as a human rights promoter and peace-seeking organization.

Syrian refugee inflow became the major security issue within Eurozone. Foreign policy-making of the EU has centralized upon this security problem arose from so-called cultural and economic threat that influx of displaced people from Syria posed.[15] It is already a common argument that member states could not achieve full adaptation of the EU's migration and asylum policies that were introduced with Maastricht Agreement.[16] Consequently, inefficiency manifested itself through Syrian refugee crisis.[17] In 2015, a huge inflow of Syrian refugees arrived to Europe. Consequently, EU member states reacted to this influx with nationalist urges and strengthened border controls in Schengen Zone.[18] For this reason, Syrian refugee crisis is a significant indicator of the EU's legislative deficiency in terms of both harmonization of the Union's policies in national scale and political integration of member states.[19] Similarly, results of the Brexit referendum in the UK arose from the same political and social trend. This trend is explained as *souverainisme*, which refers to re-emergence of nationalist patriotism derived from protectionism and xenophobia.[20] Exempting Britain from the EU will accelerate this trend: France has already brought the *Frexit*, which is known as the trampling of EU flag, up for discussion by the yellow vests became part of a daily order.[21] Moreover, the

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[14] See Former High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana's Speech upon "*Shaping an Effective EU Foreign Policy*", 24 January 2005, p. 1. http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/discours/83461.pdf, (Accessed on 22 July 2018).

[15] Kelly M. Greenhill, "Open arms behind barred doors: fear, hypocrisy and policy schizophrenia in the European migration crisis", *European Law Journal*, Volume: 22, No: 3 2016, p. 319.

[16] Stephan Stetter, "Regulating Migration: Authority Delegation in Justice and Home Affairs", *Journal of European Public Policy*, Volume: 7, No: 1, 2000, pp. 82-83.

[17] Marco Scipioni, "Failing Forward in EU Migration Policy? EU Integration After the 2015 Asylum and Migration Crisis", *Journal of European Public Policy*, Volume: 25, No: 9, 2018, p. 1361.

[18] Greenhill, *op.cit.*, p. 317.

[19] Scipioni, *op.cit.*, pp. 1369-1370.

[20] François Heisbourg, "Brexit and European Security", *Survival*, Volume: 58, No: 3, 2016, p. 14.

[21] Heisbourg, *ibid.*, p. 15.

EU remains inefficient in hindering Russian influence over the Western Balkans. Russian energy deals with the Western Balkan states indicates a shift away from the EU. On the other hand, Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014 indicated the Union's decreasing influence in post-communist states in its immediate environment.

After the collapse of the U.S.S.R., the EU initiated fully-fledged economic and institutional reforms towards post-communist, European states under the context of Europeanization.[22] In post-Cold War era, Russia and the EU have been competing in enhancing their influence over post-communist states in Europe.[23] As a neighbor to newly formed Russian Federation, Ukraine became a very important country to be embodied to the European system under post-Cold War strategy of the EU.[24] However, the EU foreign policy-making focused on the inclusion of Western Balkan states to the Union as the first wave of enlargement policy in the beginning of 21st century.[25] Hereby, Ukraine became the secondary issue in EU's foreign policy agenda.[26] Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Slovenia became members of the Union, whereas Serbia and Macedonia became candidate states to the Union.[27] Although inclusion of Romania and Bulgaria is problematic in terms of the Union's conditionality, the EU was relatively successful in its first wave enlargement strategy and exerted its normative power to consolidate European influence over post-communist states.

However, with the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, the EU was proven to be relatively ineffective. The EU's security visions in Ukrainian territory have conflicted with Russia's security perceptions over its southern borders for a long time, given the countries' historically competitive nature.[28] In 2014, the dispute over Ukraine indicated the EU's failure to keep Europe under the EU's umbrella. In June 2014, the EU finalized the Association

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[22] David Lane, "Post-communist states and the European Union", *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Volume: 23, No: 4, 2007, p. 462.

[23] Cristian Nitoiu, "Increasingly Geopolitical? The EU's Approach Towards the Post-Soviet Space", *Journal of Regional Security*, Volume: 11, No: 1, 2016, p. 9.

[24] Nitoiu, *ibid.*, p. 10.

[25] Geoffrey Pridham, "EU/Ukraine Relations and the Crisis with Russia, 2013-14: A Turning Point", *The International Spectator*, Volume: 49, No: 4, 2014, p. 54.

[26] Pridham, *ibid.*, p. 54.

[27] For detailed information, see the website of European Union, https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries en#tab-0-1, (Accessed on 20 July 2018).

[28] Nicholas Ross Smith, *EU–Russian Relations and the Ukraine Crisis*, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016, pp. 4-9.

