

SOUTHEAST EUROPE; TRADITIONAL RIGHT-WING ORIGINS, ORGANIZED CRIME, AND EU'S AND NATO'S POLITICIZATION

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Abstract

The study argues that the region remains structurally fragile and right-wing radical, economic-political undervalued, with external anti-EU and NATO geopolitical entities' influence, organized crime sources, with a necessity for joint-ethnonational cooperation implements. The Balkan history is the building material of collective identities within the discourse of "our vs. their victims." The security and stability of Southeast Europe continue to be undermined by unresolved status issues. After the conflicts manifested in varying intensities fearing region by metaphor Balkanization as the final eschatological calamity, the region entered into a post-conflict vacuum whose essential determination is a crisis. The diagnosis of several countries in bifurcation leads to testing different experimental concepts from the international political laboratories. Ethnopolitics pursue containment policies; "hybrid wars," radical right-wing movements, and historical revisionism affect the regional security paradigm. Under the intensity of post-war ethnonational inappropriate leadership, some countries could exert a similar path as a nation, "returning" into a "far-right society." Besides Croatian and Serbian traditional radicalism, historically non-traditional doctrines of post-war foreign ideological Islamic extremist influence are noticeable over a tiny percentage of the Bosniaks. Ethnic-confessional nationalism is the opposing concept of Western nationalism; prevailing ideologies in former Yugoslav states are legitimized by the post-war denominational purity, influencing fragile security. The war and post-war illegitimate legacy enabled a political economy of corruption within a sociopolitical climate. Close broader cooperation is crucial to preventing trans-European criminal expansion and radicalization due to Balkan historical roots. Croatia *misapplied EU and NATO membership to implement its foreign policies and requires the EU and NATO's affirmative action (e.g., ICTY convictions rejection, claims of B&H Islamic extremism as an EU security risk)*. The regions' collective accession to the EU would encourage better regulation of ethnic relations, reduce organized crime and protect national minorities within a complete normative definition and a better human rights application.

Keywords: Southeast Europe, Right-wing, Ethnopolitics, Organized crime, EU and NATO

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INTRODUCTION

The study argues that the region remains structurally weak, fragile, and right-wing radical, economic and political undervalued, with external anti-EU and NATO geopolitical entities' influence, organized crime sources, with a necessity for joint-ethnonational cooperation implements.

There is little in the recent century of political past of the Balkan peoples that is valuable and should be celebrated. Except for quiet historical periods that were short-lived primarily and anti-fascist resistance in World War II, all that history is torturous, shameful, and violent. The countries of Southeast Europe, in general, have shown minor progress in the post-Cold War transition processes. The intertwining of unresolved conflicts culminating in bloodshed and war crimes has distanced the region from European integration. Given the previous Balkanization process, wars, poverty, and recessions, Southeast European countries find it very difficult to establish good neighborly relations and find it challenging to recover their resources and realize EU accession criteria. Thus, the security remains fragile. Even when they had independent states and mainly were subordinate, constantly shedding their own or others' blood to sustain the ruling dynasties, and return to the past that glorifies those times and their actors in itself is a pathological desire to celebrate their evils, mourn the collective sufferings of the past, or reckon with historical and present enemies. While the narratives of extremists in the "West" are mainly aimed at immigrants facing failed integration, socio-economic marginalization, and a sense of injustice and inequality, radicalization in the Western Balkans occurs mainly in their domestic communities with similar challenges. The dynamics of extremist groups are such that they offer young people a sense of belonging, fulfillment, inclusion, equality, dignity, and purpose and often fill psychological gaps that have remained open in their lives.

The pasts of the Balkan peoples are full of evils of all forms, and any uncritical memorialization of them means, at the same time, invoking the evil spirits of the past. Multiethnic and multi-religious conflicts in the Balkans at the end of the last century created an unstable security environment in which the risks of new interethnic pogroms became even more diverse and dangerous. These conflicts, supported by neo-Nazism, mythology, ethnic chauvinism, and religious extremism, as a mobilizing ideology, have created an explosive, dangerous and traumatic environment in which the possibility of multiethnic/religious dialogue in this area is increasingly being challenged. The consequences of the Balkan wars are that a vast European country with a reputation in the East and the West was destroyed, and seven smaller infamous states were built on its ruins. The causes of these numerous wars, ethnic cleansing, and genocide in the Balkans were not, as some Western media speculated in the 1990s, sudden volcanic eruptions of ethnic and religious hatred embedded in the mentalities - hatred that only the most authoritarian communist dictatorship could curb. On the contrary, hatred erupted before the wars of the

1990s after a ten-year media war. The production of fear and incitement of the people has settled to this day through state media and religions among right-wing circles.

