

## **The European Union Policy towards the Balkan States in the Post-Cold War Era**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This article analyses the EU's approach towards the Balkan states in the post Cold War era. It argues that the EU failed to serve a credible military actor to prevent the war, even to act an effective mediator to find feasible settlement in the region. The second contention of this study is that the EU has been effective in influencing reconstruction and state building process in the Balkan region after the war through its civilian power instruments: namely the accession carrot and economic instruments.

**Keywords:** *Balkan states, Bosnian war, Dayton Agreement, the EU, negotiations and the United States*

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### **Introduction**

As is seen the disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, the Balkan region is to some extent characterized as an unstable region associated with political, social and economic precariousness in former republics of Yugoslavia. This is closely related to historical legacy, political rivalry, identity politics, unresolved political issues and some shortcomings in principle of democracy and human rights regimes in some Balkan states.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, although the Balkan region is located on the periphery of the Europe and thus political and economic developments in the region have important implications for the Europe, the EU appears to have neglected the region. This contention is particularly a case in EU's policy during the Balkan wars of the 1990s aftermath of disintegration of Yugoslavia.

This study is primarily concerned with the EU's policy towards the Balkan region since the end of the Cold War. The first section presents a brief analysis of EU's response to the disintegration of the Federal Republics of Yugoslavia and the Balkan wars. The second section moves on to analyse the extent to which the EU has impacted on political and economic developments in the former Yugoslavian Republics during the post Balkan war era. Finally, the conclusion section summarizes the findings of the study.

### **1. EU's Civilian Power Approach to Outbreak of the Balkan Wars aftermath of Disintegration of Federal Republics of Yugoslavia**

As is seen in the existing literature on European integration, the EU is, to some extent, considered to be as a '*civilian power*' in international system.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the EU's response to the outbreak of the war presented key characteristics of civilian type of

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<sup>1</sup> Harun Arıkan, *Turkey and the EU: An Awkward Candidate for EU Membership?*, Ashgate, 2006, p.204.

<sup>2</sup> For the subject of the EU as a civilian power, see Harun Arıkan, "The European Union as a Civilian Power: Success or Failure?", *Suleyman Demirel Üniversitesi, Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, Sayı 25, Mayıs 2012, pp.99-109.

intervention. Before analysing the EU's response to the War, it is helpful to start by looking briefly at sources of conflicts. Since the late 1980s, President of Federal Yugoslavia, Milosevic, had pursued a policy which implied that the political and administrative structure of the State would be reorganized in the form of more centralized arrangement through by changing the 1974 Federal Constitution.<sup>3</sup> Such policy attempt had met with resistance of other republics, including Slovenia and Croatia on the grounds that it would not only change the balance of power between the states, but also strengthen powers of the central government at the expense of power of each republic.<sup>4</sup> Apart from this constitutional issue, aftermath of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, remarkable political and regime changes took place in the Central and Eastern European countries.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, states of Federal Yugoslavia had desired to follow the same pattern. Indeed, emergence of ultra-nationalism and religious and cultural rivals among the ethnic communities in the Yugoslavia had generated a strong sense of the otherness, with the perception that they would no longer live together. As a result, In June 1991, Slovenia and Croatia issued a declaration of independence with the expectation of full diplomatic recognition from international community as a sovereign state.<sup>6</sup> These declarations had resulted in the outbreak of Balkan wars between the former states of Yugoslavia.

With regard to the EU's approach to the conflicts and wars in Balkans, at the first place, the EU had been subject to criticism on the grounds of slow response to the conflicts, a lack of common policy stance and a lack of military capacity to act as a powerful actor to influence the parties in conflict. This criticism is not groundless as the EU had failed to speak with one voice on the issue diplomatic recognition of Slovenia and Croatia at the first place: although Germany was an enthusiastic supporter for official recognition of the two states, most of the EU member states, including the United Kingdom and France had resisted the German policy stance on the grounds that formal recognition of these states by the EU would deepen the conflicts in Balkan.<sup>7</sup> Finally the EU reached a common position in January 1992 to recognize the two countries as a sovereign state. A similar disagreement between the EU states can be seen in the case of Macedonia, as the Greece was concerned with the use of name 'Macedonia' by the former Yugoslav state on the grounds that the use of name Macedonia would entail the territorial claim of Greek province of Macedonia.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Mikulas Fabry, "International Norms of Territorial Integrity and the Balkan Wars of the 1990s", *Global Society*, Vol.16, No.2, 2002, p.147.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed analysis on the subject, see Mikulas Fabry, International Norms of Territorial Integrity and the Balkan Wars of the 1990s", *Global Society*, Vol.16, No.2, 2012, p.148.

