



THE FUTURE OF 20 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE SIX WESTERN BALKAN STATES. A KEY QUESTION FOR EUROPE'S GEOPOLITICAL FUTURE

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The European Union has an obvious interest in the wealth and stability of the six Western Balkan states. Yet, the situation in these countries is growing into a threat for the EU. In this paper, the author proposes to replace the denomination Western Balkan states with states of the Eastern Adria, as the former has acquired a negative meaning, while Eastern Adria will underline the European dimension of the six states' integration. The article will also assess the reasons why the WB6 are crucial for Europe, the state of negotiations and obstacles to accession, as well as the reasons why the EU's traditionally bureaucratic-paternalistic approach to this region cannot be successful.

1. The “Balkan dead end”

The prevailing political and journalistic debate about the geopolitical future of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia (FYR), Montenegro and Serbia has come to a dead end: **the situation in those six states is growing into a threat for the European Union, however, because of this same situation, they cannot become members of the European Union for the foreseeable future.** At the same time, expert observers are setting the tone of this dramatic debate and can only hope “to publish their reports in the papers, be consulted as experts, receive support as representatives of NGOs and not to be regarded as “abandoned” diplomats” – as Andreas Ernst, South Eastern Europe correspondent of the *Neue Züricher Zeitung*,¹ puts it. It is also this opportunistic dramatisation that bars ways out of the dead end. However, two fundamental barriers are the **“destructive” historical-political view on the “Western Balkans”** and the **EU’s bureaucratic-paternalistic enlargement policy.** Both are “scientifically” supported, the first by national history and the second by comparing facts about member and applicant states while ignoring spatial and temporal conditions.

1.1 The “destructive” historical-political view on the “Western Balkans”

The term “Balkan Peninsula” is the starting point of questionable “made up” historical identities of the Balkan states. It was coined in 1808 by the German geographer Johann August Zeune. He followed the idea of ancient geographers according to which the Balkan Mountains stretch over the entire South Eastern European area from the Slovenian Alps down to the Black Sea and were just as significant for the whole region as the Apennines for the Italian Peninsula. The term “Balkan Peninsula” is met with justified criticism since this assumption has been proven to be untenable. As early as 1893, another geographer, Theobald Fischer, suggested calling the region “South Eastern European peninsula” which we abide by in this paper. Those states in the west of the peninsula remaining outside the EU, after Greece joined in 1981, Slovenia in 2004, Romania and Bulgaria in 2007 and Croatia in 2013, may also be referred to as **“States of the eastern Adria”** together with Slovenia and Croatia.

The questionable term “Balkan Peninsula” is leading to the “Balkan narratives” – such as “the powder keg of Europe”, “Balkans going to the bad”, “Balkans – the most dangerous of Europe’s trouble spots”, “The Balkans are a highly explosive region”, “Balkans: hotbed of bad news about corruption and organized crime”, or “The Balkans – inefficient statehood in a fragmented region”.

Marie-Janine Calic² developed an extensive basis to overcome this “destructive” narrative by putting South-Eastern Europe in a world-historical context. Two turning points in history have left the region permanently devalued: with the centre of the world economy shifting from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic area during the Age of Enlightenment, South-Eastern Europe was marginalised on the “Western European mental map” and considered “peripheral, backward and culturally inferior”; the

¹ A. Ernst, *Echoraum, Nicht Pulverfass, in Jugoslawien = in Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 40-41, 2 October 2017.

Michael Schmunk offers a very realistic analysis of diplomatic activities in South Eastern Europe: *The Western Balkans’ EU-perspective in an Era of New Challenges and New Uncertainties – External Game Change of an Agonizing Accession Process*, in *Südosteuropa Mitteilungen*, 04-05/ 2017, p. 27-39.

² M-J. Calic, *Südosteuropa. Weltgeschichte einer Region*, Munich 2016.

breakup of the region's empires since the end of the 19th century set off the fragmentation of statehood.

Calic shows how "world empires" are historically responsible for the "bad news" about South-Eastern Europe where they waged their conflicts and exploited the region's people and resources. Her historical view goes beyond narrow national history. Trans-local, regional and national trade-offs are considered episodes of global history. This way, regional cultures and identities can be understood as "constructs" of their time and may be used in a "destructive" manner to the present day.

The first sentence of the book "Am Anfang war Alexander der Große" [*In the beginning was Alexander the Great*]- translator's note] is currently leading to a naming dispute between Greece and post-Yugoslavian Macedonia. Historic documentation indicates that these countries have a Greco-Roman cultural heritage. And contemporary history shows how little these states can use it for their European integration. Those three prove the questionable condescendence of western European states towards South-Eastern Europe, despite pre-Christian and Christian Rome being a constituting element of the EU. The Christian EU-narrative especially is being narrowed down to Western Europe and historically distorted as South-Eastern Europe was Christianised centuries before North Western Europe. After the division of the Roman Empire in 395, South Eastern Europe was ruled by Byzantium even during those centuries when Rome had lost all political power. Hence, after the year 800, South Eastern Europe did not become part of the Carolingian Holy Roman Empire, the Franco-German narrative bracket of the EU. Following the schism of 1054 between the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, Byzantium used its religion for imperial rule too. Slavs had been migrating to South Eastern Europe since the 6th century where they were Christianised from Byzantium. Thus, they were involved in the continent's power-political and religious division. Heinrich August Winkler³ attributes a European "primordial difference" since the Middle Ages to the schism between Rome and Byzantium. According to him, the separation of powers between divine and human law – founded in the Concordat of Worms of 1122 for the "west" – did not happen in the sphere of influence of the Byzantine Church, which for Winkler explains the "non-western" development of eastern and South Eastern Europe to this day. This historical-political thesis is very influential in European politics. However, it is fatal for Europe's geopolitical perspectives. European integration can hardly accept that historical religious differences are turned into fundamentalism but requires their abolition – just like the Peace of Westphalia did for the political interaction of Catholic and Protestant states in 1648.

Moreover, Winkler's "inner Christian" primordial difference is ignoring the complex and even beyond 1999 war-relevant difference between Christianity and Islam in south-eastern Europe that can be attributed to the Ottoman conquest of the Byzantine Empire, culminating in the conquest of Byzantium in 1453. Both differences together, as part of a corresponding indoctrination on the part of the EU, make it easier for Turkey and wealthy Arabic states to influence those parts of the population that were Islamised by the Ottomans.

Since the 14th century, Islamic dominance pushed the Christian one aside and the Ottoman Empire used this for imperial purposes. By way of comparison, its reign was, despite all cruel claims to power and exploitations, multicultural.

