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**New Dimensions of Cooperation:  
Hungary and Slovakia's Joint Involvement  
in the Western Balkans**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The accession of Hungary and Slovakia to the European Union provided them with an opportunity to shape the policies of the EU, including foreign and enlargement ones. Until now, neither of the countries exploited all chances they had, since a big portion of their diplomatic activities aimed at the explanation of problems in their bilateral relations. Instead of presenting new initiatives that might be of added value for the EU, both countries got the reputation of more hostile EU members. The main aim of this paper is therefore to steer a discussion on possible areas of joint cooperation between Slovak and Hungarian diplomacy, with specific focus on the Western Balkan region. The identification of concrete fields of cooperation in the Western Balkans might not only bring added value to EU policies, but could improve the reputation of both countries on the Union level. The Western Balkan countries could benefit from this cooperation, too, since Hungary and Slovakia are considered to be their supporters, who understand their recent history and development perhaps better than other EU member states.

It can be argued that the Western Balkans is one of the key regional priorities for the European Union. Moreover, the European perspective is a clear sign that the Western Balkan countries are considered as future members of the EU. Accordingly, the Western Balkans has a central position among foreign policy priorities of both Hungary and Slovakia.

The paper has three principal tasks. Firstly, it aims to identify the most important security risks and political challenges the governments of the Western Balkan countries face. Secondly, it briefly analyzes the most recent trends and developments in the Hungarian and Slovak policies towards the Western Balkans. Finally, the authors set up a number of concrete areas, in which the Hungarian and Slovak diplomacies can intensify their cooperation. These areas of cooperation are further followed by concrete recommendations to the Slovak and Hungarian governments.

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## **2. WESTERN BALKANS – STABILISED INSTABILITY**

Both the European Union and NATO, of which Hungary and Slovakia are members, consider the maintenance of security in the Western Balkans to be a priority task. The eruption of instability in the neighbouring Western Balkan region might naturally have an impact on the security situation of both countries, even though Slovakia – unlike Hungary – does not have direct borders with any of the Western Balkan countries. While in the 1990s the Western Balkans was a region where numerous wars and military clashes emerged, current security threats are reduced to soft security issues. Political instability, corruption, illegal migration, organised crime, including drug and weapon trafficking, represent important challenges to the governments of the Western Balkan countries, but also for the EU, NATO and their member states. Therefore, the forthcoming paragraphs not only analyze the most important challenges, but, going from one country to another, identify particular sources of instability in each of the countries in the region. A more detailed analysis of security threats and current political development is a precondition for any concrete political action, while it also gives legitimacy to the recommendations that are put forward in the end of the paper.

One of the most burning problems with regards to the region is that it cannot be treated as a single entity, despite the fact that the international community has been referring to the region as the Western Balkans roughly since 2000. This description covers the republics of the former Yugoslavia, except Slovenia, but including Albania. Ostensibly, the recent NATO newcomer Croatia, whose negotiations for EU membership are at an advanced stage, cannot be considered as being the same – in terms of security policy risk and integration capabilities – as the internationally supervised Kosovo, or Bosnia-Herzegovina. While there are examples for both stability and instability, the latter is not strong enough to threaten the security of the region. The time of armed conflicts is over and since 1999 only low-intensity conflicts occurred periodically (2000 – 2001 south Serbia, in 2001 Macedonia, Northern Mitrovica February – March 2008). With some certainty, we could dismiss the possibility of more serious armed clashes in the West Balkans. There are two reasons for this. On the one hand, the main objective of the countries of the region includes Transatlantic integration, as well as the intervention earlier of the international forces remains a warning example for each participant. However, the region is far from being stable, primarily because of the thus far unresolved Serbian – Albanian issue, as well as a few other tensions that have an impact on the stability of the region, these include primarily the problems of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, the domestic situation in Serbia, as well as the unresolved border dispute between Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Serbia, etc. The fact that Serbia's Foreign Minister cancelled his participation at the Dubrovnik summit on June 9 – 10, 2009 – for whatever the real reason – there are conflicting explanations from the Croatian and Serbian sides – is a definite sign that unexpected tensions might emerge. We can safely predict that the present situation would more-or-less prevail in the following few years, since the fundamental disputes rest on problems, which are irresolvable in the short term.

Apart from the internal political situation, we must also deal with four external factors. The first one concerns the impact of the economic crisis. The countries of the region thus far – somewhat surprisingly – reacted reasonably well and even enhanced their bilateral cooperation. While the commercial warfare that erupted between Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in the middle of May 2009 is gaining ground, it obviously cannot transcend a certain limit in light of Euro-Atlantic integration.

The second factor relates to the capacity of the EU to expand. Albeit, official rhetoric insists that the integration of the West Balkans is an explicit goal, periodically statements appear which tend to signal that expansion might be considerably delayed. Some countries would prefer to halt the enlargement process until the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, but Angela Merkel for instance, insisted that after the accession of Croatia, the EU must hold a longer enlargement pause.<sup>1</sup> The possible deferral of enlargement would most likely have a negative effect on the security policy aspect of the region.

Thirdly, the problems related to illegal migration should be mentioned as well, since the EU automatically connects this issue to combating illegal migration.

Finally, widespread organised crime and human and drug trafficking present serious security policy challenges not only to every country in the region, but to the EU as well.

In regards to the security of the region, it is noteworthy that on an Albanian initiative, a two-day regional meeting was held between the heads of states of Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro on 23 – 24 June, 2009. Apart from the enhancement of good neighbourly relations, the participants discussed the fostering of mutual economic cooperation, common Euroatlantic targets, the creation of a common energy structure, as well as cooperation in the field of tourism. They endeavour to demonstrate to foreign investors that the evolving atmosphere in the region is congenial and Albania has offered the use of the country's ports. During the apparently affable atmosphere, the Kosovo side has pointed out that though the past cannot be forgotten, it is in the interest of everyone to develop the best possible relations with Serbia, while the Montenegrin side emphasised that the success of Serbia's evolution and integration is in the interest of every country in the region.<sup>2</sup>

An equally important regional meeting was held in Montenegro on June 8, 2009, where the foreign ministers of Croatia and Bosnia – Herzegovina discussed the issue of cooperation along the common triangular border.<sup>3</sup> It is also noteworthy that a conference was held on the issue of customs services in the Balkan region and it appears that cooperation in this respect will be closer in the future. However, these favourable developments cannot lead to the over-optimistic view the Greek President of the Socialist International, Papandreu expressed at the end of June when he stated that the whole of the Balkan region could become a part of the EU by 2014.<sup>4</sup> Bosnia – Herzegovina and Kosovo would not be able fulfil the required conditions by that date, even if everything were to proceed in the most favourable direction.

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<sup>1</sup> "Merkel says EU must consolidate before growing" (March 16, 2009); <http://www.reuters.com/article/newsMaps/idUSTRE52F4Z420090316>.

<sup>2</sup> "Što prije riješiti otvorena pitanja"; <http://www.pobjeda.co.me/citanje.php?datum=2009-06-25&id=166475>.

<sup>3</sup> "Priopćenje za javnost" (July 8, 2009); <http://www.mvpei.hr/MVP.asp?pcpid=1382>.

<sup>4</sup> "Papandreu: Region u EU 2014. godine" (June 30, 2009); <http://www.pobjeda.co.me/citanje.php?datum=2009-06-30&id=166803>.

Regional security challenges mentioned above are, though to a different extent, present in each of the countries in the region. However, there exist additional risks that are specific for particular countries and which might become a potential source of instability for the whole region. Therefore, a more detailed focus on the most important factors marking political, economic and social development in all Western Balkan countries is reasonable to be made.

## 2.1 Albania

In comparison to other Western Balkan countries, the general political and economic situation was relatively stable in the course of the last few months. Albania has also improved its relations with other Western Balkan countries and participates actively in numerous regional initiatives, considering regional cooperation to be an important instrument for enhancing political and economic cooperation. Moreover, Albania sent its official application for EU membership to Brussels and was invited – together with Croatia – to join NATO at the Bucharest summit.

However, the developments after the most recent parliamentary elections held in June 2009 show that Albania might potentially face certain political instability in the future. The results showed that the ruling Democratic Party (DP) led by Sali Berisha and its coalition are the winners. The congress of the Socialist Party (SP), however, adopted a resolution in August in which it refused to recognise the results of the elections, due to irregularities. Later in September the Socialist Party leadership decided to boycott the work of the parliament. The Socialist Party leader Edi Rama said that early elections are needed for Albania to emerge from a political crisis.<sup>5</sup> International observers pointed at some problems during elections, too. According to the OSCE, even though the Albanian parliamentary election process showed improvement, the violations persisted.<sup>6</sup> One of the problems turned out to be a long vote count.

