

The Unresolved Issues that Cross the Way to Euro-Atlantic Integrations: The Case of the Western Balkans

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Abstract

The present research study will explore the unresolved issues in the Western Balkans, which cross the way to the Euro-Atlantic integration. The approach of this study will be theoretical and will encroach upon two pillars: the challenges that the countries of this region are meeting, regarding the integration processes, as well as the consequences that would arise, in the case of non-integration. The study shall analyze in detail both the internal challenges of each country and the regional cooperation challenges of the Western Balkan countries. In the same level, it shall state the consequences that would arise out of non-integration of the region into Euro-Atlantic community.

Introduction

The region of the Western Balkans is a key part of Europe. It is a region of a great geostrategic importance. The region's integration issue to join the Euro-Atlantic community is crucial for the security and stability in the Balkans and for Europe in general. Western Balkan countries are characterized by a complex nature, as to the transformation process and prolonged path of their integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. The challenges that these countries meet, in order to become part of the two most important political, economical and political-military organizations, such as European Union and the NATO, are major. The present research study will explore the unresolved issues in the Western Balkans, which cross the way to the Euro-Atlantic integration. The approach of this study will be theoretical and will encroach upon two pillars: the challenges that the countries of this region are meeting, regarding the integration processes, as well as the consequences that would arise, in the case of non-integration. The study shall analyze in detail both the

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internal challenges of each country and the regional cooperation challenges of the Western Balkan countries. In the same level, it shall state the consequences that would arise out of non-integration of the region into Euro-Atlantic community.

Conclusions drawn out of this research consist in the argumentation that the delay in the countries' internal reforms – as a precondition for their membership in Euro-Atlantic structures – tends to result to the detriment of each state. Furthermore, leaving the region outside the Euro-Atlantic community will be detrimental to stability and regional integration in general. As a result of the research some recommendations are made:

- (1) There is a need for precipitation of the internal reforms in the countries of the Western Balkan
- (2) There is a need for the overall transformation of the political culture in those countries
- (3) The urgent need for the internal policies' profiling in the Balkan countries for the benefit of the Euro-Atlantic integrations,
- (4) Cooperation and regional communication are indispensable and
- (5) The negative practices of the Balkan states to prevent the membership of new states into Euro-Atlantic integration, urge the reformation of the decision-making mechanism of these organizations, which aim to preserve peace and regional stability

Western Balkans and the Euro-Atlantic community

Western Balkans represents a very important geostrategic region for Europe and the Euro-Atlantic area. Nowadays it does not represent only an important geographic region, but a region with a politic importance for whole Europe. "This is a region that is crucial to Europe's future," declared Philip Gordon, assistant secretary of state for Europe and Eurasian affairs (Kostreci, 2010). Without its integration into European Union, the map of the continent is not complete. Euro-Atlantic integration serves as a drive for reform in the Balkans. Traditionally the integration in NATO had forerun the integration in the European Union, because security and stability ensure democracy. Benefits of being integrated in these structures are greater than the risks to be taken. Euro-Atlantic organizations continually promote the open door policy

and enlargement, but the conditions which they have set for membership of new states are very precise and include many aspects (Maastricht Treaty, 1992).² The way becomes even more difficult when it comes to the very fragile states, the post-socialist systems, which still stay on the long way of transition, with internal problems and major challenges in front of them. South Eastern European countries, especially those of Western Balkans represent typical cases, because of the specific nature of their transformation. The transformation process in the Western Balkan has undergone through several phases:

1. Post-communist political and economic transformation (authoritarian regimes towards democratic regimes and planned economy towards free market)
2. The late phase of the creation of states (states that emerged from the disintegration of Yugoslavia)
3. The process of state building (in post-conflict countries which faced instability, armed conflict, violence etc. such as Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina)
4. Democratic consolidation
5. The preparatory phase leading to the accession of the Western Balkan countries into the European Union (tailor made mechanisms by European Union)

