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Balkan Forum i a masterplan for peace and stability required

SEEKING A NEW BALKAN IDENTITY?

The Balkan Region is well known due to its historical identification of the Balkans as exclusively pejorative. “The Balkans”, “Balkanism”, “Balkanisation” etc. are linguistic symbols of lagging, un-development, violence, conflicts, intolerance, struggles and wars, ethnical, national, political, economy and all other diversities known as the “Balkan embroilment”. Region traditionally has been treated by “big powers” as their zone of interests. Second half of the XX century approved once by hundreds of years created perception of the area. “Balkan formula: “two NATO countries, two soviet block and two specifically neutral” had been expressing traditionally accepted views. Apart of bipolar confrontation the Balkans achieved itself as a periphery of the main world theatre.

Previous century last decade, when the Region sank in the bulk of post socialism local wars and conflicts, once again clearly presented a bad Balkan legacy. The main consequences of post cold war world are a huge geopolitical changes based on of braking up of former socialist “second” Yugoslavia. Losing important strategic position

between two blocs, the Balkans did not achieve important position in a new international relations –periphery stayed as it was.

Transition in Eastern and Central European Countries was more important for western countries than South of the Continent.

Purposely or not, from that time in more frequent usage instead of the name of the Balkans is South East Europe which clearly refers as not so to Europe as more political approach regardless all former countries in the region proclaimed direct connection to EU as well as United States. Because of attractiveness of the region it is very hard to define borders of the region. How to treat Turkey, Hungary, Slovenia, Cyprus or Moldova? From time to time, from one to another political opportunity, countries like to be considered as a part of South East. It helps for some of them to be taken as a “part of package” on the way to Euro-Atlantic an European integrations, on the other hand for more developed to use all benefits of known and bigger market.

As the first war in Europe after WW II, SEE in 90-ties was one of the main focuses of world politics of big powers. Relations with South East Europe fundamentally changed in the last ten years. The region of SEE with a number of states of old tradition and new emerged states in the process of firming of nation building, entered into historically decisive stage of their civilisational development. They faced with huge dilemma between “Balkan-centrism” or collective standing and individual access to security and economy integrations. Access is weighted with traditional tensions such are

Greek-Turkish, Bulgarian-Turkish dispute, Serb-Albanian regarding Kosovo, relations between Romania and Hungary concerning Hungarian minority in Romania. New emerged countries brought in a line of a new international disputes ex. Relations between Serbia and Croatia, border disputes between Croatia and Slovenia, tensionable Macedonia-Greek relations, complex Macedonia-Bulgarian, as well as Macedonia – Serb and Macedonia Albanian relations in terms of position of numerous Albanian-ethnic minority in Macedonia. Joining some interior crisis spots an inflammatory potential raises.

Apart of inter-state disputes there are three really strong hot-spots as the biggest potential to provoke broader regional conflicts and crisis. The first is “South Balkans” with Macedonia in the center because of many disputes it has and possibilities to pull in the entire Region. The second one is Serb-Kosovo relations in the framework of self-proclaimed independency of Kosovo 2008 rejected by Serbia, the case which is tried on the ICJ. There are many interests which back both sides. The third one is Bosnia and Herzegovina on itself. Fourteen years after signing DPA, BiH is in permanent disputes about interior organization and relations between three peoples.

All three hot spots revived traditional geopolitical interests of different international actors such are USA, EU, Russia as well as neighbors including Turkey with recently highly raised rhetorically reminding on a successful Ottoman ruling in the region, supported by Muslim religious leader in BiH. USA and EU invested a lot of

human and financial capital in the changes on the Balkans 5 billion dollars in BiH for instance. Russia shown up recently with huge potentials in energy field and getting in with huge investments in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, particular entity of the Republic of Srpska, Montenegro but also other countries.