Even though Albania decided to send its application for the EU membership to Brussels, this step has currently more symbolic than real value. It is premature to think about the date of Albania's accession to the EU, since Albania has to undergo a number of important reforms and adjust its legislature to the EU standards. The EC's 2008 progress report stated that Albania has to reform its legal judicial system in order to diminish corruption and fight against organised crime<sup>7</sup>. Unlike Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, Albania is not going to enter the Schengen "white" list in January 2010 because it has not made sufficient progress in fighting organised crime and corruption, introducing biometric passports and enhancing border and migration management.

Being a strong advocate of Kosovo's independence, Albania continued to strengthen its ties with its neighbour. The construction of the Durres-Kukes highway is considered to

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5 "Albania's Socialists refuse to recognise elections results"; [http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en\\_GB/newsbriefs/setimes/newsbriefs/2009/08/31/nb-05](http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/newsbriefs/setimes/newsbriefs/2009/08/31/nb-05).

6 "Albanian elections – lessons to be learned"; [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/press\\_corner/newsletter/index\\_en.htm#a8](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/press_corner/newsletter/index_en.htm#a8).

7 European Commission, *Albania 2008 Progress Report*; [http://www.delalb.ec.europa.eu/files/albania\\_progress\\_report\\_2008.pdf](http://www.delalb.ec.europa.eu/files/albania_progress_report_2008.pdf).

be an important step in terms of opening Kosovo to regional and European markets.<sup>8</sup> The highway might also become an important transport corridor for other countries in the region. However, when one lane of the highway was opened for traffic with an official ceremony at the end of May, Albanian Prime Minister Berisha accented the need to “tear down the wall between Albanians”. Since Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaci took part in the ceremony as well, the bilateral dimension clearly overshadowed the regional one.<sup>9</sup>

Despite certain improvement in economic performance, Albania continues to be one of the poorest European countries. However, the current economic crisis showed that its economic isolation from the past had more positive than negative impact on the state of Albanian economy and protects it from the hits of economic crisis. Nevertheless, Albania has to restructure its economy and attract more foreign investments in order to improve its economic performance and living standards of the population.

## 2.2 Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina is the most problematic country of the region, even more problematic than Kosovo. The main problem is caused by the fact that the Dayton Agreement and the will of the international community have forced three nations to cohabit in an ethnic mix, which none of these nations really want. Thus, there is no chance for them to form a unified nation-state in this area. A segment of the international community thinks that the present cumbersome state could be made more effective by reinforcing the central power – in some sense to create a quasi nation-state.

While Haris Silajdžić would favour a stronger centralised state and would like to eliminate the Serb entity<sup>10</sup>, the leader of the Serb entity, Milorad Dodik, perceives that even the smallest reinforcement of the central power would endanger his ethnic entity.<sup>11</sup> Both parties use the existing problem to their own political ends by manipulating public opinion. In essence, this is the main reason that the Bosnian politicians are unable to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. Furthermore, the international community is trying to square the circle. On the one hand, the USA insists that it respects the Dayton Agreement and maintains that it is still valid<sup>12</sup>, yet it insists that the agreement should be changed for the sake of effectiveness, on the other.<sup>13</sup> Scores of examples of such statements could be

<sup>8</sup> The highway has been financed by the Turkish-US consortium. The highway was officially inaugurated in June by the Albanian and Turkish prime ministers Ali Berisha and Recep Tayyip Erdogan. See <http://www.makfax.com.mk/en-us/Details.aspx?itemID=6040>.

<sup>9</sup> “Erdogan, Berisha to open Albania-Kosovo highway”; <http://www.balkanforum.info/f63/erdo-berisha-to-open-albania-kosovo-highway-59742/>.

<sup>10</sup> “Dodik odbacio Silajdžićeve ocjene” (August 1, 2008); <http://www.dnevniavaz.ba/dogadjaji teme/dodik-odbacio-silajdziceve-ocjene>.

<sup>11</sup> N. Pejić, “Bosnia Caught Between Tweedledee And Tweedledum” (October 23, 2008); [http://www.rferl.org/content/commentary\\_Bosnia\\_Tweedledee\\_Tweedledum/1332195.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/commentary_Bosnia_Tweedledee_Tweedledum/1332195.html).

<sup>12</sup> “Novi američki veleposlanik u BiH English: SAD će nastaviti podržavati Dayton” (October 5, 2007); <http://www.pincom.info/bih/opsirnije.asp?ID=51040>.

<sup>13</sup> “Inglis: Srbi moraju prihvatiti da nema ništa od otcjepljenja” (November 21, 2007); <http://www.dnevniavaz.ba/dogadjaji/aktuelno/inglis-dejtoski-sporazum-mora-biti-poboljsan>.

cited. It seems, however, that the EU and the chief international envoy support a (slow) evolution and a compromised solution by supporting the Prud Process, but this positive effort is being frustrated from two sides. On the one hand, the Bosnian leaders – on numerous occasions – squabble at the time when general principles should be transformed into concrete programmes. On the other hand, the USA and the EU periodically disagree over the handling of the Bosnian problem.<sup>14</sup> This is not surprising, since it is not easy to implement the Bonn mandates properly. If the EU and the SR do not implement these mandates, the Bosnian politicians will propel the country towards anarchy. However, if it does, then the question arises whether a democratic country can be governed by dictatorial means on the one hand, and what it should do if large numbers of political actors defy its will, on the other.

Presumably, this dilemma is the reason why Javier Solana endeavoured to convince Valentin Inzko to ignore the Bonn mandates and instead, search for a „political solution“.<sup>15</sup> Ostensibly, a compromise reached between the two led Inzko to annul a decision made by the Republika Srpska on May 14, 2009,<sup>16</sup> however, no sanctions had been threatened in case the Serb entity refused to comply.<sup>17</sup> In June 2009, Sulejman Tihić expressed concern that clashes could erupt if the OHR were to close before the sides could agree to amend the constitution. This stipulation is underscored by a declaration issued by the PIC at the end of June. According to this declaration, the OHR would remain open until Bosnia fulfils the goals set out by the PIC. Russia disagreed with a clause in the declaration that sanctioned the conduct of the Republika Srpska.<sup>18</sup>

For the aforementioned reasons it is difficult to believe that the alteration of the ALTHEA into a capacity – building and training operation – mentioned by Solana – could materialise in the near future. It is not by accident that Solana himself has insisted that this could happen if and only if the necessary conditions materialise.<sup>19</sup> In light of past practices and what has been said before, we cannot expect speedy progress. It could be perceived as a great achievement, if Bosnia were to become a part of the so-called white Schengen by the middle of 2010.

Since Olli Rehn has pointed out that a quasi-protectorate cannot become a member of the EU and accession talks cannot begin while the OHR is present in Bosnia<sup>20</sup> – this thus

<sup>14</sup> “EU učinila više za zapadni Balkan nego SAD“ (May 22, 2009); <http://www.glassrpske.com/vijest/2/novosti/22426/lat/EU-ucinila-vise-za-zapadni-Balkan-nego-SAD.html>.

<sup>15</sup> “Valentin Inzko zaratio sa Javier Solanom“ (retrieved June 18, 2009); <http://www.dnevniavaz.ba/dogadjaji/aktuelno/valentin-inzko-zaratio-sa-javier-solanom>.

<sup>16</sup> “Decision Repealing the Conclusions of the Republika Srpska National Assembly No. 01-787/09 and No. 01-788/09 adopted on 14 May 2009“; [http://www.ohr.int/decisions/statemattersdec/default.asp?content\\_id=43633](http://www.ohr.int/decisions/statemattersdec/default.asp?content_id=43633).

<sup>17</sup> “Tihić nezadovoljan odlukom OHR-a“ (June 20, 2009); <http://www.glassrpske.com/vijest/2/novosti/23829/lat/Tihic-nezadovoljan-odlukom-OHR-a.html>.

<sup>18</sup> “Communiqué of the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council“ (June 30, 2009); [http://www.ohr.int/pic/default.asp?content\\_id=43665](http://www.ohr.int/pic/default.asp?content_id=43665).

<sup>19</sup> “The EU HR for the CFSP Javier Solana“; [http://www.euforbih.org/eufor/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=875&Itemid=54](http://www.euforbih.org/eufor/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=875&Itemid=54).

