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Understanding the Complexity: Europeanization in the Western Balkans

Summary

This paper aims to review some important ideas, conceptualizations and definitions of Europeanization from the perspectives of the European integration processes in the Western Balkans region. Europeanization can be understood not only as a modernization process with its norms and values, but also as changes in the substance and process of democratic governance. The region provides further explanatory tools of Europeanization, such as “Balkanization,” in terms of closing up the process of establishing stable nation-states or a “quasi-Metanarrative” which provides a virtually new meaning to political life in the region. The paper’s goal is also to explain the specificities related to the processes of Europeanization in this rapidly transforming region of Europe.

KEYWORDS

Europeanization, Western Balkans,
European Union

ZROZUMIEĆ ZŁOŻONOŚCI: EUROPEIZACJA BAŁKANÓW ZACHODNICH

Streszczenie

W artykule dokonano przeglądu istotnych idei, conceptualizacji oraz definicji terminu europeizacji z perspektywy europejskich procesów integracyjnych regionu Bałkanów Zachodnich. Europeizacja może być rozumiana nie tylko jako zjawisko modernizacji z jej normami i wartościami lub zmianą istoty procesu demokratycznego zarządzania. Doświadczenia regionu pozwalają uchwycić kolejne „odsłony” europeizacji rozumianej jako na przykład „bałkanizacja” – w kontekście zamknięcia procesu tworzenia stabilnych państw narodowych w regionie – lub rozumianej jako „quasi-metanarracja”, która zapewnia praktycznie nowy sens życia politycznego w regionie. Praca wyjaśnia także specyfikę procesów europeizacji w tym dynamicznie transformującym się regionie Europy.

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europeizacja, Bałkany Zachodnie, Unia Europejska

INTRODUCTION

A German geographer August Zeune named the Balkan peninsula (*Balkan Halbinsel*) in 1808 in order to avoid the culturally sensitive euphemism of the “European part of Turkey,” as the rest of Europe then called that region:

In the north this Balkan Peninsula is divided from the rest of Europe by the long mountain chain of the Balkans, or the former Albanus, Scardus, Humus, which, to the northwest joins the Alps in the small Istrian peninsula, and to the east fades away into the Black Sea in two branches [Simić 2001, p. 20].

To live in the Balkans literally meant that one was “in” Europe but not “of” Europe [Liotta 2003]. More than two centuries later the same region still is “in” Europe but is it “of” Europe? This dilemma particularly applies to the post-Yugoslav political space which is today called the Western Balkans.¹ Due to various historical circumstances the

¹ According to the European Union, “the term «Western Balkans» covers Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic

region has never experienced democracy in its “western” form. After the collapse of Communism and the destruction of Yugoslavia, the Western Balkans’ new born states aimed to join the European Union [EU] (before 1992 – European Community). The European integration of the Western Balkans (with its starting point. Europeanization) has closely been intertwined with the democratization and democratic consolidation in the region which the EU considered *conditio sine qua non* for the candidate-countries.

But how do we understand the word ‘Europeanization’? Europeanization is a fashionable term in social scientific terminology. The concept of it is understood in many different ways [Goetz, Hix 2001; Olsen 2002, p. 921-952; Bulmer, Burch 1998, p. 601-628]. The scope of this paper does not permit a comprehensive review of the literature on Europeanization and will therefore retain the theoretical framework of the most important authors of the works in this field. It will review the various ideas, conceptualizations and definitions I consider relevant for this analysis, concluding that the Western Balkans region provided some new understandings of the term.

EUROPEANIZATION AS TECHNICALITIES

Most of the literature on Europeanization analyzes the relationship and influences between the EU and its Member States, with an emphasis on the top-down perspective. In this context, the literature has mainly focused on the way Member States are transformed after they obtain EU membership, and the process of Europeanization conceptualized as a constant interaction between the national and supranational (European) levels, with EU Member States as policy-makers and policy-takers. Ladrech in 1994 provided a starting point when he argued that Europeanization was “an incremental process reorienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organisational logic of national logic of national politics and policy-making” [Ladrech 1994,

of Macedonia, Kosovo under UN Security Resolution 1244, Montenegro and Serbia. With the exception of Albania, they were all a part of the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia” [EEAS 2013].

p. 70]. This seems to necessitate a process of downloading or top-down procedures, which was presented by Goetz and Hix [2001], Boerzel and Risse [2000] or Buller and Gamble [2002, p. 4-24]. Some commentators include a clarification of its direction: “top-down,” “bottom-up” or a combination of both [Ladrech 2002, p. 389-403; Bulmer, Burch 1998; Radaelli 2003a, p. 27-56].

