

The Democratization Process in the Western Balkans in the Last 20 Years: Interethnic Relations and Security Implications

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Abstract: *The process of democratization in Western Balkans is connected with the process of state-building before and after the reconstruction. After the break-up of Yugoslavia, the region became a brutal battleground as different nation-based groups fought to define the boundaries of a set of new states in the Balkans. One of the key challenges related to the democratization of the Western Balkan countries is resolving the issues with their neighbours. However, political pragmatism and bilateral relations between the countries of the Balkans, including their internal conflicts do not exclude informal alliances, but as a temporary form of exploitation of the current political and security situation or in order to achieve their own national interests. One of the key tools in the achievement of national interests, especially expressed in the Balkan countries is represented by the ethnic minorities. Ethnic minorities in the Balkans cannot be overlooked and most of them are seen as a destabilizing factor in the countries in which minorities live. Without overcoming prejudices and differences of the past, the Western Balkans could not continue their independent development. Democratization of the Western Balkans means that improving the peace and coexistence should not be viewed in the past, but in the current process of cooperation. The EU integration process of Western Balkan countries and the democratization process of the region will have to be implemented in the future if the political elites in Western Balkan countries wish to achieve security, stability and prosperity of their societies.*

Keywords: *democratization, Western Balkans, European integration, security*

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Introduction

Is the presence of support and assistance of the great powers for the countries in the Balkan region an expression of a tactical game for incursions and promotion of their capacity and influence? The presence of the U.S. and Russia, as an extended arm for defence and military assistance, economic benefits and social care for the Balkan countries is actually another attempt to ensure global military and economic supremacy. In a region where safety is not affected, it is an excellent target for further provocations between the U.S. and Russia, in terms of strengthening their military presence where great powers have an interest. On a long-term basis, this may not have major implications for the Balkans in terms of impact on the security of the states. But, would this mean a re-match for the arms of the great powers? In fact, their arms competition, is the same as during the Cold War, with the only difference that now the great powers tend towards integration and the establishment of peace as their main ideology.

The Balkan region has always been of interest for the West and Russia, because in terms of interests it has not been settled to whom it belongs. Especially in the case of the Republic of Macedonia which, because of the name issue, and the impossibility to join NATO and the European Union, is still a neutral country or an ideal area of overlap of the Russian-American interests.

The Western Balkans region is particularly sensitive. The European Union, in the 1999 sets a possible approach between the Western Balkans and the Union. Since then we have implemented a process of stabilization and association, suited to this region in order to bring countries towards membership. In fact, EU, by its commitments and strategy has a goal to prevent the region from conflict situations and also to strengthen the stability and security in its frame. Through the Stabilization and Association through gradual steps towards EU membership, the EU has found a way to exert influence in the Western Balkans and on their internal management policy and action and further define the political system and state apparatus.

Apart from the security implications in the Western Balkans, this region undoubtedly plays a major role because of its ethnic identity. The multi-ethnicity is often experienced in different aspects, not just between states and their societies, but also within the state itself. If you analyze that from the perspective of promoting national identity and national - patriotism, the story of the Western Balkans becomes even more challenging and with a more uncertain end.

Democratization is a long process that can only be achieved through cooperation and commitment.

Democratization as a process for successful integration of the Western Balkan countries