Agreement, which concentrates on promoting European values such as democracy, good governance, rule of law, fundamental freedoms, non-discrimination of persons, respect for human dignity and maintaining free market economy.[29] However, despite these efforts to reaffirm Ukraine's commitment to European values, EU policies have remained inefficient in ensuring Russian retreat from Crimea. Additionally, given Russia's position as the main energy source for the European continent, Russia has the upper hand in aforementioned political competition with EU in enhancing spheres of influence over post-communist states in Europe.[30] Thereby, along with problematic inclusion of some of Western Balkan states, annexation of Crimea indicates decreasing influence of the EU over post-communist states in Europe.

Furthermore, systemic changes in world politics pose additional threats to the EU's external policy. The global balance of power in the world is shifting from the Transatlantic to the Asian and the Pacific area and today this trend is clearer than ever.[31] This shift of the global scale signals shrinking European power as well as the overall attractiveness of the European Union in the sense that the EU no longer constitutes economic and financial points of interest in the world. Subsequent shifts in global-scale division of financial assets and increasing trade volume in the Asian continent indicate a transformation of the world's financial center. On this basis, finalizing the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) on December 8, 2017 could be interpreted as the EU's attempt at revising foreign-policy regarding Asia Pacific region. Additionally, EU-Japan EPA aims at a broad range of trade volume, which also indicates increasing interdependence between two parties.[32] In this regard, EU-Japan EPA seems promising in terms of EU's attempts to keep up with recent global, political and economic action, increasing its economic and financial capacity via bilateral agreements.

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[29] Pridham, *op.cit.*, p. 53.

[30] Serdar Ş. Güner, and Dilan E. Koç, "The Syrian Conflict: Driving Forces of Balances and Imbalances", *MERIA Journal*, Volume: 33, No: 3, 2017, p. 16.

[31] Richard Gowan, "The US, Europe and Asia's Rising Multilateralists," in Patryk Pawlak (ed.), *Look East, Act East: Transatlantic Agendas in the Asia Pacific*, Report No. 13 of the EU Institute for Security Studies, 2012, p. 24.

[32] For detailed information about EU-Japan trade relations in years, see EU Report on "Trade Sustainability Impact Assessment of the Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and Japan", http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2016/may/tradoc_154522.pdf, (Accessed on 20 July 2018).

In addition to shrinking financial resources and shifting world politics, the EU is also incapable of wielding hard power alternatives on the international stage. While it struggles to obtain economic resources during times of crisis, the EU is not a military actor; it remains under NATO's collective defense guarantee. This situation further limits its options in pursuing policies worldwide. Having outlined the immediate challenges to EU's "soft power", it is time to evaluate its track record thus far by looking at the two most important soft power instruments in its toolbox - CSDP missions and EU membership conditionality.

1. The effectiveness of the CSDP missions

The EU's failure to stabilize the situation in the former Yugoslavia prompted the launch of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP)[33] in 1999. This further increased the conflict prevention and crisis response capacity of the EU, enabling it to respond to the security challenges in its neighborhood. Perhaps more importantly, it added important tools in the EU's toolbox to meet political objectives of conflict prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict reconstruction.[34]

Since its launch, the EU has initiated more than 18 ESDP operations all around the world, ranging from the Western Balkans (Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo) through Eastern Europe (Georgia and Moldova), from the Middle East (Palestinian territories) to Africa (Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Horn of Africa, and Uganda). In terms of the overall effectiveness of European civilian missions across the world, the EU faces clear challenges, and it is far from improving the quality of its missions.

One such challenge stems from its ponderous bureaucratic apparatus. Complex and cumbersome institutional arrangements have damaging consequences for the civilian missions of the Union. The complicated nature of the decision-making processes leads to frequent cases of bureaucratic mismanagement, reflected in its initiatives in the security arena. For years, the absence of a united voice in response to security issues put the EU in a disadvantageous position. Efforts to overcome this challenge resulted in the

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[33] With the entering into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the ESDP became the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP).

[34] Eva Gross, "Civilian and Military Missions in the Western Balkans", in Michael Emerson and Eva Gross (eds.), *Evaluating the EU's Crisis Missions in the Balkans*, Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies 2007, p. 127.

Lisbon Treaty, which was enacted in December 2009. The treaty provides an institutional framework that allows the EU to surmount its internal divisions by giving one individual - the High Representative of the European Union - the authority to administer the Union's foreign policy.[35] This institutional reform is expected to further promote the EU's growing role in dealing with the security challenges in its neighborhood as well as more complex and global security concerns. This, in turn, increases the effectiveness of the EU's crisis-management operations around the world.