In the absence of global democratic order, there remains a fluid, fragmented and old-fashioned fight against racial, interfaith and intercultural hatred and animosity, which is a time of digital/technological revolution and growing authoritarian populism, creates new multiple threats that could explode into a new escalation of conflict in the Balkans could have dramatic consequences for all of humanity. In a figurative sense, Balkanization's notion is broader than the Balkans and means an area of destabilization and permanent conflicts between different ethnic and religious groups. It manifested at the end of the last century, primarily in ex-Yu (former Yugoslavia). The Balkan's lessons in dealing with individuals and movements that promote the "cleansing" of Europe and preserving an "identity" artificially tailored to others' hatred are proactivity. The Balkans' (un)successful fight against the historical forms of right-wing extremism in more current circumstances has become like an overflowing foundation of global right-wing networks. (Hadžić, 2020: 67) At the same time, countless events, documented by numerous researchers and, most importantly, the UN Commission of Experts, which compiled thousands of pages of material about the war, demonstrate that the driving force behind the destruction of Yugoslavia was not just nationalism but organized crime. Moreover, many similarities between terrorism and organized crime can be found in the Balkans, although terrorists differ in their ideological or religious goals. The Commission for "9/11" warned back in 2010 that the Balkans' countries face extremist groups' challenges, which we must point out before the emergence of ISIS.

The "Balkan question," no matter how autonomous its roots, cannot be understood without a broader EU and global power context. The political dialogue defines the appointment policy with EU policies as a general goal, approaching foreign policy with the Common external and security EU policy. The author indicates that Russia's relationship is considered a unique domain in these states, i.e., a particular national interest question. "It is certain that the enthusiasm in the region for the EU is declining. However, at the same time, external factors like Russia and China have little to offer. The authoritarian and corrupt elites of the Balkans would gladly accept their projects, at least to get wealthy on them." (Bieber, 2020) However, the Balkan nationalist and separatist ideas, which resurfaced with the former Yugoslavia's break-up, should be reticent and transformed within the EU.

Impossibility or incompetence should also be emphasized in European policy in settling relations in the Balkans. Thus, Western Balkans face double standards, strategies, and alliances within the EU. Moreover, with its "enlargement fatigue," the EU loses its attractiveness and influence in Southeast Europe. In all this, the transformation of these countries, which lasts alone the disintegration of Yugoslavia, is still not over, and only the presence of European

forces and their action has not yet contributed to a better situation in these states' political empowerment.

Countries are like a human-type society, in the permanent movement going through different states, evolving, adapting, and connecting. However, in addition to the demands facing the Western Balkans countries by the EU, it is valid to emphasize that the EU takes stabilization steps. The EU has pursued Western Balkans countries and still implements conditioning policies. Regional cooperation of the Western Balkans states is one of the formal conditions for improving relations between countries with the EU, and initiatives in this area can accelerate approaching the EU. European Commission Strategy for the Western Balkans in 2018 stated that candidates for accession must give the highest priority in the negotiations to the rule of law, the judiciary, and fundamental rights. Three characteristics cut across and affect the fundamental areas in the Western Balkans: low trust in institutions, high levels of informality, and policy capture. (Transparency International, 2016). Policy capture reduces trust and promotes informality. These characteristics are often found in contexts where justice and law enforcement institutions are weak, private interests heavily influence political systems, regulatory frameworks for policy-making are dysfunctional, and media and citizens cannot check the state. Together, they lower economic competitiveness and make public and democratic governance reforms extra challenging (OECD, 2017). The OECD data from 2020 show significant improvements in specific areas, which matter directly for citizens and businesses. However, economic competitiveness is held back by factors outside the finance and the economy, such as political instability and a lack of legal predictability. Thus, progress is uneven across areas, economies, and administrations. Moreover, the processes of regional integration are essential to attract foreign direct investment. Regional economic cooperation between Western Balkans states is still not at an enviable level. (Grieverson, 2020) The author argues that reasons for that were economic and political undervalue concerning the main world trends, poor communication with major European integrations, isolation from global economies, and traditionally poor political relations.

With European commissions' support, the Southeast Europe (SEE) Strategy- 2020 was created at the Ministerial Conference in Paris in 2011. It represented the Strategy embodiment of European values, and in practical terms, it sought to accelerate approximation in European norms and regulations. The SEE Strategy stressed the importance of SEE countries' further prosperity, supporting the CEFTA Secretariat, OECD -and the European Training Foundation (ETF), and other relevant regional partners. Strategy reflected SEE governments' determination to implement policies that will encourage faster social-economic growth, improve citizens' prosperity, and have more significant access to the EU market. Small political units in Southeast Europe (independent states) gather around the US and the EU, respecting the new geopolitical context

in which the total force of these two forces exceeds the "force of the other units." In joint and separate arrangements, these two forces, with different motives, refer to region countries for the future - affiliation. The EU, which is so in prospect geopolitical context reveals as a creative force of the future, with an objectified tendency whose power, (which at least should be reduced to war and thought of as war) in space Old world rises above the force other reference units, US, and on thus strongly relativizing Aaron dualistic force capacity. The US and the EU, because of their geopolitical, geoeconomic, and security reasons, are managing the crisis in Southeast Europe but inconsistent between its normative potential and current problematic aspects of process implementation policies. However, pragmatism is a critical concern in society's political and social transformation and the apparent tendency of key political actors to follow the "speech of Europe" in their daily political practice without considering the content. (Hadžić, 2020: 38)

1. The Balkan security paradigm; between the radical historical roots, democratic deficit, and organized crime

Right-wing extremism starts from the point of view that a particular ethnic group, people, race is superior to others. Thus, collectivity is preferred over individualism. Everyone is exposed to radicalization, but young people are especially vulnerable because violent extremists and terrorist organizations have various recruitment methods. Given this fact, all segments of society should provide young people with the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills and accept appropriate attitudes and positive social values to resist the negative influence and propaganda of violent extremists and radicalized groups. Youth experiences, especially those who had an unhealthy mental and psychological environment, can make those same youth more receptive to simplified structures and less complex thinking, just as we find it in the discourse of extremism.