In the political science theory the term “balkanization” became definition for fragmentation of a political unit in a combination of antagonistic entities (Heywood, 2009: 418), as it happened with the conflicts which blighted the Balkan region in the 1990s. Yugoslavia became a brutal battleground as different nation-based groups fought to define the boundaries of a set of new states in the Balkans. After the break-up of Yugoslavia, the EU established the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe to stimulate economic and political reform in this region. The agreement establishes free trade areas both with the EU and between the countries of the Western Balkans. The term “Western Balkans” covers Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo. Croatia became member of the EU on 1 July 2013. With the exception of Albania, all other countries were a part of the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The Western Balkan countries are geographically surrounded by EU member states, and the EU’s general approach towards the region is characterized by stabilization through integration. The integration in the EU is the political agenda of the Western Balkans countries to achieve security, stability and prosperity as their major goals. Democratization is part of the stability goal and it is defined as the process of institutionalizing a democratic system of governance, which is achieved by allowing free elections and guaranteeing civil and political rights (Danzinger, 2011: 123). It should be achieved with the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe with the help of the EU so that countries in the region overcome their political and economic problems and get closer to Euro-Atlantic structures (Weidenfeld & Wessels, 2009: 456). The idea of the Pact was proposed by Germany in late 1998 and the intervention of NATO during the war in Kosovo in 1999 has just catalyzed the political will of the international community for coordinated action and conflict prevention in the region. The Stability Pact has three working areas: 1. Democratization and human rights, 2. Economic reconstruction, co-operation and development, and 3. Security issues. The Pact gave opportunity to representatives of South Eastern European countries to be on an equal footing with those of international organizations in advising on the future and setting priorities related to the content of the working areas of the Stability Pact. Furthermore, as a contribution to the Stability Pact, the EU continued with the Stabilization and Association Process by setting framework of Stabilization and Association Agreements with the Western Balkan countries. This relationship was reaffirmed at the EU-Western Balkans Summit in Thessaloniki in June 2003. The Stability Pact represents a serious attempt by the international community to increase its intervention policy in the region of South Eastern Europe with long-term conflict prevention strategy.

The political agenda of the Western Balkan countries related to the integration in the EU is clear. On 1 July last year Croatia became an EU member state. It is understandable that the democratization process of the Western Balkans and the enlargement process of the EU go hand in hand. The EU started to use the conditionality as a tool to ensure democratic governance during the accession process with the potential member states. Conditionality has over the past two decades become a sophisticated instrument not only

to ensure compliance with the *acquis communautaire*, but also the country's protection of human rights and democratic standards (Džihic & Hamilton, 2012: 4-5). According to the rankings of Freedom House in the annual Nations in Transit, the process of EU accession has motivated important reforms in the Western Balkans and provided a formal mechanism that gauges each country's progress toward fully democratic institutions (Freedom House 2013). The table below (Table 1) provides the democracy score for the Western Balkan countries.

Table 1. Democracy scores in the Western Balkan countries

The Balkans	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Change
Albania	4.13	4.04	3.79	3.82	3.82	3.82	3.93	4.04	4.14	4.25	▼
Bosnia	4.29	4.18	4.07	4.04	4.11	4.18	4.25	4.32	4.36	4.39	▼
Croatia	3.83	3.75	3.71	3.75	3.64	3.71	3.71	3.64	3.61	3.61	
Kosovo	5.50	5.32	5.36	5.36	5.21	5.14	5.07	5.18	5.18	5.25	▼
Macedonia	4.00	3.89	3.82	3.82	3.86	3.86	3.79	3.82	3.89	3.93	▼
Montenegro	3.83	3.79	3.89	3.93	3.79	3.79	3.79	3.82	3.82	3.82	
Serbia	3.83	3.75	3.71	3.68	3.79	3.79	3.71	3.64	3.64	3.64	
Average	4.20	4.10	4.05	4.06	4.03	4.04	4.04	4.07	4.09	4.13	
Median	4.00	3.89	3.82	3.82	3.82	3.82	3.79	3.82	3.89	3.93	

Source: Freedom House, Nations in Transit 2013, p. 21

The ratings in Table 1 are on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest. The 2013 ratings reflect the period January 1 through December 31, 2012. According to the findings of Freedom House's Nations in Transit 2013 survey, the ratings of the Western Balkans region have shown very little movement and declines are registered for some countries (Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Macedonia).

The Western Balkan countries have changed after the implementation of the Stabilization and Association Process but compared to the 1990s the region has not seen a move towards a consolidated democracy, which raises questions about the linkage between democratization and EU accession. There are three possible explanations for this issue. The first one is that there is no clear link between EU accession and democratization. The second one represents some difficulties in the specific context of the region of the Western Balkans. And the third one emphasizes that the EU integration process has also been characterized by setbacks (Džihic & Hamilton, 2012: 6-7). After the implementation of the Stabilization and Association Process in Western Balkans, the EU is the dominant player and it influences the political and economic transformation in the region. The Western Balkan countries are in the position to see the EU integration process as the only possible opportunity to achieve democratic stabilization without any other alternative. The alternative probably is democratic stagnation and delays for further integration (Džihic & Hamilton, 2012: 8).

