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FUTUR ENLARGEMENT OF THE EU-THE CHALLENGE CALL WESTERN BALLKAN AND TURKEY

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Abstract

EU enlargement will depend on many factors and challenges that will determine not only the pace of this process but also will carry alongside the settlement of many open problems in various forms, between Western Balkan countries and member states of EU. The purpose of this text is to provide a better approach, as the enlargement process, especially with the Western Balkan countries, not forgetting Turkey, as one of the most powerful and influencing country not only in the Balkan Peninsula, but also in the Middle East and beyond.

The question whether the traditional strategies and actions of EU enlargement process are satisfactory for this changed geostrategic environment, needs to be researched in different ways. It will seek to answer in a separate process, reforms and problems that need to be faced by all acceding and candidate countries for integration into this organization. Only if we take the basic and processing milestone of EU enlargement with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and especially with Romania and Bulgaria, we will conclude that the process of integration and enlargement of the EU does not only depend on the will of the aspirant countries, but either on the necessity of this organization to expand in new European space.

The geostrategic position of the entire Balkans, and especially when determining the prefix West, it gives a picture of the various events, especially after the end of the Cold War. Disputes between members and non members of EU and candidate countries are a challenge for EU integration and enlargement. Changes and events that brought not only the mapping changes of this region but also the demolition of old balances and introduction of new interests and influences, make more interesting this region for analyses in prism of integration/enlargement in EU.

KEY WORDS: EU integration, EU enlargement, SAP, Western Balkan, Bilateral Disputes.

1. Introduction

This text basically presents an attempt to give additional impulse to the approaches in order to conduct analysis and perceptions on the issue of future enlargement of the EU which inevitably encompasses the countries from Balkan region and Turkey. However, the process of accession of countries from East and Central Europe in to the EU over the past decade and their affiliation during the last enlargement processes could be lesson learned for the rest of the countries which aim to follow the same path as are Balkan countries and Turkey.

If we began from the fact that Balkan region and it's countries and Turkey as well, are of geostrategic importance from the one hand and great interest of previous and current power which seek their presence and try to influence their policy's from the another, we will see that integration of the countries from this region including Turkey it is not just imperative of the time and imperative of their leaders, but also is the challenge for European Union, through it's foreign policy tool-Enlargement, to extend its zone of peace, stability, democracy and prosperity.¹

With great aspiration, focused on this subject we share the commitment that in period to come, the EU enlargement process have to take place in the Balkan's and Turkey having in mind that reconciliation processes is still needed, the regional cooperation has to take place and finally EU have to show it's leadership. The problematic past of Balkan's followed by bloody conflicts, large number of victims, ethnic cleanings, punishments, fugitive crisis, exoduses etc, the process of reconciliation and Peace accord established, are characteristics which make's this region particularly interesting for conducting the analyses, examination, and predict the future developments in countries of this region. The traditional approach toward the process of enlargements prescribes particular measures and mechanisms through which the EU, impose, give advices and make control about conditions for membership.

The future enlargements of EU presents a challenge where organization need to exceeds itself. In this case the country's from Western Balkan must improve all criteria and condition steed by EU. Also they need to establish the mechanism for bridging the differences for easy joined integration process of Western Balkans countries. This consideration arises from the former experiences where the countries (aspirants and candidates) are presented to see their future in the developmental process of the EU as hostages of the open problems and issues such as bilateral disputes.

2. Enlargement of the European Union

Without going in depth through the reasons for the origin, creation and development of the EU through history, we will try shortly to point some of the characteristics and specific circumstances of process of enlargement. Very often the process of enlargement is called horizontal development of the EU or “widening”, which in fact has the meaning of: “shifting its boundaries through development and enclosure of new countries to the center”, to describe all measures, mechanisms and activities taken by institutions of the EU and the countries aspirants and candidates for membership.²

Even from the early creation EU, proclaimed as a organization which in her future will be enlarged outside of its boundaries. Development of the EU from its first outlines until the present conglomerate based upon two processes which are closely connected between them.