<sup>20</sup> “Intervju Borisa Tadića za “Večernje novosti“ (June 28, 2009);

[http://www.ds.org.rs/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=7746&Itemid=424](http://www.ds.org.rs/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=7746&Itemid=424).

far unsuccessful political endeavour should be abandoned. The establishment of a federative state-formation hitherto rejected by Silajdžić and the Americans – would possibly be the right solution, despite being aware of the inherent difficulties. The creation of a federation would not be accompanied by large-scale population- and territorial exchange, while exiting the federation should be prohibited. Therefore, the federal formation seems to be the only solution, which would alleviate the justified or unjustified fears of the Croats and the Serbs *vis-à-vis* the Muslim majority. Moreover, this would provide the only opportunity to achieve substantive changes in the constitution and to render the running of the country more efficient. If this solution is not attempted, the international community would have to remain in the country for a long while.

### 2.3 Croatia

In the short term, the situation of Croatia will be determined primarily by the economic crisis, as well as by Slovenia's veto in the EU. Albeit, economists had warned politicians already in the autumn of 2008 about the serious consequences of the economic crisis, the Prime Minister at that time, Ivo Sanader, insisted that the measures introduced by the government would suffice.<sup>21</sup> However, it transpired already in the first half of 2009 that the problems could not be ignored any longer. On July 1, Sanader resigned from all his posts without offering any justification for this move and it soon transpired that the country was in a dire economic situation. It is only hoped that while writing these lines, the new prime minister, Jadranka Kosor – in spite of the depressing situation – will be able to hold the government coalition together and implement the necessary, but painful austerity measures without any serious social upheaval.

The border dispute between the Croats and the Slovenes primarily concerns the issue of whether the geographically disadvantaged Slovenia would have an undisputed right of entry to the open seas and have access to a continental shelf, as well as the advantages thereof. The Croats would prefer to leave the decision in the hands of the ICJ. This would need the consent of both parties. However, Slovenia wants to include in the dispute – apart from the edicts of international law – the principle of the *ex aequo et bono*, too. Both parties have valid arguments, but the prevailing general view is false that maintains that solely Slovenia is responsible for taking this bilateral problem to the EU. The bilateral dispute would not have reached the level of the EU, if Croatia had not attached such documents to the accession documents, which – according to Slovenia – predetermined the territorial and maritime borders between the two countries.<sup>22</sup> The Croats attempted to solve the dispute by insisting that the declaration attached to the documents does not determine the particular border.<sup>23</sup> However, the Slovenes argue that this is insuf-

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<sup>21</sup> "Hrvatska se uspjela pripremiti za sve moguće scenarije financijske krize" (October 15, 2008); [http://www.vlada.hr/hr/naslovnica/novosti\\_i\\_najave/2008/listopad/hrvatska\\_se\\_uspjela\\_pripremiti\\_za\\_sve\\_moguće\\_scenarije\\_financijske\\_krize](http://www.vlada.hr/hr/naslovnica/novosti_i_najave/2008/listopad/hrvatska_se_uspjela_pripremiti_za_sve_moguće_scenarije_financijske_krize).

<sup>22</sup> "Pripombe slovenskega Ministrstva za zunanje zadeve na sporočilo hrvaškega Ministrstva za zunanje zadeve in evropske integracije" (November 3, 2008); <http://www.mzz.gov.si/nc/si/splosno/cns/novica/article/141/24923>.

<sup>23</sup> "Izjava Vlade Republike Hrvatske" (December 19, 2008); [http://www.vlada.hr/hr/naslovnica/priopcenja\\_za\\_javnost/2008/prosinac/izjava\\_vlade\\_republike\\_hrvatske\\_\\_1](http://www.vlada.hr/hr/naslovnica/priopcenja_za_javnost/2008/prosinac/izjava_vlade_republike_hrvatske__1).

ficient and the Croats should remove the disputed elements from the accession documents. It is noteworthy that the Italian Foreign Minister Frattini – accused by the Slovenes of bias – proposed the same to Croatia.<sup>24</sup> It is a fact too, that Slovenia did not stop at this point and insisted that Croatia should not present the disputed elements at the International Court of Justice either. Even Slovenian analysts find this demand as excessive.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the efforts of Olli Rehn, the first part of 2009 was full of pointless disputes and evidently, EU leaders do not intend to mediate between the countries and expect the two sides to find an acceptable solution.<sup>26</sup> It must be taken into account, too, that it is not only the Slovene veto that hinders Croatia's EU accession. Zagreb faces at least three other seriously problematic areas. One of the problems relates to the view of the International Court of Justice in The Hague, which maintains that Croatia's refusal to submit certain military documents is a proof that Croatia does not cooperate sufficiently with the Court. The second problem is that the EU has continually demanded the fulfilment of certain conditions without avail. These include primarily the reform of the judiciary and agricultural sphere, as well as Croatia's failure to restructure some aspects of the shipping industry. Moreover, the situation of Croatia is complicated further by the border disputes with Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro and parties plan to turn to international mediators in the case of the latter as well. It is noteworthy that – citing cadastral surveys – Croatia is demanding a particular territory from Serbia<sup>27</sup>, while rejecting similar demands from Slovenia. The most serious among the border disputes is ostensibly the problem of the Bosnian Neum, where the geographic situation is disadvantageous for both countries: at this section, the Croatian territory is dissected by a stretch, which is under the suzerainty of Bosnia – Herzegovina. Consequently, the traffic on the highway leading from Split to Dubrovnik must pass through two Bosnian border crossings. For this reason, Croatia wants to construct a huge bridge to link the mainland to the Pelješac peninsula in order to bypass Bosnia. However, the collective presidency of Bosnia – Herzegovina insist that this would hurt the country's interests (since it is a concern whether the Bosnian tall ships heading for the open sea would be able pass under the Croatian bridge), and for this reason it urges Zagreb – referring to good neighbourly relations – to resolve the problem in accordance with article 280 of the UN Maritime Treaty (UNCLOS). In case this does not happen, Bosnia will be forced to defend its interests in accord with paragraph two of article XV of the UNCLOS.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> S. Tomašević, "Hrvatsko povlačenje zemljoVIDA prekinulo bi blokadu" (June 26, 2009); <http://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/hrvatsko-povlacenje-zemljoVIDA-prekinulo-bi-blokadu-clanak-1776>.

<sup>25</sup> S. Vidmajer, "Blokada", *Delo* (December 20, 2009).

<sup>26</sup> A. Palokaj, "Bruxelles: Mi nemamo ideju, dogovorite se sa Slovenijom"; <http://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/clanak/art-2009,7,23,,170514.jl>.

<sup>27</sup> M. Dermadi, "Pregovori oko granice na Dunavu napreduju ,puževim korakom'", *Vukovarske novine* (July 29, 2005).

<sup>28</sup> "Predsjedništvo BiH održalo 56. redovitu sjednicu" (April 23, 2009); <http://www.predsjednistvobih.ba/zaklj/sjed/1/?cid=13402,3,1>.

## 2.4 Macedonia

Albeit, the Albanians represent a sizeable political factor in Macedonia, the situation thus far has ostensibly stabilised. However, the question is whether a further Albanian demographic explosion could harm the currently improving situation. Demographic indicators have demonstrated that the Albanians comprise the majority in increasingly more settlements, or are present as a sizeable minority. The country is struggling with ever-mounting economic problems and it is among the poorest European countries. One third of those polled<sup>29</sup> would prefer to emigrate from the country. The situation is aggravated further by the ongoing name dispute with Greece. For this reason, Athens blocked a larger EU sum that they wanted to use for the financing of the motorway. This example demonstrates that the position of the countries has not converged at all in the last 17 years. It is noteworthy that the Albanian party in the ruling coalition would like to participate in the formulation of a bilateral compromise, but apart from emphasising the multiethnic society, nothing concrete has emerged thus far. NATO is encouraging Macedonia to foster good relations with the country's Albanians, improve relations with the opposition, as well as the economic situation of the country. It transpires from the latest NATO communication that nothing is mentioned in regards to the settling of the name dispute, but there are objections to the considerable gaps in several areas of the country.<sup>30</sup> Albeit, both integrative organisations are encouraging Skopje, it is highly unlikely that the country – holding a candidate status since 2005 – could realise the desired economic reforms quickly to become a member by 2015. It is impossible to predict the time and method of settling the name dispute with Greece. The fact that more and more people are inclined to call Macedonians as Macedonians and to call the country – at least in bilateral relations as Macedonia – would not soften the resistance of the Macedonians and thus, NATO membership is not getting any closer, albeit the USA is doing everything in its power to achieve this as soon as possible.