Finally, the EU enlargement agenda covers Western Balkan countries and each country is at a different stage of that process. Montenegro, the Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia are candidate countries. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo are potential candidates. The EU integration process of Western Balkan countries and the democratization process of the region will have to be implemented in the future if the political elites in Western Balkan countries wish to achieve security, stability and prosperity of their societies.

Interethnic relations expressed in terms of national-patriotism

The prejudice and historical syndromes and, as a consequence of it, the mistrust among nations and nationalism in the region, today are mainly intact. Reconciliation between the Balkan countries is still out of reach. Legacy and misunderstandings need to be put aside, and the normalization of bilateral and regional cooperation in all areas of common interest has to be the goal. Integration into Euro - Atlantic structures should guarantee the stability of the region, and should be the main generator for the security and prosperity in every field in the Balkan countries.

What is especially important is that after years of independence of the Balkan countries, it is still necessary to work on internal reconciliation in the country, in order to be able to realize regional cooperation.

The Western Balkan countries undergo a democratization process; however, in which form can we present that process? We can ask ourselves: Can we expect that Sofia will accept that in Macedonia live Macedonian people who speak their own language? Will Athens wake up and realize that the Macedonians are real and not imaginary, that they live on their territory and also in Greece, but are totally ignored and without universally recognized rights? Will Serbs and Albanians overcome the confrontation which is about a century old, and has now reached its peak? Do you expect the Serbs and Croats to begin wide cooperation as if they don't have historical nightmares behind them? Is consensus possible in Bosnia and Herzegovina which was the common interest of Serbs, Croats and Bosnians? There is no real chance that these historically difficult syndromes will be overcome in the near future. These are deep wounds that will for a long time bother the Balkans.

While going deeper into the 21st century, these cases strongly indicate how far the democratization in the Balkans is. We are witnessing such a development, though Athens for a long time, and in the near past Sofia, are already part of the European Union. It certainly does not mean that they are under Europeanization.

According to analysts, the degree of democracy in the countries of South East Europe decreases with the strengthening of populism and anti-liberalism, primarily because of the reform fatigue and political polarization, but above all, as a result of the intensive promotion of the national patriotism.

As Orwell wrote: "By 'nationalism' I mean first of all the habit of assuming that human beings can be classified like insects and that whole blocks of millions or tens of millions of people can be confidently labelled 'good' or 'bad'. But secondly — and this is much more important — I mean the habit of identifying oneself with a single nation or other unit, placing it beyond good and evil and recognizing no other duty than that of advancing its interests. Nationalism is not to be confused with patriotism. By 'patriotism' I mean devotion to a particular place and a particular way of life, which one believes to be the best in the world but has no wish to force on other people. Patriotism is of its nature defensive, both militarily and culturally. Nationalism, on the other hand, is inseparable from the desire for power. The abiding purpose of every nationalist is to secure more power and more prestige, *not* for himself but for the nation or other unit in which he has chosen to sink his own individuality" (Orwell, 2010: 367).

Patriotism refers to a sense of pride in the achievements of one's nation and fellow citizens. It can also describe a devotion and commitment to serve and protect your country. Patriotic sentiments should be distinguished from the subjectivity and prejudice associated with feelings of nationalism which are based on common descent, language and religion.

The expression of the patriotic sentiments within the ethnic groups in a multiethnic country can be equally dangerous as the need to respect the personal diversity and identity.

According to the definition of Rupert Emerson from the 1960: "The nation is a community of people who feel they belong together in the double sense that they share deeply significant elements of a common heritage and that they share a common destiny for the future... The nations today are the largest community which, when the chips are down, effectively commands men's loyalty (Emerson, 1960:95). That means that the object of this loyalty coincides for the total population of a state that is nation-state. But, the reality of the Western Balkans states is nothing such as ethnic "clean" state. There are different ethnic and cultural groups as minorities that can be easily excluded from the "main nation".