The last report about the enlargement strategy and main challenges 2009-2010 prepared by the European Commission, concluded: “The countries of the Western Balkans have still, to different degrees, substantial work ahead in meeting

² The 1992 Maastricht Treaty says (in Article 49) that any European state which respects the principles of liberty, democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law may apply to join the Union. Relevant criteria were established by the Copenhagen European Council in 1993 and strengthened by the Madrid European Council in 1995. To join the EU, a new Member State must meet three criteria:

- political: stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;
- economic: existence of a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union;
- acceptance of the Community *acquis*: ability to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.

the established criteria and conditions. The pace of reform is often slow. The international economic crisis adds to the strains. In several cases, bilateral questions unduly affect the accession process.”(Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2009-2010, 2009: p. 2). The challenges that Western Balkans countries are meeting are about adapting to the peaceful and democratic cohabitation of these countries, accepting the political realities and processes in the region, transforming political culture of these countries and ensuring mutual regional cooperation. Only after surpassing these challenges, Western Balkans would represent an important factor for security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area.

Challenges of the Western Balkans Countries towards Euro-Atlantic integrations

Albania

Albania has become member of the most powerful political-military alliance – NATO in 2009 and also has applied for EU membership. Albania has made very important steps on her way towards Euro-Atlantic integrations, even though it is still halting regarding the implementing of the internal reforms which will be determinative for the full integration in the economic, political and military structures. “Albania needs to make progress, in particular, regarding the rule of law and, notably, the fight against corruption, as well as the proper functioning of state institutions, especially the independence of the judiciary”, the 2009 EC progress report says.(Likmeta, 2009) However, it is demonstrating a constructive approach towards regional integrative policies, deepening and intensifying neighborhood relations and relations with the most powerful allies such as European Union and the United States. Albania is cultivating carefully its role as a genuine stabilizer of the relations among the countries in the region.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina’s future looks more uncertain than it has at any time since the end of the war in 1995.(Arbour & Clark, 2010) Although in 1995, Richard Holbrooke said that in Dayton “we were, in effect, burying another part of Versailles”

(Macmillan, 2006: p. 12), the current circumstances speak about the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a failed story about the multi-ethnic state. In Bosnia and Herzegovina divisions are increasingly widening. Its efforts and international's authorities for maintaining the unitary of this fragile state are becoming increasingly difficult. This has come as a result of the tendency of the Srpska Republic, which is led by the mentors in Belgrade. This implication of Belgrade has made the internal reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina be stalled, starting from the constitution, which are extremely slowing down its path towards Euro-Atlantic integration.

FYR of Macedonia

Unlike Slovenia and Croatia, FYR of Macedonia became independent peacefully, through the referendum where only Macedonians participated. Therefore, while until 2001 Macedonia was mentioned as a model of peace in the Balkans, it was all a facade because internally the problems mentioned, meanwhile ethnic tension was growing. (Halili, 2003) In 2001 Macedonia was trembled by an armed Macedonian-Albanian conflict. With the support and assistance of the international community, an agreement was reached which was named as the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which ended the crisis and presented new changes in the constitutional and political system of Macedonia. Despite the opinion of Savo Klimovski, who writes that interventions in the Preamble of the Constitution were made in the spirit of European constitutionalism and radical separation from the traditional concept of nation-state (Klimovski, Mitkov, Treneska, & Karakamisheva, 2003: p.36), the representation of Albanians in state institutions even after eight years remains only a unfulfilled promise, only in paper. Albanians are still treated as second-class citizens even though they represent more than 25% of the entire population living in this country.³ The criteria that Macedonia must meet to join NATO are almost similar to Copenhagen criteria for joining the European Union. The Progress Report on Macedonia prepared by the European Commission in late 2009 assessed the