In clarifying our understanding of Europeanization, we may start with the one that is most frequently used: Radaelli’s definition of Europeanization, who defines it as

the processes of: a) construction; b) diffusion; and c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles ‘ways of doing things’ and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated within the logic of domestic (national and sub-national) discourse, identities, political structures and public policies [Radaelli 2003b, p. 30].

In his “Europeanization: solution or problem?” [Radaelli 2004, p. 7-16] he distinguishes the aspects of Europeanization with its political content and public policy versus domestic political structures which include institutions, public administration, the relationship between central and regional governments, the legal system, the structure of representation (party system and pressure groups) and cognitive and normative structures. The importance of Radaelli’s definition is in the fact that it does not emphasize only certain aspects of Europeanization in relation to the political system, but also includes its normative aspects. The EU impact on domestic structures cannot be observed directly from the aspects of economic, legal and institutional transformation and formal adjustment to the EU. The normative aspect of Europeanization is in the background of all of these processes. This means that it cannot be analyzed independently from the way in which the formal and informal structures, policies, procedures, paradigms, styles, discourses, beliefs, identities and norms are internalized at the national level, thus shaping and changing discourses, identities, political structures and public policies. This internalization is what differs the normative aspect from other formal aspects of Europeanization – although all aspects of Europeanization are interdependent. Radaelli’s definition also emphasizes the importance

of changes in patterns of political behaviors which differs from the results of Europeanization of other processes, such as transition or globalization, in the post-communist political context.

In the context of Western Balkans post-communist countries, *ipso facto* candidate countries, Europeanisation has significantly different characteristics when compared to the Europeanization of the “old” Member States. When it comes to the latter, the study of Europeanization acquired its first major impetus with the development of the European communities. It dealt with the appreciation of processes taking place in the post-war Western Europe and the impact on member states of what has been termed “Europeanization, Western style” [Goetz 2002]. This first reading of Europeanization was linked to changes inside the European Community itself and the adaptive capabilities of its member states. It drew heavily from the experiences of Western European politics and societies. Simply, the EU is central in setting the agenda for change and is the primary bearer and expression of Europeanization [Anastakis 2005, p. 78].

The Europeanization of the Western Balkans candidate countries is a conceptual framework that links EU integration and transition. Moreover, the process of modernization and transformation of political, economic, legal and normative systems in each country as a condition of membership of the EU is not only linked to their Europeanization, but these processes are mutually conditioned. Boerzel and Risse [2000] suggest three levels of domestic change: absorption, accommodation and transformation. The main difference relates to the degree of domestic change: absorption incorporates European policies and ideas and adapt them to the countries’ institutions. Existing facilities, policies, processes and institutions do not change substantially, though, and therefore the degree of domestic change is low. Through accommodation, a moderate degree of domestic change is achieved due to EU pressure to adapt to existing processes. While there is a moderate degree of change, the normative aspect of Europeanization is nonetheless still missing. The third level (transformation) involves a change of existing policies, processes and institutions, including essential characteristics and background meanings, paradigms and norms. The degree of domestic change is high and it is therefore evident that only a third degree complete transformation assumes the existence of a normative aspect of Europeanization. It is

obvious that the third degree – identification with norms within the domestic community – is the final goal of Europeanization (or the final Europeanization!) The question remains how the EU can achieve this goal. It is an important question as it involves three levels for the candidate country: its politics, policy and polity. Persuasion and socialization are among the EU tools for achieving this goal:

Socialization refers to the process of inducting new actors into the norms, rules and ways of behavior of a given community. Its end is internalization, where the community norms and rules become taken from granted [Checkel 2008, p. 197].

