

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE BALKANS: BETWEEN SYMBIOSIS AND INTEGRATION?

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Abstract. *The European Union continues to constitute an incomplete economic-political entity at intergovernmental and supranational level. The EU is seeking to establish appropriate functional superstructures extending beyond the narrow confines of trade, the economy and free market rules to accommodate its integral progress as a new force for prosperity, democracy and peace in the world. On the map of the Balkans, the local political actors continue to define their choices in line with their historic experience and stereotypes, especially as regards their neighbours and the Great Powers of the moment. The Balkan countries, which in any case are still seeking to consolidate their conventional state structures, need much more time to find their place within this unfinished supranational European structure. In both cases the actors involved, whether in the EU or in the Balkans, are grappling with the challenges of global politics from their different starting-points, but it is not easy to overcome the boundaries of their national sovereignty.*

Keywords: *European Union, Balkans, International Relations, Geopolitics*

Introduction

"This day", February 17, 2008, "this moment obligates every Albanian to bow with deep respect before superhuman sacrifices of Kosovo Albanians for the sake of freedom, dignity and independence, in rescuing the nation"¹, Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha declared exuberantly on that day. Two months later, at Bucharest on 3.4.2008, his country was accepted into NATO, while roughly two years earlier, on 12 June 2006 in Luxembourg, he had again had every reason to rejoice, with the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between Albania and the European Union: indeed, he described that day as one of historic importance for the fulfilment of the

Albanian people's dream of returning to their European family. In fact, Sali Berisha had begun this Euro-Atlantic voyage 16 years previously, in March 1992, when after his election he hailed Europe with enthusiastic warmth from Skenderbeg Square in Tirana in his victory address to his party's supporters. That was a time of rejoicing for Europe as well, for it was the year when the Treaty establishing the European Community was signed at Maastricht, formally creating the European Union and its Common Market.

Albania's Euro-Atlantic progress from Tirana in 1992 to Luxembourg in 2006 and Pristina, Brussels and Bucharest in 2008 and 2010 is yet another reprise, with different actors this time, of the old Balkan play entitled "what one country wishes to forget, another

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¹ WEEKLY NEWS, A Weekly Bulletin of the Council of Ministers, Republic of Albania, 1, No. 37, 18.02.2008, p. 2. Available at: http://www.km.gov.al/skedaret/1204634082-Weekly_news_nr_37.pdf [Accessed 10.03.2009].

country wishes to remember". Today it is the Albanians who feature as the elect of the Great Powers. Earlier it was the Greeks and the Serbs, with the Turks handling the legacy of the Ottoman Empire in the permanent role of the "friendly" neutral as required in terms of each situation. The Albanians now feel themselves to be, as once the Serbs and the Greeks did, the chosen people of the Balkans, a nation which has not yet been vindicated, which remains nationally unconsummated². Once again, through a piece of the Balkan mosaic, this time Kosovo, the region of Southeast Europe finds itself at the forefront of world affairs. The Balkans has become synonymous with Kosovo, and by extension all the stereotypes perennially associating the region with the interwoven and irreconcilable enmities of the past have returned to the stage in geometric progression. Preceding episodes include, *inter alia*, the secession of the Yugoslav³ republics in 1992, the war in Bosnia in 1995, the bombing of Serbia and Kosovo in 1999, the conflict in FYROM in 2001, and the prospect of EU membership opened to Turkey in 2002.

This paper endeavours to present the historical engagement of the European whole with the subset of the Balkans, in direct association with the stereotypes and the reality in the Balkans, through the course of developments in the region and in conjunction with the corresponding progress of the integration of the European Union in the context of political globalisation.

Stereotypes and reality in the Balkans

As the '90s got underway, the region of the Balkans returned to the forefront of international politics, bringing with it its geography, its history and its bad reputation. The rapid unfolding of events in the region soon gave politicians, analysts, journalists, experts, books, and public opinion in general reason to talk once again about the "hell-hole of Europe"⁴ that was not "worth the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier"⁵. The turbulence brought to the surface the simplistic clichés in which the heroes of one people are criminals to everyone else around and the national myth of one country is a tale of woe and misfortune for all its neighbours. The geography of the Balkans, historically defined in the narrow context of the neighbour and usually ancient rival and enemy, came, after the changes of 1990, to engage in the same plane with the history of the region, pinpointing the danger spots in political developments.

