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Committee: Special Political and Decolonization Committee (GA4)

Issue: Ensuring political stability in the Western Balkans

Student Officer: Ioannis-Stylianos Velonias

Position: Deputy Chair

INTRODUCTION

The Western Balkans constitutes a term concerning geopolitical issues, which was employed by the governing bodies of the European Union (EU) in the beginning of the 21st century including those countries which were not official members of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) at this period of time. Officially, in the Western Balkans seven countries are included, which are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYROM, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia. However, Croatia joined officially the European Union and became the 28th member on 1st July 2013 and since then Croatia is not usually included in the term Western Balkans.



The political stability in the Western Balkans is an issue of paramount importance, which frequently generates a great deal of heated debate in Europe. This situation is one of today's most confusing issues and one of the top EU-priorities. It is commonplace, that the whole area of the Western Balkans is characterized by political corruption, thus leading to economic disparities, which is the result of chronic conflicts and civil wars, with varying background, after the collapse of Yugoslavia. These issues have made the region to suffer and has caused multiple negative political and economic consequences, which continue to deteriorate even in our modern world. More specifically, these are the question of the

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independence of Kosovo, the issue of the name of FYROM, the political corruption in the area of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as the issue of social cohesion in Montenegro.

Despite the fact that there is a plethora of different issues in this region, almost each country deals with some specific problems. These are the lack of integrated states, social cohesion as well as the absence of cooperation between countries. This results from the fact that the majority of the countries of the Western Balkans is constructed from an amalgam of different ethnic, religion and by and large minority groups.

Regarding the geographical position of the Western Balkans, this area is of utmost and vital importance to the European Union with regards to issues of security, solidity as well as trade. Ergo, the crucial political and economic recovery of the countries of Western Balkans within a European outline, should be in high interest for the European Union.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

The Balkans

A region in southeastern Europe between the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea.¹ More specifically, the Western Balkans includes some specific states, which are the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. All these states with the exception of Albania have derived from the collapse of Yugoslavia.

European Union (EU)

A union of European nations created by treaty and put into effect in 1993 for the purpose of working gradually toward an economic and political unification of Europe by means of a

¹ "The Balkans Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary." *Gender Pay Gap Definition in the Cambridge English Dictionary*, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/balkans.

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unified monetary policy, a common currency, standardized laws of commerce and trade, etc.² As a result, the European Union was created in 1993.

Autonomy

Autonomy refers to the capacity and right of a country or other jurisdiction to govern itself. The term, autonomous comes from the Greek word, *autonomos* meaning *auto* - “self” and *nomos* - “law” respectively. In political, moral, and bio-ethical philosophy, it is explained as the capability of an entity to make an informed, unforced decision.³

Political corruption

Political corruption means the abuse of political power by the government leaders to extract and accumulate for private enrichment, and to use politically corrupt means to maintain their hold on power. However, abuse of political power for other purposes, such as repression of political opponents and general police brutality, is not considered political corruption.⁴

Authoritarianism

The enforcement or advocacy of strict obedience to authority at the expense of personal freedom.⁵

² Mifflin Harcourt, Houghton. “European Union Definition and Meaning | Collins English Dictionary.” *Complacent Definition and Meaning | Collins English Dictionary*, 2010, www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/european-union.

³ Wee, Rolando Y. “What Is An Autonomous Government?” *WorldAtlas*, WorldAtlas, 20 June 2016, www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-is-autonomy-and-autonomous-governance.html.

⁴ US Legal, Inc. “USLegal.” *Opening Statement Law and Legal Definition | USLegal, Inc.*, definitions.uslegal.com/p/political-corruption/.

⁵ “Authoritarianism | Definition of Authoritarianism in English by Oxford Dictionaries.” *Oxford Dictionaries | English*, Oxford Dictionaries, en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/authoritarianism.

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Federal state

A federal country or system of government is one in which the different states or provinces of the country have important powers to make their own laws and decisions.⁶

Ethnic groups

Members of an ethnic group share the same language, have similar ways of life and a common history, preserve traditions and customs from one generation to the next, identify themselves as members of that ethnic group, and often have a common genetic heritage.⁷

Minority groups

A group that is different racially, politically, etc., from a larger group of which it is a part of it.⁸

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Dissolution of Yugoslavia

Yugoslavia was officially founded as a kingdom in the end of the First World War I and it was formed again as a socialist union of states in 1945, after the Axis Alliance was defeated during the World War II. The three main partners, which were in the Axis alliance, were Germany, Italy, and Japan. Yugoslavia was constructed by six particular states which were the following: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia. In addition to this, it has to be mentioned that the kingdom of Serbia had two

⁶ "Federal Definition and Meaning | Collins English Dictionary." *Complacent Definition and Meaning | Collins English Dictionary*, www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/federal.