³ Although in the latest census in 2002 the number of Albanian population living in Macedonia was 25%, the number of Albanian population represents 33% of the overall number of population living in Macedonia. See Veliu (2002)

progress made by Macedonia on meeting the Copenhagen criteria as unsatisfactory, especially those policies that include: stability of institutions to guarantee democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities, regional cooperation, good neighborly relations, respect for international obligations, etc. (*The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2009 Progress Report*, 2009) Organizing free and democratic elections are one of the basic political criteria for membership in Euro-Atlantic organizations. Before the Bucharest Summit, in Macedonia there were many political conflicts and even use of physical force in parliament, which reflected negatively on the work of this institution as one of the highest organs of the state. These political confrontations prevent proper functioning of democratic institutions in country, and slow down the necessary reforms as condition for Macedonia's membership into Euro-Atlantic structures. Disrespect for minorities has damaged the image of Macedonia in the international arena. According the EU progress report for Macedonia, integration of ethnic communities remains limited. (*The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2009 Progress Report*, 2009) Albanians are the number one factor for the existence of Macedonia, but when it comes to questions of domestic governance, they become secondary category. They remain in disadvantage almost in all spheres.

Having in mind that the conditions and procedures for membership in both organizations, in which Macedonia has aspired to be integrated, are almost identical, we conclude that Macedonia has had many gaps in meeting the criteria for membership even before the Bucharest Summit. Although Martin Erdman⁴ had praised the successful regional policy to attract investments in Macedonia, he was counting the main requirements that Macedonia must meet in order to secure an invitation to join NATO. These included: first, the sustainability of Macedonia's reform process and implementation of the Ohrid Agreement, secondly, improving interethnic relations, sustainable dialogue and cooperation between parties and long-term political stability. (*Macedonian news*, 2007) The reform process is very slow, judicial reforms have stalled, and the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement has

⁴ Martin Erdman is s the NATO Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy as well as leader of the team that evaluates the progress of Macedonia towards its way joining the alliance

been left out and neglected by the leaders of Macedonia. Interethnic relations during this time had continued to remain very fragile culminating occasionally through different clashes, especially in multi-ethnic areas.

The Allies had declared that "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has made progress in implementing political, economic and military reforms, but still need to work", continuing that " efforts for sustainable reforms will remain crucial for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in achieving its Euro-Atlantic aspirations."(*NATO official web page, 2008*) According to these declarations of the allied states, it is clear that they have warned some of the reasons due to which Macedonia would not receive an invitation to join the coalition three months later. Therefore, Macedonia itself bears much of the blame for its non-membership in NATO and prolonged way of European Union integration. Vainly it seeks for the guilty outside its borders. Except the delay of the process of resolving the name issue with Greece, Macedonian state structures had also delayed meeting certain criteria set by NATO and EU - implementation of the internal reforms and developing the concept of coexistence in a multiethnic state such as Macedonia.

Kosovo

„The EU reiterates its unequivocal support to the European perspective of the Western Balkan countries. The future of the Balkans is within the European Union. “This is the main phrase of the Declaration of the EU-Western Balkans Summit held in Thessaloniki in 2003. (*EU-Western Balkans Summit – Declaration, 2003*) By that time Kosovo was yet not a state. Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia on February 17, 2008 and is until today the newest country in the world. That Kosovo also has a European perspective; this remains an irrevocable commitment of the EU-countries. The EU keeps reaffirming this commitment to the Kosovo’s institutions. Since the progress of each country towards the EU depends on its own merits in meeting the Copenhagen criteria and the conditions set for the Stabilization and Association process – Kosovo is the only Western Balkan country, that hasn't signed it yet – Kosovo as a two-year-old state is facing various challenges related to the transition process, it is going through. The non-recognition of Kosovo's independence by some EU-countries (Spain, Romania, Slovakia, Greece and Cyprus

hesitated so far to do so), territorial problems, such as border demarcation with Serbia, the existence of the Serbian parallel structures and security challenges are the main external issues, which Kosovo has to solve, before considering its membership into the EU. Furthermore, Kosovo's disability to reintegrate the North and the interferences in the executive competences between the Kosovo's institutions and the international mission(s), combating the corruption and the organized crime, as well as essential administration and government reforms represent other internal difficult challenges to be managed. Even though there are still five EU-Members, which have not recognized Kosovo so far, these countries have supported the deployment of the European Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) and are giving their support within the frame of the Mission. Yet since this mission is projected as a continuation of the international civil presence in Kosovo, envisaged by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244⁵, it is consequently neutral toward the status of Kosovo, causing a chain of problems related to Kosovo's declared independence, as well as Kosovo's efforts on its path to EU-integration.