Additionally, a socio-economic environment dominated by high unemployment, uncertainty, insecurity, distrust of institutions and the state apparatus, the legacy of war, ethnic tensions, and rhetoric contributes to a sense of hopelessness and hopelessness on a personal level. By their character and role in the lives of the youngest generations, educational institutions are an unavoidable part of the overall effort to form young people into healthy and positive personalities. Whether education can prevent violent extremism and radicalism, the answer should be affirmative only if the primary task of education is to live universal values (peace, freedom, social progress, equal rights, and human dignity). Given that the education sector in the Balkans is divided within several ethnic historical-political contours, violent extremism begins where a society of common actual values disappears.

The new national and nation-state structure of the Balkans has opened up many unresolved identity issues. In the initial phase, language and religion were in the first place as collective criteria of affiliation. The use of a "Christian" or "European" language (Greek or South Slavic) and belonging to Orthodoxy seemed to be sufficient for belonging to the Greek or Serbian nation. However,

both criteria proved insufficient or incapable of reaching consensus to strengthen competing for national movements. Religious and linguistic differences were sharply expressed (between Christians and Muslims, on the one hand, or Greek, South Slavic, and Albanian dialects, on the other), determining affiliation could (at first glance) seem relatively unproblematic. Ethnic, national, and confessional affiliation in former Yugoslavia adds to political radicalization. When nation and religion become "controversial" identification and mark others as potentially dangerous, through a policy that allegedly aims to "affirm" and "protect" its people and their faith, then in local historical and current circumstances, it essentially implies antagonism in the most dramatic conflicts. (Hadžić, 2020: 106) The processing of war crimes in B&H (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and transitional justice for the war and genocide victims is significantly delayed. The International Criminal Court for Yugoslavia, in Hague (ICTY), dissolved, and the much-needed reform of the judiciary has stalled. All attempts to revise World War II results globally and generally change and falsify historical facts are punishable. However, in the former Yugoslavia, militant formations of Serbian Chetniks and Croatian Ustashe from the latest war, and Collaborators of Hitler's WWII genocidal formations regularly receive pensions and medals, schools, and streets are named after them, while ISIS and Ukrainian-Donbass fighters are facing indictments if they return home. (Hadžić, 2020)

States claim that the main threat from organized crime and terrorism comes from informal groups that aim to attack the state and, along the way, civil society. However, it is worth considering the credibility of the claim that the prominent radicalize, but also the main perpetrators of organized crime, both globally and in the region of Southeast Europe, were, in fact, often states. Given the powers, social status, and actual power of such perpetrators, it becomes clear that the greatest threat in the realm of "non-war security threats" stems precisely from their potential criminalization. (Hadžić, 2020) The argument is also proved by the Freedom House organization study of Western Balkans countries in 2018. Serbia was assessed as a semi-consolidated democracy, B&H, Kosovo, and Macedonia as transitional, hybrid regimes; regimes that have elements of democracy but also authoritarianism, speaks enough about the fact that these countries face fundamental problems, which diminishes their political, social, and economic opportunities in the modern world. (Freedom House, 2018)

The economic situation has only partially improved, thanks to EU funds, in Croatia. However, the system has caused the most massive exodus of the population, in the long run, reducing the tax base and jeopardizing pension health systems. A recent survey (2018) in Croatia shows that the main reasons for mass emigration are "an unorganized and corrupt state." (Jurić, 2018). The characteristics listed for this area have significantly influenced the assessment of these countries as weak. Issues such as the country's status have dominated in recent years in the operation of this region to other important priorities such as economic underdevelopment Euro-Atlantic orientation. State strategies of this

type create a culture of fear and insecurity, and public debate is often about "security." It is a security that justifies authoritarian forms of social control, mass raids, arrests, and public intimidation while cooperating with the underworld. Such campaigns in the Balkans had taken off since the fall of communist regimes when it turned out that tycoons linked to "Europeanization" and "market liberalization" either had a criminal past on their own or were cooperating with the international underworld. (Hadžić, 2020) The OSCE Committee, also addressing terrorism, has practically reaffirmed the same early warning and risk indicators. Their "global" approach to the issue is based on three dimensions of equal importance at the same level: the political-military dimension, the economic and human dimensions; - loss of political space for the opposition, civil society, and the media; - social, economic and political exclusion of some groups from the prevailing development trend; - a high percentage of young unemployed; - impoverishment, rapid decline in access to essential services; - distortive effects of development in terms of distribution and increase of horizontal inequalities; - a growing sense of loss of dignity and frequent human rights violations; - increased insecurity and perception of existing threats; - migration flows, domestic and international, caused by both economic and political reasons. Within the security framework, the author maintains that it is necessary to strengthen public confidence in the judiciary, whose practice is consistent, predictable, and in line with the European Convention on Human Rights standards.