The Ottoman Empire was one of the two adversaries in the global conflict between Europe's dominating empires since the end of the Middle Ages, Habsburg the other one. While the Ottoman Empire was oriented towards the east, Habsburg was oriented towards the west as far as America,

³ H. A. Winkler, *Zerbricht der Westen? Über die gegenwärtige Krise in Europa und in Amerika*, Frankfurt am Main 2017.

which marks the beginning of the modern age. There, England and France became new imperial adversaries.

The West, North America and France experienced democratic revolutions at the end of the 18th century related to the Enlightenment and the articulation of human rights. They freed South Eastern Europe from the Ottoman Empire and brought about national efforts which were the beginning of conflicts lasting to this day; they are linked to made-up ethnic-cultural historical-political perceptions.

It is of global political significance that the creation of small national states is competing with imperial or “nationalism of great powers” in the 19th and 21st centuries. The imperial interests of Habsburg, the “national powers” of England and France as well as Russia – on cultural grounds of Slavic unity – and the Deutsche Reich after 1871 all stirred up the “small nations” in South Eastern Europe against one another. Their antagonisms resulted in the Balkan Wars in 1912-13 and led the “great nations” into two world wars. Those wars were marked by distressing atrocities – also against civilians – committed by the warring South Eastern Europeans among themselves and by the intervening great powers, especially Habsburg during World War I and Nazi Germany during World War II. The suffering inflicted upon millions became a reference for the creation of ethnic identities that consider bearers of other identities as enemies.⁴

Efforts to develop democratic statehood in South Eastern Europe between World War I and II remained unsuccessful also because the German-Italian fascism prevented it from happening. After 1945, South Eastern Europe was politically divided following an agreement between Stalin and Churchill and the region became – with the exception of Greece – communist. Soon, this division became a part of the globally imperialistic and ideological dualism between the Soviet Union and the United States.

Early on, the South Eastern European states attempted to free themselves from their dependence on the Soviet world power, which was especially true for Yugoslavia, with Tito playing a major role as leader of the non-aligned movement; it was tragically-exotically true for Albania; and totalitarian-chauvinistically true for Romania under Ceaușescu. From a cultural and linguistic point of view, these attempts were made by Slavic-speaking peoples, an Albanian and a Latin speaking people. Current distinctions between a real or pretended “pro-western” and “pro-Russian orientation” of eastern European states can hence not generally be justified with common Slavic grounds.

In the beginning, the building of communist statehood led to strong economic growth that went hand in hand with a technological and economic transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy and a lasting urbanisation. The communists’ power and integrated statehood declined as the communist states in South Eastern Europe were no longer able to solve their crises mainly caused by their financial integration in the world economy and external deficits since the early 1980s. The wars in declining Yugoslavia turned into a global crisis that changed the world order: new global political instruments were created such as the International Criminal Court or the UN’s “responsibility to protect”. The globality of the crisis in South Eastern Europe gives reason to fear that unsolved conflicts between and within the six states on the eastern shores of the Adriatic Sea could have global consequences with “great national” states as players and disagreeing EU member states being affected.

In Calic’s view, South Eastern Europe should develop from a scene of world history into a region equally respected for human rights by building democratic states, overcoming nationalistic fragmentation and European integration. This would have to be accepted by current world powers

⁴ A. Micic, *Der bosnisch-herzogowinische Nachkrieg*, in *Jugoslawien = in Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 40-41, 2 October 2017.

and EU member states alike. Still, the US and Russia like to interfere in small states, also in south-eastern Europe, China entered the picture in the 21st century and so could India, soon the world's most populous nation.

This is prompting the question of European geopolitical actions. Whether the six Western Balkans states– or now abbreviated as “WB6” – belong to Europe is a nonsensical question. Nobody would contest this from a geographic point of view and historically, they already did belong to Europe when the North of Scandinavia or Great Britain had not even entered history yet. However, this question is linked to the EU's self-image, articulated time and again, that it was synonymous with Europe. But this is “Eurocratic” hubris sometimes allied with western European “national-provincial” arrogance. Naturally, Europe's cultural and identity-related “self-image” – also for the EU – has to apply the Greco-Roman and Christian historic narratives to all states in South Eastern Europe as well. This includes overcoming inner-Christian conflicts progressively and thus being able to handle conflicts with the other monotheistic religions – Islam and Judaism – accordingly.

International politically-integrated territory for operations is rarely determined on historical or cultural grounds but by the efficiency of political institutions acting within it and their power-political dimensions. This is also true for the EU and its enlargement policy which was and still is above all guided by its capacity for action and economic power for which historic references may either be welcome or neglected. This makes the EU's relations with the WB6 power-politically relevant on their common continent. By taking a deeper look into their common history, it is easier to assess the integration of 20 million people in South Eastern Europe while reflecting the present. A permanent topic for the past 20 years and coming with slogans such as Euro-political lethargy and enlargement fatigue, the EU is failing in this duty.

1.2 The bureaucratic-paternalistic enlargement strategy of the EU

As is known, the EU has European legal relations with the South Eastern European states with a prospect of EU membership.⁵ The EU opened accession negotiations with Serbia and Montenegro, Albania and Macedonia (FYR) received candidate status, stabilisation and association agreements exist with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. On this basis, the EU has the right to assess these states' “accession maturity” and has been doing so regularly for years.

These “maturity assessments” are linked to the “regatta principle”. By competing against each other, these states are supposed to achieve maturity. The regatta principle can be considered as a Eurocratic-arrogant approach; “strict and paternal” according to the EU Commission: “Now you start running, let's see who wins and may be rewarded”. However, the regatta principle is absurd since “immaturity” is also due to missing cooperation between the concerned states and lies in bilateral problems. The EU is doing its best to help solve such problems – prior to or before concluding the accession negotiations. By doing so, the EU is, however, partly responsible for this “immaturity”. Hence arises the question whether the underlying logic of political integration doesn't require solving such bilateral problems in the course of accession negotiations.

⁵ A possible membership is regulated by article 49 of the Treaty on the European Union of 9 May 2008; Association agreement standardised article 217 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) 9 May 2008.

This is especially true for the relations between Kosovo and Serbia and in general for the Serbian-Albanian relationships. Kosovo's independence is the result of how the Serbian government under the war criminal Milosevic treated Albanians living there in a dictatorial and discriminatory way as well as the successful intervention of NATO according to its idea of a "Responsibility to Protect" under international law. Subsequently, further integration of the Kosovar Albanians into the Serbian state proved to be impossible. In 1999, Kosovo was put under interim administration of the UN⁶ until becoming a sovereign state in 2008. It was therefore non-autonomous and partly still is after 2008. Since June 1999, authority in Kosovo is exercised by the United Nations Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), led by a special emissary of the UN General Secretary; as well as, since July 1999, by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, and, since 2008, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX). UNMIK is quarterly grading the development, last on 31st October 2017.⁷ In addition, embassies intervene almost daily, especially the US American embassy. This causes a divided consciousness about "international" politics. Albanians are striving for national independence in the 19th century tradition, when European Great Powers with the involvement of Russia accepted the creation of national states after the fall of the Ottoman Empire.⁸ The goal is stability; Kosovar politicians who took responsibility for their state during the war of independence against Serbia are trying to meet this goal also because they are hoping to be rewarded with retention of power and protected against prosecution by international justice – after all it is hard to imagine war without war crimes. This is contradictory to the European political understanding of a young generation who is embracing free mobility and a welfare state guaranteed by democracy.