But, is there a common definition for the nation, in the Balkans? The commonly recognized objective criteria of language or religion come in varying combinations. Religion is the clearest divide between Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats, but the Albanians are a single people, although they are divided between Muslims, Orthodox and Catholics. This complicated situation is rooted in the Ottoman past; the *Sublime Porte* did not acknowledge the existence of national groups. It recognized only religious communities, which were protected by the Sultan and granted a degree of self-administration under the *millet* system. The modern Balkan nations developed on that foundation, which is why the Orthodox churches of the region have an ethnic character, although the identification of Orthodoxy with an ethnic group was condemned as a heresy, "ethnophyletism", by an ecclesiastical council in Constantinople in 1872 (Castellan, 1992)

If we ask ourselves who has lost and who won during the Balkan wars in the past period, according to Derens those are the minorities who were never directly part of the

main conflicts of identity, but were often forced to choose sides (Arnault Dérens, "Le Monde diplomatique", 2003).

By definition, the nation-state is a kind of political organization and territorial union, which has the ultimate authority and political axioms of the independence and autonomy (Kennett 2008: 3). The nation-state has prevailed as the dominant political unit in international relations from the nineteenth century, and the "third wave" of globalization. The process of globalization significantly disrupted the traditional analytical and conceptual framework in which the policy can be understood. This state seeks modification, transnationalization and cosmopolitan spirit. (Ćirić 2008: 210).

The appearance of national minorities was a direct consequence of the drive to create nation states: where the political legitimacy of the state is not founded on ethnic/national criteria, the concept of national minority is meaningless. And areas within the new state frontiers could not possibly coincide exactly with the territories of the new nations, which were mostly ideological constructs. The inevitable result was the creation of Trans-border minorities. All the wars that have affected the Balkans, from the eastern crisis of 1878, the Balkan wars 1912-13, and the two world wars, to the Yugoslav wars 1991-2000, can be seen as attempts to make state frontiers coincide with idealized national territories (Arnault Dérens, "Le Monde diplomatique", 2003).

Nationalists always prefer territories defined this way to those delimited by natural frontiers. The Balkans has proved too small to accommodate all these territorial claims. In the resulting conflicts, identities resistant to the new national models have been crushed.

The degree of democracy in transitional countries is assessed at the lowest level (according to some reports of Freedom House), and the progress that states have made in several subcategories, such as the electoral process, civil society, governance, independent media, judiciary and combating corruption is assessed.

After the death of Croatian President Franjo Tuđman in 1999, and the fall of the Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević in 2000, the Balkan countries aspired to build democratic governments and societies. However, there are still doubts concerning the safety and unsettled state that continue to dominate political life and how the European Union interacts with this region. Fears that conflicts in a country could be extended to the whole region and even the rest of Europe continues to define and determine policies for EU enlargement, in a way that prepares pre-accession agenda. In that respect, the interest of stability is sometimes preferred over other factors, including the consolidation of democracy. All this points to the fact that democracies are the most suitable arrangements for achieving security and stability and solve state problems.

The process of democratization of the Western Balkans in the past was connected with the process of building the state before and after the reconstruction. We talk about the triple transition in the Balkans: from war to peace, from the rule of the communist economy to a liberal market economy, and from the one party system to a plural democracy. Resolving the issues with their neighbours is the fourth challenge to the democratization of the Western Balkan states.

The Balkans, in the future, even declaratively, will stand up for democracy, good neighbourliness and cooperation. Still, for a long time the national authorities in the Balkans will be faced with real challenges for the accomplishment of these goals. Through self-criticism and less national - patriotism it is necessary to build a better understanding with the neighbours. Otherwise there is a risk of not taking into account the actual situation of other ethnic communities, and that may lead to re-escalation of the conflict. In terms of the existence of the multi-ethnic states in the Western Balkans, the national - patriotism can lead only to returning to a decade in the past, in terms of what has been achieved by a modern democracy. Excessive favouring of nationality, nation-state, at a time of globalization means disregarding the norms and principles of international relations aimed at networking and connection of the states in order to achieve the above and further regional cooperation and international representation.

Democratization of the Western Balkans means that improving the peace and coexistence should not be viewed in the past, but in the current process of cooperation.

Security implications - Strategies for new alliances or status quo policy

Firstly, it is necessary to explain the term Western Balkans. It is not a geographical or political concept derived from geographic area or political alliance leaders or their relationship in political, economic, ethnic or structural sense. This notion is a euphemism of the political group leaders who are in the region of the Balkan Peninsula. They have no interconnection in any primary national concepts either in terms of economic development, social structure or the risks and threats to their safety they face with. Hence, we believe that the term Western Balkans is a modern politico-economic and security ghettoization group states that in this context have political and economic power to influence its position in the region and international relations.