⁷ "Ethnic Group - Oxford Reference." *Social Class and Sport - Oxford Reference*, Oxford University Press, 16 June 2017, www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095759513.

⁸ "Minority Group Definition and Meaning | Collins English Dictionary." *Complacent Definition and Meaning | Collins English Dictionary*, www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/minority-group.

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autonomous states in its territory, namely Kosovo and Vojvodina. However, in 1992 the federal state of Yugoslavia started to dissolve and fall apart. It was clear that the movement of nationalism was dominating in the region of the Balkans and especially in the Western Balkans and communism was being replaced. The first countries to break away from the borders of Yugoslavia were Croatia and Slovenia.

Meanwhile, during the year 1992 an additional conflict had taken place in Bosnia and Herzegovina and it gained its independence on the 3rd of March 1992. However, the Serbs, who lived in the region of Bosnia and Herzegovina were adamant to stay within the federal union of Yugoslavia and had a strong ambition to create a



greater Serbia. Hence, the Serbs of Bosnia and Herzegovina received important assistance, in order to achieve their purpose, from extremist groups, which had their foundations in the area of Belgrade. In this way, the religious minorities of Muslims were forced to leave their homes and particular operations, which were well-known as "ethnic cleansing". By the year 1993 the government of the Bosnian Muslims was surrounded in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, by the Bosnian Serbs, who had 70% of the territory of Bosnia under their control. Irrespectively, the Croats, who lived in the region of Bosnia, also known as Bosnian -Croats were attacking a Muslim army in the center of the country, in order for them to become a part of a "greater" Croatia. Furthermore, despite the fact that the presence of peacekeeping forces of the United Nations was really active, their efforts and their actions proved to be ineffective and with no positive consequences.

Nevertheless, the involvement of the United States of America (USA) in order to cease the war in the region of Bosnia proved to be effective. As a result, in November 1995 an agreement was achieved, known as the Dayton Agreement, which led to the creation of two autonomous governments within the region of Bosnia and Herzegovina, namely the government of the Bosnia Serb Republic and the federation of the Muslim Bosnians – Bosnian Croats.

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The agreement's purposes were to lead to the reintegration of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to protect the human rights of all different ethnic groups in the region. On the other hand, it was strongly advocated that this settlement could not reverse the consequences of the "ethnic cleansing". Ergo, the two different ethnic groups, despite the fact that they live in the same state, have different governments, parliaments, policies as well as army forces.

Moreover, the bonds between Serbia and Montenegro, the two last states, which belonged to the federal union of Yugoslavia, were pulled apart, with the Montenegrin government making efforts to recede from the Slobodan Milosevic's stewardship of Kosovo. In 1995 the state of Croatia set up an attack called as Operation Storm in order to gain in their sovereignty all the Serb-held areas in Krajina, which forced over than 200,000 Serbs to leave their homes and disappear from the territory of Croatia. After 83 whole years of existence, the Soviet Union was finally vanished from the world map in the beginning of the 21st century. Ergo, Serbia and Montenegro were the sovereign states to emerge out of these conflicts.

Kosovo

Regarding its geographical position, Kosovo is located in the center of the Western Balkans, where it is surrounded by multiple countries, namely Albania, FYROM, Montenegro and Serbia. Kosovo has been fighting for its independence against Serbia for years. Since the declaration of Kosovo to be independent from the Serbian state on the 17th February 2008, more than 110-member states, and more specifically 23 out of 28-member states of the European Union, have recognized its sovereignty. However, it is not recognized by each and every member state



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as an independent state. For instance, the state of Serbia doesn't recognize its independence, nevertheless, since the Brussels Agreement, which took place on 19th April 2013, Serbia was forced to form relations with the Government of Kosovo. Hence, due to the fact that many countries do not accept the independence of Kosovo, this leads to political instability and conflicts in this particular region.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina declared its sovereignty in October 1991 as well as its independence from the former Soviet Union, officially the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) on the 3rd of March 1993. It is commonplace that in the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina political corruption dominates due to the fact that the country's population is constructed by a wide range of different ethnic and religion groups, which prevents the social cohesion in this region. According to the statistics of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Bosnia Herzegovina is divided with the Bosnians consisting the 50.1%, the Serbs the 30.8% and the Croats the 15.4% of the total population irrespectively. In addition to this, it has to be mentioned that these different ethnic groups constitute chronic opponents and there is a plethora of problems when important decisions for the country are to be made.