This divided consciousness of "international" politics in Kosovo is causing the EU to have a credibility crisis between its documented claims of democracy and rule of law on the one hand and the concrete actions of ambassadors of its larger members states on the other. This crisis is fuelled by limited success of its missions; EULEX is not free from allegations of corruption. A German in charge of energy policy at UNMIK was arrested for illicit enrichment in the millions. Growing "national" claims of the Kosovar opposition become understandable versus "national" claims of Serbian politics. For Kosovo and Serbia to become members of the EU, both states must have equal rights which is not the case today due to Serbian claims of influence and to non-recognition of Kosovo by five EU member states.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the problem of the cohabitation of Albanians and Serbians in both states can only be sustainably solved within the EU: with freedom of movement, borders are becoming less important, minority rights turn into European rights and both make current conflicts obsolete.

Kosovo is also in conflict with Montenegro over a territory of a marginal – from a European point of view – 8,000 hectares. Generally, several border disputes also exist in the region with Serbia. Kosovo considers giving in as a prejudice against the much bigger issues persisting with Serbia. The fact that the EU is punishing people in Kosovo with visa requirements until this border dispute is resolved shows that only diplomats and members of parliament for whom diplomatic passports are a simple reality of life can have come up with this idea.

⁶ UN Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

⁷ United Nation Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo* (S/2017/911), 31 October 2017.

⁸ Those great powers participated in the military border disputes. President Wilson encouraged the creation of new states after the end of World War I, evidently without knowing the historical context. This self-image of being a great power has an effect on the behaviour of ambassadors – to the point of influencing the formation of governments, favouring or ostracising political parties.

Kosovo's dilemma has certain parallels with Bosnia and Herzegovina. Trilateral issues between Bosnians, Serbs and Croats remain unsolved. While Bosnians are resolutely fighting for their state, questions about the relationship with Serbia and Croatia are arising for Serbs and Croats. The common state is the result of a structure established under international law designed by the US and the EU in Dayton. The UN and EU took over institutional roles, extensively curtailing the competencies of democratically elected politicians. It comes then as no surprise if their rhetoric is identity-connected. The international community's failures are by now a generally described proven fact. Here, too, it is becoming increasingly clear that solutions can only be found in an EU that includes Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian statehood that respects minorities. However, Croatia's EU membership has not brought Bosnia and Herzegovina's issues any closer to a solution and a border dispute is persisting between EU members Croatia and Slovenia over sovereign rights at sea.

Compared to the "grading" of individual states, general problems the EU is clearly involved in are put aside during the "maturity assessments". Next to its annual "communication of the EU-Commission on its enlargement strategy and most important challenges"⁹, the EU is also assessing criteria rephrased over the years. Currently and since 2015, these are rule of law, basic rights, economic development as well as functioning democratic institutions and

the reform of public administration.¹⁰

2. Rule of law, basic rights, economic development as well as functioning of democratic institutions and reform of public administration

a) For reasons rooted in democracy, the rule of law is at the very heart of the conditions for membership. States must tackle justice reforms and fight organised crime and corruption. Corruption is the most widely discussed issue with and within the WB6. There is no journalistic article without a reference to it and, apparently, mutual accusations of corruption play a central part in election campaigns in these states. However, there are hardly any benchmarks applied equally to eastern and western Europe allowing for a comparable classification. Since 1995, Transparency International draws up the Corruptions Perceptions Index, which indicates perceived levels of corruption of politicians and officials. It is determined by assessments by independent institutes and opinion surveys of country analysts, business people and experts at home and abroad.

If correlated with state rankings of domestic product per capita however, i.e. when "rule of law" and "economic development" are correlated, this ranking is thought provoking.

Below a ranking of domestic product per capita calculated in US dollars of the still 28 EU states and the WB6 on the lowest ranks:

⁹ Latest communication of 9 November 2016, COM (2016) 715 final.

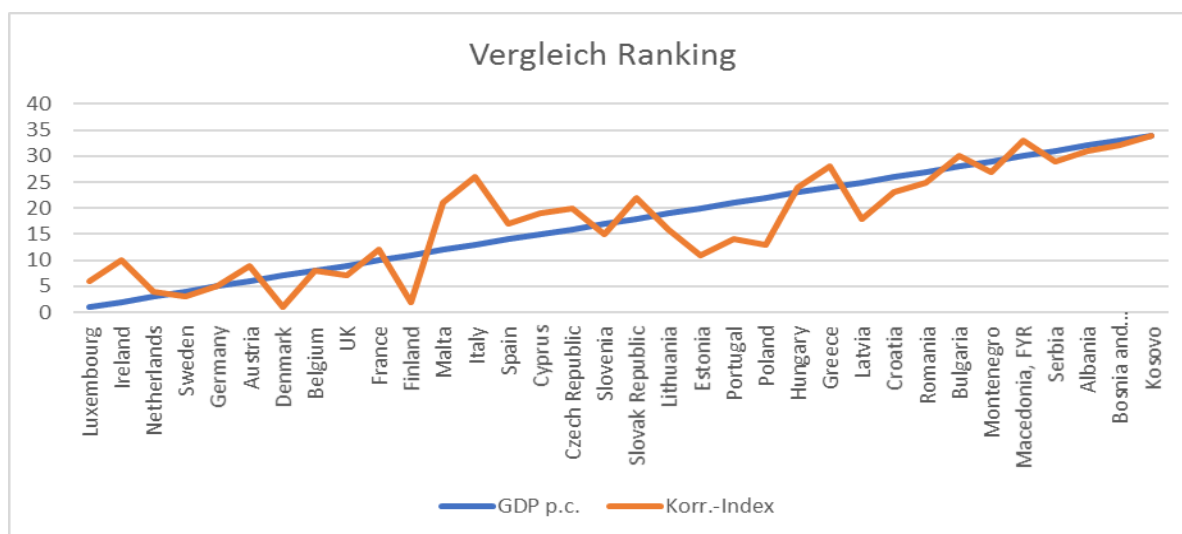
¹⁰ Based on a medium-term strategy for the EU enlargement policy.