The first process represents vertical development-the integration of the EU integration until present form, where the second process is the enlargement. This process presents voluntary and not impeded process of the implementation of the politics and norms of the EU from the countries aspirant and candidates for membership in EU, while the inevitable and consistent integration of the international norms in the domestic legislative, represents a process which supports the way to law component membership.

If all these numbered and described principles previously give the picture of definition and development of the characteristics of enlargement process, next we will describe in short which are the characteristics of EU enlargement through the previous experiences. The process of EU enlargement can partite into seven categories (B. Reka, O. Höll, Y.Sela 2010), where is explained and represents clear figure of EU expansion into different territories and regions of the European continent when the first form was established until the plans for future enlargement (combined with the process of association and negotiations with some candidate countries). According to this schema we can try to explain something about each wave of enlargement including some that not happened yet.

The first enlargement also called “reconciling enlargement” (1973), who geographically enclosed the watersides of first form of EU (Great Britain, Ireland and Denmark), while on political plan send message to the continent for reconciliation after the veto establishment to the candidature of Great Britain.

The second enlargement (1981/86) also called “post-dictatorial enlargement”, geographically not enclosed some region of European continent but comprehend countries recently released from dictatorial domination. The enlargement with countries such as Spain, Portugal and after Greece, broke the taboo subject that the process of EU enlargement was caused just for democratic principles.

The third enlargement (1995) also called “neutral enlargement”, because of joined a countries from European continent with neutral status. This enlargement geographically same didn’t represent particular region (Scandinavian countries such as Finland and Sweden and central Europe-Austria), but for political point it was clear a message that the EU is organization who every country who fulfill the conditions can be a member.

The fourth enlargement (2004/07) or “post-communistic enlargement”, was one clear message for every country of European continent in the economic, political and security aspect, that the integration into EU is one of the most important things for national interest of all the member countries who joined in this wave. The enlargement of EU with twelve new members such as: Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Slovenia, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Cyprus, Malta, Romania and Bulgaria was clear signal that this process won’t stop only with this enlargement, even being all skeptics and EU fatigues from the former enlargement. This enlargement had also another mark because of fact after which named, that all countries which became part of the EU come from former communist or socialist societies.

The fifth enlargement (that lasts from 2000) had not yet finished, represents one of the future challenges. This wave of expansion of EU we can named “post-conflict enlargement”, because of relations and the past of the countries from this region who want to joined to the EU. The geographical prefix (Western Balkan) given to the region who participate countries such as: all the member state of former Yugoslavia (minus Slovenia, plus Albania) were part of enlargement process from 2000, and all those countries were part of destructive conflicts (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, Albania,) during the ’90 and after (2001 Macedonia).

The sixth enlargement or “inter-civilization enlargement”, named in honor Turkey. This process was started almost half century and didn’t finished yet. The goal of named inter-civilization enlargement is because of facts that Turkey is a knot or the place when the different civilizations, religions and cultures clashed. This example with the previous one will be analyzed in the next titles.

The seventh enlargement represents the region and countries such as Island who is the outside border of the EU and also called “nordic-atlantic enlargement”. Island is waiting to be a new member of EU very soon.

3. The characteristics of the Western Balkan’s countries and Turkey

In order to go in details into the problem of euro integration process of the Balkan region, who is the subject of interest in these contribution, we see appropriate to be focused on specificities of Balkan region from several perspectives. Throughout the history the Balkan region was always an interesting area where the great powers have crossed their interests. In that aspect, many destructive wars and conflicts took place. Region where the problems, unsolved issues, disputes, threatens, risks, instability and insecurity characterized as common profile during centuries. Although, our

attention on some of the aspects and characteristics of the Balkan, it will be used for completing the mosaic of the countries from this region and process of integration and enlargement.

The term "Balkan" comes through the Persian into Turkish language and originally points "high mountains places". The Balkan Peninsula was used in this format firstly by German geographer Johann August Zeune in 1808 with the aim to attract attention of the intellectual public for this region. But this geographic area began to be used with this name in the middle of XIX century.³ Apart from this nomination of this region there are several others among which we will mention that the term Balkan comes as a combination of two Turkish words, such as: *bal*-honey and *kan*-blood. From this nomination we can conclude that this geographical region can be "sweet and bloody region" same time.