As the Western Balkan countries seek EU membership, OCCRP's (The Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project- established in 2005) investigations in the region provide evidence that these countries have serious problems that need to be addressed. People linked to criminals or even criminals themselves hold political posts and are protected. Montenegro has become a state where government representatives work alongside organized crime, while Serbia's leading politicians have been implicated in high-profile corruption scandals. In recent years a sharp decline in press freedom has obstructed journalists' work in the Balkans. The journalists connected by OCCRP have found themselves the subject of smear campaigns, threats, and lawsuits orchestrated by the targets of their anti-corruption investigations. (Petrućić, 2018) Considering what has been said about organized crime, any analysis of the risks arising from terrorism and political extremism must consider the broader conditions. We can recall the events of the last century, the attack in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, as the detonator of an unprecedented world crisis. It was also far from an isolated gesture - despite the ways it was later exploited, idealized, or denied - in that it was logically aided to some extent by external forces and in the context of politics.

Religious communities and politics are two different realities between which there should be some coexistence. Thus, power is divided into spiritual and secular, and each is (or should be) competent in its field. The common is that both of them exercise "supervision" over people. There are many examples of

this, but we are only interested in the former Yugoslavia area, where all three denominations - of course, to a greater or lesser extent - were manipulated by nationalist policies. That is why their natural effect has declined to mere and empty declarations and proclamations, reaching by its influence seldom and nowhere to the people and the faithful. In the former Yugoslavia, religious elites have sought (since 1990) to ensure that politics moves in religiously based coordinates.

The Serbian Orthodox Church openly supported acts against humanity, and soldiers were blessed before and after the Serbian clergy's crimes, emphasizing the reference of Hrebelijanovic Lazar, a fourteenth-century Serbian prince. Although the Serbian Orthodox Church has simultaneously denied significant violence and organized rapes and claimed its victimization, the presence of genocidal initiatives and public and private promotion of Muslims' expulsion from their homes is evident. Contemporary Serbian extremism shares essential characteristics with the European far-right and has its specifics that are primarily the result of the socio-political circumstances of the 1990s. Characteristics include: "normalization" of nationalism, a rise of anti-fascism, an examination of state secularism, a deficit of the rule of law, ethnic homogenization, and ethnic boundaries, anti-communism, strengthening of traditionalism and authoritarianism, fundamentalist interpretation of Orthodoxy considered a superior religion concerning other ethnic and religious groups, opposition to the ideas of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism and hostility towards "new" minorities (LGBT) and traditional minorities (Roma). Shortly after the Milosevic regime's overthrow, Serbia was faced with the emergence of a growing number of extreme nationalist and neo-Nazi groups. Interestingly, no serious research has been conducted in Serbia so far on the motives for joining extreme right-wing organizations.

In the context of discussions on today's fight against "international terrorism" and the place that B&H has in it as potentially vulnerable, the war and post-war presence of Arab volunteers and missionaries in that country is one of the critical topics. Possibly also because the ideological influence, they have left there to date probably goes beyond their military role in the Bosnian war. It is neither an incidental nor an accidental outcome. In addition to the direct role of the mujahideen as fighters, it is vital to keep in mind that many Islamic NGOs played a crucial role not only in logistics: in short, it can be said that Islamic extremism arrived in the Balkans under the guise of humanitarian intervention. It was a form of infiltration that influenced him and the way he acted in the post-war period. In some Western Balkans countries, Salafi jihadist communities are still active, in which the official Islamic communities and the democratic order of the home country are not recognized. To purify Islam, for Islamic extremists, in these cases, means to purify it of all those impurities brought into it by the local culture or the influence of other peoples with whom Muslims in the area share numerous customs. Therefore, they believe that Muslims should be cleansed of

anything reminiscent of the behavior of local Christians. It is a way of separating Muslims from other nations, and it may have security consequences in the future. Wahhabism, as a movement, can divide into two groups. First, we have so-called peaceful or passive Wahhabis who want to live in an orthodox way, who invoke the tradition of the Prophet of Islam, who think that only they authentically, in full content, inherit the Prophet, and very often attribute to him something that never said or imitated his style of dress. However, according to the most authentic testimonies of his biographers, the Prophet never wore it that way. Therefore, such Wahhabis are not critical. Second, nevertheless, there are other Wahhabis to whom the religious worldview serves only as an excuse, and their daily practice has nothing to do not only with Islam but with any severe and virtuous religious tradition. However, paradoxically, B&H Islam has never hidden its aversion to all Wahhabi fundamentalism demonstrations that openly support their various initiatives aimed at dialogue, interfaith respect, and coexistence, which is in some ways specific to B&H's general sociological conditions; more similar to Western-Europeans of Muslim-descent. For most B&H residents, Salafism (Wahabism) is imposed on local Muslims from the outside, but Bosnian Serbs and Croats consider an influence by B&H Islamic Community. According to the study "Selefism in B&H, Who they are, how others see them, and what media reported, Socio-psychological study," the most common form of violence to which members of the Salafi movement in B&H are exposed is verbal violence, most often because of their appearance. They also challenge the way they dress, and this does not only refer to vicious criticism but also to attempts to remove those clothes. Physical abuse is also present (throwing stones, attacks by drunk people, hitting, spitting). Several people were arrested and imprisoned, only to be later released. One part of the criticism refers to their way of practicing Islam, the way of worship, and the like. They find employment challenging because of their appearance, women because of their coverage, and men because of their beards. Problems within the family are reduced to verbal threats from parents and the request to shave the beard. They encounter economic insecurity and emotional violence daily, while they encounter the most emotional and verbal violence during the week. Physical violence is present several times a year in every tenth Salafi in B&H. (Puhalo, 2016)

Furthermore, there is the phenomenon that religious leaders often became active politicians, as is the case with Muslim religious leaders. Thus, for example, the former Grand Mufti of the B&H Islamic community, Mustafa Cerić, and Serbian Sandžak (a historical geopolitical region in Serbia and Montenegro) Mufti Muamer Zukorlić were candidates for the B&H and Serbian Presidency. In addition, Muamer Zukorlic is an active member of the Serbian Parliament.