	EU member states and WB6	Domestic product per capita in US dollars
1	Luxembourg	104,003
2	Ireland	69,231
3	Netherlands	51,049
4	Sweden	49,836
5	Germany	48,111
6	Austria	48,005
7	Denmark	47,985
8	Belgium	45,047
9	UK	42,481
10	France	42,314
11	Finland	42,165
12	Malta	39,834
13	Italy	36,833
14	Spain	36,416
15	Cyprus	34,970
16	Czech Republic	33,232
17	Slovenia	32,085
18	Slovak Republic	31,339
19	Lithuania	29,972
20	Estonia	29,313
21	Portugal	28,933
22	Poland	27,764
23	Hungary	27,482
24	Greece	26,669
25	Latvia	25,710
26	Croatia	22,795
27	Romania	22,348
28	Bulgaria	20,327
29	Montenegro	16,643
30	Macedonia, FYR	14,597
31	Serbia	14,493
32	Albania	11,840
33	Bosnia and Herzegovina	10,958
34	Kosovo	9,332

This ranking can be compared with the “tabular ranking” of Transparency International’s “corruption index”. The last figure indicates the domestic product per capita rank with a rating of the differences in ranks added.

TI corruption index	EU member states and WB6	Per capita GDP ranking	Comparison
1	Denmark	7	significantly better
2	Finland	11	significantly better
3	Sweden	4	minimally better
4	Netherlands	3	same
5	Germany	5	same
6	Luxembourg	1	<u>significantly worse</u>
7	Great Britain	9	marginally better
8	Belgium	8	same
9	Austria	6	slightly worse
10	Ireland	2	<u>significantly worse</u>
11	Estonia	20	significantly better
12	France	10	marginally worse
13	Poland	22	significantly better
14	Portugal	21	significantly better
15	Slovenia	17	marginally better
16	Lithuania	19	marginally better
17	Spain	14	worse
18	Latvia	25	significantly better
19	Cyprus	15	worse
20	Czech Republic	16	worse
21	Malta	12	<u>significantly worse</u>
22	Slovakia	18	worse
23	Croatia	26	better
24	Hungary	23	minimally worse
25	Romania	27	marginally better
26	Italy	13	<u>significantly worse</u>
27	Montenegro	29	marginally better

28	Greece	24	worse
29	Serbia	31	marginally better
30	Bulgaria	28	marginally worse
31	Albania	32	minimally better
32	Bosnia and H.	33	minimally better
33	Macedonia, FYR	30	slightly worse
34	Kosovo	34	same



It becomes clear that corruption correlates with poverty, rich states are perceived as less corrupt. Italy shows an evident negative discrepancy and yet, the well-known *mafiose* structures were no obstacle for the country to be a founding member of the European Economic Community in 1957. One of the questions around inner-European security is that of corruptive structures in Western Europe linking up with those in South Eastern Europe. This concerns the fight against organised crime, which should work better within the EU than in the small “WB 6” states.

b) Another part of the fight against corruption in the context of the “rule of law” and “functioning democratic institutions” as well as “economic development” is the issue of overcoming an inappropriate influence of the rich, called oligarchs in Eastern Europe. Economically meaningful benchmarks are missing here too. The “Bloomberg Billionaires Index”¹¹ published by Bloomberg, ranking 500 billionaires, may serve as a reference here. The three richest are all US Americans with a “total net worth” of over 80 billion US dollars each. The fourth and hence richest EU-European is a Spaniard with 78 billion US dollars. Among the 500 people listed are 26 Russians and one Ukrainian; however, with two Czechs, among whom ANO-leader Andrej Babis, only two citizens from all Eastern European EU member states made the list and no one from the WB 6. For the sake of comparison: Germany has 36.

¹¹ Bloomberg Billionaires Index as of 10 December 2017, www.bloomberg/billionaires/.

The German newspaper *Welt am Sonntag*¹² developed an oligarch index based on the “Bloomberg Billionaires Index” defined as “wealth of the five richest persons in a country matched against the country’s economic performance in percentage terms”. According to this index, EU member Cyprus is leading by a long way with a result of 80.8%, third is Sweden with 18.7%, Czech Republic has 11.9% before Denmark with 10.7%, Russia is 10th with 6.7%, and Germany is 15th with only 3.7%. The “Bloomberg Billionaires Index” provides no statistical basis for the WB6. Of course, here, too, we find rich people influencing the political development in their economically weak state for their economic interests. In the EU however, this would be irrelevant since the European market would marginalise such influence, also because of these states’ low domestic product, just as EU membership relativised the peak values of Cyprus and the Scandinavian states on a European level. The question may be asked how differently wealth and hence political influence of individuals are assessed between Western and Eastern Europe.

c) Some political and socioeconomic links must be known and weighed accordingly to assess corruption. One of those links stems from the communist past. In a well-founded book on “Corrupt democratisation in the context of European integration”, Gergana Bulanova-Hristova,¹³ using Bulgaria as an example, shows that corruption is also a communist legacy. Her analysis – that may also be applied to the WB6 – is based on the observation that socialist societies were marked by strong deficits in goods. This “implied the development of an almost all-encompassing barter system where goods were bartered for status in the sense of access to limited goods or services”. It was not a barter for objects of equal value but access to something limited for a favour now or in the future. She calls this a “second network” that is different from the structures of the communist governing party. This double network led to the idea that there was a second way for everything, thus circumventing official rules. Strong family or professional ties offered helpful conditions for such a system of favours. With the implosion of communism, the formal centre of power disappeared as well while the social structures remained unchanged. “They maintained their existence as a network of people who knew each other from their professional or social environment and trusted from their experience that the reciprocity of favours would inevitably be maintained. The elites of the transformation were recruited from precisely those networks, such as flexible parts of the former *nomenklatura* and intelligentsia who directed their political efforts at putting ‘their people’ in all areas of society to divide the leftovers of the former state’s assets among themselves. ‘In the new era’ some of the professional networks of socialism paved the way for the origins of post-socialist organised crime”.¹⁴

A crucial element of the socioeconomic transformation that is also relevant to functioning democratic institutions was that Bulgaria’s elite was not replaced in 1989 – which applies to the WB6 in a similar way. Instead, the former political leadership split and one part quickly took over the role of a new elite. It consisted of members of the former *nomenklatura* and circles of scientists, artists and writers. Early legitimisation of the new political elites, determining the basic characteristics of the democratic transformation, happened at round tables or during similar gatherings. Unlike the Polish “round table” that brought together the Communist parties and anti-Communists who had fought in the underground for years, in South Eastern Europe pro-reformers of the Communist party and alternative parties, that were created within a few weeks and whose protagonists had had a

¹² D. Eckert, H. Zschäpitz, *Die wahre Liste der Superreichen*, in “Die Welt am Sonntag”, 26 November 2017.