Over the past three centuries the Balkan nation-states emerged, belatedly, from the broader imperial agglomerations in Southeast Europe, progressing – despite occasional efforts to create common regional structures through irredentist fragmentation and the threat of dissolution to voluntary integration into another type of supranational formation. However, the sovereign, albeit incomplete in comparison to their Western models, structure of the Balkan nation-state has produced in the post-Cold War period an endless tug-of-war between pre-industrial economic structures, the desire of

² AL. S. STAVRIANOS, *The Balkans Since 1453*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1958. M. MAZOWER, *The Balkans*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000.

³ S. OETER, "The Dismemberment of Yugoslavia: An Update on Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Montenegro", *German Yearbook of International Law*, 50 (2007): 457-521.

⁴ J. GUNTHER, *Inside Europe*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1940, p. 437.

⁵ In the words of Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898).

local societies to become more European, adaptation to the new digital age, and the catalytic role still played in much of Balkan life by a prickly nationalism on the defensive against other neighbouring nationalisms in direct conjunction with the intermediary role of external agents acting in defence of their general interests.

As the historian Pavlowitch has so aptly remarked⁶, “we must see the history of the peninsula as a region that has been determined by the interaction of its geography and its history ... Europe (the whole) misunderstands the Balkans (the part), just as the Balkans misunderstand Europe, although Europe accepts and the Balkans claim that the peninsula is part of the continent.” The change of regime in the political life of the Balkan countries in the wake of 1990 continues to be sustained by a duality of language, which entails a political cost. The history of each Balkan country is based on magnifying its heroism for internal consumption, while at the same time the quest for European avenues of escape demands promising the supranational decision-making centres that initiatives will be set in hand to adopt the *acquis communautaire*. The existing structure of history and politics in the Balkans continues – regardless of whether some Balkan countries have already been admitted into the European Community system – to be totally at odds with the supranational processes of finding a common system for economic and political integration.

As regards approaches to Balkan reality and the stereotypical/fabricated⁷ perceptions entertained by the present and erstwhile imperial powers, the difference is palpable. The Ottoman Empire, and by extension Turkey, was/is a local power that experienced the gradual amputation of its territorial sovereignty, contributing to the perpetuation of the Eastern Question, the residual consequences of which continue to influence, under different parameters, developments in the Balkans and elsewhere. By contrast, the American political approach to and activity in the Balkans today, like that of Europe’s successive former Great Powers, is connected only with defending its own interests on the world stage, where Southeast Europe is merely a pawn on the international chessboard⁸ of power politics.

Developments in the Balkans after 1990

Since 1989, the Balkan region has lived through spectacular changes, both positive and negative. At that time Europe still had very few “exotic” countries. Today, of the whole Southeast European region, it is only the so-called Western Balkans⁹ that have been left knocking at the doors of NATO and the European Union. The following facts and support schemes for the Balkan countries sum up the basic characteristics of EU initiatives in this area:

- After the accession of Greece in 1981 and Slovenia in 2004, there followed, albeit under a system of partial surveillance, Bulgaria and Romania in 2007.

⁶ S. PAVLOWITCH, *History of the Balkans, 1804-1945*, London: Pearson, Education Ltd., 2000, p. 479

⁷ See as an example of a stereotypical approach to the Balkans, R. KAPLAN, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993, and at the other end of the spectrum, M. TODOROVA’s classic *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

⁸ M. GLENNY, *The Balkans 1804-1999: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers*, London: Granta Books, 1999. S. WOODWARD, *Balkan Tragedy. Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War*, Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1999.

⁹ R. BELLONI, “European integration and the Western Balkans: lessons, prospects and obstacles”, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 11, 3 (2009): 313-331.

- Measures connected with the provision and transfer of technology and expertise in the context of specialised Community programmes such as e.g. PHARE, INTERREG, TACIS and OBNOVA.

- Long-term economic aid and the prospect of investments in the framework of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and G-24.

- Bilateral trade agreements that can, in specific conditions, eventually lead the remaining Balkan countries into the European structures.