Unresolved nodes remained long enough in the origin and specific goals of the AKSH organization itself (Armata Albanian citizen), except for the general call for the unification of "all Albanians" divided between Albania, Kosovo, northwestern Macedonia, Southern Serbia, Montenegro plateau) Moreover, Greece's area on the border with Albania was already disputed during the Italian

occupation in World War II. It potentially included six states; however, at this point, the ethnic issue should not be underestimated as an absolute nightmare for stabilizing the Balkans. According to IWPR (Institute for War and Peace Reporting), the organization is credited with the bloodiest attack carried out by Albanian guerrillas on Macedonian security forces in 2001. However, it was "the only attack for which the phantom organization called the Albanian National Army claimed responsibility. AKSH probably was not a further ethnic subvariant in the movement's classification but a manifestation of the Albanians' traditional ties of Macedonia and Kosovo that have always been traditionally close in the past, especially in the absence of a state border. To say that, AKSH is, in fact, a franchised denomination structure, with leadership in Albanian nationalist extremism circles and a system of affiliation that is uncertain and easy to mobilize in certain geographical areas, transcending the "new" border. After Operation Mountain Storm in 2007, AKSH appearances have been drastically reduced until tensions over Kosovo's independence and election riots in Macedonia in 2008.

The fall of the "Iron Curtain" in Croatia created changes in the forms of government and economic structures and created real "counter-identities," reinforced by the apparent failure of socialism. From the moment of the former Yugoslavia's disintegration, the presence of political movements was noticed in Croatia, which more or less directly referred to the past collaborative experiences of the world conflict and Nazism. Organized and managed by the collaborationist regime of Pavelic, it was the only extermination structure operating in the heart of the Balkans and mostly eliminated Jews, Serbs, and other political opponents. Some details about the extermination methods are awful, as that gas chamber and crematorium in Auschwitz - the elimination is done by slaughtering, unique lethal means created by the perpetrators and victims themselves. Which later became apparent in the symbols adopted by certain groups participating in the conflict. Attention should be drawn to the presence of far-right ideologies (for example, the issue of persecution of Serbs or the Jasenovac concentration camp and war-crimes in B&H), which find moments of glorification of the same ideology at Marko Perković Thomspon's concerts (singer frequently accused of Fascism, Nazism, and Ustashism), in an atmosphere of tension comparable to the end of the 1990s, in the context of micro intolerance. Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was a WW2 -era puppet state of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. During its entire existence, the NDH was governed as a one-party state by the fascist Ustaša organization. The Ustaše was led by the *Poglavnik*, Ante Pavelić. The regime targeted Serbs, Jews, and Roma as part of a large-scale campaign of genocide and anti-fascist or dissident Croats and Bosnian Muslims. According to Stanely G. Payne, crimes in the NDH were proportionately surpassed only by Nazi Germany, the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, and several highly genocidal African regimes. (Payne, 2006) Persistent denial of the International ICTY convictions of high-ranking participants by Croatian politicians and manipulating the public is entirely at the

joint "criminal" enterprise level. Under the intensity of war and inappropriate leadership, Croatia is inclined to take a similar path as a nation, "returning" into a "far-right society." Latterly, Bishop Košić, who naturally rehabilitates the Independent State of Croatia-NDH, was elected President of the Council of the Croatian Bishops' Conference for the Doctrine of the Faith. By in-depth observation of the bishops' statements in the Croatian Catholic Church, there are no significant differences among Croatian bishops regarding national, religious, or worldview issues. At the same time, bishops called Ustasha soldiers Croats from the altar, recited Ustasha songs by Vinko Nikolić, equated fascism with communism, and the victims of the Way of the Cross with those from the 1990s. (Grozđanić, 2019) Among other circumstances, the aggression against B&H was because of the necessary conflict of civilizations, Christianity, and Islam.

For Croatia, the military action "Storm" in 1995 (The last major battle of the Croatian War of Independence was significant in the Bosnian war outcome against the self-declared proto-state Republic of Serbian Krajina) was considered a magnificent victory. For Serbia, it was a case of ethnic cleansing. The attitudes of ordinary citizens, Serbs, and Croats, have not changed significantly. Many believe that the relations between the two states on the anniversary of "Storm" are becoming tenser each year. The fight against revisionism is an ongoing process. In the case of B&H, that story intensified in 2006 and continues to this day. The agents of revisionism have organized and strengthened institutionally. (Slobodna Europa, 2016)

The Balkan security dilemma's central discourse is who will control a piece of a particular territory. Albanians in Macedonia did not get territory but rights (they changed the Constitution, the President of the Assembly is of Albanian nationality, the right to speak in Albanian was also introduced), while in B&H, ethnicity was gained. It means increased opportunities for monopoly and power over the territory. (International Commission, 1996) Furthermore, politics of parallel memory, nationalism, and revisionist historical narratives became a behavioral practice. The politics of fear spread influence among young people among whom ethnopolitical indoctrination has reception and is left to chance, creating solid preconditions for hostilities in future generations to escalate into violence in specific political-economic circumstances. (Hadžić, 2020) Vjekoslav Perica, a Croat historian, stated, "In sports arenas, kill, and slaughter are shouted, fascists march through the streets, mutual lawsuits are filed for genocide, military parades are held, provocative commemorations are organized in support of nationalism, genocide denied, and mythomania within the transitional crime, corruption, and interethnic hatred." (Perica, 2016)