Even after two years of independence Serbia continues to challenge Kosovo's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The demarcation issue is not considered to be a negotiation topic in the new announced negotiations over technical problems between the two states, since Serbia considers Kosovo as its territorial part. Two years after independence Serbia for the second time organized elections within the Kosovo territory, establishing parallel structures in Serbian enclaves in Kosovo and tightening in this way the irritation of the Kosovo-Serbs, which seem to have lost their way and can not decide between Kosovo and Serbia. On the other hand, the international community (EULEX, UNMIK, ICO), which has also certain executive responsibilities (EULEX), hasn't shown that it is willing implement the constitution in the whole territory of Kosovo, because of the fear of possible new tensions.

The recent reduction of the NATO- Troops in Kosovo was welcomed by the political leaders of Kosovo, accompanied by the call for the transformation of the current Kosovo Security Force⁶ into a military force and the call for a further support

⁵ According to the Resolution, the United Nations Security Council considers Kosovo as a part of Serbia

⁶ KSF is not considered to be a military force, but a civil organisation

to a future integration in the NATO, since the EU and the NATO - Integration is considered necessary in order to reduce perceived fears and security dilemmas (Grimm, 2008: p. 2).

The Kosovo Government declares on the other hand to be committed to re-integrate the northern part of the country, but Kosovo continues to practically be divided (in North and South), since the NATO-intervention in 1999. By approving a very modern constitution, which affirms the position of the minorities,⁷ or adoption of the legislation, which provides a reservation of 10% of posts in the central-level on civil service for non-Albanian communities, the Kosovo's institutions have shown that they are ready to concede for the peaceful future's sake. Yet, the Government of Kosovo hasn't managed to realize this goal in practice, since, among others; the majority of Kosovo-Serbs does not recognize the institutions of Kosovo and hesitate to cooperate with them. The Government of Kosovo in cooperation with the International Civil Organization hat mapped out a Strategy for the integration of the North, which seems not to be implementable, since it is not supported by the EU-Mission. Since Kosovo has not the necessary capacities and is not able to manage the integration issue on its own account, the voices for development of a new Kosovo-Strategy are continuously rising (Grabbe, Knaus & Korski, 2010).

Another mayor problem, which the Albanians of Kosovo are facing, is the combating of the wide-spread corruption and the organized crime. This is one of the topics, of which the Kosovo Institutions are criticized the most in the last Report of Progress for Kosovo 2009.(*Kosovo under UNSCR 1244/99 2009 Progress Report*, 2009) The Government of Kosovo has several times declared its commitment for „zero Tolerance against corruption“. Practical results are, however, not have been seen in the horizon so far. Kosovo's reform process is hampered by general underdevelopment and limited capacities.(Grimm, 2008: p. 2) Small steps have been undertaken, such as adoption of legislation according to European standards, or in the area of local government administration, Kosovo's capacity to approximate its legislation and policies with those of the *acquis communautaire* related to the internal

⁷ Reservation of 20 of 120 seats in the Parliament, establishment of Serbian municipalities with wide administrative and governmental competences, etc.

market, sectoral policies and justice, freedom and security, in line with the Stabilization and Association Process and the European Partnership priorities remain still limited.