One way to reach this end point is via persuasion, and this is the main soft power mechanism of Europeanization, which constructivists define as a social process of communication which involves changing beliefs, attitudes or behavior in the absence of overt coercion. Grabbe [2001] suggests five EU mechanism categories as instruments of change and conditionality during the accession period. The first mechanism provides a model for the legal and institutional framework that should be achieved by the candidate country. It refers to the harmonization of the national legal system with the EU legal system, and incorporation of the *acquis de l'Union* into it. This model puts equal pressure on the candidate country as well as at the “old” Member States in adopting policies and institutional resolutions from the “European” level. However, unlike the Member States, candidate countries cannot adapt legislative *acquis* to their preferences, and cannot complain if some of the policy does not fit into the internal structure of domestic policy. This feature of Europeanization is described by Anastakis as a “patronizing nature of the process (of Europeanization M.B.) due to asymmetrical power between the EU (...) and South East European partners” [Anastakis 2005, p. 81] (in our case the Western Balkans countries). As he explains, the EU is, by and large, dictating the rules of the game and the countries have only limited or no power to affect these rules. He sees several reasons for this imbalance of negotiation power:

First, these countries are not EU members so their capacity to affect the EU norms and procedures is non-existent. Second, the candidate countries wishing to join the EU have no say over rules of accession:

they merely have to abide by them. Moreover, the fact that all (...) countries have placed EU accession at the top of their foreign policy agenda means they are prepared to accept EU conditions, objectives and criteria [Anastakis 2005, p. 81].

The first mechanism goes further when the candidate is required to accept directives which are not part of the compulsory *acquis* within the pre-accession process (for example, social policy). This relation encourages the candidate to look for “good model” policies although for many policies there is no adequate legislation. The reason for such behavior is the political elite’s search for legitimacy: 1. they demonstrate themselves to be a relevant partner as future members of the EU; 2. they try to present themselves as recognized and serious political actors *vis-à-vis* the EU. Since the EU has no single model of “good governance,” different interpretations of various models of specific public policy are possible. This mechanism clearly shows that the policies for the region were designed primarily for economic and not for political transition. At the same time, it granted flexibility to the EU when it came to deciding which countries would be ready for full membership and when.

The second mechanism, according to Grabbe, is provision of financial and technical assistance to encourage the transfer of the EU model into national systems. This mechanism is extremely important (through the implementation of programs and funds or through the bilateral programs of the Member States). It also facilitates the implementation of certain segments of conditionality, through institution building.

The third is benchmarking and monitoring as essential elements of the conditionality for accession. Partnerships (which first appeared in 1998) shape this form of conditionality. These documents define short- and long-term priorities in preparation for accession. Those criticisms of Partnerships that have been made mostly concern the vaguely defined objectives listed at the normative level (improved training, capacity building etc.) without giving detailed preferences.

The fourth is the advisory role and twinning which contribute to the direct impact of EU administrative bodies and actors on the local administrative structures. It helps them to meet the requirements of full membership by learning from EU Member States’ experiences. The problem of this measure is the inability to control EU experts and advisers, which usually results in a diffusion-effect on the public

administration of the candidate country. EU administrative officers often function within their own administrative culture staying blind to the cultural specificities of a candidate country.

The fifth mechanism is the one that is the most effective – it allows further stages of negotiations over previously fulfilled conditions (a gate-keeping mechanism). This means there is a direct relationship between the fulfillment of specific criteria and the direct benefits in the pre-accession process [Grabbe 2001, p. 1013-1031]. Generally speaking, EU conditions vary from the broad Copenhagen criteria to the more focused conditions of the Association Agreements, to specific conditions linked to financial packages and projects. Other conditions emanate from the Dayton, Belgrade, and Ohrid peace accords. If conditions are not met, the EU has the power to delay progress and halt financial assistance [Anastakis 2005, p. 84]. A case in point is the way the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia (ICTY) criteria have been adopted by the EU and the international community. Non-compliance with the ICTY has affected progress in the Association and Stabilization process with Serbia and Montenegro and the start of accession talks with Croatia. Abiding by the ICTY rules is a significant part of the normative side of Europeanization for these countries and signifies justice, recognition of past crimes, and reconciliation between neighboring states and ethnic communities. As a result, the EU's power to determine the course of bilateral relations with candidate countries is unrestricted. The EU uses a combination of carrots, sticks, and the promise of eventual membership to bring these countries closer to Europe [Anastakis 2005, p. 84].

EUROPEANIZATION AS A STATE (DE)CONSTRUCTION PROCESS?