Despite this initiative, coordination between various EU institutions continues to be weak. The European Commission-European Council duality regarding foreign policy decisions, for example, still exists. The EU needs to be able to make quick decisions in urgent cases and so far, they have proved unable to do so. In some civilian missions, such as the European Police Mission (EUPM) in Bosnia or the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), the EU is represented by up to five different bodies, a configuration that makes decision-making a time consuming job. While bureaucratic hurdles seem to have been to be somewhat mitigated with Lisbon, the recent challenges posed by the EU's lingering financial and economic crisis introduce further problems - as well as opportunities - for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). European security policy was already pushing the limits of a shoestring budget, and it seems likely to fall victim to further budget cuts stemming from the crisis.[36] As a result of current budget cutbacks, the EU is already struggling to maintain the status quo. Nevertheless, despite all uncertainties and financial difficulties, expectations of civilian and military missions are getting higher, leading to a capabilities-expectations gap.

Another challenge to the effectiveness of the EU's CSDP missions is the quality of staff. The Union has difficulties in finding skilled, high-level, professional civilians to staff its CSDP missions. The EU has no standing

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[35] Daniel Korski and Richard Gowan, *Can the EU Rebuild Failing States?: A Review of Europe's Civilian Capacity*, Report of The European Council on Foreign Relations, October 2009. Available at: https://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR18_-_Can_the_EU_rebuild_failing_States_-_a_Review_of_Europes_Civilian_Capacities.pdf, (Accessed on 27 June 2019).

[36] Christian Mölling and Sophie-Charlotte Brune, *The Impact of the Financial Crisis on European Defence,* Study for the European Parliament Directorate-General for External Policies, April 2011. Available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201106/20110623ATT22404/201106 23ATT22404EN.pdf, (Accessed on 27 June 2019).

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civilian force. Therefore, recruitment for its missions depends on its member states. Most of the EU states do not fulfill this task properly. Not all the civilians are well trained, and the number of civilians sent to the missions by member states is often lower than expected.[37] The missions are not attractive for high-level, experienced staff and are usually preferred by the inexperienced young professionals who are in the beginning of their careers. The EU must make the EU civilian missions more attractive for better qualified staff. The EU should also be able to provide the necessary instruments and environment to train these people before they start their duty. There is no comprehensive approach to the training of the recruited staff. Recruitment is done in a patchy way, or even neglected altogether, by most EU member states.[38] As a result, quality of CSDP personnel is very low than expected. Therefore, its missions remain inefficiently-conducted.

One other challenge to the EU CSDP missions is the "one size fits all" understanding held by many EU strategists. There is a tendency in EU civilian missions to follow the same top-down methods that have been supposed to be successful in different settings. It is clear, however, that the same set of methods often produces different outcomes in different circumstances. EU bureaucrats should better acknowledge that a template proven reasonably effective in a civilian mission in Eastern Europe might not be adequate for dealing with crisis management situations in other parts of the world. Each case is unique in at least some aspect and thus needs to be dealt with from a situation-specific perspective. Civilian missions should, therefore be conducted in conjunction with realities of the target case. Unsuccessful cases should also be taken into consideration, and "selection bias" should be avoided.[39]

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[37] Alexander Mattelaer, "The CSDP Mission Planning Process of the European Union: Innovations and Shortfalls," in Sophie Vanhoonacker, Hylke Dijkstra, and Heidi Maurer (eds.), *Understanding the Role of Bureaucracy in the European Security and Defence Policy*, *European Integration Online Papers: Special Issue* 2010, Volume: 14, No: 1, p. 3. Available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1661708, (Accessed on 27 June 2019).
[38] Korski and Gowan, *op.cit.*, p. 13.
[39] Korski and Gowan, *ibid.*, p. 63.

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2. EU enlargement and the shortcomings of EU membership conditionality

Conditionality is another soft power instrument, mainly associated with the EU. It includes rule adoption,[40] i.e., the mechanism for pushing the domestic elites for internal reform. Conditionality serves as an effective instrument for change and bargaining strategy through "carrot and stick" policies, which encourage target countries to comply with certain standards. Based on principles of instrumental rationality, conditionality consists of interactions that contain limited coercion and, in which compliance is often based on the willingness of recipients.[41]

The EU implements membership conditionality in its efforts with respect to enlargement.[42] At the European Council Copenhagen Summit of June 1993, specific criteria were formalized for the beginning of EU accession negotiations, and the Union set as goal for candidate states the adaption of democratic rules and practices, monitoring progress towards meeting four basic criteria. These consist of the achievement of institutional stability guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and the protection of minority rights.[43] By fulfilling the political criteria, target countries were rewarded with financial assistance, various institutional associations, and finally full membership.[44]

The first wave of Eastern enlargement can be considered a successful case of the use of EU membership conditionality. It has been the most ambitious effort of the Union to-date, showcasing a success story of its

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[40] Amichai Magen and Leonardo Morlino, "Preface," in Amichai Magen and Leonardo Morlino (eds.), *International Actors, Democratization and the Rule of Law: Anchoring Democracy?*, London: Routledge, 2009, pp. xiii-xvi.