- An on-going dialogue in a political framework that complements the efforts of the Balkan countries to achieve greater democracy and at the same time to improve their knowledge of the European situation and the likelihood of speeding up their integration into the European family.

As regards the evolution of each separate state in the region, the outstanding and truly impressive example is that of Slovenia, which became a Member State of the European Union in 2004 (after joining NATO in 2002) and by January 2008 was embarking on a term in the Presidency of the European Community. Other catalytic developments of equal significance for stability in the region were the integration of Bulgaria and Romania into the Euro-Atlantic structures: NATO in 2004 and the EU in 2007.

At present, there are three candidate countries for EU membership, Croatia, Turkey and the FYROM. Croatia has been a candidate country for EU membership since June 2004. It was the second country to sign a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU on 29 October 2001. This agreement entered into force on 1 February

2005. On 3 October 2005 the Council decided to open accession negotiations with Croatia. By the end of 2006 Croatia had successfully completed the screening process, that is, the in-depth analysis of how far its legislative framework was compatible with the *acquis communautaire*. On 30 June 2010 Croatia¹⁰ opens last three policy-related negotiating chapters and provisionally closes two.

Turkey is a candidate country for EU membership following the Helsinki European Council of December 1999. Accession negotiations started in October 2005 with the analytical examination of the EU legislation. Turkey has also come a long way down the difficult road of reform as regards its prospects of joining the EU at some point. Chronic issues – headed by the Cyprus problem – connected with Turkey's compliance with the European *acquis* continue to stand in the way of its further advance towards European accession¹¹.

The FYROM was granted candidate country status for EU membership in 2005. On 18 February 2008 the Council adopted the Accession Partnership for the country, thus updating the previous European Partnership of January 2006. A visa facilitation agreement and readmission agreement with the EU has been in force since 1 January 2008. On 15 July 2010 the European Commission proposed to grant visa liberalisation to the citizens of this country.

The other countries of the Balkans - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo under UNSC Resolution 1244/99 - are known as potential candidates for EU membership.

¹⁰ Croatia, *inter alia* newly elected to the UN Security Council (for a two-year term, starting 1 January 2008), was admitted to NATO at the summit in Bucharest (3-4.4.2008).

¹¹ H. KRAMER, "Turkey's Accession Process to the EU. The Agenda behind the Agenda", *SWP Comments*, 25, October 2009.

Albania's¹² efforts towards social and economic reform were recognised by the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union in 2006. Montenegro, now a full member of the international community in its own right (it declared independence on 3 June 2006), has within a remarkably short space of time signed a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union (16 March 2007) and joined NATO's Partnership for Peace programme (15 December 2006). The conclusion of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Union and Bosnia-Herzegovina in December 2007 gave new impetus to that country's Euro-Atlantic prospects. Of course, fifteen years after the Dayton Agreement, much still remains to be done as regards keeping a balance between its ethnic groups, especially in terms of a more rational decision-taking system. Serbia is a potential candidate country for EU accession following the Thessaloniki European Council of June 2003. On 29 April 2008, the EU and Serbia signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) and a year later, on 22 December 2009, Serbia submitted its application for EU membership.

All this suggests that the steps that have been made towards achieving democracy and security in the Balkans have been guided more by the interests of external intervening forces. Peaceful coexistence, however, according to the Western European model, still has a long way to go, especially since the internal structures of the several Balkan countries are either still being developed or continue to harbour elements associated with

ethnic and nationalist tensions, an inability to establish the rule of law and order, organised crime and widespread corruption, and weak economic performance. They betray more a quantity of democratisation and adaptation to the so-called European models of governance than a quality of appreciation of the democratic institutions that would further secure the fragile historical and ethnic balances in the Balkan region. Their efforts appear rather to be fragmentary attempts to impress both the European superstructure and their domestic structures, while for its part the EU has no global strategy governing its approach to the Balkan region.

The progress of European integration

The wars of the 20th century accelerated the formal process of establishing the European Communities. The unification of Europe began timidly and hesitantly in the 1950s, became more dynamic and more promising with the reforms of the 1970s, and began to consolidate its place in the international firmament as something different in the middle of the 1980s. Different in its political system from those of the national states, different too from any known systems of regional and international organisations, increasingly complex in its institutional dimensions and actions from its original dry beginnings as, first, a coal and steel market and later a trade and economic market¹³.