A state-building process within the explanatory scheme of Europeanization might bring fruitful results when analyzing the Western Balkan countries.² The end of communist state-building was replaced by the

2 The fragmentation of Yugoslavia in the 1990s into smaller states further weakened the ability of future administrations to stand up to the challenges of European integration.

core concept of transition and democratization theories in Europe, especially in countries where the change of regime was violent and ended with destruction of the whole society. If we apply a constructivist³ theoretical framework to state-building issues we realize that it asserts the existence of social structures – including norms, beliefs and identities – which constitute world politics [Wendt 1999]. All constructivist theories assert the importance of what John Searle calls “social facts”: facts that exist because all the relevant actors in a society agree they exist [Searle 1995]. He explains that “social facts” cannot be separated analytically from social values; therefore the units of analysis in the social sciences must be both facts and values. State-building may also be understood as a “social fact.” Most authors consider that the comprehensive process of state-building is the essence of Europeanization [Grabbe 2006]. Therefore from an axiological point of view, Europeanization means changing society and the political structure according to EU rules, values and conditionality. Javier Solana once stated [O’Brien 2006] that the process of EU enlargement not only improves the technical capacity of states but also commits them to shared values and wraps them in an ongoing process of lawmaking, law implementation and norm creation. In this context, Solana was correct to call EU enlargement “the greatest state-building success in modern history,” stressing the importance of “Europeanization as a state-building pattern” [O’Brien 2006].

From a constructivist perspective, Europeanization entails both norms and values. The process is a comprehensive formal process of institution-building and a symbolic creation of a “political community” accepted and trusted by all actors in the society. Seen as a dynamic process, Europeanization is a transfer of both practices and symbols [Featherstone, Radaelli 2003]. It cannot therefore be analysed as unfinished, but as a process which is always in the making. Moreover, it is a process of both defining and applying rules, so the interaction between the structure (the EU as a representative

3 Constructivism emerged in the 1990s as a part of the post positivist “sociological turn” in the social sciences and one of the pioneering authors in international relations is Alexander Wendt. He is the author of *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge 1999) which in 2006 received the International Studies Association award for “Best Book of the Decade” in the field.

of the international community) and the agent (local representatives of the Western Balkans) is fundamental for explaining the outcome. In this context, it is worth mentioning another element in the Europeanization process in the Western Balkans – the ever increasing and more demanding integration agenda. When compared with the criteria and rules of previous enlargements the current agenda is colossal (the best example is the most recent case of Croatia⁴). “The countries of the region are up against a moving target that runs faster and becomes more demanding by the day” [Anastakis 2005, p. 84].

In addition to the above, we should also note the fact that the Western Balkans faced a “dilemma of simultaneity” [Offe 1996] at the beginning of their transformation process, in that Western Balkans countries faced a “triple transition” which is not comparable with any other Central or South-East European experience: 1. from war to peace; 2. from humanitarian aid to sustainable development; 3. from a socialist political system to a free market economy. Once these have been taken into consideration, we can fully understand the perplexity of their status. On the other hand, if we consider the EU to be “the most densely institutionalized international organization in the world” [Pollack 2005, p. 357] then it is no wonder that EU conditionality, as the main instrument of political Europeanization, has proved to be problematic due to the diversity of tools directed towards two sets of countries within the same region – the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) functioning on bilateral conditionality and the Stability Pact promoting regional co-operation [Troncota 2011]. This conditionality must be understood as a multi-purpose process of imposing standards and social values in shaping democratic reforms in the Western Balkans. Not only does EU conditionality influence institution-building as the primary technical step in state-building, but this instrument also aims to bring peace, stability and prosperity to the region. The strategy was contradictory: increasing unity within the region through regional integration schemes, yet creating divisions by granting applicant status (with all the costs and benefits this entails) to some countries of the region, but not to others. In this context, both sides – the EU and the Western Balkans countries, have faced over the past decade or more a contradictory process of

4 Croatia joined the EU on July 1, 2013

unrealistic expectations from each other [Babić 2011, p. 131-155]. The rise of expectations from both sides is also a result of the successful experience of the Europeanization of the Central Eastern Europe countries (CEE) which motivated both the EU and the Western Balkans countries to expect similar results: the former expects the latter to progress in the same way as CEE did; at the same time the latter expects from the former to transform it the way it transformed the countries of CEE. Unrealistic expectations, then, are followed by disappointment. This situation contributes to the low level of accountability and creates a dangerous symbolic trend that can be understood as “Balkan-scepticism” that is backed by “Euro-scepticism;” this results in a delayed and problematic state-building process [Troncota 2011, p. 80].