## 2.5 Montenegro

Albeit, Montenegro must face numerous problems, it is perhaps the most promising country in the region after Croatia. Ostensibly, this is to a large degree due to the authoritarian leadership, which – with some difficulties – has successfully ruled the country in the last ten years or so. Thus far, the 33 per cent Serb minority, which is dissatisfied with scores of conditions, has not jeopardised Montenegro. Apparently, the united Serb organisation established at the beginning of the year, could not create de facto unity. The most respected authority in the country – signalling a great anomaly – comprises the head of state representing the country's sovereignty, as well as the Serb Orthodox Church,

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<sup>29</sup> С. Јовановска, „Резултати од последното истражување на Балкан Галуп монитор“ (June 27, 2009); <http://www.utrinski.com.mk/?ItemID=D0C3EC01C196F540B67AFAA4AD8EEC8D>.

<sup>30</sup> „НАТО гледа назадовање во Македонија“ (June 30, 2009); <http://www.utrinski.com.mk/?ItemID=7440E885154C9946BA0E121912C6201D>.

representing the Serbs and the idea of union with Serbia in practically equal proportion (53.2 and 54.6 %). Confidence in the EU is at 51 per cent, while only 31.6 per cent trust NATO. Despite a decline in the number of the disaffected (from 56 per cent to 51 per cent) still 73 per cent of those questioned by Gallup, would leave Montenegro which underpins the anomaly that characterises the country. Furthermore, the number of those who would prefer to leave has increased drastically in comparison to the previous pollster in 2006.<sup>31</sup> Despite the problems (organised crime, human trafficking, declining economic indicators), the EU is strongly encouraging Montenegro. The government is hoping to commence accession negotiations in 2011. Enlargement Commissioner, Olli Rehn, has handed over the questionnaire of the European Commission, which is an important step in this direction. The government is also taking steps to fulfil NATO membership requirements as soon as possible.<sup>32</sup>

## 2.6 Serbia

Even though everybody is talking about Serbia being a key country in terms of regional stability, this is true both in the positive and the negative sense. While Serbia has made great strides since 2000 both in the domestic and foreign policy arena, numerous characteristics prevail that signal instability in both areas. Although there are considerable disagreements over some issues between the internally divided government coalition and the opposition, (primarily concerning EU membership and Kosovo) there is consensus between the political forces over numerous issues, or at least, the rift does seem as deep as it appears at first sight. This is underscored by the fact that the head of state, Boris Tadić, ostensibly adopted the position of the opposition when he declared that neither the government, nor he would raise the issue of NATO membership until the end of his mandate.<sup>33</sup> This is partly owing to the fact that 56 per cent of those polled – including a high 77 per cent proportion of the young generation – oppose NATO membership,<sup>34</sup> and thus, the opposition proposes a referendum on NATO accession.<sup>35</sup> A little over 60 per cent of the population supports EU membership in the future (this had been higher in the past).<sup>36</sup>

We also find thought processes reflecting the mindset of the opposition in regards to relations with Russia. While Serbia had great difficulties in meeting the requirements set by the IMF, the government ponders to resolve the financial problems with the help of

<sup>31</sup> "Međunarodna agencija za istraživanje javnog mnjenja o stanju u Crnoj Gori"; <http://www.dan.cg.yu/?nivo=3&rubrika=Vijest%20dana&clanak=192844&datum=2009-06-30>.

<sup>32</sup> "Press release following Cabinet meeting" (July 2, 2009); <http://www.gov.me/eng/infobiro/vijesti.php?akcija=vijesti&id=175043>.

<sup>33</sup> "Intervju Borisa Tadića za *Večernje novosti*" (June 28, 2009); [http://www.ds.org.rs/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=7746&Itemid=424](http://www.ds.org.rs/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=7746&Itemid=424).

<sup>34</sup> "EU popularnija od NATO-a"; [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=06&dd=11&nav\\_id=365391&nav\\_category=206](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=06&dd=11&nav_id=365391&nav_category=206).

<sup>35</sup> "Opozicija za referendum o NATO, vlast protiv" (June 17, 2009); <http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/Politika/Opozicija-za-referendum-o-NATO-vlast-protiv.lt.html>.

<sup>36</sup> "Za učlanjenje u EU je 61 odsto građana Srbije" (June 18, 2009); <http://www.novosti.rs>.

Russia.<sup>37</sup> This political thinking is very close to the positions of the Serbian Democratic Party and the radicals. However, the Russians are far from being as amicable as they have been earlier and are demanding further economic advantages in the relations between the two countries.

The situation is similar in regards to the issue of the status of the Vojvodina region. Although the opposition, first and foremost the Democratic Party of Serbia, viciously attacks the present version of the draft status and would only endorse it with the introduction of restrictions, the leader of the Democratic Party, President Boris Tadić, too, has reservations with regard to the status of Vojvodina. In his view, the government cannot reinstate the extended autonomy laid down in the 1974 constitution.<sup>38</sup> At present, it is also being contemplated that instead of endorsing the autonomy of the Vojvodina, the solution of the Vojvodina situation should be incorporated in the 'fading' decentralisation of Serbia and (statistical) regionalisation, while Koštunica and his followers consider regionalisation itself as being unacceptable.<sup>39</sup>

The Serbian political forces have not been able to digest the loss of Kosovo, and major parties are trying to convince the population that they are the de facto protectors of Kosovo, while their opponents are its adversaries.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the case of Kosovo is one of the destabilising factors in Serbia's domestic political life. Serbian politicians will insist in the future, too, that they would be willing for EU integration – if and only if – the EU would treat Kosovo as a part of Serbia, as well as hope that the ruling of the International Court of Justice in The Hague (ICJ), due in the summer of 2010, would decide in its favour. According to the one of the most distinguished international lawyers in Serbia, Tibor Váradi, the ICJ could make a decision, whereby both sides could claim it as their own victory.<sup>41</sup> If his prediction were to be correct, the present stalemate could persist for a long time. Serbia endeavours – symbolically, as well as in practice – to prove its sovereignty over Kosovo. To serve this goal, Serbian politicians periodically pay visits to Kosovo to finance the Serbian populated Kosovo regions,<sup>42</sup> and attempt to persuade the Kosovo Serbs to boycott the local government elections in Kosovo,<sup>43</sup> as well as support the actions of the Serbs in Northern Kosovo.

Serbia's regional politics can be considered as somewhat problematic and periodically hysterical. Apart from a few exceptions, Serbia maintains confrontational policies and is least cooperative. It is not only the case of the harsh reactions to Bulgaria in con-

<sup>37</sup> "Konuzin: Nastavak saradnje"; [http://www6.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=06&dd=25&nav\\_category=11](http://www6.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=06&dd=25&nav_category=11).

<sup>38</sup> "Tadić: Statut samo u okviru Ustava" (June 23, 2009); [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=06&dd=23&nav\\_category=11&nav\\_id=367498](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=06&dd=23&nav_category=11&nav_id=367498). "Statut Vojvodine, ipak, političko pitanje" (July 17, 2009); <http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/Politika/Statut-Vojvodine-ipak-politichko-pitanje.lt.html>.

<sup>39</sup> "Regionalizacija – Završetak rasparčavanja Srbije" (June 10, 2009); <http://www.dss.rs/newsitem.php?id=7912>.

<sup>40</sup> "Vlast se lažno zaklela da neće priznati Kosovo" (July 15, 2009); <http://www.dss.org.yu/newsitem.php?id=8097>.

<sup>41</sup> "Varadi: Odluka Međunarodnog suda pravde o Kosovu sredinom sledeće godine" (July 18, 2009); <http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/Politika/Varadi-Odluka-Medjunarodnog-suda-pravde-o-Kosovu-sredinom-sledece-godine.lt.html>.

<sup>42</sup> "Proslava Vidovdana na Kosovu"; [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=06&dd=28&nav\\_id=368342](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=06&dd=28&nav_id=368342).