In the context of efforts towards European convergence, there persists an obvious and insidious tendency towards the creation of successive circles, worlds and alliances within the EU as regards how to address the partners' shared concerns. This is most

¹² Albania, as Croatia, was invited to join NATO at the same summit in Bucharest (3-4.4.2008).

¹³ V. K. AGGARWAL and E. A. FOGARTY, "Between Regionalism and Globalism: European Union Interregional Trade Strategies", V.K. Aggarwal and E.A. Fogarty (eds), *EU Trade Strategies. Between Regionalism and Globalism*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, 2004, pp. 1-40.

apparent in a polarisation between the so-called “old world” on the one hand, the rural Europe of social rights, the Europe of the *acquis*, the Europe of Nations, and on the other the new Europe of the industrial, and later the technological and the digital, revolution, the Europe of competition on the economic and every other level of social life, Atlantic Europe.

However, in the present phase of common European progress, the EU cannot afford the luxury of historic isolated imperial grandeurs and a division into spheres of influence that will increase its isolation. As the 21st century gets under way the search for appropriate and functional superstructures targets a Europe that is not simply “commercial, humane and liberal”. Now that it has managed to be “producer and merchant of its economic products”, essentially combining the qualities of producer, consumer and merchant of its economic prosperity, the EU must aspire, following the changes of the 1990s and the new world structure, to change its overall image and present itself as a new force for peace, prosperity and democracy in the world¹⁴.

The *Europe of the Nations* continues, of course, to resist. The picture presented by the EU since its inception has been one of simultaneous clash and osmosis between traditional forms of organisation of state, international and supranational structures and superstructures. Its long-term progress shows that the structures the Communities gave themselves in their founding Treaties

are no longer adequate to the pursuit of their purpose. Monetary union without political union cannot exist on a long-term basis. Monetary union entails and presupposes political union and a central European government.

At the beginning of the 21st century, and assuming that we accept that it has achieved its economic superstructure, the EU is still looking for a specific political metasuperstructure in order to direct its unification project towards its final destination of a European State. The EU is at a crossroads for its future course: whether to remain a Union of the common denominator or to become an increasingly cohesive Union¹⁵ with a dynamic federal evolution. The “Reform Treaty” (Treaty of Lisbon)¹⁶ as a sequel to the Constitutional Treaty appears to be nothing more than the management, with increments of good order and functionality, of the existing status quo of the EU of 27. The EU continues to rely on the old tried and true formula that has guided its policies for the past 50 years like a kind of dogma, ‘borders-hierarchy-markets’¹⁷. Built on a foundation of intergovernmentally-selected elements composing the hierarchical model for the construction of a State, with all the necessary supranational choices relating to the abolition of borders in its policies through a fully globalised network of rules governing the market and competition, the EU is still searching for its identity¹⁸, its object and its legitimacy in the face of the citizens of its Member States.

¹⁴ J. ORBIE (ed.), *Europe’s Global Role: External Policies of the European Union*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2008.

¹⁵ D. DINAN, *Ever Closer Union. An introduction to European Integration*, London: Lynne Rienner, 3rd Edition, 2005.

¹⁶ J. NERGELIUS, *The EU Constitution in a Comparative and Historical Perspective: An Analysis of the Lisbon Treaty and its Importanc*, Wien/New York: Springer Verlag, 2009

¹⁷ S. ECONOMIDES and P. WILSON, *The Economic Factor in International Relations. A Brief Introduction*, London: I.B.Tauris Co Ltd, 2001, pp. 251ff.

¹⁸ P. GOWAN and P. ANDERSON (eds), *The Question of Europe*, London & New York: Verso Editions, 1997.

Confidence in the European structure has always depended upon the ability of the EU to inspire security and prosperity in its citizens. Up to the beginning of the '90s, this confidence was simply assumed, and that was enough. Ambitious European leaders planned bold steps towards integration, content with a minimum degree of silent assent on the part of the people. The golden age of this integration¹⁹ began to arrive towards the end of that decade, when two things began to become apparent: that integration was spreading into sectors associated with the core of national sovereignty and that the gasping European economy with its high unemployment was not producing the expected collective benefits that had in the past justified the confidence of Europe's citizens.