[41] Timm Beichelt, "The Research Field of Democracy Promotion," *Living Reviews in Democracy,* 2012. Available at: https://ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/cis-dam/CIS_DAM_2015/WorkingPapers/Living_Reviews_Democracy/ Beichelt.pdf, (Accessed on 27 June 2019).

[42] Sonia Lucarelli, *Peace and Democracy: The Rediscovered Link. The EU, NATO, and the European System of Liberal-Democratic Security Communities*, Report funded by NATO Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council Individual Research Fellowships: 2000-2002 Programme, p. 43.

[43] Antoaneta Dimitrova and Geoffrey Pridham, "International Actors and Democracy Promotion in Central and Eastern Europe: The Integration Model and Its Limits," *Democratisation*, 2004, Volume: 11, No: 5. pp. 91-112.

[44] Othon Anastasakis, "The EU's Political Conditionality in the Western Balkans: Towards a More Pragmatic Approach", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies,* 2008, Volume: 8, No: 4, pp. 365-377.

democracy promotion efforts.[45] EU membership conditionality successfully helped the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) to adopt Western institutional structures through profound economic social and political transformation. By the end of the process, in less than fifteen years, eight former communist countries of CEE had become (at least partially) liberal democracies with functioning market economies. Aspiring to become members of the European Union, CEE political elites and societies alike became immersed in an atmosphere of change towards democratic transition and consolidation of their respective political systems in exchange for EU membership.[46]

After the successful Eastern enlargement waves in 2004, the EU went through a very problematic period. It had to deal with problematic of EU candidates in the middle of fierce constitutional debates; at the same time, the Eurozone crisis and its aftershocks severely impeded the EU's ability to function. The EU's institutional structure and crisis management capabilities have been tested during the Eurozone crisis, and the result has been a disappointment.[47] The serious debt crisis that several EU member states faced has led to a reluctance towards accepting new members. The attractiveness of EU membership, that derives from the model of cooperation and soft power, is been endangered as a result of the political, economic, and social mismanagement of the crisis.[48] Nearly all EU leaders have taken a stance opposing further enlargement. As a result of these developments, the political impetus of enlargement has been lost, and Euro-skepticism has set in for countries waiting on the EU doorsteps.[49]

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[45] Richard Youngs, "Idealists at Bay", *The European Union and Democracy Promotion: A Critical Global Assessment*, in Richard Youngs (ed.), Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010, p. 1.

[46] Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier, "Governance by Conditionality: EU Rule Transfer to the Candidate Countries of Central and Eastern Europe", *Journal of European Public Policy*, 2004, Volume: 11, No: 4, pp. 661-679.

[47] Emil Kirchner, "Common Security and Defence Policy Peace Operations in the Western Balkans: Impact and Lessons Learned", *European Security*, 3 January 2013. Available at :http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09662839.2012.749865, (Accessed on 27 June 2019).

[48] Rosa Balfour and Corina Stratulat, *The Enlargement of the European Union*, European Policy Centre Discussion Paper, 10 December 2012. Available at: http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/pub_3176_enlargement_of_the_eu.pdf, (Accessed on 28 June 2019).

[49] Ivan Dikov, Looking behind France's Shameful Veto on Albania, N. Macedonia's EU Accession Talks, European Views, Available at: https://www.european-

3. Turkey and the Western Balkans

In the early sections of this article, it has been suggested that the EU is in the middle of a lingering financial and economic crisis that poses concerns for the future of European soft power, (which is already suffering under massive budget cuts).[50] In this section, it is suggested that the capabilities-expectations gap discussed above necessitates an alternative to a weakening EU in the region. Entering into new partnerships with other actors could help the EU carry out security policies in an ambitious way, while operating within its declining soft power capacity. This next section evaluates the potentiality for EU-Turkish partnership and the hopeful strengthening of its soft power in the Western Balkans.

The cultural and historical ties that Turkey has with the region, coupled with its new activism in foreign policy, introduces a new importance into a Turkey-EU partnership for the Western Balkans. The growing influence of Turkey in the region coincides with the "collapse of the EU's soft power" debates.[51] When considered from this point of view, Turkey's increasing influence in the region can be seen as a development at the expense of EU influence. This article argues in contrast, however, that Turkey can actually boost the EU's soft power role if it is given a collaborative framework.