And while Kosovo remains committed to join the European Union, it must accompany this commitment by increased efforts to meet the given conditions. It should take into consideration EU's rigorous criteria, since the integration of other post-communist countries. The European Union in the meanwhile should use this period, either to reconsider the Union's position toward Kosovo's independence, or to find an acceptable solution, which will enable the country to join the EU, without the need for its recognition.

Serbia

Serbia has been very persistent in accepting the new regional reality. The Serbian government continued to contest Kosovo's declaration of independence. It is to the detriment of itself as well as to the region such a destructive policy nourished with ancient myths, nationalism and ambition for continued hegemony. It continued its non obedience against internationals which are trying to open a path for its way towards Euro-Atlantic structures. With much carelessness Serbia is setting itself traps in the way that it should walk. Lodging of war criminals, it is not the act the international community really likes. Negligence towards meeting the conditions as cooperation of the Serbian serb authorities with the International Tribunal for war crimes, is prolonging the process of implementing the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with European Union, which already has been signed. ICTY indictees Ratko Mladić and Goran Hadžić are still at large. Significant challenges remain regarding the domestic prosecution of war criminals (*Serbia 2009 Progress Report, 2009*).

Regional cooperation challenges

The Lisbon Treaty was ratified in late 2009 bringing a new era to the European Union and to Europe in general. The Treaty commits the EU to the “development of a special relationship with neighboring countries aiming to establish an area of prosperity and good neighborliness, founded on the values of the Union and

characterized by close and peaceful relations based on cooperation".(Lisbon Treaty, 2010: article 8)

Despite some positive processes in the Balkan region, a not very good practice is emerging from several countries concerning the integration of the region into European and Euro-Atlantic structures. The infection of neighboring states regarding the use of right of veto, is becoming a common practice which first of all affects the aspiring states become members of these organizations and finally the Balkan region in general. While the process for some countries is slowing down due to the non progression in the internal reforms, conflicts among neighbors are transforming into an obstacle for serious member states that have already fulfilled the basic standards to join these structures.

Name dispute between Macedonia and Greece

The unsolved dispute with Greece over Macedonia's constitutional name was one of the main reasons why Macedonia did not receive an invitation to join the largest organization for maintaining security in the Euro-Atlantic area. In the statement issued by presidents and prime ministers of the countries participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in April 2008, was said that "although in the framework of the United Nations, many actors had worked very hard to resolve the name affair, and didn't manage to, the invitation to Macedonia will be extended until an agreement acceptable to both parties is reached.(*Bucharest Summit Declaration, 2008*) The Macedonian dispute with Greece has been launched since Macedonia's independence, while the efforts to resolve it, had started since 1995, with the intervention of the United Nations. According to Greek, Macedonia's constitutional name sets out territorial aims on a northern Greek region with the same name and represents a misuse of the Hellenic cultural tradition.

This dispute shouldn't be viewed only by a bilateral angle between Greece and Macedonia. To obtain a clearer picture it is indispensable to get back in retrospective, since the inception of this problem arises from the depravity of the Ottoman Empire and has a triangular range. Treaty of San Stefano (1878) had created the Greater Bulgaria, which included Aegean Macedonia too and which can be taken as a starting point of the cooling of relations between Greece and Bulgaria