EU - Balkans: set and subset

At the beginning of 1990, the Balkans at first glance appeared not to belong to the Europe of the regions and of the convergence of inequalities between the centres and the regional units. Their vital statistics seemed to show primitive rural development, distorted industrialisation, a declining craft industry sector and a social fabric maintained by state subsidy. At that time, the countries of the Balkan Peninsula, seeking to prioritise their problems and find solutions to them, began to press forward so as not to drop even further behind. Both its old and its new countries urgently needed a way out, essentially at any price, of the isolation and paper prosperity of the socialist period. The EU, in its turn, began to appear as the paradise that would compensate for the bitterness of the lost years and their hopeful expectation of a better tomorrow in the European family of regional subsets.

From that hasty beginning in the first days of the '90s, the managers of the state structures in the Balkan states continued, more or less, and according to the situation in each country, to exploit the fuzzy European dream of their local societies. The whole experience of the meeting between Europe and the Balkans suggests a prevailing perception that Europe had a duty to assist the Balkans. The image of EU-Balkan relations today is due, to no small degree, to the wave of enthusiasm for the new age in both the local societies and the EU. It is more the immediate expectation that the consumer needs of an entire lifetime, and in general the conditions of daily living, will now be satisfied. Things become simplified, and it is assumed that whatever comes from or is done in Europe will automatically have the same results in a Balkan context. This mentality is adopted up to point by the Balkan states themselves. Whether because they cannot control developments or because the mechanisms of state are themselves so caught up in the pursuit of rapid enrichment for purely electoral reasons, the result is the same: life in the Balkan countries is acquiring a duality. Alongside each problematical state activity there more often than not springs up what is commonly labelled private initiative, but which tends to operate more in the realm of illegal activities than that of legitimate business.

The history of the Balkans from the time of the Ottoman oppression of local societies has left as its legacy the conviction that anything that has to do with the government and the state is essentially foreign, uncontrolled and at least partially inimical to the sanctity of the individual and family *acquis*. The Balkan reality of the so-called "fragmented community"²⁰ continues

¹⁹ L. TSOUKALIS, *What kind of Europe?*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

²⁰ E. GELLNER, *Conditions of Liberty. Civil Society and its Rivals*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1994, pp. 1-12

to this day to resist – essentially, not merely in form – any new “European” model for the creation of a functional institutional continuity in the Balkan states in order to balance public and individual interests. In the Balkans there continues to persist the contradictory phenomenon of pre-industrial structures for the exercise and management of power and interests which profess to be modern post-national administrative models acting in those terms but which at the same time seek to serve only their narrow client interests at the expense of the general whole.

The EU, for its part, uses the accession process to reinforce a peaceful *modus vivendi*, especially in the unstable and volatile Western Balkans. The European enthusiasm of the early days has taken a back seat. The single approach to the Balkan phenomenon will come up against the obstacle of the individual national desires of the various European countries for benefits of every sort from the region. It is not only the Balkan countries that turn to old historic alliances to determine their first steps: up to a point, the larger EU countries follow the same tactics. It is only to be expected that each one will try to use historic moments of change to secure, first and foremost, their own national position; there will be time enough afterwards to discuss the affairs of the Community as a supranational European partner.

Seeking to establish stability, peace and prosperity in Europe, the EU has *de facto* come to be the primary benefactor of Southeast Europe: in 2000-2006 it made

grants totalling 4.6 billion Euros to the countries of the Western Balkans²¹. Through this funding it was pursuing four goals: first, democratic stability, reconciliation and the return of refugees; second, institutional and legislative development in the framework of Community models, respect for the rule of law, human rights, democracy, the principles of a free market economy; third, sustainable development; fourth, regional cooperation among the Balkan countries and between those countries and the European Union. More specifically, it was seeking the unification and integration of the Balkans through free trade zones encompassing all countries that share a common border, replacing the existing complicated bilateral agreements between the countries of the region. Since 2007, all the EU assistance to the countries with a prospect of EU membership – the Western Balkans and Turkey – has been brought under a single heading, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)²².