United States of America

The United States of America (USA) has effectively contributed to the post-war rebuilding of the states of the Western Balkans and has played a role of great significance, having a great influence in this region, also due to their dominant role in NATO. Despite the fact, that the topic of the Western Balkans is not one of the top priorities of the USA's agenda pertaining to the foreign issues, the United States of America have repeatedly shown their commitment regarding their integration in the Euro-Atlantic region. The

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United States' commitment has been proven effective and crucial pertaining to the reconstruction of those countries.

Russian Federation

From the past, Russian Federation has made multiple attempts in order to have a great influence on the South-Eastern region of Europe. As a first step, they used the Serbian state in order to create friendly bonds with an ally, in a region, where there is little room for Russian activity. Russian Federation's fundamental aim is to dissuade the countries of the Western Balkans to become member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Respectively, the main objective of Moscow, is to discourage those countries from becoming members of the European Union. Ergo, the country of Serbia is the main target of Moscow, due to the fact that these two states, which are two Slavic and predominantly eastern Orthodox Christian nations, have common historical references and strong bonds. In addition to this, it is perceivable that it is of vital importance for the Russian Federation not to lose their main ally, because in this way they will not have any influence on this region. In this way, Russians are getting more and more agitated as long as they lose allies in the region of Balkans. However, it's unclear how many things they are willing to go in order to maintain their interests, but judging from what they had done in the past in Ukraine, they are many.

European Union

It is commonplace that the European Union (EU) has close relationships and connections with the states in the region of the Western Balkans. Its fundamental objective was the security and obviously the stable function of the Western Balkans as democratic countries, in order to achieve the suitable integration of them in the European Union. The attempts for the integration of these states began with the Council Conclusions, which took place in April 1997. Two years later, in 1999, the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) was established by this Council. In this procedure, it was officially declared that the states of the Western Balkans were entitled to become members of the European

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Union if they met the obligations, which were announced at the Copenhagen European Council, which took place in June 1993. Later, on the 19-20th June 2003, European Council was determined to make every possible attempt in order to integrate the Western Balkans in the borders of the European Union, which was held in Thessaloniki, Greece. Respective attempts were made again on the 14-15 December 2006 by the European Council. In this way, cooperation was achieved between the states of Montenegro and Serbia as well as FYROM and Albania were considered as potential member states of the European Union. It is perceivable that the cooperation and the close relationships between the countries of the Western Balkans are of vital importance in order to achieve reconciliation and political stability in the region.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)



The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or North Atlantic Alliance constitutes an intergovernmental military organisation between 29 countries from North America and Europe, including Albania and Montenegro, which are 2 states of the Western Balkans. NATO's main political role is to encourage the values of democracy and its member states to cooperate concerning security and defence issues. In this way, member states cooperate, within their competence, in order to find enduring and feasible solutions and to build trust between them. Therefore, NATO has an influence of crucial importance on this region with characteristic example its involvement in the conflict of Kosovo. Due to the fact that the majority of the Kosovo's population are Albanians, NATO's main purpose was to provide assistance in order to effectively deal with the crisis to promote stability and security in neighbouring countries with particular emphasis on Albania. NATO was highly involved in the break up of the Yugoslavia as well as it had an active role in the region, making multiple attempts in the past in order to solve the situation in this region.

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European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI)

The European Centre for Minority Issues is an independent and intergovernmental institution, which was founded in 1996 by the governments of Denmark and Germany. Its main role is to cooperate with other similar institutions as well as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and engages in collaborative projects in these fields. In the area of the Western Balkans, ECMI in cooperation with FUEN (Federal Union of European Nationalities) have made multiple efforts in order to assist and to effectively contribute in the active participation of the minority groups in the region of Serbia, FYROM, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, including mainly the minority of Roma.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
1918	The state of Yugoslavia was founded in the region of the Western Balkans after the end of the First World War
1922	The creation of the Soviet Union, which was governed by the well-known Communist Party
1991	The beginning of the Yugoslav wars
1991	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia gained its independence after the dissolution of the Soviet Unions
3rd March 1992	Bosnia and Herzegovina gained its independence after the dissolution of the Soviet Union

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1995	The state of Croatia set up an attack called as Operation Storm in order to gain in their sovereignty all the Serb-held areas in Krajina
March 24, 1999	The beginning of NATO bombing in Yugoslavia, which was a military operation against Yugoslavia throughout the war in Kosovo
June 10, 1999	The end of the military operations of NATO against Yugoslavia, which led to many deaths and destructions
1999	The end of Yugoslav wars
March 2004	In Mitrovika, a city of Kosovo, the people experienced the worst national cruelty since 1999
21 st May 2006	According the referendum in Montenegro, the 55% of the voters select for the independence of their state
17 th February 2008	Kosovo was declared in complete agreement by 109 member states to be independent from the Serbian state
2009	Albania became officially a NATO member
19 th April 2013	The Brussels Agreement took place, which forced Serbia to form relations with the Government of Kosovo
1 st July 2013	Croatia officially became the 28 th member state of European Union
2017	Montenegro became officially a NATO member

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UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

The European Parliament adopted:

Resolution on June 14, 2017 on the 2016 Commission Report on Kosovo.