The main features of this Europeanization pattern show that it is basically a technical process focused on institution-building – the civic approach towards citizenship; it puts a lot of pressure on local elites and it creates high expectations from endogenous factors – the responsibility is theirs, although the values are ours; failure or delay in fulfilling the formal criteria of state-building and EU conditionality produce disappointment and doubt regarding the future evolution of the process – “the Balkan-scepticism.” From the constructivist scheme of explanation one can emphasize that the EU’s impact in the Western Balkans countries does not only depend on constellations of domestic material interest, but can be most clearly seen where there is a “cultural match” between EU demands and domestic rules and political discourses. The EU puts a lot of stress on formal development criteria, losing sight of the contextual elements which hinder the Europeanization in the Western Balkans. If state-building is not a linear process, then the lack of uniformity in applying rules, the differentiations of the rhythm of implementation and the level of commitment may explain the nonlinear feature of Europeanization itself which is profoundly challenged in the Western Balkans region [Troncota 2011, p. 86]. The reaction of the EU towards this reality was the creation of a country-by-country assessment of development towards fulfilling the conditionality inside tailor-made Strategy Papers. It is important for international actors to use state-building to assess how things ‘are’ in the Balkans, rather than how the development dogma or EU conditionality tell us they should be [Troncota 2011, p. 86].

Dorian Jano introduced two models which have shaped state-building in the Western Balkans in the recent decade: Europeanization as a (Member-)state-building process and Balkanization as a Nation-state-building process [Jano 2008, p. 213-234]. The idea of the state that has been developed in the region was that of an authoritarian and/or strongly nationalistic regime, intending to bring 'stability' and 'saving' the state from disintegrating. However, this pattern often appeared to produce the opposite results (instability and disintegration) since it was unable to avoid a strong confrontation with its own citizens and most notably with its minorities. It seems however, that the problem is of a much more fundamental nature. Can we not assume that Europeanization does not oppose Balkanization but is instead an integrative (although oppressive) part of it?

BALKANIZATION AS EUROPEANIZATION?

If we expand the meaning of the term "Europeanization" to "westernization" or "modernization,"⁵ as Maria Todorova did in her "Imagining the Balkans," then we can conclude that the "Europeanization" of the Balkans started much earlier than in recent decades. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the "project of Europeanization," understood (in the above context) as the influx of capital and the creation of nation-states through the Balkan wars (1912-1913) in which everyone fought everyone else, and in which widespread atrocities were committed, was, at that time, pejoratively characterized by the Western press and intellectual imagination as "Balkanization" – a term which relates to the territorial fragmentation accompanied by enormous amounts of violence. The term "Balkanization," which rapidly became popular, overshadowed its true meaning, which emerged from the process of Europeanization. In the pejoratively understood term "Balkanization" there seems to be nothing of the Balkans but of the

5 The process of the Westernisation or modernisation of "the Balkans in the 19th and 20th centuries included the spread of rationalism and secularism, the intensification of commercial activities and industrialisation... the formation of the bourgeoisie and other new social groups in the economic and social sphere, and above all, the triumph of the bureaucratic nation state" [Todorova 1997, p. 13].

European [Mujkić 2012, p. 38]. It is, in a way, an unpleasant mirror of Europeanization, “of nation-states as its components, a ghost from a turbulent past that haunts, disturbs to the extent that it has to be named some other way, something like «Balkanization» [Mujkić 2012, p. 38]. Dominique Schnapper reminds us that nations were always born in violence and with time they become “natural” and “an objective truth” [Schnapper 2008]. Gerard Delanty assumes that European idea has in fact strengthened and not undermined the idea of the nation [Delanty 1995]. Asim Mujkić correctly notices that

what is disturbing in the nation-building process in the Western Balkans is that geopolitical reasons made it a kind of a late recapitulation of ontogenesis of the European nation-state in both its segments – firstly as the initial forced accumulation of capital, secondly as a violent process of political, economic and cultural uniformization of the desired nation-state. If we keep that in mind, then the term balkanization is nothing but an empty signifier (...) [Mujkić 2012, p. 40].

In this context, it is interesting to notice that among the most often used attributes in the European academic and political vocabulary for the 1992 dissolution of Yugoslavia, were assessments that this multiethnic and multinational country was an unnatural arrangement. Ignorant European critics of Yugoslavia did not say which states were natural arrangements. In short, Europe did not demonstrate any interest in keeping the integrity of Yugoslavia, then a sovereign European and a Balkan state [Sokolović 2007, p. 176]. Europe, as a paradigm of the nation state, showed an incredible level of ignorance and indifference in spite of the Helsinki [OSCE 1975] oaths to the stability of European borders.