<sup>5</sup> A further account on the subject, see Stephen White, Judy Batt and Paul G. Lewis (editors), *Developments in East European Politics*, Macmillan 1993.

<sup>6</sup> Kerem Batır, "War in the Balkans: Humanitarian Intervention and Beyond", in Haluk Kabaalioglu, Muzaffer Dartan, M. Sait Akman and Çiğdem Nas, (editors), *Europeanization of South-Eastern Europe: Domestic Impacts of the Accession Process*, Marmara University European Community Institute, 2005, p.262.

<sup>7</sup> Mikulas Fabry, "International Norms of Territorial Integrity and the Balkan Wars of the 1990s", *Global Security*, Vol.16, No 2,2002, p.161-162.

<sup>8</sup> Misha Glenny, "Heading Off War in the Southern Balkans", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol74, No.3, May-June 1995, p. 103.

In relation to other criticism of EU's hesitation to military involvement in the conflict, it should be noted that at the first place the EU had no treaty based legal structure to act militarily when the conflict began. However, this is not to deny that the EU would have been more effective in influencing the settlement of conflicts by using its military capacity since the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, as the Treaty provided a legal framework for the EU to take joint action on matters of the Common Foreign and Security policy of the EU. Indeed, Article J.4 (1) of the Treaty of Maastricht stated that "*The Common Foreign and Security Policy shall include all questions related to the security of the Union...*" Article J.4 (2) also stated that "*The Union request the Western European Union (the WEU), which is an integral part of the development of the Union, to elaborate and implement decisions and actions of the Union which have defense implications...*"<sup>9</sup> Considering that Balkan region is located on the periphery of Europe, conflicts and political instability in the region have important implications for European security.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, conflict and war in Balkan region presented a security challenges and threat to the EU and thus, providing a legal base and considerable scope for the EU to act militarily under the framework of EU's Common Foreign and Security policy.<sup>11</sup>

In the immediate of aftermath of the Maastricht Treaty, the Bosnian war began on the Balkan region. Therefore, the EU's policy stance to the war provided a particular case to assess the question of to what extent had the EU's newly established Common Foreign and Security been successful? The EU's initial response to the Bosnian war was characterized as declamatory. Indeed, the EU had issued a number of formal declarations on Bosnia, calling of the parties for an immediate cease-fire. As an example, the European Council at Birmingham in October 1992 adopted the declaration on Former Yugoslavia in which it expressed its strong concerns about humanitarian situations in the region, and condemned the continuing wide-spread violence and human tragedy in the former Yugoslavia.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the EU also deployed "conference diplomacy" by initiating a number of peace conferences on the Balkan issue, including Peace Conference on Yugoslavia (known as *Carrington Conference*) in September 1992 and conference on a 'Round of Talks on Bosnian Constitutional Arrangements' under the Portugal Presidency in March 1992; and also organized International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia in August 1992, with the involvement of the United Nations, (known *Vance-Owen Plan*).<sup>13</sup>

The other characteristic of the EU's policy approach to the Former Yugoslavia in general and to the Bosnia, in particular, is that the EU made enormous effort to cooperate closely with other international actors, such as the United Nation, NATO, the United Sates and Russia in negotiations of peace settlement. EU's multilateral

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<sup>9</sup> Treaty on European Union, Title V Provision on Common Foreign and Security Policy, *Official Journal of European Communities*, C191, 29 July 1992.