For many researches this region was always a priority for finding and search new models for overcoming challenges and issues. Nevertheless, the modern period of the region even now days is marked with turbulences, instability and conflicts. The great powers had always more interest for the control over this area. Some international relations scholars, gives the classification that "the VVI was initiated exclusively by the triggers from this region's countries". During the Cold War, Balkan was area where capitalism and socialism clashed for their interests, but all those qualifications was about term Balkan and their specifications region.

In order to define the new term "Western Balkan", we must said some characteristics for Balkan region (peninsula). After the end of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the motivation for defining new regional group was high, because of several reasons. One of them was new initiative of international organizations and institutions to divided form the whole region of Balkan Peninsula⁴.

Direct help and involvement of UN, EU, NATO and OSCE in overcoming the disputes was the primary reason to put through the term Western Balkan. So the term "Western Balkan" was used firstly in 1999 by the institutions and bodies of EU, but this term we can find in some of the EC Report's even in 1996. This referenda was often used to identify "few countries from south-eastern Europe" or "region which countries hadn't started negotiations or even signed association agreement". Some of another definitions about term "Western Balkan", was "Bosnia a Herzegovina and her surrounding", but the official use of this term was in 1999 where the EC lanced SAP (SAA) in order to stabilized, developed and prepared the region of "traditional Balkan minus countries such as: Greece, Romania and Bulgaria" or the "countries from former Yugoslavia minus Slovenia, plus Albania".⁵

The question about what is the connection to put the Turkey in group with Western Balkan countries in these contribution is that "The Turkey have ruled with this region over five centuries, and had more connections points with the history, events, conflicts, religions, cultures and developments, more the any another countries".

If we provide analysis to this region and take into consideration the events in history, we will conclude that: "The Balkan Peninsula characterized with different factors which had and still have direct or indirect influence upon the event and situation in European continent and specially to their regional and international organizations". The cultural and religious divergence's, non-defined boundaries, different perceptions, high level of crime and grey economy, unsolved and open questions-disputes, conflicts, threats and risks are jus few of the characteristics usually used to recognize and describe the period until present day. The obvious question which could be raised is "Whether the EU leadership, leaders of Balkan countries and Turkey, are able to change this picture (profile) of this region and crash their boundaries and borders", - it remains to be seen.

4. Future enlargement of the EU and reforms progress of Western Balkans countries and Turkey

Previously the development of the EU can be defined and divided into two directions: internal development or integration and external development or enlargement. In all treaties, agreements and documents with greater significance used to regulate the activities, acts and work of the EU, her organs and institutions those two processes were leaded from the principle of parallelism what's mean both processes developed independently one from another but always implementing all new arrivals contracts in both sides.

We now very well that the process of enlargements starts from early time-since the founding. Started from the 70' of previous century with integration of G. Britain, Ireland and Denmark, passed through different challenges, problems and disagreements between the members of the EU, but apart from all these facts, process of enlargement continues. Based in this fact, we do raise a question: How this process have a influence, what's are the consequences, in which way it will continue in the future? If we take into consideration the process of enlargements with twelve countries from central and Eastern Europe (2004/07), we will see that impact was the great and all simultaneous activities of EU have led into the approval and implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. The another question about process of enlargement of the EU would be: what's are the challenges for the future of this process and which countries or region will be acceded in this case. The approaches and politics of EU in relation with first enlargement and the last one (including the future) was drastically different.

During the last enlargement, EU introduced the model of "group or package", for the countries of Western Balkan and Turkey, after some events (Lisbon Treaty, different scale of progress of countries ect.), the EU change his course and want more to use the models "regatta" or "individual approach for every country, based on merits" (Copenhagen and Madrid's criteria). However, this model or approach is hard full bearing in mind the fact, that certain country doesn't need to be hostage of another country who "doesn't accomplishes her home works on time".