The roots of the Turkish interest in the region can be traced back to the first years of newly established Turkish republic, which was shaped by regional alliances in order to consolidate its new state formation as a middle power[52]. More pro-active Turkish interest concerning the region, on the other hand, became more of an issue after the end of the Cold War, a time at which the Turkish post-Cold War strategy was born. Turkey primarily focused on establishing friendly ties with its neighbors, such as Macedonia, Albania, Romania and Bulgaria. Turkey also played a role in the Bosnian war and

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views.com/2019/10/looking-behind-frances-shameful-veto-on-albania-n-macedonias-eu-accession-talks/, (Accessed on 13 November 2019).

[50] Mölling and Brune, *op.cit.*

[51] Dimitar Bechev, *The Periphery of the Periphery: The Western Balkans and the Euro Crisis*, European Council on Foreign Relations Policy Brief, ECFR/60, August 2012,7. Available at: http://ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR60_WESTERN_BALKANS_BRIEF_AW.pdf, (Accessed on 28 June 2019).

[52] Dilek Barlas, "Turkish Diplomacy in the Balkans and the Mediterranean. Opportunities and Limits for Middle-power Activism in the 1930s", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 2005, Volume: 40, No: 3, pp. 443-444.

pursued a multilateral - albeit risk-averse - strategy under the umbrella of NATO in the post-war period. Following the war Turkey was involved in efforts of state-building within republics succeeding the former Yugoslavia.[53]

In the early 2000s, the Western Balkans became a more stable and developed region, as violence was contained and as an increasing number of Turkish entrepreneurs started to invest in the region. In addition to the decade-long defense and diplomacy strategy the Turkish government had pursued in the region, the overall improvement of the Turkish economy during this period opened new avenues for active involvement in the region. As a result, Turkey's ties with the entire region have expanded in scope, and its presence in the region shifted from pure diplomacy to diverse functional and societal fields, such as trade, investment, infrastructure development, energy, tourism, and popular culture. Not only is Ankara involved in attempts to reconcile Bosniaks and the Serbs, but private Turkish investors' money contributes to infrastructure development in the form of roads, buildings, etc.[54]

Today Turkey is undoubtedly recognized as an important actor in the Western Balkans. Since the AKP government rose to power in 2002, high growth rates and economic dynamism have changed Turkey's foreign policy.[55] The country moved from a security-oriented policy to a commerce-oriented one, and its scope moved from distant partners to its relative neighborhood. Turkey's growing influence in the Western Balkans, complemented by the search for a credible alternative to EU enlargement, made the emergence of a non-aligned, commerce-based, soft power strategy possible. In the last fifteen years, Turkey has pursued an increasingly nonaligned strategy and, contrary to popular perceptions,[56] has done this by benefiting minimally from its historical and friendly ties with former Ottoman territories. In fact, the most important Turkish investments in the region are all in Serbia. For example, through a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) signed between the two countries Turkish construction companies won a tender to build a 445-kilometer-long highway in Serbia, linking Belgrade with Bar in

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[53] Zarko Petrovic and Dusan Reljic, "Turkish Interests and Involvement in the Western Balkans: A Score-Card", *Insight Turkey*, 2011, Volume: 13, No: 3, pp. 159-172.

[54] Petrovic and Reljic, *ibid.*, p. 163.

[55] Rüma, *op.cit.*, p. 134.

[56] For a discussion of what is sometimes referred to as "neo-Ottomanism," see: Loic Poulain and Akis Sakellariou, *Western Balkans: Is Turkey Back?*, Report published by the Center For Strategic and International Studies, 25 April 2011.

Montenegro.[57] Turkish diplomatic efforts have, however, engaged Turkey's cultural affinities with neighbors in the Western Balkans to a certain extent. So-called "state to public diplomacy," for example, involves the Turkish state's establishment of cultural organizations in the region, such as the Yunus Emre Foundation branches, which promote a common cultural heritage.[58]

In contrast, within the framework of the "state to public diplomacy" approach,[59] the Turkish government and military staff work closely with international organizations to bring stability to the region. Turkey is the most active participant of the ESDP among all the non-EU countries and even outperforms many of the member states. In the Western Balkans, Turkey participated in various ESDP missions, including EUPOL PROXIMA and EUFOR Concordia in Macedonia, EUPM and EUFOR ALTHEA in BiH, and EULEX in Kosovo.[60] In total, there are nearly 1,150 Turkish peacekeeping troops deployed in the Balkans.[61] Although the majority of these troops are part of NATO-led missions, such as the Kosovo Force (KFOR), there are also various police missions in which Turkish personnel are taking part.[62]

Turkey's attempts to contribute to peace and stability in the region have not always been well recognized, however. In 2009, for example, the U.S.-EU led initiative dubbed the "Butmir Talks," which aimed at transforming BiH into a more functional state but concluded without concrete

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[57] Poulain and Sakellariou, *ibid.*

[58] Bülent Aras, "Turkey and the Balkans: New Policy in a Changing Regional Environment," Report published by The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 31 October 2012. Available at: http://www.gmfus.org/archives/turkey-and-the-balkans-new-policy-in-a-changing-regional-environment/, (Accessed on 28 June 2019).