Today Europeanization can be understood in this dual sense – as a capitalist re-appropriation inevitably accompanied by the ethno-national re-appropriation on the one hand, and as ‘harmonization with European values’, with the dominant legal and political standards that are based on the liberal-democratic imaginary and republican principles of government. The breakdown of the communist block and its subsequent Europeanization followed this dual pattern in detail. In the CEE countries which had deposed communism, a capitalist re-appropriation occurred – in various forms of so-called “privatization.” Also, in each of these countries, a reaffirmation of

the classical nation state occurred, first and foremost in the form of an ethno-national re-appropriation of its nation-state [Mujkić 2012, p. 41]. In the former Yugoslav political space, Slovenia more or less successfully completed the re-appropriation of the nation-state, the collateral damage of which was the administrative deletion of the Others, who were denied all their civil and political rights. In Croatia, as a consequence of the civil war, the number of national minorities was reduced to a controllable level; as a result, today this country is an EU member-state, a liberal democracy and a stable nation-state. There are several countries of the region that did not have the strength or were not successful in their ethno-national re-appropriations – Serbia, Macedonia and the still unresolved Albanian issue. In Bosnia and Herzegovina there is an entire archipelago of unfinished national identities, para-countries, cantons, communities, regions, which are mutually opposed and hostile; in essence, they lack the power to finish the processes of ethno-national re-appropriations of their own imagined nation-states [Mujkić 2012, p. 41].

In this context, finishing the process of Europeanization in the Western Balkans would mean further ethno-re-appropriations, homogenization and ethnic divisions. The region is far more important for the EU than the latter is willing to admit as it deals with the essence of the European identity. European identity is (still) a nation-state identity whether we like it or not. Stable nation-states in the region with controllable minorities and liberal democracy as their ideology waiting to join the EU would paradoxically mean a victory of Europeanization understood as Balkanization.

EUROPEANIZATION AS A “QUASI-METANARRATIVE?”

Othon Anastakis has noted that Europeanization can be treated as

a means and an end, a method as well as substance, a project and a vision. It signifies a certain political, socioeconomic and cultural reality, but it is also an ideology, a symbol, finally – a myth? [Anastakis 2005, p. 78].

The interpretation of reality regarding European integration (even more the process of Europeanization) of the Western Balkan countries

in the public sphere has become an ideology itself. Ideas in general, but political ideas in particular, are not only attempts to interpret reality, but also attempts to modify reality, to link parts of reality, to change reality, ipso facto the possible creation of a desirable social reality and expression in countless ways. This is the way in which ideas turn into ideologies and movements, and how they are enforced through institutions. People accept and interpret ideas in their own way. But, ideas are not neutral and as such are constantly addressed to the interests, needs and expectations of individuals, as well as social groups in a society.⁶ The “Idea” becomes a powerful tool for the integration of individuals into the community only if it is not abstract and remote from the experiences of an ordinary man. It must be translated into a language understandable to everyone. The idea must be translated into an event.⁷ Does an ordinary man understand Europeanization in a way that allows him to treat it as his own experience?

Isaiah Berlin [2000] has noted that throughout history people have been driven mostly by irrational rather than rational solutions. Therefore, most human beings are willing to sacrifice freedom, because they do not understand its true value. This is the bottom line of all metanarratives.⁸ Today, public discourse in the region prefers to discuss the progress of the accession process rather than freedom; it prefers to emphasize the security we obtain once we formally and legally become a part of the EU; and underlines the justice and equality we will enjoy once we join the great European community of nations.

The idea of the European integration confirms Marx’s thesis that underdeveloped societies (or a society on the periphery of Europe, as is the case of the Western Balkans) tend to see developed societies

6 Malinowski [1990] noticed that culture imposes on human behavior a new type of specific determinism. Postmodern societies are entering a phase of development where cultural (ideological) motives determine the ways people live, whether they are aware of it or not.

7 To connect ideas with human interest means to degrade the concept into reality and raise reality up to the idea. As Hegel [1975, p. 111] explains: “Thus it is only the reality which is adequate to the Concept which is a true reality, true indeed because in it the Idea itself brings itself into existence.”