<https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2017/06/15/european-parliament-resolution-on-the-2016-commission-report-on-kosovo/>

Resolution on June 14, 2017 on the 2016 Commission Report on Macedonia.

<https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2017/06/15/european-parliament-resolution-on-the-2016-commission-report-on-macedonia/>

Resolution on 16 March 2017 on the 2016 Commission Report on Montenegro.

<https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2017/03/17/european-parliament-resolution-on-the-2016-commission-report-on-montenegro/>

Resolution on June 14, 2017 on the 2016 Commission Report on Serbia

<https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2017/06/15/european-parliament-resolution-on-the-2016-commission-report-on-serbia/>

Resolution on the western Balkans adopted by the UEF Federal Committee, 22 October 2017, Paris.

<http://www.federalists.eu/uef/news/resolution-on-the-western-balkans/>

It is of great importance to highlight that the Union of European Federalists (UEF) is a pan-European, non-governmental political organization dedicated to the promotion of European political unity.

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PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Indeed, the issue of "Ensuring political stability in the Western Balkans", constitutes an issue of paramount importance. Undoubtedly, the United Nations and the European Union have effectively contributed in order to deal with the situation over the past years. In addition to this, it is imperative to mention that a lot of conferences have taken place and a wide range of official resolutions has been composed, in order to deal with a series of problems that affect the situation in this region.

More specifically, it has to be mentioned that there has not been found any concrete solution to the problem, but measures have been taken into consideration in order to lead to political stability and economic recovery. Without doubt, there is lack of cooperation between those countries. However, many of the countries of the Western Balkans are candidates for EU-membership or are on this course. This shows, that there is an approach with the European Union and the effort made is to integrate them in the European framework and defeat the local nationalistic tendencies by European cooperation and the self-explained good bilateral relations between EU-states or potential EU-members. Nevertheless, there isn't any long-term strategy and resolution to effectively contribute to the process of dealing with the issue as well as to immediately engage in negotiations in order to find a suitable, acceptable feasible and enduring solution to the problem.

Additionally, there have not been made a lot of efforts, pertaining to the integration and social cohesion of those countries. Actually, the absence of functional states, as well as integrated societies, is one of the fundamental problems in this region. Ergo, measures should be taken, in order to combat this situation.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Indeed, it is of crucial importance to deal with the situation and to ensure the political stability in the Western Balkans in order to alleviate the political corruption as well

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as the social incoherence, which have been chronic dominating in this region. In addition to this, regarding its geographical position, it is also of great significance to the European Union for security, economic and political issues. Nevertheless, currently there is no clear framework, which is quite effective in order to achieve the political stability in the Western Balkans, but there is a number of ways that the issue could be effectively tackled.

More specifically, one of the most important and effective ways to deal with this situation is the creation of state integration services that will help the minority groups, such as ethnic and religion groups, in such ways that they will be efficiently integrated in the society. Those services could, for instance, devise comprehensive plans that could range from language acquisition programs and cultural immersion events to vocational training classes. Furthermore, the creation of suitable institution, which will be responsible for structural changes, in order to confront and alleviate corruption and achieve the reinforcement of democracy. Additionally, international cooperation is sine qua non while multilateral, bilateral agreements are essential, which will be accomplished by de facto reconciliation between former opponents, such as Serbs and Croats. Moreover, it is important to highlight the fact that economic and infrastructural support is of vital importance, since the lack of economic growth is a key factor for tensions and rivalries. Therefore, the UN and the EU could provide financial aids to those countries. In this way, these countries could use this financial support to achieve infrastructure. Infrastructure spending is an essential activity for the society, not only for the quality it brings but for its economic benefits too. Many economists agree on the fact that high-developed infrastructure brings in higher productivity by an efficient human workforce as assigned by the businesses. Last but not least, it is of paramount importance a feeling of empathy and respect to be cultivated for the minority groups so as to become part of the solution instead of falling prey to populist, xenophobic rhetoric.

In this way, we could pave the way for the Western Balkans as it was achieved in the past in the Eastern Balkans, to actively participate as state members in the European Union as well as in the organization of NATO. The active presence of NATO in the region could also function as pull-factor for some states, e.g. FYROM, given the security provision this Organization guarantees for its member states. All these aforementioned measures will play a role of paramount significance to find a feasible and enduring solution, within

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the competence of all countries of Western Balkans, European Centre for Minority Issues, European Union, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United Nations to deal with the situation and achieve the political stability in the region of Western Balkans.

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