[59] İbrahim Kalın, "Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Turkey," *Perceptions*, 2011, Volume: 16, No: 3, p. 11.

[60] Sinan Ülgen, "The Evolving EU, NATO, and Turkey Relationship," in Frances G. Burwell (ed.), *The Evolution of US - Turkish Relations in a Transatlantic Context*, Colloquim Report published by the Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College, April 2008, pp. 97-109.

[61] "The Overlapping Interests of US and Turkey in the Post-Cold War Balkans", Bilgesam, 14 December 2011. Available at: http://www.bilgesam.org/en/incele/1873/-the-overlapping-interests-of-us-and-turkey-in-the-post-cold-war-balkans/#.XSthqh7VLfY, (Accessed on 28 June 2019).

[62] "Turkey's International Security Initiatives and Contributions to NATO and EU Operations," website of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. See: http://www.mfa.gov.tr/iv_-european-security-and-defence-identity_policy-_esdi_p_.en.mfa, (Accessed on 28 June 2019).

result.[63] Left out of the loop, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu initiated a Balkans strategy that included local (reinforcing dialogue among citizens), regional (bringing Bosnia and its neighbors Croatia and Serbia closer), and finally international (lobbying for Bosnia) levels of diplomacy. Indeed, despite being overlooked, the role that Turkey can play in the search for a new solution for BiH can provide significant benefits. Of particular relevance to this article, traditional ties between Turkey and the region can be alternative to the EU's role as a negotiator and an advisor.[64] Turkey's role as mediator between Serbia and the Bosniak leadership in Sarajevo, for example, led to the signing of İstanbul declaration by Turkey, Bosnia, and Serbia in April 2010. Turkey, an excellent actor during these talks, has illustrated its capacity to contribute to the peace and stability of the region.

Lessons learned from the history of this region tell us that conflict is inevitable when the power vacuum is not filled by any of the strong powers in the region (compare for example the Balkan war after the Ottoman setback, the dissolution of Yugoslavia after the weakening of Yugoslavia). Given the fact that EU mechanisms (CSDP, EU membership prospect etc.) have proven to be ineffective in promoting a full-fledged democracy and peace in the region, alternatives should be considered. In such a case, leaving out Turkey would be a mistake.

Both Turkey and the EU need each other for the reasons mentioned above. However, some institutional and political conditions prevent the deepening of Turkey-EU cooperation in the Western Balkans. From 2005 onwards, relations between Turkey and the EU deteriorated due to long-term and open-ended negotiations related to the full membership of Turkey to the Union.[65] After 2010, critiques concerning Turkey's de-Europeanization- due mainly to the country's reform packages apart from EU's conditionality-

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[63] Murat Önsoy, "Coping with Bosnia-Herzegovina's Critical Problems: Reconsidering the International Community's Role", *Uluslararası Hukuk ve Politika,* 2011, Volume: 25, No: 7, p. 139.

[64] Janusz Bugajski and Heather A. Conley, "A New Transatlantic Approach for the Western Balkans: Time for Change in Serbia, Kosovo, and Bosnia-Hercegovina", *Report published by the Center for Strategic International Studies,* November 2011, p. 30. Available at: https://csis.org/files/publication/111110_Bugajski_TransatlanticApproach_web.pdf, (Accessed on 28 June 2019)

[65] Senem Aydın-Düzgit and Alper Kaliber, "Encounters with Europe in an era of domestic and international turmoil: is Turkey a de-Europeanising candidate country?", *South European Society and Politics*, 2016, p. 1.

became more of an issue.[66] Increasing popularity of the Justice and
Development Party (AKP) government, as well as the lack of efficient
opposition towards it, created a large maneuver space for the AKP to actualize
its de-Europeanized reform packages.[67] Finally, the negotiations upon
cooperation in the Syrian refugee crisis reawakened Turkey's concern about
its position as a 'strategic partner' rather than a 'potential member' of the
EU.[68] The increasing uncertainty about Turkey's own prospects in regard to
an EU membership has created difficulty in relations and has complicated the
potential for cooperative efforts aimed at targeting other prospective
members. Turkish attitude towards its relations with the EU is at a low point.
Turkey's accession talks have been stalled, despite efforts to revitalize them.
While cooperation on regional issues, for example, may be on the table,
bilateral institutional arrangements on issues of security and defense
cooperation between Turkey and the EU will be hard to achieve if the
membership bid gets further off-track.