This fact are not in compliance or are not in the spirit of solidarity, equality and other principles set for during the accession processes. This is the problem who make processes of integrations and enlargements more difficult. Best examples for this conclusion is blocking of accession of Slovenia by Italy and than Croatia by Slovenia e etc.⁶

The traditional approach, apart from the problems with the absorbing capacities, make EU fatigue, but enlargement process had proved it's strength beside the bilateral disputes between countries. The efforts for changing the traditional approach into the new – “Balkan”, where the role and influence of the EU in solving bilateral disputes should be more and more present. This new approach provide the significant frame in terms of solving some old and forthcoming bilateral disputes.⁷ Almost all the countries from this region have or can open new issue (dispute) with their neighbors. So, in some way the future enlargement of EU can be good chance to overcome the differences.

For better understanding the process of integration and enlargement of EU in one hand and progress of Western Balkan countries and Turkey we will showed some facts and main events. Firstly will begin with Croatia.⁸

a) Croatia

In order to analyze the development of the process of membership in the EU, will be better if we point out and look for all events chronologically related to the integration. In 2001 Croatia started her first negotiations with the EU and in October that year signs the SAA. After two years in 2003 send formal application for membership in EU. Same year Croatia submit answers to the Commission's Questionnaire. In 2004 EC replies to the answers with a positive opinion (Avis), who's open the door for receiving official candidate status, and in December, European Council sets the date for the entry negotiations to began at 17 March 2005. The problematic relationship with the Hague Tribunal (ICTY), was a events who's had influence in progress of reforms and negotiations toward integration in EU.

Interesting events who is matter to pronounce is the blockade of negotiations about border dispute between Slovenia and Croatia. During the opening and closing some of the EU Questionnaire Chapters, Slovenia used this issue like trigger to showed that will be problematic continuing with the process of membership in EU without solving a bilateral dispute around Piran Bay. In this case the role of EU and their official was so brave and great to manage with this new situation and put both side to finding acceptable solution for this issue. In 2009 Slovenia agrees on an immediate ending of its blockade of Croatia's EU accession and further negotiation of the Gulf of Piran border dispute between the two countries, and Croatia continuous to close the Chapters to the full enclosing negotiations.

The annuals progress reports for Croatia (from the first one in 2004 until the last one), showed enormous efforts and reforms taken by the Zagreb's officials to make easy the short road what Croatia have to walk until the full membership in EU. This year Croatia finishes her negotiations and very soon will become the 28 member of EU.

b) Bosnia and Herzegovina

This country became out of Yugoslavia's disintegration. We must make some parallels between this country and the EU in the past and the present. EU was involved in all events (from fall of Yugoslavia, raises a new states until the ends of conflicts and peace operations, mediations, reconciliation ect.) in modern history of this country. Direct involving of EU in politics, economy and rule of law, make this country little bit different from others in Western Balkan. During post-conflict period Bosnia and Herzegovina has made a various progresses in many field but still have seriously problems in economic and politics. Instability of this country initiate by many political divergences between different communities is a key problem in political progress of this country in road toward integration in EU. This country started with negotiations on SAA during 2005 and concluded in December 2007. This is first step before making an application for candidate status and starting membership negotiation. As we said before the main problem is the political dialogue and differences between community officials, this process was included in 2008 with signing SAA. According to the progresses and efforts countries officials planed to submit an application for membership between April and June 2009, but didn't happen until 2010. Bosnia and Herzegovina still have so many problems in many field of society, but the worst issues are the open questions who's this time maybe are invisible with Serbia and Croatia about bilateral disputes and neighborhoods relations who is key for fast and positive progress in process of integration toward EU.