about the dominance of the Aegean Macedonia. The Second Balkan War had led to an alliance between Greece and Serbia against Bulgaria, which ended with the Treaty of Bucharest in August 1913. (Mowat, 1916, pp.121-123; Derens, 2000 : pp. 54-58; Chiclet & Lory, 1998: pp. 16-20) Through this treaty, Greece put on its possession Aegean Macedonia. While with the Treaty of Neuilly (1919), Bulgaria lost West Thrace as well as access in the Aegean, which today is under the sovereignty of Greece. This fact has raised the fear of Bulgaria's revenge against Greece about Aegean Macedonia and Western Thrace, which can be taken as a reason for the crash between Greece and Macedonia about the name issue. Sofia's own policy continues considering the Slavic population of Macedonia with Bulgarian ethno genesis, ignoring the Macedonian nation and Macedonian language either. Bulgaria has so far issued thousands of Bulgarian passports (Vecer, 2006)⁸ in Eastern Macedonia without excluding government officials of Macedonia. This fact has certainly scared Greece, which objects Macedonia's constitutional name. Greece is afraid of the possibility of uniting Macedonia with Bulgaria, because Bulgaria can request on behalf of Macedonia, the part of Aegean Macedonia which is under Greece. On the other hand, the dispute with Serbia about the matters of the church still drags on. Therefore, Macedonia's government should implement the signed documents with the European Union and NATO, which are parameters for the regulation of good neighborliness between states. Otherwise the problem can be expanded, from one Macedonia, to switch to three Macedonias: the Aegean, the Pirin and the Vardar. However, Greece has already accepted the presence of the word "Macedonia", but has conditioned it with the addition of epithets such as "north", "new", "Skopje", etc. On the other hand the Government of Macedonia is not ready to contribute a flexible solution that would be acceptable to both parties. It hasn't hesitated to do even provocative actions⁹ against Greece, which have been strongly condemned by the international factor. Macedonia has been advised to avoid actions that exacerbate

⁸ According to this newspaper it is said that since 1990 until November 2006, 10 198 Macedonians obtained Bulgarian passports

⁹ Renaming the Skopje airport Alexandre the Macedonian. See

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18 2007. BIRN. Macedonia continued with naming the main auto route that links these two countries with the same name, naming the stadium Philip II as well as putting the antique statues before the government building in Skopje.

neighborly relations in the region. The stalemate in efforts to resolve this dispute is costing too much to Macedonia.

Although Albanians had been indifferent regarding this issue, things have changed significantly after the Strasbourg Summit in 2009. The main issue for Albanians remains the integration of the country into Euro-Atlantic structure. Regarding this issue a Macedonian researcher (Koneska, 2009) argues: "Just as seen in the current election campaign, Albanian politicians and ethnic Albanians have become far more powerful supporters of Macedonia's integration into EU and NATO, since they perceive less emotionally the name issue with Greece, and they're more inclined to make compromises." But even the Macedonian community, even though they consider the name dispute issue as exclusively theirs, still does not seem clear what their compromise is. Since after the Strasbourg summit 2009 as well as Lisbon Summit 2010, the possibility for Macedonia's NATO membership does not appear anywhere, this fact has begun to irritate many Albanians living in Macedonia.

According to Halili (2008) "the lack of clear and concrete political concepts of Macedonia is reflecting an uncertainty also in the relations with other neighbors. Macedonia's dispute with Greece over the name has revealed a chain of other issues that are related to identity and language". The eastern neighbor Bulgaria has accepted the name of the state as such, but never had accepted the Macedonian language and Macedonian nation. Although Bulgaria and Macedonia had signed a joint statement where Bulgarian and Macedonian language had been known as the two official languages, former Bulgarian deputy Prime Minister Ivaylo Kalfin has stated, that his country will support Macedonia's entry into NATO when Macedonia will resolve all disputes with neighbors. (*Iliria News Agency*, 2009) The north-eastern neighbor - Serbia refuses to accept the Macedonian autocephalous church claiming that the only autocephalous church is the Serbian Orthodox Church. Also, since the recognition of Kosovo's independence from Macedonia in October of 2008, relations between these two former Yugoslav republics remain extremely fragile.

Macedonia currently is experiencing a profound identity crisis contested by all its neighbors. According to the report of the International Crisis Group it is said that the issue of Macedonian identity is linked to the very existence of their state. (*Crisis Group Europe Briefing*, 2009) This is because Macedonia is a

multiethnic country and extremely fragile, though the continuing tensions between Macedonians and Albanians are present and noticeably shake the stability of the country. These reasons directly or indirectly influenced the non accession of Macedonia into the political and military superpower. Dispute with Greece has influenced directly by using its veto to prevent Macedonia's integration, while disputes with other neighbors have had other negative impacts. Relations with neighbors and contributing to regional security and prosperity are the basic criteria for membership of a country in the European Union and in NATO as well.