Moreover, the changing state of affairs in the relation between Turkey
and Russia is another aspect that should be considered. In recent years, Turkey
and Russia have distanced themselves from the West. This is a result of
overestimated power they believe they possess in a post-hegemonic
international system, which stems from their imperial pasts.[69] Consequently,
they have strengthened their relations in regional cooperation. However, since
Turko-Russian rapprochement requires common political ground in the
Syrian crisis, the relationship is restrained by Turkey's insistence on the
overthrow of Assad's regime in Syria and Russia's desire to keep Syria as a
pro-Russian regime.[70] Because of this reason, although Turkey and Russia
have strengthened their economic ties, characteristics of Turko-Russian
relations have become ambiguous in geopolitical visions and foreign policy
decisions.[71] In January 2018, Turkey initiated an operation in Afrin due to
security concerns stemming from YPG activities in Northern Syria.
Meanwhile, on 30 January 2018, Turkey pursued an active policy in the

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[66] Gözde Yilmaz, "From Europeanization to De-Europeanization: The Europeanization Process
of Turkey in 1999–2014", *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, Volume: 24, No: 1,
2016, p. 94.

[67] Yilmaz, *ibid.*, p. 87.

[68] Aydın-Düzgit and Kaliber, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

[69] Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yılmaz, "Turkey and Russia in a Shifting Global Order: Cooperation,
Conflict and Asymmetric Interdependence in a Turbulent Region", *Third World Quarterly*,
2016, Volume: 37, No: 1, p. 72.

[70] Güner and Koç, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

[71] Öniş and Yılmaz, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

Syrian crisis by participating in the Syrian People's Congress in determining post-war settlements in Syria along with Russia and Iran.[72] However, Turkey's uncertain position on the Syrian issue, as well as its foreign policy direction, manifests itself in reactions to US-led air operations to Syria. In April 2018, President Erdoğan declared his appreciation for the successful US-led air operations against the forces of Assad regime.[73] Because of this, Turkey has positioned itself on a foreign policy slippery slope that has the potential to bring about uncertainty in its relations - relations with decisive power on the issues concerning the Western Balkans and with the ability to restrict Turkey's maneuvering space in foreign policy-making.

On the other hand, Turkey's FDI in the Western Balkan states has increased between 2010 and 2017, despite Turkey's worsened economic conditions. Within the aforementioned time period, Turkey increased its export to Albania by 64,6%; Bosnia and Herzegovina by 72,1%; Macedonia by 40,3%; Montenegro by 117,7% and Serbia by 154,6%.[74] In total, Turkey achieved an 88,1% increase in its export to the Western Balkan states between 2010 and 2017.[75] These numbers become significant when compared with Turkey's overall economic indicators in the same time period. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute and Ministry of Economy's data, starting from the mid-2000s, Turkey has enjoyed relatively economic prosperity.[76] However, from 2013 onwards, Turkey has experienced a decrease in economic welfare.[77] Thus, in light of the economic course of events regarding both Turkey's domestic economic conditions and its foreign trade with the Western Balkan states, it can be argued that Turkey has capacity to enhance economic cooperation with Western Balkans and hereby maintain its influence over the region despite economic challenges it has faced for nearly a decade. Turkey has achieved close relations with the region via economic,

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[72] Christopher M. Blanchard, Carla E. Humud, and Mary Beth D. Nikitin, "Armed conflict in Syria: Overview and US response", *Library of Congress Washington DC Congressional Research Service*, 2014, p. 15.

[73] Al Monitor, "*Turkey's response to US-led Syria strikes: Not enough but welcomed*", 15 April 2018, https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/04/turkey-responds-syria-strikes-assad-russia-iran-erdogan.html, (Accessed on 20 July 2018).

[74] Data obtained from UN Comtrade Database website, https://comtrade.un.org/data/, (Accessed on 21 July 2018).

[75] *Ibid.*

[76] Zeynep Elif Koç and Murat Önsoy, "An Evaluation of Turkey's Western Balkans Policy under the Akp and Prospects for the Post-Davutoğlu Era", *Selçuk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi,* 2018, Volume: 43, No: 1, p. 359.