In this context, it can be justified in theoretical discussion and consideration of the political doctrines of the Balkans as a security implication. Setting the opposite hypothesis regarding the title of this section, or thinking about political strategies built on national interests through the prism of alliances, we can say that the political discourse towards creating alliances or maintaining the status quo situation causes proportionate security implications.

The possible creation of new alliances and its security implications in the region is seen as pragmatic untenable situation which is constantly influenced by its change. Primarily in international relations and regional level there is no possibility for fixed policies, only just different terms for the nation's interests as a basis for policy making.

The balance of power as a multi-polar system in the framework of regional policy and security is closely linked to the concept of alliances. Alliances are formal and informal agreements of sovereign states to provide mutual security. They may be motivated by military or non-military reasons (Naj, 2008:106-107). However, unions fail for many

reasons, especially when the national interests of the states are bumped or union members see on it as a threat to their safety.

The historical experience affects the governments in the region and it increases their mutual distrust. This situation creates many conflicting processes that directly impact safety. The actual security impact is closely tied to the impact of foreign policy, and pragmatism in the Balkans and may in fact say that these effects are much larger than regional. The Balkan area is strongly influenced by the EU, US and Russia. Each of these players aims to achieve its interests and enhance its positions.

Besides the impact that exercise global security and political actors, as already identified risks and threats to the region, the scene appeared more countries or part of the Balkan states still got one international legal entity (state) of the same ethnic background.

The new regional geopolitics deviates from traditional historical alliances, but also from maintaining the status quo situation. The European Union already established alliance and global security actor in relation to the countries of the so-called Western Balkan developments poses a crucial expectation, and it is the expression or achievement of capacity, effects and exercised influence that you can perceive in terms of achievements for membership as part of the permanent European debate especially in terms of its future expansion (Marash, Ress, 2012:130). Therefore, it is notable that the Union is trying every way to promote itself as a future of the Western Balkans.

However, political pragmatism and bilateral relations between the countries of the Balkans, including their internal conflicts do not exclude informal alliances, but as a temporary form of exploitation of the current political and security condition or in order to achieve their own national interests.

One of the key tools in the realization of national interests, especially expressed in the Balkan countries is ethnic minorities.

Ethnic minorities in the Balkans cannot be overlooked and most of them are seen as a destabilizing factor in the countries in which minorities leave. With any political philosophy minorities as a reason for joining the states in the Balkans, they are still a risk factor or jeopardizing national interests at the expense of the neighbouring state. Starting from this view, the basic tendencies of states in the region are aimed at minorities' deprivation of touch with state resources and their assimilation. Historically and in the contemporary relations ethnic minorities used to implement pragmatic political rhetoric in bilateral relations.

The historical alliances in the region more than 100 years ago have never publicly expressed the real motives and national interests of the countries that go to war. Publicly proclaimed motive of the war against the Ottoman Empire in 1912 was "the liberation of their brothers". These "brothers" were never released, but they were victims of the principal aim of the Balkan union at that time, and that is the rule in Macedonia and heritage of the Ottoman territories in the Balkans (Katardziev, 2013:87).

Historical heritage of the Balkans has not yet left the spirit of the rule of the territory of Macedonia, or Macedonia today. The difference is that nobody is calling for the release, but

the promotion of European values and good neighbourly relations, and basically perform destabilize the region. Destabilization has a key goal, for the Republic of Macedonia to prevent the normal development and its integration into Euro - Atlantic structures. In this regard, Macedonia should be shown as a country that exudes regional instability and which would be best not to exist as an independent state. One of the key factors in the geopolitical and strategic game represents the minorities, and primarily the role of the Albanian minority. This minority is not used only in the context of achieving the strategic national interests of the Albanian leaders of Macedonia, but also as an accelerator in the movement process ethno-political conflict in Macedonia in Greece needs.

The approach of the states in the region to Macedonia strategically is no different from that of 100 years ago, in that there are two differences in the geopolitical position of the country.

Firstly, today there are two Albanian states (Albania and Kosovo) that in 1912 did not exist, and second, the pressure on Macedonia's EU membership.

Taking into account the strategic objectives of the countries in the region and two basic differences in historical perspective, we can say that the security implications of the Balkans are away from status quo situation and suggest new primarily political alliances.