c) Serbia

If we put an parallel between status and relations of all countries from Western Balkan's from beginning up to now we can see, Serbia was at the end of process of integration. Serbia was a part of former Yugoslavia and was included in all conflicts and destructive processes during the fall of Federation. When the Montenegro get independence for the Union (Serbia and Montenegro), Serbia had started with their efforts to enjoined in process of integration with rest of Western Balkan's countries. So the first imitative to stated with process of integration in EU, Serbia made with Montenegro (after fall of Milošević regime in 2000). Negotiation on a SAA started in late 2005. After few months EU suspended SAA talks with Serbia over its failure to arrest Ratko Mladić and others persons sought by ICTY. Already all the countries involved in conflict have some extra conditions to fulfill over their integration in EU. Serbia's main condition was to find and arrest (or help in arrest) the criminals against humanity. Another main problem in condition about integration toward EU was the Kosovo case. In 2008 Kosovo declared independence and EU had to implement their mission –EULEX. Coordination and implementation of this mission was impossible without involving of Serbia's. Few months later Serbia arrested Radovan Karadžić after the EU decided to reopen the talks and negotiations (2007). Serbia officially applied for EU membership on December 2009. During the 2011 Serbia answered the questionnaire.

d) Montenegro

The newest country (except Kosovo) in the Western Balkan region was a successful in their ambitions and efforts toward integration in EU. Montenegro like a part of State Union with Serbia started a process of Accession to the EU

in 2005 (negotiations over a SAA). In 2005 Montenegro voted independence in a referendum and dissolved from Union, and this new independent country continued with negotiations in late of 2006. The Agreement was officially signed in 2007 and officially applied to join in EU in 2008. In April 2009 EU institutions accept their application after answering the questionnaire. On the May 2010 SAA came into force and in the recommendation of this year EC, recommended that Montenegro be granted the official status of candidate country. If we analyze all those events happened in very short time, we can conclude that the Montenegro is the most successful country from the region in process of integration into EU.

e) Albania

When we defining the term Western Balkan in one expression we said "...region of countries from former Yugoslavia plus Albania...", that mean, Albania didn't have so commons with the countries formed after fall of Yugoslavia, but still was a country with communist or socialist regime such as former Yugoslavia. If we had in consideration all the challenges and problems having this country in modern history, can conclude that this country have many commons with the rest neighborhoods. Collapse of state in 1997, crises with Kosovo's refugee, economic a political problems was only some of the challenges that had a influence in late starting process of integration toward EU. Albania started negotiation on a SAA in 2003 and signed in 2006. This country had joint to all initiatives of EU and NATO for countries of Western Balkan. After become a member of NATO Albania had made some of key reforms but still having some problems with politic dialogue and corruption. Application for membership Albania send to EU institution in 2009 and get a status of "potential candidate country". In all annual progress reports EU have recommendation form continuing with some key reforms for easy negotiation in process of membership.

f) Kosovo

Include of Kosovo in the new EU lanced mechanism "Agreement for Stabilization and Accosiation", means that this country would be part of process of integration of Western Balkan's country into EU. This mechanism lanced in 2003 in EU Summit in Thessaloniki, when the main Agenda was the process of enlargement and integration of EU and Western Balkans countries perspectives. Firstly we must introduce the main events about Kosovo and their process toward EU. From the 1998 Kosovo was under UNSCR 1244 until declaration of independence in 2008.

g) Macedonia

If we make one comparison between the countries from this region, who is the winner or looser in process of integration into EU, in that case Macedonia is a biggest looser. The reason why this is true became from some facts about the process of integration. R. Macedonia was the first country who signed SAA in April 2001. All we know about problems in this time. The country had a very difficulties with rule of law and ethnic conflict. Those problems was not all. After proclaimed independents in 1991 Macedonia, was recognition by many countries and international organization by the referenda FYROM. In 1995 Greece and Macedonia sign Interim Agreement under consent of UN in order to transcend the differences. This fact was the main problem about relation with Greece and raise of bilateral dispute about name issue.

In 2004 Macedonia applied to become an official candidate for membership in EU and one year later EC recommended to attain candidate status. During all the progress reports Macedonia had many recommendation about reforms in many fields of society. In 2008 during the NATO Summit in Bucharest when Macedonia didn't get his membership with Adriatic Group A-3 (Croatia, Albania Macedonia). This was one clear signal that the resolution of name issues as a part of EU integration process. From this time until now Macedonia is in waiting process for starting negotiation with EU. Already all progress reports and open recommendation of EU officials is in way that Macedonia should solve the name issue with Greece in order to continuing with integration process.