[77] Koç and Önsoy, *ibid.*, p. 363.

religious, cultural and political channels during the AKP period.[78] Moreover, the criticisms about Turkish Foreign Policy in the region include accusations of neo-Ottomanism in reaction to the discourse used by Turkish political figures. These accusations mostly came out of Diyanet's (Presidency of Religious Affairs) activities in the region. It has had a significant role in maintaining religious-based relations with mostly Muslim-populated countries. In Western Balkans, Diyanet has communicated with Muslim communities, fulfilled their needs via on-site monitoring and thus established good relations.[79] However, the decade long neo-Ottomanism accusations is over and a 180 percent shift occurred in Turkish Western Balkans policy and nowadays Turkey is merely focused on personalised diplomacy of president Erdoğan and his pragmatic relations with leaders such as Aleksandar Vučić of Serbia and Edi Rama of Albania. Furthermore, Turkey's activism in the region has been based on nothing but enhancing economic cooperation and financial assistance, which have led the region's stability and eased Euro-Atlantic partnership.[80] Furthermore, Turkey has been eager to be in an active role in peacebuilding by virtue of its cultural ties with the region.[81]

On grounds of active stance that Turkey has achieved, in recent years, Turkey has been seen as an important actor in the region. Such that some argues if Western Balkan countries' accession process to the EU fails or leads a frustration in them, Western Balkan countries could turn their face towards Turkey and improve their partnership with it.[82] Moreover, a recent analysis indicates the very same concern for the Western Balkan countries by stating that failure in their accession to the EU could lead those countries to be encircled by the spheres of influence of a third party, which includes Russia, China and Turkey.[83] Therefore, Turkey is interpreted as an influential actor in

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[78] Ahmet Erdi Öztürk, İştar Gözaydın, "A Frame for Turkey's Foreign Policy via the Diyanet in the Balkans", *Journal of Muslims in Europe*, 2018, Volume: 7, No: 3, p. 340

[79] Öztürk and Gözaydın, *ibid*., pp. 343-345.

[80] Mehmet Uğur Ekinci, "Turkey's Balkan Policy and Its Skeptics", *Insight Turkey*, 2019, Volume: 21, No: 2. pp. 37-38

[81] Marek Dabrowski, Yana Myachenkova, "The Western Balkans on the road to the European Union", *Bruegel Policy Contribution*, 4, 2018. p. 4

[82] Mariya Hake, Alice Radzyner, "Western Balkans: Growing economic ties with Turkey, Russia and China", 2019, p. 7.

[83] G. Soros, A. Soros, "In the Balkans, A Chance to Stabilize Europe", *The New York Times*, June 18, 2018.

the region with reference to its capacity and ongoing activism in Western Balkans[84].

Conclusion

The power of the EU in international relations stems from its economic and political strength. In the absence of hard power alternatives, the Union relies predominantly on soft power methods and instruments such as trade, cooperation or association agreements, aid, monetary assistance, institutionalized dialogue, and the promise of EU membership.[85] However, the EU faces many challenges that reduce the effectiveness of its soft power abilities in general and the Western Balkans specifically. As the two important instruments of EU's soft power, CSDP missions and EU membership conditionality are both faltering due to inadequate personnel, bureaucratic inefficiency, budget cuts, lack of credibility in transformative power, and the financial crisis, as demonstrated above.

As long as the economies of the Western Balkan countries are negatively affected by the crisis, the carrot and stick policy of a weakened Union seems ineffective. If the EU's political and financial recovery is delayed even further, the main goal of bringing the Western Balkans into the post-national European mainstream will fail to be reached.[86]

A soft power in crisis has limited options, and collaborations between rising powers in the Western Balkans have been proven to be a cost-effective and strategic move. Therefore, while the EU has been losing its appeal in the region - both for internal and external reasons - Turkey, which also has its shortcomings in the Balkans after the successful years of the late 2000's and early 2010's, has been showing itself to be a natural ally for the EU. Considering the deep historical but also problematic ties between the EU and Turkey, which date back to the Ankara Treaty of 1963, a joint institutional framework for such collaboration seems an achievable goal. Precisely at the time that the EU is faltering financially, a decade of economic development has created increased political influence and more active involvement in the

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[84] Birgül Demirtaş, "Reconsidering Turkey's Balkan Ties: Opportunities and Limitations", *Turkish Foreign Policy*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham 2017, p. 146.
[85] Still Smith, "Civilian Power EU?", 2005. Available at: https://www.cairn.info/revue-politique-europeenne-2005-3-page-63.htm#, (Accessed on 30 November 2019).
[86] Rupnik, *op.cit.*, p. 29.

Western Balkans. Despite Turkey's changing political conjuncture in terms of relations with the main actors of the Western Balkan region, Turkey's fragile but still functioning diplomacy and economic activities in the Western Balkans demonstrate its capacity to contribute to the welfare of the region, and as such offers an appealing alternative for facilitating the EU's job in the region.

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