Democratic processes will reduce security risks and threats in the region. New alliances are logical consequence, and particularly use of the ethnic minorities as a tool for security threat. In this context, it is necessary to follow the historical trends of "traditional friendship and alliance" between the countries of the Balkans, especially in the relations with Macedonia. One of the key security implications that threaten the region is the apparent policy of Greece, which "will never accept the existence of a Macedonian term that has no Greek character".

The second risk is security reference to minority rights to ethnic minorities. Therefore, there is no Balkan country that is immune to the "abuse" of its minority groups in neighbouring countries and with varying intensity, depending on the size of the group and its grouping, especially in regions close to the border with their mother country.

The third security risk is the use of religious issues combined with ethno-political mobilization, supplied by only strengthens of the capacity of the potential conflicts.

In such a situation, in the Balkan region does not exclude the possibility of establishing new alliances, which at first glance may seem very strange and unrealistic, but their existence, publicly or secretly contributes to increased security risks in the region.

Starting from these security risks, new Balkan informal alliances that will have nothing to do with the democratic tendencies of the European Union for democratization and Europeanization of the region can realistically be expected.

The only honest, democratic and non-threat union that represents the solution to the Balkan outstanding issues and security risks and threats is the European Union.

Conclusions

How can we be witnesses of the security implications in the Western Balkans countries, especially from inside? Russian political influence and support of the Western Balkans countries is based on three pillars. The most important of these is the privileged position of Russia as a permanent member of the Security Council of the UN. Thanks to its veto Moscow is able to block all UN processes that manage the Balkans. Thus, for example, Russia in 2007 prevented attempts of Western countries of the Security Council of the UN to provide international legal legitimacy for the independence of Kosovo. The other pillar is a historical, cultural and political tie between Russia and the countries and peoples of the Balkans, which are primarily of Orthodox tradition. The third pillar of Russia's influence in the Western Balkans is the economic importance of Russia to these countries. Russia is the main supplier of energy in this region, and it increasingly appears as an investor and trade partner.

However, due to the gradual expansion of American influence, Russia is experiencing the danger of gradually being suppressed of the South East Europe. After the Cold War, the United States have significantly expanded their influence in the Western Balkans - by setting up bilateral political ties and NATO - almost cemented geo-strategic advantage in the region.

Apart from Serbia, which still maintains ties with Russia, and is not part of the North Atlantic Treaty, other countries in the region are oriented towards the United States, or of the Atlantic Alliance, or, as Macedonia and Montenegro, are on the road to membership.

The great powers that support the Western Balkans have their own interests and benefit from this collaboration. Cooperation between the EU and Russia is observed through achieving benefits for the region and its own benefit, primarily due to economic and political terms:

- Progress on the integration of the Western Balkans;
- Reaching agreement (where the United States also have to be involved) to achieve lasting stability in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Make a Russian project „South Stream”.

How the security implications are having a hand in strengthening democracy in the Western Balkans? If the region does not enjoy security and internal harmony, presenting at international level will be difficult, and even on political, economic and cultural terms, impossible. Each of the Western Balkans countries on individual base deals with different security implications. Inner peace and order is dependent on the established political, legal and security order. In order to preserve the internal peace, and in terms of ethnic differences within a society and the promotion of various ideologies need to be amplified high goals that unite rather than divide.

Also addressing the security implications, especially in terms of the ethnic differences that lead to the escalation level, promote the support of the international community, especially the countries which show different motives aspiration towards this region. Besides winning economic aid and security perspective, these countries have to some

extent influence and its impact on the internal politics of the countries of the Western Balkans, that act as an extended framework in their internal system. It indicates the importance of this region especially in terms of its geopolitical structure.

Another dilemma emerges here. Is the name of the Western Balkans and South- Eastern Europe geopolitically appropriate for this region? The actual separation of the countries that unites with different issues can cause further fuelling of their international status.

Democratization of the Western Balkans is equally a privilege and a temptation. Twenty years of democratization in the Western Balkans suggests that things are not yet settled ethnic disputes, inter- state affairs. What they need to promote in the future is the mutual cooperation and all the benefits of the democracy, without prejudice of the past - hopeless time for the Western Balkans.

Without overcoming prejudices and differences of the past, the Western Balkans could not continue its independent development.

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