<sup>43</sup> "Vlada: Srbi da ne izađu na izbore"; [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?nav\\_category=640&dd=2&mm=7&yyyy=2009](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?nav_category=640&dd=2&mm=7&yyyy=2009).

nection with the case of the recently released Agim Çeku, but the fact, too, that its policies with respect to Bosnia and Montenegro do not always enhance stability either. The declaration of Koštunica that the NATO membership of Bosnia – Hercegovina is not in the interest of Serbia<sup>44</sup>, and the population of the Republika Srpska should express its view in this respect in a referendum, has caused widespread consternation in the ranks of Bosnian politicians who demanded that Serbian President Boris Tadić should distance himself from Koštunica.<sup>45</sup> The Bosniaks are concerned about the collaboration between Srbijagas and the Pale Gasprom, since in their view, with this move, Serbia is committing economic aggression against Bosnia.<sup>46</sup> Serious confrontation also occurred involving some administrators of the two countries over the assessment concerning the situation of the Muslims in Serbia. The picture is relatively mixed in regards to the prospects of Serbia's EU integration. The Serbian government is making considerable efforts to prove that Serbia is ready to comply with the conditions demanded by The Hague. For instance, the recent collaboration with the Bosnian authorities in this respect,<sup>47</sup> the statements of the Serbian foreign minister pertaining to this issue and, first and foremost, that the Serbian authorities have made several rulings in the case of war criminals at home. It is also noteworthy that the socialists in the governing coalition have abandoned their anti-EU rhetoric<sup>48</sup> and are politicking wisely. It is also encouraging that the Swedish EU Presidency has declared support for Serbia's integration<sup>49</sup>, while several European countries would like to accelerate this process. The question might arise whether the possible rise to power of the opposition could derail Serbia from the "European" path. The biggest anti-Europe tendency is found in the Koštunica-lead Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS). The EU appears on the home page of the party only in connection with Kosovo, rejecting the EU's policies *vis-à-vis* Kosovo. However, it is highly unlikely that an anti-EU political trend would prevail in Serbia in the near future: firstly because – albeit the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) hopes for early elections at the end of the year – the chance is minimal for this; secondly, because the opposition is divided and the division between the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) and the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) is ostensibly unbridgeable. The SNS, which left the Radicals, has decided to distance itself from the other two parties over issues related to the EU, since it considers this issue to be more important than the other two parties.<sup>50</sup> Some analysts, too, consider the pro-EU stance of the

<sup>44</sup> "Koštunica: BiH da ne uđe u NATO" (June 25, 2009); [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=06&dd=25&nav\\_category=11&nav\\_id=367981](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=06&dd=25&nav_category=11&nav_id=367981).

<sup>45</sup> "Tadić: Koštunica se opasno miješa u unutrašnje stvari BiH!" (retrieved June 26, 2009); <http://www.dnevniavaz.ba/dogadjaji/aktuelno/tadic-kostunica-se-opasno-mijesa-u-unutrasnje-stvari-bih>.

<sup>46</sup> "Bečarević: Preuzimanje transportnog sistema plina u BiH" (retrieved June 21, 2009); <http://www.dnevniavaz.ba/dogadjaji teme/srbija-izvodi-ekonomsku-agresiju-na-bih>.

<sup>47</sup> "Malovićeva u poseti Sarajevu"; [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=06&dd=29&nav\\_id=368392](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=06&dd=29&nav_id=368392).

<sup>48</sup> "Dačić: Sve zavisi od Srbije"; [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=11&dd=07&nav\\_category=11&nav\\_id=327698](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=11&dd=07&nav_category=11&nav_id=327698).

<sup>49</sup> N. Vlačo, "Švedska će pomoći Srbiji na putu u EU" (July 12, 2009); <http://www.blic.rs/politika.php?id=101324>.

<sup>50</sup> "Nikolić: Da Srbija ne bude talac sudbine i stranih država" (October 21, 2008); <http://www.pressonline.rs/page/stories/sr.html?view=story&id=49597&sectionId=29&seriesId=82>.

SNS important.<sup>51</sup> This is noteworthy, despite the claim by one of the functionaries of the Democratic Party (DS) that in reality the pro-European attitude of the SNS is a bluff.<sup>52</sup>

Ostensibly, Serbian domestic – and foreign policy contain numerous anomalies, since they contain strong positive and negative elements. In light of the facts discussed above, as well as recalling that organised crime and corruption present a great problem in Serbia, too, it is unlikely that Serbia – in the medium term, i.e., around 2014 – could be an EU and NATO member country.

## 2.7 Kosovo<sup>53</sup>

At present, the status of Kosovo is uncertain also, since the UN documents, the Secretary General, as well as a number of influential Security Council members consider that Security Council Resolution 1244 is still valid: according to which the territory is part of the Yugoslav Republic and its legal successor state, i.e., Serbia. Distinctive contests are taking place between Pristina and Belgrade in a number of areas, but the results are rather mixed. At the beginning of October, 62 countries have recognised Kosovo. In fact this is less than one third of the 192 UN member states. On the other hand, there are key powers that have not recognised it, but more than the forty countries Belgrade marked in 2008 as being a maximum. Although Serbian politicians unanimously reject the independence of Kosovo – as I have already mentioned that it is not likely the ICJ would come to an explicit decision. It is important that the actions of the government, which came to power in July, 2008 are much more rational than those of its predecessor. After the declaration of Kosovo's independence, Belgrade recalled its ambassadors from countries, which recognised Kosovo and subsequently gradually halted this procedure. The main lesson learned in the period following the declaration of independence concerns the failure of the Serbian and Russian prophecy that the instability the Kosovo independence would cause in the Balkan region, as well as reinforce separatist tendencies worldwide.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, the case of Abkhazia and Ossetia might also be considered as an exception, which had been motivated exclusively by Russian interests.

The Albanian government and authorities are exceptionally triumphant in a number of areas. Their endeavour is to demonstrate that they are cooperative partners of the international community and their goal is the creation of a multiethnic Kosovo society. The head of state, Fatmir Sejdiu, has called on the Serbs that fled the country to return to their homes and promised that Kosovo, as well as international institutions would help in this endeavour.<sup>55</sup> For Kosovo, it is a great achievement to have become a member of the

<sup>51</sup> "Toma Nikolić evropejac" (July 5, 2009); <http://www.pressonline.rs/page/stories/sr.html?view=story&id=71304&sectionId=37>.

<sup>52</sup> "Šutanovac: Vojvoda Toma nikad neće biti demokrata" (July 14, 2009); <http://www.pressonline.rs/page/stories/sr.html?view=story&id=72557&sectionId=37>.

<sup>53</sup> Kosovo being under UNSCR 1244/1999.

<sup>54</sup> "Posledice zbog priznanja Kosova"; [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=13&nav\\_id=284706&nav\\_category=640](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=13&nav_id=284706&nav_category=640).

<sup>55</sup> "President asks Kosovo Serbs to return to their homes"; [http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en\\_GB/features/setimes/newsbriefs/2009/04/27/nb-02](http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/newsbriefs/2009/04/27/nb-02).

IMF – in spite of Serbia's efforts. It is a great achievement, too, that at the end of June, 2009, 310 Serb policemen returned to the bonds of the Kosovo police (KPS), who refused to accept the Albanian authority since February 2008. Two factors are noteworthy in this respect: firstly, that Goran Bogdanović, minister responsible for Kosovo affairs in the Serbian government has declared at the end of June that they have stopped opposing the return of Serbs to the bonds of the KPS; secondly, while Bogdanović had stated that he was negotiating with EULEX about his conditions for the returns<sup>56</sup>, the head of EULEX denied it.<sup>57</sup> Thus, the return of the policemen happened without agreeing to Belgrade's conditions.

The agreement reached between the Serb settlements and the Kosovo electricity supplier, too, can be construed as an Albanian success. The complication surrounding the electricity supplies is a good indication for the difficult situation Belgrade's machinations have created for the Kosovo Serbs. From the start, Serbian politicians endeavoured to persuade the Kosovo Serbs to refuse cooperation with the Kosovo authorities.<sup>58</sup> In this atmosphere, the Kosovo electricity supplier (KEK) declared that it intends to take full control of electricity supplies and will no longer require the intermediary services of the Serbian electricity supplier (ESP). Some settlements signed the required contract with the KEK, but other settlements – in accordance with the expectations of the Serb politicians – refused to sign the contract with the KEK.<sup>59</sup> The KEK – partly demonstratively – switched off electricity supplies to settlements, which did not pay, while people were expecting help from Belgrade. The Serb politicians were at a loss as to what to do. Goran Bogdanović, Minister for Kosovo – Metohija, summed up the dilemma thus: the government „does not have a moral right to recommend anyone in Kosovo to pay for electricity until this problem has been solved. (...) It's not easy to tell someone to pay for electricity if they know that perhaps in this way some institutions that we do not recognize will be financed“.<sup>60</sup> While the Kosovo Serbs were awaiting instructions from Belgrade,<sup>61</sup> Serbian Secretary of State for Kosovo Affairs shifted the blame to the Kosovo Serb authorities, saying that they must decide on this issue. He rejected the idea that the recognition of the KEK would be an indirect recognition of Kosovo. The Serbs of Štrpče – who maintained passive resistance the longest – were forced to sign the agreement<sup>62</sup> – have been cooperating with the Albanian authorities since.