¹³ G. Bulanova-Hristova, *Von Sofia nach Brüssel. Korrupte Demokratisierung im Kontext der europäischen Integration*, Baden-Baden 2011, especially p. 322 ff.

¹⁴ See *ibidem* p. 323 f.

Communist past (though a less prominent one), came together. They agreed on the main political reforms, a market-based liberal democracy and a European orientation. There was no real public debate about the path to those “reforms” so that no competition in terms of content could come up between the parties. This meant a derogatorily perceived choice between “post-Communist” or “anti-Communist” governments in the Western European view. Both ways were to blame for the initially negative consequences of the socioeconomic reforms, in which their dependence on international financial institutions and the EU deprived them of any alternatives.

The above-described barter system has a lot to do with economic informality, the second socioeconomic link to be looked at. Informal economic activity must not be confused with a (tax evading) shadow economy. It is a non-monetary market system, without public social security. This informality is much simpler if the informal objects for barter, as described by Bulanova-Hristova, belong to the service sector than in the case of the agricultural sector, where large parts of production are used for own needs, complemented by an in-kind barter. Norbert Mappes-Niedieck¹⁵ points out that large parts of the Balkan Peninsula were oriented towards livestock breeding. Herdsmen drove their sheep and goats through mountainous regions where farming was hardly possible. They were necessarily armed, and their barter could degenerate into robbery.

Some of the WB6 still have a large agricultural sector similar to Romania. While only 4.5% of employees in the EU are working in agriculture, it is 41.3% in Albania, 19.4% in Serbia, 17.9% in Macedonia (FYR) and Bosnia and Herzegovina respectively, and, to a less significant extent, in Montenegro with 7.7% and Kosovo with only 2.3%. Society defeats crime and corruption in the transition from an agrarian to a service-oriented society in a social state.

The links between a weak domestic product and missing rule of law can generally be explained with a contradiction. Weakness is certainly a result of informality not least because it is not statistically captured and hence makes the declared domestic product smaller than the actual one. Corruption leads to reserve of the private sector, financial resources are misdirected however, real oligarch power is made impossible by economic weakness. And yet, it is likely that sufficient recovery growth is only possible in the EU.

This is confirmed by comparing the domestic products of all Eastern European states between 2000 and 2016:

GDP growth in Eastern Europe			
	2000	2016	Increase in %
Albania	9,386	11,840	+26.2%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	9,017	10,958	+21.5%
Bulgaria	15,670	20,327	+29.7% !
Croatia	19,454	22,795	+17.2%
Czech Republic	27,498	33,232	+20.9%
Estonia	21,724	29,313	+34.9%!
Hungary	21,906	27,482	+25.5%

¹⁵ N. Mappes-Niedieck, *Balkan-Mafia. Staaten in der Hand des Verbrechens – Eine Gefahr für Europa*, Berlin 2003, p.127 f.

Kosovo	7,76	9,332	+18.5%
Latvia	17,856	25,710	+44.0%!
Lithuania	20,551	29,972	+45.8%!
Macedonia, FYR	11,564	14,597	+26.2%
Montenegro	13,562	16,643	+22.7%
Poland	21,084	27,764	+31.7%
Romania	16,719	22,348	+33.7%!
Serbia	12,110	14,493	+19.7%
Slovak Republic	24,555	31,339	+27.6%
Slovenia	28,055	32,085	+14.4%

In 2000, the domestic product of all “WB 6” states was lower than all states that joined the EU and this has not changed since 2016. According to an assessment of the European Commission however, increases in some of the recent member states are significantly higher than in the WB6 states, especially in Bulgaria and Romania, which suffer from similar deficiencies as the WB6 states and also in the Baltic states. In the case of Croatia, the higher baseline value was in favour of its admittance, not the increase.

e) It is remarkable that the low domestic product is hardly being explained in the EU Commission’s communications. Structural reforms and macroeconomic stability with low public debt are crucial, though it is not verified whether a corresponding economic policy is actually necessarily contributing to higher growth rates compared to Western European member states.

Sectorial economic structures are a decisive prerequisite for sufficient growth. However, this is barely discussed in the communications even though corresponding indices are listed in the annexes. The percentage employment share of the agricultural sector has already been shown in the context of informal economic activity, below the shares of industry, construction and services. Those are 17.3 %, 6.8 % and 71.3 % in the EU. WB6 values for comparison are:¹⁶

Employment share by sector			
	Construction	Industry	Services
Albania	6.9 %	11.6 %	40.2 %
Bosnia and Herzegovina	7.5 %	22.0 %	52.4 %
Kosovo	9.5 %	18.7 %	68.4 %
Macedonia, FYR	7.1 %	23.4 %	51.6 %
Montenegro	6.6 %	10.8 %	74.8 %
Serbia	4.5 %	19.9 %	55.4 %

¹⁶ 2016 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy, COM(2016) 715 final.

EU values for services and industry must be strived for, especially at the expense of the agricultural sector; highly developed economies are post-industrial service and knowledge economies. Coordinating the inter alia scientific-technical training with corresponding professional perspectives is decisive to fight youth unemployment and emigration of the qualified young.

e) Rule of law is a fundamental prerequisite for the democratic and economic development of Europe, the EU and the WB6. Democracy is founded on the rule of law; this is the difference with totalitarian and authoritarian political systems. The rule of law is based in appropriate laws and the independence of the justice system. This independence means not to be subject to the government's instructions, but it also means socioeconomic independence. Only if judges are sufficiently paid corruption will not spread; this may happen if they are not adequately paid for their social status. However, this was and remains insufficiently solved and is problematic because the varying socioeconomic situations in European states are transparent and comparable – in terms of communication, in fact, Europe is fully integrated. For example, Albanian judges, who received € 500 per month for a long time, knew that their German colleagues were paid about ten times as much. One of the European Commission's almost absurd positions concerns its opinion that judges' salaries were a matter for member states, which coupled with the recommendation for budgetary consolidation and, if possible, no tax increases. In the concrete case of Albania, this position seemed grotesque. In 2006 EURALIUS, the European Assistance Mission to the Albanian Justice System published the report "Creation of medium-term programme to increase judges salaries aiming to reduce corruption degree".¹⁷ It recommended increasing the salaries of judges in the first instance from almost € 600 to € 1,000 and up to € 1,500, increase that was to be paid by the Albanian state. Hardly anything could have contributed more to improving the rule of law in Albania than a financial contribution of the EU to this very recommendation.

In the meantime, the Albanian judicial system has been improved following strong pressure from the EU and the United States ambassador. However, it will still depend on the comparison of the judges' salaries in Europe whether those regulations will be effective.