A position of international community in the region is very complex. First of all, there is an influence oriented to attract countries to join to Euro-Atlantic security framework and EU trying to force them to realize higher standards required for integrations. In the second hand, there is a direct ruling by international community such are Office of the High Representative in BiH and UNMIK combined with Eulex as a tools for “supervising of independency”. As enlargement commissioner Olli Rehn recently stated: membership either in NATO or EU is impossible with a such a role if international community which means that states have to be functional on itself. While the Kosovo case will be treated through embroiled international procedures, BiH has to get rid of OHR and find out a way of functioning on its own.

Discussions on issue, named due to the NATO military base the “Butmir Process” started two months ago. After the third round in hardly could have been said is going in right direction. Five ruling parties, each of their own reasons, do not agree offered solutions with. Two attempts of sparkling process on building interior consensus failed. First time, so called “April package” of constitutional changes did not passed 2006. in the Parliament

although politically negotiated previously. The second one is process named due to Prudd village meeting in northern Bosnia sparked by three main national leaders. It failed as well. In BiH is on the spot a huge interior discussion about a future role of OHR as the direct ruler on behalf of IC. Opinions are divided – while Serbs and Croats insisted on getting rid of, Bosniak side attitude is to remain it. Another question is how to realize a transition to local politicians forcing them to take over not only political power but as well as accountability for a state.

Anyway all Balkan countries are faced with necessity of regional cooperation and building regional initiatives institutions. A level of interest depends on a state of access to NATO and EU. Big inter-country differences are huge burden for regional cooperation. More developed countries have preferred individual access policy, less developed are opposite – they would like to go ahead hand by hand with others. Differences in GDP, Business Ranking and Democracy ranking can explain some of these attitudes. It might have revived old relations and interferences based upon regional diversities and diminish goals and values of regional cooperation. For difference with other regions such as Nordic Council, Visegrad Group and Baltic Group the Balkans is linked with much more regional projects. Some of them are top-down model, another are bottom-up named as a “regional ownership”. The difference is that these bottom-up concepts are weaker, badly financed, non-defined clearly, too formal and not recognized in regional countries as a cornerstone of future integrations. Not only preparations for joining

them but more important to start with building a “new regional identity”. It should not be neither a classical state identification based on Westphalia nor EU head. It is just an awareness of necessity of dialog, communication, joint effort and common representation in some way to integrations. First steps in regional cooperation efficiency are disturbed by all habits of unpreparedness for common market imposing customs, non-tariff barriers and other obstacles. Regional cooperation is important because of different security concepts trying to be realized here. Old tradition with balancing with big powers based on Russian come-back, neutrality or national security options. But any type of viable security and feasible economy can be based only on regional cooperation and coordination.



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Balkan economies' GDP per capita by PPP

2006 PPP

Albania	\$5,700
Bosnia & Herzegovina	\$5,600
Bulgaria	\$10,700
Croatia	\$13,400
FYR Macedonia	\$8,300
Montenegro	\$3,800
Romania	\$9,100
Serbia (including Kosovo, 2005 est.)	\$4,400
Consolidated democracy threshold	\$11,226

Source: All figures according to *The World Factbook*,
[tps://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html).



Freedom House *Nations in Transit* democracy ratings, 2003-2007.

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Bulgaria	3.38	3.25	3.18	2.93	2.89
Romania	3.63	3.58	3.39	3.39	3.29
Serbia	3.88	3.83	3.75	3.71	3.68
Croatia	3.79	3.83	3.75	3.71	3.75
FYR Macedonia	4.29	4.00	3.89	3.82	3.82
Albania	4.17	4.13	4.04	3.79	3.82
Montenegro	3.88	3.83	3.79	3.89	3.93
Bosnia & Herzegovina	4.54	4.29	4.04	3.79	3.82
Kosovo	3.88	5.50	5.32	5.36	5.36



World Bank *Easy of Doing Business* ranking, 2006-2008

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>
Bulgaria	62	54	46
Romania	78	49	48
FYR Macedonia	81	92	75
Montenegro	92	70	81
Serbia	92	68	86
Croatia	118	124	97
Bosnia & Herzegovina	87	95	105
Albania	117	120	136