<sup>10</sup> Harun Arkan, *Turkey and the EU: An Awkward Candidate for EU Membership?*, Ashgate, 2006, p.204.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Dover, "The EU and the Bosnian Civil War 1992-1995: The Capabilities –Expectations Gap at the Hearth of EU Foreign Policy", *European Security*, Vol.14, No.3, 2005, p.301.

<sup>12</sup> The European Council, *Presidency Conclusions*, Annex II Declaration on Former Yugoslavia, The European Council Summit at Birmingham, 16 October 1992, General Secretariat of the European Council, Brussels, 1992.

<sup>13</sup> Paul C. Szasz, "The Protection of Human Rights through Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement on Bosnia", *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol.90, No2, April 1996, p. 301-302.

approach to the Former Yugoslavia can be observed in the European Council Summit at Corfu in June 1994 which stated that:

*“In Geneva on 13 May, the European Union along with Russia and the United States demonstrated their determination to work together for an early and durable settlement of the Bosnian conflict through negotiations. The Work of the Contact group had reached a critical stage”*.<sup>14</sup>

This joint conference diplomacy of the EU appeared to be a rational policy choice in the sense that a joint action would not only exert a strong influence on the concern parties, but also provide a legitimate ground for humanitarian intervention under the framework of international law.

Last but not least, the EU’s most successful policy strategy towards the war in Former Yugoslavia seems to have been its economic instrument and humanitarian aid. The EU had provided financial support and humanitarian assistance with technical experts on emergency aid and staff to delivery of aid to the people. For example, the European Council at Birmingham in 1992 agreed to provide €213 million financial support for Former Yugoslavia, with aid of foodstuffs and medicines.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the Bosnian Government received €20 million for the administration of the Mostar in 1995, and €60 million worth of financial support for the infrastructure programme of the country.<sup>16</sup>

However, it should be noted that, although the EU had initiated a civilian power instruments in the form of diplomatic conferences and economic incentives, the EU has been less effective in influencing the parties to prevent war in Bosnia than it should have been. The EU’s failure to prevent war had been, to a large extent, related to its incomplete application of EU’s common Foreign and Security instruments to act effectively in security affairs. As Anders Wivel argued that *“when Yugoslavia collapsed, the EU failed to prevent war and thereby proved its inability to act effectively in security affairs, even within the EU region.”*<sup>17</sup> Robert Dower addressed a similar contention; he explained the EU’s failure in dealing with Yugoslavian crisis on the grounds of the EU’s inability to use its military power, its lack of political pressure to prevent the use of force by the Yugoslavian army and an ineffective use of financial assistance to bring the conflict to an end.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, it had been realized that a strong military response and more effective diplomacy were required to an end the war. In line with this, the Contact Group on Bosnia, consisting of Germany, France, the UK, Russia and the USA had intensified their efforts to reach a settlement during the period of between 1994 and 1995. Furthermore, the NATO launched air strikes and conducted military action against

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<sup>14</sup> The European Council, *Presidency Conclusions*, the European Council at Corfu, 24-25 June 1994, General Secretariats of the European Council, Brussels, 1994.

<sup>15</sup> European Council, *Presidency Conclusions*, Annex II Declaration on Former Yugoslavia, The European Council at Birmingham, 16 October 1992, General Secretariats of the European Council, Brussels, 1992.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Dower, The EU and the Bosnian Civil War 1999-1995: The Capabilities-Expectation Gap at the Hearth of EU Foreign Policy, *European Security*, Vol.14, No.3, p.306.