The rule of law is a precondition for economic investment: foreigners and locals have invested only in short-term projects in Albania for a long time due to legal uncertainty. Also the rule of law is a condition sine qua non to fight organised crime. As early as 2003, Norbert Mappes-Niediek,¹⁸ whose journalistic publications are not about creating scandals, described the South Eastern European states as "in the hands of crime", as a "danger for Europe".

Crime is the result of war, state failure and the creation of smaller, economically weak new states. The borders between them encourage smuggling. Suppliers and consignees in Western Europe – and in the USA – are one of the reasons for organised crime to have entered those states. Justice in every one of those small South-eastern European states is too weak and underpaid to take on the *mafiosi* networks, and international and EU missions are incapable to act for organisational reasons. It is obvious that the response to European mafia integration must be an integration of these states.

f) Organised crime is a risk for democracy if the rule of law cannot fight it on the long term. It is also undermining **basic rights** that the democratic state has a duty to protect. Basic rights had to be

¹⁷ Manuscript by EURALIUS, 2006.

¹⁸ Mappes-Niediek, cit.

enforced against the Communist past in all post-Communist states during the transformation process, but this was not always a priority to post-Communist elites for whom freedom also meant freedom of enrichment. Thanks to their knowledge about the economic structures during Communist times, these elites benefited from privatisations that were pushed by western consultants, international financial institutions and the EU on an institutional level. Thus, political influence joins economic interests and it is a short way from here to asserting those interests by criminal means too. Overlapping interests and of course crime fight shy of transparency. It follows almost conclusively that the powerful rich take hold of the media as well. All this makes guaranteeing human rights a condition sine qua non to EU membership. Their obstruction lies in their interlocking with economic development. The European Commission is doing too little in this area in the on-going accession negotiations, especially with Serbia. It is symptomatic that the current Serbian president, Alexander Vučić, used to be in a minister in Milosević's government. His criminal connections culminating in the late contract killing of prime minister Zoran Djindjić are well known. Obstructions of the media are obvious especially during Serbian elections: election observation missions have to focus on such obstructions and their continuation must lead to an interruption of accession negotiations.

g) Functioning democratic institutions and reform of public administration. The problematic nature of the freedom of the media in Serbia leads to that of functioning democratic institutions. The rule of law and basic rights are prerequisites for democracy. Democracy is shaped by elections, after which the elected ones are legitimised to take political decisions. In Eastern Europe competing parties were created with the support of West European parties and consultants after the implosion of Communist regimes. The idea was that the Eastern European party systems would adopt the West European ones, with a democratic right-left alternative. Demands for inner-party democracy were expressed, though it was rarely verified which of those demands were met by Western European parties. Since 1990, elections among political parties took place. However, it emerged that victorious parties in declining Yugoslav states were oriented towards national-separatist goals, thus accelerating decline and willingly accepting civil wars. Holm Sundhausen's verdict is that "the thesis according to which democratic elections are an important instrument to solve conflicts was not confirmed in the case of Yugoslavia".¹⁹ This was especially true for Croatia, Serbia including Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, to a lesser extent for Slovenia and Macedonia (FYR). Only Albania was not concerned. Since then, the party systems in those states have turned towards a Western European left-right juxtaposition under the strong influence of the European "families of parties", especially the PES and EPP, according to their weight in the European Parliament and in western European states. The decline of early EPP members in some East European EU member states may have an influence on South Eastern Europe. Party system analyses frequently lead to two results: a lack of alternatives to the goals of competing parties and a lack of inner-party democracy.

Both may also be explained with the influence of corruption: election campaigns focus on mutual accusations of corruption followed by accusations of electoral fraud by the loser after the elections. It should be added that the economic policies recommended or even imposed by the EU blurred the alternatives. Tony Blair's strategy of a "third way" has become a true justification for the lack of alternatives.

The accusations of lacking democracy within the parties may be countered with one example. The party chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania, Edi Rama, is reproached for not having been gone through a re-election process as chairman of the party for the past eight years, but this procedure

¹⁹ H. Sundhausen, *Jugoslawien und seine Nachfolgestaaten 1943-2001*, Vienna-Cologne-Weimar 2012, p. 292.

has been replaced by his successful re-election as prime minister. However, he took over this procedure from the British Labour Party where it was practised long before the days of Tony Blair.

The two big parties in Albania are somewhat incapable of compromise, the influence of S&D and EPP MEPs was hence useful and a necessary contribution to democratic European integration of the parties. This influence on the one hand allowed to constitutionally change the justice system, and on the other shows that democratic deficit in non-EU states can only be solved at European level, not autonomously as a condition for membership.

Macedonia's Prime Minister Nicola Gruevski's refusal to step down after his party VMRO-DPMNE lost the elections was only surmounted following international pressure. Despite efforts of the European families of parties, the case was referred to the international criminal court. This shows that supranational law is necessary in the case of small, historically damaged European states. However, such supranational law should better be European law applied to member states that are involved in the legislative process, rather than the enforcement of international standards by threatening United States ambassadors.

h) Regional collaboration. The WB6 are a result of the principally military decline of Yugoslavia, which Albania got drawn into even if it was not concerned by the international military conflict. It is understandable that peaceful intergovernmental collaboration between those states is so problematic. Not only is the improvement especially of economic collaboration a necessity, also the partly traumatic war experiences must be coped with. Since the 1990s, the international community is trying to contribute like it did with the stability pact after the end of the Kosovo War. In the face of its limited success, however, the Berlin Process was launched in 2014, which created the basis for a regional market. This is a natural cooperation for membership in the EU; yet a "substitute EU" with 20 million people instead of EU membership with then 529 million people seems a whimsical idea.

Cooperation between the heads of state and government is even more important in every day intergovernmental life. The "Western Balkans Six Leaders Summit" was held in Sarajevo in March 2017. In addition, frequent bilateral meetings between the heads of state and government are indispensable contributions; even Vučić and Rama are meeting. The last meeting of the heads of government in 2017 was held in early December in Brussels upon invitation of the High EU Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini.

To criticise such meetings because they are motivated by domestic politics is bizarre, as every foreign policy must be also legitimised by domestic policy. The fact that Rama talked to parties of the Albanian minority in Macedonia (FYR) about their involvement in overcoming the local crisis of democracy was rather a necessity for political integration. Calling it an interference in the country's domestic affairs seems to be a lack of understanding of the institutional goals of the EU. The Brdo-Brioni Process, initiated by the presidents of Croatia and Slovenia, is another important contribution; the last meeting was held on the 3rd of June 2017. This process shows that accession to the EU is a necessity for all states of former Yugoslavia or rather all states on the eastern shores of the Adriatic Sea, even if EU membership does not solve all intergovernmental, historically-charged issues, as shown by the border dispute between Slovenia and Croatia over the Bay of Piran. But here is a standard example of a European dispute: even being part of a single state does not solve the issues between the Flemish and Walloons in Belgium. Nevertheless, Brussels is the indisputable centre of EU politics.