8 The term was brought into prominence by Jean-Francois Lyotard [1998] who underlined his mistrust for metanarratives such as Enlightenment emancipation, Progress or Marxism.

in categories of their own future. Immanuel Kant, referring to the French Revolution, noticed that the truth of the revolution lies not in the factual actors of the revolution. It can be rather found in the enthusiasm of external observers. Therefore, only those who do not participate in the revolution see the truth of the revolution. Applied to another period of history, the fall of communism, it seems that (contrary to French actors of the revolution) the enthusiasm of the masses in 1989 was for the revolution that had already been achieved. While the actors involved in the French revolution created something entirely new which had not previously been in existence, the relationship between the East and the West seemed to be completely of a different nature. The East craved for nothing more than had been already realized in the West. On the other hand, the West identifies the enthusiasm for something that already exists. Therefore, a question asked by the West: "What is it that the East wants?" had to be answered with: "It is us!" The enthusiasm of the West in this sense was a narcissistic delusion – their own system and positions were seen as the best of all worlds. This was the way European integration/Europeanization, as an idea and an ideology, reached beyond local and national boundaries and merged spatial and nationally separated peoples. At the same time, after the collapse of socialism in the former Yugoslavia, the crisis developed an inherently tragic dimension. The Western Balkans countries in transition have experienced deep regression. Their development still is in some aspects well below the 1989 level of development. This shows the contradictions of transition as well as the fact that any mechanical application of the neoliberal model of dependent modernization has led to the peripherization of economy and society in the region in addition to the creation of dependent societies of the world's semiperiphery capitalism. Slavoj Žižek [1993] even considers the appearance of post-socialist nationalism in Yugoslavia as a product of the logic of Western capitalism, not something that develops from this logic. Nationalism was a tool that covered antagonisms and structural imbalances in order to impose the ideal of "community." Today the ideal has been extended to the European integrations with – at the same time – no alternatives to select. Selections appear to be only illusions. As the great narratives about "Liberation" or "Return to Nature" had proven false, looking to the West, Western Balkans found nothing. As the transition to

capitalism has not offered any meaning to political life, a replacement is found in the idea of the EU integrations and the process of Europeanization as its symbol. Therefore, Anastakis claims [2005] that in the region, Europeanization became much more than just a process of transformation or even the synergy of mutual influences in the relations between Member-states (candidates) and the EU (and vice versa): it became a symbol, a myth.

Is the EU with its Europeanization the ultimate horizon that will bring a solution to all economic and political problems in the region? In other words: is the final Europeanization the final solution? Europeanization is also a moment of crisis and conflict. The EU is a conflicting political horizon, because without conflict it would not have been political at all. Those who believe that the EU and Europeanization are the ultimate horizon, are not only naive, but they think in classical ideological terms and preclude other options, not in a geopolitical sense, but rather the possibility of other forms of political struggle and subjectification.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this paper has been to review various approaches to the process of Europeanization in the region. Besides concerns and doubts, uncertainties and difficulties there is no question that the Western Balkans region is *in* Europe and is *of* Europe. Furthermore, the process of Europeanization seems to be irreversible and potential difficulties can only influence the speed but not the general course of this process. Regardless of how we understand Europeanization:

- As “technicalities” (forcing structural transformation and modernization along with its norms and values);
- As a state-building process (with major transformations such as the revolutionizing of the structure of public administration, the social and economic convergence of EU standards, a change in the substance and process of democratic governance);
- As “Balkanization” in terms of closing up the process of establishing stable nation-states with controllable minorities;
- As a “quasi-Metanarrative” that virtually leaves no alternative and gives a new meaning to political life;

there is no doubt that “ultimately, it is Europe (its norms and values) which stand as the common denominator around which a new collective identity of the Balkans has begun to crystallize” [Bechev 2006, p. 22]. Of even greater significance is the fact that Europeanization is an identity formation project.

Although the process of Europeanization has been intertwined with democratization and democratic consolidation in the region, it is an externally driven process. But external actors cannot encourage democratization and secure a stable political system unless “internal” political actors do not strongly “manage” the elements of statehood and modernization. If the latter do not manage these processes, and the former keep dictating democratization from abroad, then it surely leads to a protectorate which limits the sovereignty of the state and causes a long-term unstable political system.⁹ This will continue to be one of the challenges of Europeanization in the region in the upcoming years.

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⁹ Unfortunately, this is the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina today. There should be more synergy between the “political” and “technical” in the process of the Europeanization of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The EU cannot afford excessive political correctness, bureaucratic and neutral positions, because it means compromising the core values of the EU.

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