<sup>56</sup> “U KPS se vratilo 310 Srba“; [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=06&dd=30&nav\\_category=640&nav\\_id=368577](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=06&dd=30&nav_category=640&nav_id=368577).

<sup>57</sup> “De Kermabon zadovoljan“; [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=07&dd=02&nav\\_id=369127&nav\\_category=640](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=07&dd=02&nav_id=369127&nav_category=640).

<sup>58</sup> “Službeni Beograd ne podržava sudjelovanje Srba u kosovskim institucijama“ (retrieved February 26, 2008); <http://www.dnevniavaz.ba/dogadjaji/globus/kosovski-srbi-izvan-institucija>.

<sup>59</sup> “K. Serbs won't sign electricity contracts“; [http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics-article.php?yyyy=2009&mm=05&dd=01&nav\\_id=58873](http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics-article.php?yyyy=2009&mm=05&dd=01&nav_id=58873); “Radnici EPS-a vratili se u trafostanicu“; <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/Srbija/75487/Radnici+EPS-a+vratili+se+u+trafostanicu+.html>.

<sup>60</sup> “Conditions not present for Kosovo Serbs to take part in elections“ (July 26, 2009); <http://www.kim.sr.gov.yu/cms/item/news/en.html?view=story&id=12839&sectionId=11>.

<sup>61</sup> “Savić: Novi zahtev Srbima iz Štrpca“; [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=07&dd=28&nav\\_category=640&nav\\_id=373619](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=07&dd=28&nav_category=640&nav_id=373619).

<sup>62</sup> “Štrpce: KEK preuzeo trafo-stanicu“; [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=07&dd=29&nav\\_category=640&nav\\_id=373748](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=07&dd=29&nav_category=640&nav_id=373748).

Ostensibly, behind-the-scenes division is taking place in the territory of Northern-Kosovo, while the steps taken by Serbia with regard to visa liberalisation – Serbia should be patrolling the so-called administrative border and cooperate with EULEX and UNMIK – should hinder this development.<sup>63</sup> The parliament of the Kosovo Serb self-governments strongly condemned Belgrade's policies in this respect. In their view, the fact that Belgrade accepted that the visa liberalisation would not be valid for the Kosovo Serbs (Kosovo is not yet ready to fulfil the necessary requirements), it acted against the position stated in the constitution, as well as the principle of citizens equality, since a border – in the classical sense – has developed along the border of North-Kosovo. They have raised objections to the fact that Serbian authorities are issuing the personal documents of the Kosovo Serbs in the territory of the so-called smaller Serbia, while these could be collected earlier in the territory of Kosovo. The aforementioned parliament of the self-governments comprise the Kosovo politicians of the Serb Radical Party (SRS) and the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) and thus, their declaration that they would not honour the agreements signed by the Belgrade government – raises the dreaded possibility of clashes.

Since hitherto the international community – partly also due to the resistance of the Serb government – is ostensibly unable to control the situation whereby the independence of Kosovo is perceived to be only apparent, since the Serb authorities are acting unchecked in the territory of the new state. New developments have surfaced in July, 2009. Ostensibly – for the sake of enhancing EU integration – the Serb government is following the procedures that some Serbian politicians have predicted earlier: Kosovo should be secured for Serbia within the EU and not without. Thus, Serbian politics should not be directed against the EU, but in cooperation with the EU. The integration path of the Kosovo government – wrestling with numerous problems, (economic difficulties, the absence of a constitutional state, organised crime, etc.) – will be a long one, but with clever politics Serbia could accelerate this process.

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<sup>63</sup> "EK preporučila ukidanje viza"; [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=07&dd=15&nav\\_category=11&nav\\_id=371359](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=07&dd=15&nav_category=11&nav_id=371359).

### 3. THE WESTERN BALKANS POLICY OF THE HUNGARIAN GOVERNMENT

In essence, the Hungarian government continued its earlier regional policy in the course of the last years.<sup>64</sup> Hungarian foreign minister in April 2005 pointed out already that the „specific political, security, economic and national policy interests of Hungary demand that the respective countries of the region, which fulfil the conditions required for integration – should become members of the Euro-Atlantic integrative institutions as soon as possible“.<sup>65</sup> The aim of Hungary remains the same from then until now. The spokesperson of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry has described the Hungarian position in November 2008 with regard to the entire West Balkan region as follows: „The recently accepted Hungarian External Relations Strategy regards as the core of our national interest deepening co-operation among the countries of the Western Balkans region, their long-term stability, security, democracy, and their road to a market economy. The most effective way to achieve this in the long-term is to secure the Euro-Atlantic integration of all of its countries. We should see to this process in such a way as to ensure that the countries – well prepared for Euro-Atlantic integration – should not suffer because of lagging behind of others; instead, their progress should serve as an encouraging example to the countries left behind, showing that effective preparation brings about the desired outcome“<sup>66</sup>

This is underscored by the statements expressed by Hungarian politicians at bilateral meetings and international conferences. The most intense bilateral meetings have been held with Serbia. Former Prime Minister, Ferenc Gyurcsány, paid a visit to Belgrade in November 2008, where he held talks with Serbia's President Boris Tadić and Prime Minister Mirko Cvetković, as well as received Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić in February 2009 in Budapest. Gyurcsány reiterated in Belgrade that there are no disputes or conflicts between the two countries and Hungary would like to help in the EU integration of Serbia.<sup>67</sup> At the meeting in Budapest, the two sides discussed the issue of energy and Serbia's integration. At the same time, the Serbian foreign minister expressed gratitude for Hungary's help during the gas crisis in January.<sup>68</sup> Hungary helped Bosnia-Herzegovina as well to combat the gas crisis. The new Hungarian Foreign Minister, Péter Balázs, too, has assured Serbia of Hungary's support. Vuk Jeremić declared that the two countries have a multitude of common causes, despite Serbia's protest against Hungary's

<sup>64</sup> I. Szilágyi, „The Hungarian Government's Western Balkan Policies since the 2006 Elections“, *International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* Vol. XVII, No. 3/2008, pp. 3–25.

<sup>65</sup> „Magyar érdekek, uniós értékek. Az euroatlanti bővítés új helyzetbe hozta Magyarországot szomszédságpolitikáját“ (April 2, 2005); <http://www.nol.hu/archivum/archiv-357249>.

<sup>66</sup> „We are striving for the Euro-Atlantic integration of all Western Balkan countries – lecture by Gábor Szentiványi“; [http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/en/bal/european\\_union/Latest+news/SZG\\_WBalkans\\_eng\\_081120.htm](http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/en/bal/european_union/Latest+news/SZG_WBalkans_eng_081120.htm).

<sup>67</sup> „Gyurcsány: Magyarország segíti Szerbia EU-integrációját“ (November 21, 2009); <http://www.vajma.info/universal.php?rovat=cikk&ar=szerbia&id=10348>.

<sup>68</sup> „Gyurcsány Ferenc hivatalában fogadta Vuk Jeremić szerb külügyminisztert“ (February 9, 2009); [http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/mss/alpha?do=2&st=1&pg=2&m10\\_doc=2295](http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/mss/alpha?do=2&st=1&pg=2&m10_doc=2295).

recognition of Kosovo.<sup>69</sup> The opening by Hungary of an honorary consulate in Niš, well demonstrates the importance of Hungarian-Serbian economic relations. Secretary of State, Jenő Faller, who inaugurated the consulate said that the fact that an honorary consulate was being established was proof that Hungary's attention is directed not only at the neighbouring Vojvodina region, but also to the whole of Serbia. He expressed his conviction that the honorary consulate's activities would greatly enhance the relationship between Hungary and the Niš region, which has great economic potential, as well as being a tourist destination. It will enhance Hungary's image in south Serbia, as well and enhance bilateral economic, trade, cultural and scientific ties.<sup>70</sup> Despite these favourable developments, relations are periodically soured by disputes. In April 2009, Hungarian diplomacy urged the Serbian authorities to act more firmly with respect to violent attacks against Vojvodina Hungarians and abusive wall-messages, as well as call the perpetrators to account.<sup>71</sup>

Former Foreign Minister, Kinga Göncz, met the entire Croatian political leadership in Zagreb in March. "The governments of Hungary and Croatia have many common issues and their close co-operation has already borne highly visible results, but the aim is to lift co-operation to an even higher level (...) Hungary's government", said Ms Göncz, "still expects Croatia to enter the EU during the Hungarian presidency in 2011". For this it is necessary however for the Croatian-Slovenian border dispute to be treated separately from talks on EU accession. The Hungarian foreign minister said it "was important meanwhile for preparations and legal harmonisation to continue". She stressed that national minorities have played "an important bridging role in the two countries' outstanding bilateral relations. The relevant mixed committee has been functioning well and both states have supported national minorities, whose requests are continuously fulfilled." The negotiations also focussed on strategically important energy co-operation plans, infrastructure developments and co-operation in education, too.<sup>72</sup>

The Hungarian position maintains that it can be attributed to Hungary's consistent West Balkans policies that in the course of 2009 – 2010, the Hungarian diplomatic mission in Podgorica, will carry out the tasks between Montenegro and the NATO High Commission, while Hungary was acting on behalf of the EU Presidency in Montenegro since January, 1, 2009 instead of the Czech Republic, which does not have a diplomatic representation in Montenegro.<sup>73</sup> The Hungarian Foreign Ministry held a meeting together with the mayor of the Montenegrin Herceg Novi at which the "heads of missions accredited to countries of the region, to NATO and to the European Union's Political and Secu-

<sup>69</sup> "Dobri bilateralni odnosi Srbije i Madarske" (May 29, 2009); <http://www.srbija.gov.rs/vesti/vest.php?id=110313&q=bilateralni+odnosi+>.