3. Necessary EU goals in six European states with 20 million people in the 21st century

The integration in the EU of six states and 20 million people in the 21st century should be based on: the interest of the Europeans in a geopolitical dimension combined with the comprehensive European understanding of human rights.

It should be the Europeans' fundamental interest to maintain an influence on the development of the world to which globalisation, increasing states' interdependencies in matters of security, economy, migration and environment add more and more reasons and no alternatives. Thus, European interests have a geopolitical dimension. And this requires territorial integration without an enclave on the eastern shores of the Adriatic Sea between Croatia and Greece. The 2015 migration crisis made clear just how harmful this enclave really is. The six South Eastern European states could not be involved in a common EU policy on refugees and hence, thousands of refugees passed through Serbia and Macedonia (FYR) on the Balkan route on their way to Austria and Germany. The government of Skopje was forced with foreign pressure to shield the northern EU member states from an uncontrolled flood of refugees via its border with EU member state Greece, a truly absurd situation for European politics. A promise to accelerate Serbia's accession process was sufficient to obtain the desired action here, south of the Hungarian border safeguarded by barbed wire. Remarkably, Albania was capable by itself not to become part of the Balkan route.

The migration crisis also made the European understanding of human rights a subject of dramatic debates. Who deserves the same civil rights of a European and who as a migrant only the asylum and refugee protection rights defined by international law? Of course, a distinction is necessary in social and political practice, yet we should also consider what are Europe's capabilities in comparison with states in the Middle East and Africa. Today, German asylum law considers the WB 6 safe countries of origin without gross human rights violations and thus, return of migrants to these states is possible. In this way, however, forced return to the WB6 states turns into a violation of the rights of 2.9 millions Albanian, 3.8 millions Bosnian-Herzegovinian, 1.8 millions Kosovars, 2.1 millions Macedonian, 0.6 M. Montenegrins and 8.9 millions Serbian citizens, a total of 20.1 millions people. There is no justification for difference in their freedom of movement and that of 508 million inhabitants of the 28 member states of the EU.

It cannot be a different recent history – that is, that they unlike most states in Central and Eastern Europe, were not struck by war after the implosion of communism – to make the difference. A distinction must be made here between Albania and the five states that were part of Yugoslavia. While this failed state had practised a liberal form of communism that allowed for cooperation with the European Community, Albanians experienced a communism of total isolation and totalitarian repression. It is all the more remarkable that Albanians managed to stay out of the Yugoslavian wars, in spite of the fact that Albanian minorities were hit particularly hard by Slavic repression, leading eventually to Kosovo's independence. If European integration is about people and not about openly changing territorial statehood, it is appropriate to ask who is responsible for war and who may be punished for it – millions of western Germans were not after World War II. 20 million in South Eastern Europe however are punished with socioeconomic discrimination and are limited in their freedom to live wherever they want in Europe – 1.8 million people in Kosovo even need a visa if they want to travel into the EU.

4. The question of democracy and political maturity

“Functioning democratic institutions” are considered as a criterion of “political” or “democratic maturity” in the assessment of the WB 6. The assessments of the political maturity is entrusted to EU diplomat, and this is indeed a sometimes questionable understanding of democracy. They involve interventions by “mighty” ambassadors who, it should be mentioned, are not democratically legitimised, in spite of the democratic constitutions of their state. This is another reason why “political maturity” refers rather to the capability of managing state and external affairs than to democracy itself. The Serbian government has been certified “politically mature”; President Vučić received partly demonstrative support also from former social democratic chancellor Schroeder. Even though mistakes of the past may be corrected, it must be noted that Vučić was minister under Milosevic and his now minister of foreign affairs, Ivica Dačić, was his press officer. The obstruction of the media by the government or associated media owners during election campaigns is hardly contested. The majorities won by Vučić exclude any serious conflicts with an opposition. Evidently, there are similar reasons for the support of President Hashim Thaçi in Kosovo. These political representatives capable of acting on an international level have been named “stabilocrats of the Balkans”.²⁰

Conflicts between the governing party and the opposition constitute the main criticism to the political system in Albania. Without a doubt, there is no fundamental democratic consensus over the arguments about the recognition of election results between the two dominating parties, the currently governing rather left-wing Socialist Party (SP) led by Rama, supported by the PES and the rather right-wing Democratic Party (DP) supported by the EPP and founded by former president Sali Berisha, who was a member of the Communist Party prior to 1990. Changes in the government after elections have taken place though – a basic requirement of democratic elections – and a third party came into being after splitting off from the Socialist Party, the Socialist Movement for Integration (LSI), which have contributed to these changes and from whose ranks come the current President of Albania, Ilir Meta.

For its part, Bosnia is criticised for having cartel political parties of the ethnically-oriented parties. A partial explanation may be the above-mentioned restriction of competency of intricately intertwined institutions by the international community. In addition, the agreement concluded in Dayton to elect a Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian president gives few reasons to make an ethnically integrated party landscape a reality.

Montenegro, which recently joined NATO, has been governed by the same man, Milo Đukanović, for over twenty years; apparently this is not an obstacle to the progression of the accession negotiations, after admission into NATO, strongly encouraged by the United States. A coalition partner parting from Đukanović and aiming for a change of government gains hardly any acknowledgement, not to say the risk of being accused of destabilisation. Yet, the EU successfully intervened in abuse of power in Macedonia (FYR).

²⁰ Title of an article by Jens Martens in the “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung”, published 4th April 2017.

5. Risks for 20 million people in six states and thus for the EU

Circumstances in the WB6 that could turn into a risk for the European Union are populism and nationalism on a domestic level, the influence of Islam on a European level and the interference of Turkey, Russia and China on an international level and overall the possibility of another war.

Populism in Europe can be a strategy both for government and opposition. Both have higher chances of success in smaller than in bigger states. Hence, the less populous “WB 6” states could be more strongly affected. In concrete terms, authoritarian governments want to stop democratic change, the populist argument here being to ward off threats to stability. Nikola Gruevski’s government in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia used this argument coupled with aggressions against the Albanian minority. The goal of this populist policy was to preserve power in order to safeguard economic interests and privileges.

Generally speaking, populism can be linked to nationalism in Europe. However, the Macedonian government’s populism was not directed at the conservation of the nation-state but at its ethnic division. This leads to the question of whether the Western Balkan states are generally nationalist. Norbert Mappes-Niediek²¹ presents valid arguments to question this. Nationalism is not a principal matter in those states that were newly created following international intervention.