The clash between national interest and the different measures of the common European initiatives for Balkan states in the transition stage rapidly leads to distrust on the part of the recipients of those initiatives. Reasons for this distrust and disappointment include the absence of solid practical results for the broader strata of local societies, the wasting of resources and the mistaken application of the various measures²³. If, now, one factors in the discouragement of the active European partners with the difficulties in the Balkan arena, then a negative result

²¹ Since 1991 the European Union has committed, through various assistance programmes, 6.8 billion Euros to the Western Balkans. In 2000 aid to the region was streamlined through a new programme called CARDS (Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation) adopted with the Council Regulation (EC) No 2666/2000 of 5.12.2000. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/financial_assistance/cards/general/2666_00_en.pdf [Accessed 10.3.2010].

²² Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/publication/ipa_brochure_2009_en.pdf [Accessed 10.3.2010].

²³ T. GALLAGHER, *The Balkans in the New Millenium. In the Shadow of War and Peace*, London: Routledge, 2005, pp. 168-170

constitutes the rule rather than the exception. Essentially, there develops on either side the impression that the other side must always take more steps.

In the twenty years that have passed since the changes of 1990, the EU has continued on every occasion – including after the 1999 bombing of parts of Serbia and Kosovo – to appear fearful of the dynamic of conflict. After the initial enthusiasm for the forgotten and exotic citizens of the Balkans, today the EU is going through a period of tolerance of a necessary evil. Moreover, the global increase in the number of clashes on the regional level makes hasty choices on the part of the foreign actors involved, whether European or not, even more negative. The security dilemma is a primordial priority for all those involved, local or otherwise. Securing areas vital to the USA, for example, acts like a noose around Russia's neck, and Russia, in turn, shows signs of returning to the Balkans, seeking to keep its control over the two areas directly connected with its "near abroad", that is, the Caucasus and the Balkans, primarily through the exercise of a multi-faceted energy policy. The EU, finding itself caught in the middle of the rivalry of the two conventional great powers, tries to restrict its field of action to those points in which it remains superior, namely the economy. Meanwhile, in the Balkans, the local recipients of all this applied politics seek to survive by any means possible in a globalised and uncertain environment²⁴.

The EU seems to be more interested in its own internal reform and in its relations

with more distant places and interregional collaboration. The collapse of the barriers to global trade has created the prospect, in the middle term, of fierce competition with the USA and with the tigers of Southeast Asia and the Far East²⁵. The Balkan countries can only wait. Many, indeed, deny them even the hope of expectation. Since they appear to need first to learn the rudiments of economics and democracy, perhaps in the end it depends on the choices and priorities of their political leaders how far they will survive in the harsh and competitive world of the 21st century. The EU seems to be fighting for its superstructures, for its future, and primarily for its political future, while the Balkans are still, and yet again, at the stage of building their basic conventional structures²⁶.

In contrast to the Balkans, the construction of a supranational European Union necessarily carries with it the burdens of history and geography in conjunction with the political challenges. The horizontal conjuncture of geographical data and historical experience on a pan-European level is intersected by the politics of the vertical articulation of the integration that is being accomplished. The questions raised by geography are where the borders of Europe end and whether geographical²⁷ criteria are sufficient to define Europe. History, in turn, necessarily raises the same concerns as geography. The perennial rivalry that constitutes the predominant feature of the European continent leaves the EU little choice but to move within national and

²⁴ D. BOZHILOVA, "Energy security and regional cooperation in South-East Europe", *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 11, 3 (2009): 293-311.

²⁵ P. KATZENSTEIN, *A World of Regions: Asia and Europe in the American Imperium*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005.

²⁶ I. KRASTEV, "The Balkans: Democracy Without Choices", *Journal of Democracy*, 13, 3 (2002): 39-53.

²⁷ For a general historically formulated discussion of the definition of Europe's geographical boundaries, see M. ANDERSON and E. BORT (eds), *Boundaries and Identities: The Eastern Frontier of the European Union*, Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001.

specific conditional supranational structures. The opponents of rapid progress towards supranational structures are of two sorts: on the one hand there are the Westphalian nation-states, which within a framework of primary or modified intergovernmentalism continue to prolong whatever national dreams they have. For the individual national states it is still difficult to erase at a stroke their national sovereignty and hand it over to whatever superstructure a European State endows itself with, and this prevents them from convincing the rest to join in the European supranational experiment without tangible results in their sensitive national affairs.