<sup>17</sup> Anders Wivel, The Security Challenge of Small EU Member States: Interests, Identity and the Development of the EU as a Security Actor, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol.43, Number 2, 2005, p.400.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Dower, “The EU and the Bosnian Civil War 1992-95: The Capabilities-Expectations Gap at the Hearth of EU Foreign Policy”, *European Security*, Vol.14, No.2, 2005, p.300.

the Former Yugoslav Army (JNA), controlled by Milosevic.<sup>19</sup> As a result, a peace negotiation was launched at Dayton in USA in November 1995, with the participation of American diplomat Holbrooke; and thus peace agreement was signed on November 1995 between the parties.<sup>20</sup> The Dayton Agreement provided a framework for the principles of Peace Agreement and the Constitution for Bosnia and Herzegovina, which established a Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serb Republics.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, the Dayton Agreement has been questioned on the grounds that it has lacked necessary institutions and instruments to generate a sustainable peace.<sup>22</sup>

## 2. The Post War EU's Policy to Balkan States: Instruments and Framework

The post war EU's policy towards the Balkan States has been more effective in influencing the political and economic developments of Croatia, Slovenia Bosnia Herzegovina and Serbia than its old policy during the conflicts and war. Indeed, the EU has since made considerable efforts to implement the peace process, state building process and reconstruction in the former states of the Yugoslavia. The EU as a civilian power provides an explanation as to why the EU has been successful in effecting economic and political systems in these countries.

In the immediate the aftermath of the Dayton Agreement, the EU initiated "the Process on Stability and Good-neighbourliness in South East Europe", known *the Royaumont Process*, to include Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Macedonia, with the aim of improving relations between the countries and promoting the security and stability in the region.<sup>23</sup> To that extent, the EU intended to encourage the countries to work together; in fact, the *Royaumont Process* had focused more on the regional problems, including border dispute, minority rights and security related issues. Financial and technical assistance provided by *the Royaumont Process* had been subject to good-neighbourliness conditionality.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, the aid and financial instrument of the process had not been materialized effectively, due mainly to the failure of meeting condition by the participant countries.<sup>25</sup>

By implications, EU's policy towards the Balkan region had suffered from some shortcomings and a lack of instruments which induced the EU to develop a more comprehensive and effective policy framework for the Balkan states. In other words, it appears that the EU's old policy to the region had failed not only to satisfy the

<sup>19</sup> A detailed analysis on NATO intervention, see Kerem Batır, "War in Balkans: Humanitarian Intervention and Beyond", in Haluk Kabaalioglu (et al), *Europeanization of South-Eastern Europe*, Marmara University European Community Institute, 2005, p.267-270.

<sup>20</sup> Jane M.O. Sharp, "Dayton Report Card", *International Security*, Vol.22, No.3, (Winter 1997-1998), p.113.

<sup>21</sup> Kari, M. Osland Research, "The EU Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina", *International Peacekeeping*, Vol.11, No.3, Autumn 2004, p.548.

<sup>22</sup> For the critics of the Dayton Agreement, see Jane M.O. Sharp, "Dayton Report Card", *International Security*, Vol.22, No.3, Autumn 2004, pp. 101-137.

<sup>23</sup> Andrew Cottey, "Europe's New Sub-regionalism", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.23, No.2, 2000, p.36.

<sup>24</sup> A detailed analysis of the EU's good neighbour conditionality, see Harun Arıkan, "Good-neighbour Conditionality for EU Membership: The EU's Policy towards The Cyprus Conflict and Its Security Implications", *Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, Vol.58, N0.4, 2003, pp.25-47.

<sup>25</sup> Andrew Cottey, "Europe's New Sub-regionalism", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 23, No.2, 2000, p.37.

countries in the region, but also to prevent human rights and border related security challenges to the Europe, as was seen in the case of Kosovo war in 1999. Accordingly, the EU had developed a ‘*Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe*’, with the aim reducing the perceived costs/ risk concerns associated with social, political and economic instability of countries in the region. In fact, the EU adopted an ‘inclusive approach’ to the region in the form of Stability Pact, Reconstruction Agency and Stabilization and Association Agreements, specifically designed for the countries in Balkan region.<sup>26</sup> By analogy with Stability Pact for Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs), which played an important role in political stability and regional co-operations between the CEECs, the EU had expected similar results by offering accession commitments for the Balkan countries.<sup>27</sup> Although some members of the EU and some officials of the European Commission hesitated to make a reference to the prospect for membership in the documents of the Stability Pact and Association Agreements, under the German Presidency it was agreed that membership prospect even without setting any timetable would encourage the Balkan states to take the necessary policy reforms to develop political and economic structure and to improve good neighbourly relations.<sup>28</sup>