Since the 2015 refugee crisis migrants have fed populist and nationalist arguments. In the context of the crisis, Macedonia (FYR) was exploited by the EU. It is crucial to look at the migration quota of the WB6. They differ. The “Percentage of migrants of total population”²² is low in Albania 2%, Bosnia and Herzegovina 1%, Macedonia (FYR) 6%, and higher in Croatia 14%, Montenegro 13%, Slovenia 11%, Serbia stands in the middle with 9%, and no data available for Kosovo. To compare: in the Russian Federation the percentage of migrants is 8%, and in Germany is 15%.

The debate around migration in several EU member states focuses on the influence of Muslim migrants. This debate also refers to the memberships of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Kosovo, all of which have a large Muslim population. This affects domestic political developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina; the Bosnian population is Muslim also in its identity, i.e. 1.9 million people or 51% of the population of this state live side by side with 31% mainly Serbian orthodox Christians and 15% mainly Croat Roman Catholic Christians. In Albania, 57% or 1.6 million, in Kosovo 96% or 1.7 million inhabitants are Muslim, together 5.3 million people. To compare: in Germany 4.7 million people, or 5.7% of the population, are Muslim, in France they are a little over 6 million, i.e. 9%. If the EU will enlarge to the Western Balkans, the percentage of Muslim population would not increase by much.

To assess Muslim influence in Albania and Kosovo, it must be noticed that the former is a constitutionally laicist state and the latter is a constitutionally secular one. The mythical hero of Albanians is Lord Georg Castriot Skanderbeg who defended Christian Albania against the Ottoman Muslims in the 15th century. His statues are found in Tirana and Pristina. Patron saint of streets, universities and airports in Albania is Mother Teresa, a Roman Catholic nun, whose memorial is located in Skopje.

²¹ Norbert Mappes-Niediek. cit. p.168 f.

²² United Nations, International Migration Report 2015.

Fears of Islamic influence is coupled with Turkey's political influence on the WB6. First of all, this influence is of economic nature, which is inevitable considering Turkey's size and is in line with the EU's strategy for a free trade policy. However, President Erdogan is connecting foreign trade with the funding of public infrastructure projects and of mosques, and with the support for Turkey-oriented groups. This may lead to dependencies in those small states that could be reduced or avoided if they were members of the EU.

Muslim influence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia (FYR) is amplified by the construction of mosques funded by Saudi Arabia; this could be linked a Wahhabi exercise of religion. This Saudi Arabian influence is to be understood as part of the much broader context of EU relations with Saudi Arabia, including the export of weapons. Again, it is easier to counteract Islamic forces violating human rights in the EU than individually in each of the small WB6.

Russia's influence has gained in importance, a result of increasing tensions between the "West" and President Putin. Those disputes find their antagonistic expression in the increasing influence of United States ambassadors, which provides the basis for the NATO-membership of at least Albania and Montenegro. Common Slavic grounds appear in the relation between Serbia and Russia; accordingly, Russia does not recognise Kosovo's independence. The WB 6 states are not at the heart of the tensions between the EU and Russia, their membership however, after solving their intergovernmental conflicts, could ease those tensions, as opportunities for Russia to interfere would be reduced.

China's influence is becoming more and more significant and is coupled with its "Belt and Road Initiative".²³ The greater context is China's 16+1 cooperation with precisely 16 Central and Eastern European states. That China's goal is to expand its trade and foreign investments is obvious, considering the international trade policies of the EU and USA, countries with significantly fewer inhabitants – 510 and 330 million respectively – than China (1,350 million). Cooperation with Beijing could lead to dependencies, for smaller states rather than for larger ones. A special aspect of Chinese international economic policy is its interest in global transport infrastructures; spatial development is regarded as a functional policy. It aims both at connections by sea, through investments in harbours (also in Eastern Europe), and by land. Transport by train from East Asia to Europe is evidently faster than by sea, with more intermediate stops in locations, that could then improve their economic perspectives. South Eastern European states see funding opportunities for their infrastructure projects through China's policy as an addition or as an alternative to EU funding. This is certainly useful if economic relations between the EU and China are clear. But it bears risks if used against the EU.

The influence of Turkey, Russia and China on the WB 6 may lead to problems for the EU if it is used to trigger crises affecting EU member states. The centuries-old experience of world history, according to which smaller states are exploited by bigger ones for their conflicts, is still valid. This exploitation by great powers – in the worst case through wars – was the Balkan's real tragedy. It is an illusion to believe that no more wars may happen on the Balkans twenty years after the Yugoslav wars. The historically most successful strategy to avoid war in Europe is the European Union and, also in the current EU-member states' own interest, should not be denied to the WB6.

²³ J. Bastian, *China's Footprint in Southeast Europe: Constructing the "Balkan Silk Road"*, in "Südosteuropa Mitteilungen", 04-05/ 2017, p. 9-26.

6. Strategy of European values also for the states on the Eastern Adria and its people

Only by admitting the WB6 into the EU can we go beyond the dead end in which these states' conditions constitute a threat to the European Union and, at the same time, an obstacle to their membership. This is the best prevention against risks.

The proclamation of European values by numerous European diplomats and members of parliament in everyday politics is done on the false assumption that the world is waiting for these European values. Consequently, it serves as a justification for the EU to punish governments and those governed by them, should their institutions not adhere to these values. For states outside the European Union this is quite a ridiculous illusion. Within the EU, however, all Europeans could fight together for their values, and the people of the WB 6 are apparently willing to do so. Most of them want to join the EU. It is obvious that values will be to their advantage. One of Europe's moral issues is that values are defended particularly where one's own prosperity is being defended. Economic weakness can consequently be understood as a neglect of values.

During the June 2018 European Council summit, the EU should decide to launch talks with all six Balkan states and drop the "regatta principle". Intergovernmental conflicts and domestic restrictions of values must be on the agenda. Negotiations between the European Commission and the concerned governments should cover a broad spectrum of topics. Representatives of the European families of parties should participate, especially their members in the European Parliament. Democracy in Europe is based on competition between democratic parties, which are, for their part, integrated on a European level.

The Western Balkan states' accession to the EU would also mean overcoming the disintegration of Yugoslavia and encourage a renewed integration of its inhabitants, this time within Europe. Hence, the participation especially of the political systems of Croatia and Slovenia is appropriate.

It should not just be a vision that the next President of the European Commission, elected after the next elections to the European Parliament in 2019, may be able to declare at the beginning of his or her term that by its end, all states on the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea will be members of the European Union, i.e. by 2024. This will already be ten years after 2014, the centennial of the gunshot fired in Sarajevo that triggered war in Europe. Actually, that year would have been a good one to solve the "Balkan issues" on a European level.