2. Western Balkans EU's and NATO's dilemmas

The European Commission in 2018. adopted a strategy for "Credible Enlargement Perspective and Enhanced EU Engagement with the Western Balkans." This Strategy is another indicator of how the EU is ready to invest in a stable and united Europe based on shared values and interests. The evidence is the statement of the EU that the "doors of the EU are open for further accession

when individual countries meet the criteria for membership." The enlargement process, they point out, remains merit-based. Cooperation stands out in particular when it comes to the challenges facing the Western Balkans. In his speech on the situation in the Union in 2017, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker reaffirmed the European future of the Western Balkans: "If we want greater stability in our neighborhood, then we must maintain a credible enlargement perspective for the Western Balkans." There will be no further enlargement during the mandate of this Commission and this Parliament. No candidate is ready. However, after that, the EU will have more than 27 members. The Strategy states that the European Commission has envisaged an Action Plan with six key initiatives that address specific areas of interest to the EU and the countries of the Western Balkans, namely: The rule of law; Security and migration; Socio-economic development; and Transport and energy connectivity. (European Commission, 2018) In 2020, the European Commission (EC) presented proposals for an enhanced accession process to provide a more credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans. At the core of the revised EU accession process is an "even stronger focus on fundamental reforms, starting with the rule of law, the functioning of democratic institutions and public administration as well as the economy of the candidate countries" combined with a merit-based approach based on objective criteria for accession. (OECD, 2020)

In 2021, the security, stability, and prosperity of Southeast Europe continue to be undermined by unresolved status issues concerning the future political configuration of Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Macedonia, and B&H. Transnational criminal networks benefit significantly from this confusion. The 2020 research on organized crime in Southeast Europe by the United Nations office on drugs and crime (UNODC) presented an analysis of the types of enablers organized criminal groups use to facilitate their activities. Corruption emerged as a crucial enabler of organized crime in the region, whereas violence or sophisticated information and communication technologies (ICTs) are minimal in facilitating organized crime. Forms of corruption include graft or bribery, with examples of law enforcement having direct involvement in criminal activity or control of local markets and even playing a conscious role in eliminating rival groups. Both violence and the use of advanced technology are considered too conspicuous. Thus low-tech options are preferred to avoid detection.

Serbia and Kosovo's relations attract great attention worldwide and lack political dialogue and final status. Regarding the normalization of relations, the EU-facilitated dialogue resumed with high-level meetings in September 2020. Many expert-level meetings took place in Brussels. Further substantial efforts and contributions to reaching a comprehensive, legally binding agreement are crucial. Such an agreement is urgent and crucial so that Kosovo and Serbia can advance on their respective European paths. Attention was on Macedonia and Greece due to issues and the dispute over the name and the flag. A dysfunctional

federal state of B&H, a complex structure of two entities and one district, an ethnoreligious division, and posing a security challenge in the Western Balkans also complicates EU-NATO entry. In Serbia, approaching NATO is taboo due to Serbia's 1999 bombing to stop Kosovo's conflict. This relationship is reflected in B&H politics. There is also a declarative commitment to European integration, which is burdened by the Kosovo context.

We mean Serbian politics' burden to believe that joining the EU means renouncing territorial sovereignty in the Kosovo context. In this way, the EU's demands for better functioning of B&H are addressed in the Republic of Srpska RS (one of the B&H entities). In B&H and Kosovo's relations, no aspect can be singled out to function at a satisfactory level. Relations remain in political rhetoric, and the problem of freedom of movement between BiH and Kosovo is directly linked to asymmetric and scarce economic cooperation. (Hadžić, 2020: 6) Developing relations with Moscow and Beijing, which do not recognize Kosovo's independence, unlike most EU members and NATO, leaves room for expanding the action of foreign factors in the media space. Simultaneously, Republika Srpska (entity in B&H) pursues Belgrade's military neutrality policy, such as striving to stay out of NATO and build relations with Russia. This political positioning and the unresolved issue of Kosovo's status continue to slow Serbia's path to EU integration and the prospect of NATO membership for B&H. (Sunter, 2020).

Additionally, there is the insufficient administrative capacity of Montenegro and the impact of crime and corruption within the business sector. Security in the Western Balkans depends on the latest case of Montenegro. The examples of Montenegro, which has profoundly transformed its attitude towards the region, and Northern Macedonia, which has made a historic step forward in its relations with Greece, testify to the need and possibility to improve the political context of the Western Balkans. Tensions and inflammatory rhetoric remain part of the region's political mosaic to make exclusivity and unilateral moves.