<sup>70</sup> "New Hungarian honorary consulate opens in Nis – State Secretary Jenő Faller's visit to Serbia"; [http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/en/bal/actualities/visits\\_and\\_events/FJ\\_Nis\\_eng-090319.htm](http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/en/bal/actualities/visits_and_events/FJ_Nis_eng-090319.htm).

<sup>71</sup> "A magyar diplomácia sürgette a szerb hatóságok fellépését" (April 9, 2009); <http://www.vajma.info/universal.php?rovat=cikk&ar=vajdasag&id=8345>.

<sup>72</sup> "Highest Croatian state leaders received Kinga Göncz"; [http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/en/bal/actualities/visits\\_and\\_events/GK\\_Zagreb\\_eng\\_090313.htm](http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/en/bal/actualities/visits_and_events/GK_Zagreb_eng_090313.htm).

<sup>73</sup> "Kiemelt magyar diplomáciai szerep Montenegróban"; <http://www.magyarorszag.hu/hirkozpont/hirek/sajtokozlemenyek/montenegro20081218.html>.

rity Committee as well as officials from relevant departments of the Foreign Ministry – discussed opportunities for enhancing relations with Western Balkan countries particularly in the political sphere, international development, culture, the economy and trade, taking into account the future aspirations of these states connected to the European Union and NATO.<sup>74</sup>

Hungarian politicians acted in this spirit in the international political arena, too. The Hungarian prime minister stated at the last summit in Dubrovnik that “the European and Transatlantic integration of the West Balkans is a priority and Hungary is playing an active role in these processes and declared that there is also continuity and consensus in regards to the future of Hungarian foreign policy”.<sup>75</sup>

Hungarian foreign policy is very active in Autumn 2009 too. Serbian Foreign Minister, Vuk Jeremić paid a working visit to Budapest on September 10 at the invitation of the Hungarian Foreign Minister. They agreed, that „consistent Hungarian diplomacy has played a large role in achieving the visa-free entry of Serbian, Macedonian and Montenegrin citizens to the Schengen zone to be introduced next January on the recommendation of the European Commission“. Mr Balázs proposed a three-sided Hungarian – Serbia –Croatian meeting of foreign ministers in Hungary in order to deepen trilateral co-operation, develop Serbian – Croatian relations and promote further stabilisation in the region. Hungary, as the current president of the V4 and as the upcoming EU president in the first half of 2011, seeks to advance European integration in the Western Balkan region.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> “Regional Hungarian ambassadors’ conference in Montenegro“ (July 10, 2009); [http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/en/bal/actualities/visits\\_and\\_events/FJ\\_Montenegro\\_eng\\_090129.htm](http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/en/bal/actualities/visits_and_events/FJ_Montenegro_eng_090129.htm).

<sup>75</sup> “Magyarországnak létfontosságú a Nyugat-Balkán integrációja“; [http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/mss/alpha?do=4&pg=49&st=5&m85\\_doc=2673](http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/mss/alpha?do=4&pg=49&st=5&m85_doc=2673).

<sup>76</sup> “Péter Balázs proposes a Hungarian-Serbian-Croatian foreign ministerial meeting – Vuk Jeremić holds talks in Budapest“; [http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/en/bal/actualities/spokesman\\_statements/BP\\_Jeremic\\_eng\\_090910.htm](http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/en/bal/actualities/spokesman_statements/BP_Jeremic_eng_090910.htm).

#### 4. THE ROLE OF THE WESTERN BALKANS IN SLOVAK FOREIGN POLICY

The Slovak government continued supporting integration ambitions of the Western Balkan countries, both to NATO and the EU. The new foreign minister Miroslav Lajčák, who took office in January 2009, also expressed this support. At the same time, the representatives of Slovakia accent the importance of the adoption of important reforms by respective governments.

The first weeks in office Miroslav Lajčák still served as the High Representative and EU Special representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Due to this unusual accumulation of positions he visited several times Bosnia and Herzegovina. In his media statements he underlined the importance of the question of future development in BaH in the context of regional stability. Apart from diplomatic involvement, Slovakia has actively participated in the EU mission EUFOR and EUPM. Unlike Hungary and other Visegrad countries, Slovakia did not recognize the independence of Kosovo claiming that the unilateral declaration of independence is in contradiction with international law. In the words of Prime Minister Robert Fico, the unilateral declaration of independence by “Kosovo separatists” can be considered to a large extent a consequence of the NATO intervention against Serbia, which was also “breaking international law”.<sup>77</sup> Since the EU did not develop a common position in this matter, Slovakia’s approach is respected. On the other hand, Slovakia has fully supported the EU’s police and rule of law mission EULEX since the very beginning. Slovakia has also a military unit in KFOR forces.

The issue of non-recognition of Kosovo’s independence has played a significant role in Slovak-Serbian relations, too. Serbian political representatives highly valued Slovakia’s position and expressed their gratitude on several occasions. On one of his visits in Slovakia foreign minister Vuk Jeremić told president Gašparovič that, for Serbia, Slovakia represents “the closest ally in the European Union”.<sup>78</sup> According to the words of Slovak representatives, Slovakia distinguishes the issue of Kosovo from integration of Serbia to the EU. In other words, Slovakia does not undermine Serbia’s approach to the EU by calling for a solution to the Kosovo issue. To a large extent Serbia remains to be a number one priority for Slovak foreign policy in the Western Balkans<sup>79</sup>, which is in accordance with policy from the previous years. This approach was, however, criticized for not being balanced.<sup>80</sup>

The relations with Croatia were concentrated on the planned accession of Croatia to the EU. Apart from expressing support for integration of Croatia into the EU, the Slovak side provided Croatia with assistance regarding technical aspects of integration and transferred know how from integration processes.

<sup>77</sup> “Vyhlásenie k 10. výročiu bombardovania Juhoslávie“ (March 24, 2009); [www.vlada.gov.sk](http://www.vlada.gov.sk).

<sup>78</sup> “Prezident SR prijal srbského ministra zahraničných vecí Vuka Jeremiča“ (April 2, 2009); [www.prezident.sk](http://www.prezident.sk).

<sup>79</sup> “Návšteva ministra zahraničných vecí Srbska V. Jeremiča v SR“, (April 2, 2009); [www.mzv.sk](http://www.mzv.sk).

<sup>80</sup> See, for instance, M. Šagát, “Slovakia’s Foreign Policy Towards the Western Balkans in 2006“, P. Brezáni (ed.) *Yearbook of Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic 2006*. (Bratislava: Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, 2007), pp. 109 – 122.

The high involvement of the Slovak diplomacy in the process of splitting the Serbian-Montenegrin union has been recently reduced to the support of Montenegro's integration ambitions and progress in the visa liberalisation process. One of the reasons for not having strong intensive bilateral relations is the absence of a Slovak embassy in Montenegro and vice versa. On the other hand, it should be underlined that Slovakia has recently opened embassies in Skopje and Tirana, which means that Montenegro remains the only country in the Western Balkans without Slovakia's direct diplomatic presence.<sup>81</sup>

Another factor influencing Slovakia's performance in the region is that Slovak diplomats have been underrepresented in international institutions and organisations operating or focusing on the Western Balkans. One of the explanations for this is that Slovakia has to cover financial needs of its diplomats and does not have adequate sources for this.