The absence thus far of a continuity of political will from the progress of the European experiment could prolong the fragmentation or "balkanisation" of Europe's advance towards integration. Between the existing structure and the desired superstructure of the European State there lurk all the dangers and factors that keep the Balkans at the first stage of their national integration. The experience of the passage of the European countries from a national structure to the European superstructure is defective and uncertain²⁸. Frequently the conditions are not ripe or there is no time for the so-called intermediate stage between structure and superstructure. The fact that the starting-point is not the same for all Community members – old, new and accession states – hampers the transition to the superstructure of European integration. Often a fast supranational result is sought for reasons of internal national interest. The contradiction between the desired supranational structure and the existing domestic perceptions of so-called national interest are one of the characteristic features

of the enlarged European Union. The solidity of the national structure may be ensured, but at the cost, in the longer term, of mortgaging any supranational structure on the micro- and macropolitical level. Apart from the given fragmentation on the primary level of the national structure, there develop within the EU additional levels of dissociation between states with a greater or lesser determination to exercise and implement policy on the second and third levels.

Then, on the other hand, there are the citizens of those nation-states. The results of the referendums in France and The Netherlands on ratification of the Constitutional Treaty highlighted the conviction that has been created in European public opinion that in the final analysis all these attempts to install supranational structures and superstructures benefit the European political and economic elites and do nothing at all for the ordinary citizen in his everyday life. The message is clear: European citizens not only need to be informed about the European Union, but they need incentives to take an informed part in the decision-making and in general in the life of the Union. They need to become more familiar with the Union, and, in turn, the EU cannot move towards a future of supranational multilevel superstructures without the real participation of its citizens. The EU continues to develop its multilevel superstructures without the substantive participation of its citizens, while the European State it is working towards mimics the classic forms of representative democracy on the national level. The object is a combination of finding suitable ways and means and the necessary political will of the EU Member States to determine the new challenges of the European community structure that is summarised in the triptych

²⁸ E. SUCHARIPA, "The Future of the European Union and the Role of the Balkans", *Review of International Affairs*, 54, No. 1109, (2003): 11-15

'identity–finalité–legitimacy'²⁹, a fact that has a catalytic effect on European Union activity on the international level as an integrated superstructure and not merely an incomplete economic model.

EU-USA: opposing superstructures

It becomes easier to understand all the parameters that enter into the redefinition of the relations between the European whole and the subset of the Balkans when the equilibrium of world politics is transferred to the higher level of superstructures, when, that is, the EU is compared to superstructures of similar size and capacity, such as the USA. According to the prevailing American³⁰ view of international relations, it was the shelter of America's military security umbrella that enabled the EU to construct its post-war supranational design. While the USA and NATO were struggling to contain the Soviet Union and its military machine, the Community was free to organise its economic superstructure.

The opposition between structures and superstructures follows a scalar progression, based in each instance on the context and object of the policy applied. Depending on the standpoint from which each side views the situation, the USA, as a direct result of the absence of any deterrent fear, is the epitome of military force and the "paymaster" who guarantees the security of global structures and superstructures, while the EU, attempting to conceal its weakness in the militarisation of international relations, is the

epitome of the so-called "peaceful political power"³¹ and the eternal mediator. Although the two entities operate more or less in the same political-ideological space of the Euro-Atlantic community's interests, they appear to be following different drummers in the regional clashes that break out around the world and in various forms of cooperation.