Failure to reach a Serbian-Albanian agreement on Kosovo contributes to instability in the region, and exceptional uncertainty in the Western Balkans is caused by the social divide in Montenegro, where anti-NATO, pro-Serbian and pro-Russian parties occupy a significant part of political power, against sovereignist pro-Western options. In addition, some state policymakers in Serbia promote the concept of the "Serbian world" as a single Serbian political people, i.e., a single political and state community of all Serbs in Southeast Europe. Promoting such ideas from the top of the Serbian government further destabilizes sensitive inter-ethnic and inter-state relations in Southeast Europe, especially towards B&H and Montenegro. Furthermore, the media and public appearances of prominent individuals in some countries continued to place narratives that challenged the legitimacy and legality of war operations during the Balkan wars, and the Croatian fascist roots and crimes during the "NDH" and the contemporary era are questionable.

Disagreements with Common external and security EU policy, expressed B&H, North Macedonia, and Serbia happened in pronouncements restrictive measure against Russia's cause of annexations Crimea. Also, Serbia is not followed the EU not in restrictive measures, according to Venezuela. Montenegro, North Macedonia, and, in particular, B&H is vulnerable to destabilizing Russian influences, using a complicated social, political, and economic environment, a lack of strategic orientation, and divisions over NATO integration (Hadžić, 2020: 10). The situation in Montenegro is not calming down after the pro-Serbian government of Zdravko Krivokapic and Dritan Abazovic took power after last year's elections. It is continuously silent, and Montenegro turns into a fragile state who can "infect" the entire region. Russia also acted subversively in the Western Balkans so that Croatia was not spared from anti-NATO and anti-EU protests. It should be emphasized that China also has a significant influence in this region. After the latest appointments in that small country's intelligence community, which became a member of NATO three years ago, unofficial claims that Russia is in the Intelligence and Security Directorate of the Ministry of Defense after the appointment are debatable. It could create a political framework for Montenegro to be under a special NATO magnifying glass. (Tomovic, 2019)

The Migrant crisis influx into Europe in 2015 occurred mainly through the Balkan Corridor with the security consequences. Despite Europe's humanitarian and legal obligations to treat migrants/refugees with dignity in securing safe havens and asylums, restrictive migration policies have been established, often characterized by the construction of wire fences along the Balkan route borders. The Migrant crisis has created several issues for Europe, with substantial legal consequences arising from their solution. At the same time, human trafficking and human smuggling are becoming the two fastest-growing transnational criminal activities. Transit corridors from Bulgaria/North Macedonia and Serbia and through Albania and Montenegro merges in B&H. Strict border controls by Croatian border police severely limit the possibilities for onward movement. As reception capacities in B&H are limited, there are critical needs for direct humanitarian assistance. We must add the consequences of the international financial crisis of 2008 and the future threat of COVID-19. Conflicts and transitional crises globally are inextricably linked to social weaknesses such as poverty, inequality, and especially the lack of an economic outlook, which has exploded into protests against governments worldwide. The general impression is that the world has become violent again and less capable of government; politics was a constant crisis.

Unlike the system in North Macedonia, the political system of B&H is different and more complex. Dayton Peace Accords created a fragile state and the world's most complex public administration; 14 governments, 180 ministers, two entities, "three languages, "one district, ten cantons, with 207 active political parties (on 3.5 million people) where pre-election campaigns last permanently,

and it has become a barrier to the country progress. The Dayton Peace Agreement, "legitimized" by the international community, is unjust and senseless, as it was, the War in B&H, as an armed territorial-expansionist attack internationally recognized country, although late and with incredible difficulty. Practically, that means that, with that interruption, war tasks, ideologies by neighboring national ideas, and contractors of the war remained unfinished.

Specifically, the symbiosis between authorities and organized crime during the creation of new states led to a permanent transformation of state/national interests into private ones development of corrupt, non-transparent, and crime-permeated societies. (Hejdinjak, 2004: 2) The ICTY (International Criminal Tribunal for the Yugoslavia) data reveals many examples of how economic violence and actions that cause economic harm were committed on a widespread basis during the 1990s conflicts in many different locations. and how it financed and sustained armed groups, thus ensuring that the conflicts could continue. (Balkan Insight, 2020) The combination of "war-profiteering structures with the presidents of Croatia and Serbia poses a great danger to peace in the region, especially bearing in mind that the last President of the Western Balkan member of the EU, former Croatian president Grabar-Kitarovic, formally represented the Euro-Atlantic option (EU and NATO). Serbia's President Aleksandar Vučić is tied to Russia and its interests in the Western Balkans. Croatia, the only EU member state besides Slovenia, instrumentalized EU membership for its nationalist aspirations in the region, especially towards B&H. NATO membership is trying to "Croatize" while ignoring the fact that NATO is a transnational organization for collective defense and security. The International Criminal Tribunal's persistent denial for Former Yugoslavia convictions of high-ranking participants by Croatian politicians and manipulating the public is entirely at the joint "criminal" enterprise level. (Hadžić, 2020: 124) Namely, criticizing and slandering the ICTY in The Hague and the verdict against the genocide in B&H, ICTY's "Six" verdict in 2017, former Croatian President Grabar-Kitarovic entered and performed a delicate geopolitical action with the production of alleged jihadists based in B&H, which may ultimately cost and harm Croatia, Croatian tourism, and Bosnian Croats the most.