Slovakia is lagging behind its neighbours, including Hungary, in terms of economic presence in the region, but wants to change the status quo. The government accents the importance of economic diplomacy and wants to utilize all available instruments to increase the economic presence of Slovak companies in the Western Balkan countries. One of important steps in this regard was made by the foreign minister Miroslav Lajčák and, minister of economy Lubomír Jahnátek on June 2009, when they presented the government a proposal on joint proceeding of the MFA and MoE in the field of economic diplomacy.<sup>82</sup> Another occasion to trigger trade exchange between Slovakia and Serbia and the interest of Slovak investors in the Serbian market was the opening of the Slovak-Serbian Economic Forum, which took place during the official visit of the Serbian prime minister Mirko Cvetković to Slovakia.<sup>83</sup> The support for the economic dimension of cooperation was also one of the key issues discussed on the occasion of the visit of the Macedonian prime minister Nikola Gruevsky in Bratislava in October.<sup>84</sup>

The added value of Slovakia in the Western Balkan region remains to be public diplomacy. A specific experience of Slovakia from transition to democracy and catching up with the neighbours in integration processes is still attracting interest of the Western Balkan countries. The projects of the NGOs, especially in the field of know how transfer, have had a good reputation in WB countries.<sup>85</sup> Since the accession to the EU, the Official Development Assistance has become an important financing instrument for projects in the field of democratisation, technical assistance, or institution building.

It is difficult to predict the future development of Slovak policy towards the Western Balkans. On the one hand, there exists certain continuity in Slovakia's engagement in the Western Balkans with the previous years, which were marked by the high diplomatic presence of Slovakia in the region. This continuity is even strengthened by the personal-

<sup>81</sup> The office in Priština is supposed to be a branch of the Slovak embassy in Belgrade.

<sup>82</sup> J. Lőrincz, "Slovakia and the Western Balkans. The Year 2008 - Before and After", P. Brezáni (ed.) *Yearbook of Slovakia's Foreign Policy 2008*. (Bratislava: Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, 2009), pp. 83 - 94.

<sup>83</sup> "Predsedovia vlád otvorili slovensko-srbské ekonomické fórum" (September 21, 2009); [www.premiersr.sk](http://www.premiersr.sk).

<sup>84</sup> "Robert Fico podporuje účasť slovenských firiem v Macedónsku vo vzájomne užitočných projektoch" (October 5, 2009); [www.premiersr.sk](http://www.premiersr.sk).

<sup>85</sup> National Convention on the EU in Serbia, coordinated by the European Movement in Serbia and financed by the Slovak Aid in the initial phase, can be mentioned as one of the examples.

ity of Miroslav Lajčák, who has not only followed the developments in the Western Balkans for many years, but even took part in several of them. It is also worth mentioning that former minister of foreign affairs and currently the member of the European Parliament Edurad Kukan was elected the chairman of the Delegation for relations with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo. On the other hand, there are some incentives showing that there might be some even more important priorities that would overshadow the process of integration of WB in the EU – energy security and the concept of Eastern Partnership might be mentioned as examples. Moreover, military and Official Development Assistance will probably be shifting their focus increasingly on other countries and regions. Military will be moving from Kosovo to Afghanistan, while ODA will increasingly shift its focus away from the Balkans to Africa and Central Asia. Finally, as already mentioned above, the problems in Slovak-Hungarian relations are consuming a lot of energy and time of high ranking Slovak diplomats. In addition, these longitudinal problems and tensions are deteriorating the reputation of both countries both in the eyes of the EU and Western Balkan countries. In order to maintain its position in the Western Balkans and enhance relations with the Western Balkan countries, Slovakia is supposed to become more active in presenting new initiatives and responding to the challenges in all relevant fields – diplomacy, economy and civil society.

## 5. SUMMARY AND PROPOSITIONS

Highly contradictory processes are taking place in the region: the Western Balkans is getting closer to Euro-Atlantic integration in several partial areas, fulfils many aspects of the requirements, but at the same time, is struggling with such internal problems (affecting certain countries and the region as a whole), which cannot be solved in the short term. The problems are enhanced by the effects of the economic crisis and by ostensible enlargement uncertainties within the EU. It is unlikely that apart from Croatia, another country would become a member of the EU by 2015.

Hungary and Slovakia, as the two key countries of the Visegrad Group, could cooperate not only in theory in regards to the stabilisation of the Western Balkans. However, it is also a fact that the current tensions in Slovak – Hungarian bilateral relations are hindering such efforts. Despite this, there are several areas where Slovakia and Hungary can coordinate their policies towards the Western Balkans. These areas are covering different fields, while all of them are to fasten the accession of the Western Balkan countries to the EU.

### 5.1 Areas of Cooperation

- The uniting platform for cooperation should remain an unconditional support for the European perspective of the region
- Having experience with travel restriction from the cold war era both Hungary and Slovakia should become advocates for those countries, which will not enter the Schengen “white list” on January 2010, namely Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The issue of visa free travel for Kosovars should be dealt in accordance with EU decisions and policies.
- Being active partners in the Visegrad cooperation, Hungary and Slovakia could jointly accent the importance of the Western Balkans agenda in the Visegrad Group.
- The Hungarian EU presidency presents a great opportunity to push forward the process of EU enlargement. It will also be a good time to present new initiatives, including Slovak – Hungarian or Visegrad projects.
- The current Hungarian V4 presidency and the following Slovak V4 presidency present another opportunity for enhanced cooperation and continuation of joint projects.
- Coordination of activities in the field of development assistance could become another area of cooperation between Slovakia and Hungary.
- Even though Slovakia and Hungary do not share the same view on the final status of Kosovo, they can jointly back all efforts leading to political, economic and social stabilisation of the Kosovo society.
- Slovakia and Hungary, together with all Western Balkan countries are extraordinarily sensitive to the impacts of a possible energy crisis. Therefore, it is in their joint interest to develop and participate in joint initiatives and projects related to energy security.

- Being active in a number of regional initiatives, among which the Visegrad group plays the most important role, Hungary and Slovakia should be interested to pass the best practices from the V4 to other regional initiatives in the Western Balkans.
- Higher involvement in twinning projects presents another opportunity for Hungary and Slovakia to increase their cooperation with the Western Balkan countries.

## 5.2 Recommendations to the Hungarian and Slovak Authorities

It should be taken into account that the list of possible areas of cooperation might be prolonged as new initiatives will be proposed. For the moment, the paper can be considered as an initiative aiming to steer a discussion and possibly intensify cooperation of Hungary and Slovakia in the Western Balkans. In the light of above, following recommendations to the Hungarian and Slovak diplomacies can be put forward:

- European perspective of the Western Balkans or related issues should by no means become a problematic issue in bilateral Hungarian-Slovak relations. Both countries, being EU and NATO members, should coordinate their activities in order to assist the Western Balkan countries in reaching strategic goals and bring European policies in the region an added value. They can achieve more by cooperation than by competition. The cooperation should, in the first place, include the promotion of democratic values and principles of solidarity, on which the EU is based.
- Hungary and Slovakia should better coordinate their activities leading to the building and enforcement of a system of democratic institutions and strengthening the integration perspective in the Western Balkan countries. If Romania, Hungary and Serbia were able to advance Serbia's integration by the creation of a system of regional cooperation,<sup>84</sup> then Hungary and Slovakia, too, could discover the map of joint action to advance e. g. Serbia's integration.
- Problems and tensions in Slovak – Hungarian bilateral relations decrease the reputation of both countries in the Western Balkans. The authorities in both countries should therefore increase their efforts to solve the most problematic disputes through a regular and structured dialogue.
- Hungary and Slovakia should increase their cooperation with the Western Balkan countries in terms of twinning projects. The governments are advised to create conditions for an increasing number of twinning projects to be adopted. The governments should also diminish possible overlapping of project activities by regularly informing each other about their planned initiatives.
- Slovakia and Hungary should increase their cooperation in the field of consular affairs and exploitation of embassy facilities – Slovakia could, for instance, use the Hungarian embassy in Podgorica for its own purposes.

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<sup>84</sup> "Budapest and Bucharest play a leading role in accelerating Serbia's EU integration"; [http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/en/bal/actualities/visits\\_and\\_events/Temesvar\\_eng\\_090718.htm](http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/en/bal/actualities/visits_and_events/Temesvar_eng_090718.htm).

- Hungary and Slovakia should better coordinate their activities in order to strengthen civil society organisations – and civil society in general – in the Western Balkans. This will not be possible without including civil society organisations from Hungary and Slovakia in the process of communication and development of joint strategies. The cooperation of official and public diplomacy is an important prerequisite for the success of various project initiatives in different fields.

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