Consequences in the case of non-integration

Maintaining regional peace and stability and enhancing security zone in Europe, are the main goals of NATO as well as EU. These goals match perfectly with the strategic interests and priorities of the Western Balkans states. Therefore, the jams made in these integrations, vital processes, are very harmful and even dangerous to peace and stability in the region. Macedonia outside these structures, except that produces an internal uncertainty; it carries as well the consequences for its neighbors and for the region in general. Reasonably, the analyst of the known German magazine "Der Spiegel", P. Edward Joseph (2009), predicts:

"By keeping open the question of Macedonia, Serbia, Russia and other countries can continue to keep open other issues in their agenda, including here the final borders of Kosovo. If Macedonia will enter again into a conflict, it's sure that it will not remain within its actual borders. (...) Before Bucharest, the anxiety in Skopje was that Serb-inspired partition of Kosovo would prompt secessionist movement among ethnic Albanians in Macedonia. After Bucharest, the reverse is true: The Serbian-Russian agenda in Kosovo could be advanced by unrest in Macedonia for which the potential remains substantial. In short, any trend toward disintegration in Macedonia would have direct and unavoidable consequences for Kosovo."

This change is an indication that the Balkans can be stable only due to the stability and sustainability of each country separately. Any vacillation and instability in any of its countries, gives impact on the entire surface of the peninsula. Therefore, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer had visited Athens in March 2008,

and had attempted to dissuade the Greeks and to warn them about the consequences for regional stability that can be caused if an agreement wouldn't be achieved." (Balkan Insight, 2008; Crisis Group Briefing, 2009) The commissioner for enlargement Stephan Füle has declared this year that if the name dispute would not resolved - opening way to the European integration process, Skopje and other countries of the region may face new challenges. (Alsat-M, 2010) The dispute between Greece and Macedonia could bring consequences in the development and economic cooperation in the Balkans, destabilization of the regional situation, may even come to the deviation of the main strategy of NATO and EU for the Western Balkan stabilization and loss of confidence in these organizations. During the integration process "black gaps" remain unlikeable for the multilateral organizations, notably for them whose main goal is preservation of peace and stability. Kostreci (2010) concludes "The path to security and prosperity in the region will be blocked until political compromise is reached in Bosnia, stability is reached in Kosovo, and Greece and Macedonia resolve their dispute over Macedonia's name".

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions drawn out of this research consist in the argumentation that the delay in the countries' internal reforms – as a precondition for their membership in Euro-Atlantic structures – tends to result to the detriment of each state. Furthermore, leaving the region outside the Euro-Atlantic community will be detrimental to stability and regional integration in general. As a result of the research some recommendations are made:

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Since the breakup of the USSR, NATO has often been at the heart of criticism in the context of its revitalization. This makes us think that the concept *Raison d'Etat* is dominating the policy of integration, since some states continue to adopt nationalist politics. The integration of states into Euro-Atlantic structures is a proof that only through this process the peace in Europe was held stable for sixty years, turning enemies into partners of cooperation. NATO and EU shouldn't allow the prevention of membership process that is being held hostage by some countries which have bilateral problems. The right of veto in the Euro-Atlantic structures for accepting new members from many countries is seen as a right to paralyze the other. Of course, the right of veto would be justified only when all the member states of the Euro-Atlantic structures would be, with the true meaning of the word, developed democracies. While, on the other hand, this right can be justified only if the member states of Euro-Atlantic don't have expansionist ambitions towards its neighbors.

If this practice will continue as well for the other states of the peninsula, which will certainly be present because of the traditional hostilities, then either a certain time must pass during which hostilities would be forgotten or a real reform in the mechanism for the membership of new members into the European Union and NATO will be more than necessary. Otherwise a full integration of the Balkan region into Euro-Atlantic integration will be almost impossible.

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