Having realized the shortcomings in its Stabilization and Association Agreements for the Balkan countries, the EU at the Thessaloniki summit in 2003 made a clear and direct reference to the prospects of membership for the Balkan countries. The EU Council at the Thessaloniki provided its full support for *the European Perspective of Western Balkan countries, which will become an integral part of the EU*, when they satisfy membership requirements of the EU.<sup>29</sup> In line with this, the European Commission has not only prepared regular reports on the progress made by the Balkan countries, but also has provided pre-accession assistance to these countries, designed to support economic and political developments of the Balkan countries. In other words, the EU has used the enlargement carrot and its pre-accession strategy to persuade the Balkan countries to commence the necessary legal and institutional reforms in line with the Commission recommendations. All Balkan countries including Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Albania, Montenegro Croatia and Kosovo have benefited pre-accession assistance of the EU. For Example, Bosnia and Herzegovina received € 51 million in 2006 and benefited from a number of EU programme. Furthermore, the EU provided € 24.1 million to support the EU police mission and the EU monitoring mission in the country.<sup>30</sup> Since then every year

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<sup>26</sup> Lykke Friis and Anna Murphy, “Turbo Charged Negotiations: The EU and Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol.7, No.5, 2000, p.767.

<sup>27</sup> See Harun Arkan, “Good Neighbourliness Conditionality for EU Membership: The EU’s Policy towards the Cyprus Conflict and Its security Implications”, *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, Vol.58, No.4, 2003, pp.24-47.

<sup>28</sup> Lykke Friis and Anna Murphy, “Turbo Charged Negotiations: The EU and Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol.7, No.5, 2000, p.772.

<sup>29</sup> European Council, Presidency Conclusions, European Council at Thessaloniki, 19-20 June 2003, General Secretariat of the European Council, Brussels, 2003.

<sup>30</sup> European Commission, *Bosnia and Herzegovina 2006 Progress Report*, [ COM (2006) 649 final],2006, Brussels, p.5.

Bosnia Herzegovina has received financial support under the instrument of pre-Accession Assistance, including €102.6 million for 2011.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to economic influence, the EU's accession commitment has encouraged the Balkan states to resolve their bilateral issues by diplomatic means. The Serbian case offers a good example: the country has not only made effort to arrest and transfer of Radovan Karadzic and the others to the International Court of Hague, but also has keenly involved in regional cooperation with the neighbour countries, including the agreement with Bosnia-Herzegovina Croatia and Montenegro on the Sarajevo Declaration Process of durable solution for refuge and internationally displaced persons.<sup>32</sup>

By implications, although the EU has placed the Balkan countries in the slow line with a clear accession commitment, once they meet accession criteria, the EU had been influencing the development of internal and external policies of the countries in the region.

### Conclusions

The analysis of the EU's policy towards the Balkan states in the post-Cold War era suggests that the EU is not a military power in international system. The EU's inability to prevent the Balkan war in its periphery during the 1991-1995 was a clear example for the above contention. Indeed, the EU's policy approach to the Balkan conflict had been constrained by the lack of military instrument of the Union and by divergence of the interests of member states. On the other hand, the EU has played a major role in peace process and state building process in the Balkan region aftermath the Balkan war. Without a doubt, the EU has successfully implemented its civilian power instruments in the form of Stability Pact and Enlargement Strategy to accelerate economic and political transformation of the countries in Balkan region. As a conclusion, the EU is still a civilian power, despite the fact that some progress has been taken to establish military structure under the framework of the Common Foreign and Security policy.

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<sup>31</sup> Fort his, see European Commission, *Bosnia-Herzegovina 2011 Progress Report*, SEC(2011) 1206 final, Brussels, p.6.

<sup>32</sup> European Commission, *Commission Opinion On Serbia's Application for Membership of the European Union*, [SEC(2011) 1208 final], Brussels, 2011, p. 8.

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