h) Turkey

Not always geostrategic interest of EU was in the first plan when we talk about enlargement. Case of Turkey is one explicit example for one who is member of NATO from the first enlargement and country who signed the "Association Agreement" or Ankara Agreement form 1963. If we want to explain what's are the reasons "why Turkey is not a member of EU", we should make a deeper analyze on relation between this country and EU and events from 1963 until now. If we take into consideration all significances and matters about position of Turkey in process of integration, they should said some facts. Turkey is a founding member of Council of Europe since 1949 and has been an "associate member". In one hand Turkey was covered by some historic controversies and in another hand she is a geostrategic country of Europe and its gates for Middle East and Asia. Opened question about continental shelf, Aegean Sea, Cyprus status and control of waters and space are the problems who Turkey had in his shoulders during integration in EU. If we added the problem with Curds community and some bilateral disputes with countries such as Armenia, than we come to an conclusion, the geostrategic position and economic growth (even is member of G-20) are not enough for membership in EU. In 2005 Turkey started negotiations for membership and in 2006 screening was completed. In which way will continuing process of integration let see.

5. Final remarks:

The EU from the first step of creation was proclaimed as on organization that will give the chance to everyone no matter of their differences and diversities. In addition, all the past and present proclamation showed that the differences in the Union represents the enormous treasure. But if all activities of the organization are analyzed in aspect of enlargement we will come to the conclusion that the different factors contributed to change the directives, ways and conditions of enlargement process.

All previous enlargements of EU had positive impact by providing the new momentum for reform of all actors involved. The enlargement of market, economic growth, financial and monetary strengthen and stability are just some of the predispositions that increase the EU in a global actor who escape from traditional shell.

Since the EU was set for, the achievements are enormous, EU today is the internationally recognized actor, significant global player, important contributor on international peace and security with in United nations and elsewhere.

The improvement of political environment in combination with security component, elevate EU to the seventh heaven in relation to the acceptability for membership of each countries from the region. This model which in one way presents *sui generis*, is just a bait for coping in the other continents and regions too. But, are these positive aspects of the enlargement enough for defining these politics and contribution of the process in future? Of course not.

If we take into consideration that the last enlargement of the EU were in the spirit of showing an inclination or “reward” toward the countries that choose the road of integration in this organization, it is clear that the EU not always approached the process of enlargement in the same way. In certain cases does the EU fatigue and skepticism included the reduce of absorbing capacities and economic crises comes in one unsuitable moment when the needs for enlargement of EU with the countries and regions such as Western Balkan (“package integration into EU”) are more then before.

Even we know that all initiatives (reforms, efforts, development, ect.) toward integration in EU, the countries of this region put them into first place like a national interest. In another way if we analyze the impact of EU in all cases of Balkan countries and region during the conflicts, humanitarian actions, reconciliation, state building, rule of law, solving of issues and disputes then we can see that this region are more connectivity with the EU even the another.

Latest developments after the approval of Lisbon Agreement, facing the economic and financial crises, crises within Euro zone – Greece Debt and other to come, cerate’s the opinion of EU ladders to take away from the region, and all the reforms taken by countries of this region are more formally then before.

At the same time if we analyze how the EU have managed to face the global financial crises, how they keep stable the Euro currency, how they shape the monetary policy and overcome the most difficult period in it’s history the Debt crises, than we can conclude that: Enlargement as foreign policy tool is very efficient, capacity of EU is extremely high, EU continue to be significant global player . These positive practices of EU have to extended and to be implemented in the region of Balkans as well.

Remaining to be an imperative for all countries from this region, no matter of the prices what they have to pay for it, countries have to continuing with reforms until full membership.

Does the challenge called integration or enlargement of EU with new countries from Western Balkan region and Turkey will be an agenda of enlargement policy of EU we will see. We hope that the ridership of EU and western Balkan countries (including and Turkey), will find common (language, interest and tools) for both processes.

There is no another alternative as an countries being part of the EU territory.“ EU not bee complete with out western Balkan”.

¹We put Turkey in this group because of so many commons with the other countries of the region of Western Balkan.

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⁸ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL, Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges, 2011-2012, Brussels, 12.10.2011

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