The dominant matrix, repeated continuously in the region's politics, is "Europeanization." The ethical content of "Europeanization" is forced into the background or vaguely present. As long as political structures operate in the name of "Europeanization" and "democratization," anything is attainable. It is proved that international support is given to "political pragmatists" who oppose "rigid legalists" throughout the Balkans. Thus, political pragmatism is in society's political and social transformation. (Hadžić, 2020: 39) Europeanization also means the transfer of an actual decision-making center to the European level. In other words, the decisions that were previously made in the member state institutions are (from) now on, so to speak, "Europe." We have two views of Europeanization: one is focused on what is happening "down" as a result of the advent of Europeanization, and others what is happening is "top" in the sense of

"Europeanization." In other words, "what happens when power is once transferred to Brussels." Europe integrates - or unites - in economic, political, security, and legal. The most important result of international legal integrations in Europe is the emergence of "*Ius Publicum Europaeum*" - European law as the most outstanding European integration whole. In order to properly understand such a claim, apart from the fact that we would call it legal Europeanization in general and what the legal Europeanization of Western Balkans correctly understood, we should say and point out that European law or EU law is an entirely new type of law. *Ius Publicum Europeaum* is not International law. Miruna Tronkota, author of the book "Post-Conflict Europeanization and the War of Meaning," mentioned the concept of post-conflict Europeanization. It is a concept that recognizes that ethnic groups, in post-conflict situations, attach specific meanings to political realities and wrestle in the field of public narratives, paving the way for reconciliation and, later, EU integration, which is an even more complicated process. Her book shows how different parties tell different stories in front of the camera, which leads to citizens understanding the reality of the same situation very differently from what happened behind closed doors, which is why they have different expectations. (Hoxha, 2017)

Economic development and political stability are crucial, apart from purely contractual matters and free trade agreements. Furthermore, refugees and displaced persons' return should be emphasized, eliminating the consequences of war casualties, interstate communications, reconstruction of the roads, rail, air traffic, joint efforts to fight against organized crime and corruption, and social-legal issues. Participation in resolving bilateral issues is one of the forms of European participation policies in this area. The integration process of Western Balkans in the EU should not have a serious alternative. This process will continue to flow and occur through two consecutive ones and to each other conditioned phases. The concern is not whether it will, but what kind of EU the Western Balkans states will enter. Maybe it will be the moment the Western Balkans find at the door of entry the EU to be the one that has genuinely changed and become unrecognizable.

CONCLUSION

After the conflicts between the countries manifested in varying intensities fearing region by metaphor Balkanization as the final eschatological calamity, the Western Balkans entered into a post-conflict vacuum whose essential determination is a crisis. It is difficult to define because the crisis structure depends on the internal (regional) political actors that agree to compromise and prevail. The region remains structurally fragile. The security and stability of Southeast Europe continue to be undermined by unresolved status issues. A historical legacy has mostly persisted and harms institutional relations and the consolidation of democratic institutions. In the Balkans, history is the building material of collective identities within the discourse of "our vs. their victims." Ethnopolitics pursue containment policies; "hybrid wars," radical right-wing

movements, and historical revisionism affect the regional security paradigm. Ethnic-confessional nationalism is the opposing concept of Western nationalism; prevailing ideologies in former Yugoslav states are legitimized by the post-war denominational purity, influencing fragile security. Against this practice, it is necessary to express as concrete a skeptical objection as possible and remind that this is the wrong direction for one human community, particularly in the fragile historical and prevailing Balkan context. Furthermore, although EU membership remains a strategic goal, developing relations with anti-EU and anti-NATO geopolitical factors with the politicization and instrumentalization could develop.

Under the intensity of post-war ethnonational inappropriate leadership, some countries could exert a similar path as a nation, "returning" into a "far-right society." Besides Croatian and Serbian traditional radicalism, historically non-traditional doctrines of post-war foreign ideological Islamic extremist influence are noticeable over a tiny percentage of the Bosniaks. Therefore, it is necessary to continuously, with zero tolerance towards any form of radicalism and violence, work on creating a safe, stimulating, and in every sense, fully inclusive environment, notably for learning and teaching and all activities in educational institutions.

The war and post-war illegitimate legacy, regionally entrenched, enabled a political economy of corruption within a sociopolitical climate. The EU's common challenges are organized crime and extremism. Close broader cooperation is crucial to preventing trans-European expansion and radicalization due to Balkan's historical roots. The regions' collective accession to the EU would encourage better regulation of ethnic relations, reduce organized crime and protect national minorities within a complete normative definition and better human rights applications. The EU and NATO's affirmative action was required on Croatia's leadership, misapplying EU and NATO membership to implement its foreign policies (e.g., the International criminal court- ICTY convictions rejection, claims of B&H Islamic extremism as an EU security risk). Historical revisionism and parallel memory politics, by its criterion, incorporate Serbia and some other entities in the region.

The diagnosis of B&H, Montenegro, Kosovo, and North Macedonia in bifurcation leads to testing different experimental concepts from the international political laboratories. Today, we have a series of fragile states under external geopolitical entities' influence with the necessity of cooperation implements. Given the multitude and heterogeneity of threats, all possible conditions and nuances for developing specific security challenges cannot be defined as "crucial," but violence remains the most significant and least desirable implosion factor.

Within the decade-long political and economic crisis, the societies and countries of Southeast Europe and the Western Balkans could be further affected in the coming period by strengthening the security stalemate and coherence of the factors such as organized crime, radicalism, ethnoreligious nationalism, and

political instability. Therefore, one of the region's policies priorities is to launch deep structural economic and legal reforms, and inherited practices must be abandoned.

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