And it is not only for the Cold War period that the USA sees the EU as the EU does the Balkans: American analysts³² and government officials accuse the EU of the same pusillanimity in the post-Cold War years. The EU has been very hesitant to follow the flexible superstructure of the American State in its fight against terrorism and the trouble spots that threaten the peace and security of the world³³. A "balkanised" EU worries about the domestic cost of getting involved, is unwilling to risk human and economic loss, and continues to shelter behind the label of a global political and economic powerhouse. In the issues where the Americans have adopted a – so-called – military option, the EU seems willing to drop its visions of a superstructure and, through individual national vetoes or a global European "nay", return to the "balkan" reality of a national structure based on narrow interests. The EU, in fact, often finds it preferable to exhaust its contribution within the Euro-Atlantic community with funds or as a mediator, without implicating its Community structures and superstructures. How often have the Balkans not been criticised, and not without reason, for being willing to accept

²⁹ H. W. MAULL, "Europe and the New Balance of Global Order", *International Affairs*, 81,4 (2005): 775-799.

³⁰ R. KAGAN, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003.

³¹ M. TELÒ, *Europe: a Civilian Power? European Union, Global Governance, World Order*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

³² Most representative of the harsh American line against the EU is *The Project for the New American Century* (R. Kagan, W. Kristoll, L. Kaplan et al.), which seeks to promote America's global hegemony in the world.

³³ J. REDWOOD, *Superpower Struggles: Mighty America, Faltering Europe, Rising Asia*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005.

Community subsidies but not using them to improve their infrastructures, to pursue reforms that would smooth their path into the European superstructure of the *acquis communautaire*?

Concluding remarks

Certain passages from Hans Magnus Enzensberger's *Ach Europa*³⁴ can be very useful for an understanding of the current debate about structures and superstructures within the EU, and also have a direct bearing on the stereotype of the "particularity and disorder" of the Balkans as a European subset: "The European Community is truly extraordinary, right down to its microstructures, and any attempt to impose order in the traditional sense is a waste of time. The same is true of the Community's constitutional structure. Disorder and confusion are our definitive form ... What you call chaos is our supreme advantage. We live by diversity. For politicians who want to put everything under a hat, at least to a certain degree, a situation like this is indeed chaotic..."

In the Balkans the discussion still, of necessity, centres on either the construction of the essential structures of governance or the completion of the unfinished structures and intermediate stages that will lead to the superstructures and any other form of multilevel institutional cooperation and integration. The EU has accelerated its pursuit of those multilevel structures and superstructures. In the EU of the future, the individualised and politicised daily life of its citizens will have to accommodate,

in time and in manner, the historic steps of its peoples. Both in Europe as a whole and in the subset of the Balkans two conflicting elements persist, namely the negative stereotype of the "other", the "neighbour", and the mythmaking of our own collective past, as the characteristic features of Euronationalism – an attempt to copy nationalist methods in the building of political identity on the European level. Should we not rather, as an answer to this and to the challenges of the 21st century, be searching for a European perspective that can leave behind our "previous self, ...self-destructive... [and] ... barbaric"?³⁵

The rest of Europe may have started earlier than the Balkans to go beyond their conventional institutional and state structures in order to achieve integration within a new and as yet unformed supranational whole, but they do not appear to be disposed to pay the price of losing their "civilised national particularity". The people of the Balkan states, for their part, who in any case are still seeking to consolidate those classic (although outmoded in this globalised age) state structures, need much more time and patience to close the gap with the – albeit unfinished – European supranational framework. They are looking towards integration into the broader framework of the established European model of intergovernmentalism, but at the same time they are striving not to lose "their barbarity"³⁶. On the map of the Balkan Peninsula the local players are unreeling the threads that form the skein of their history but are severed from the political reality of their

³⁴ *Ach Europa! Wahrnehmungen aus sieben Laendern. Mit einem Epilog aus dem Jahre 2006*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1987, pp. 483-484.

³⁵ As Timothy Garton Ash suggests in an essay written to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the European Union. See T. G. ASH, "Europe's True Stories", *Prospect Magazine*, Issue 131, 13 February 2007. Available at: <http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/2007/02/europestruestories/> [Accessed 09.10.2009].

³⁶ A. PAGDEN, *Peoples and Empires*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2001.

neighbouring states and the successive Great Powers. On the other hand, these powers are either offering the local actors new skeins or are themselves severing the threads as they please in order to further their own general interests. And in both cases the players involved on either side, in the EU and in the

Balkans, are struggling from different starting points with the challenges of global politics, but find it difficult to be cut off from their roots, to sever the threads of their identity from the supranational skeins of globalised international relations.

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