

THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE PROCESS OF CURRENT GEOPOLITICAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF POWER RELATIONS

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Abstract: Military interventionism is a risk with unforeseeable consequences for the international order and its security. Catastrophic potentials, primarily military power, generated in foreign policy by major powers in order to realize their national interests are a great danger of permanent militarization of international politics. The war in Ukraine initiated significant changes that will remain as building blocks of the future defense role of the European Union (EU). It may gradually increase the EU's ability to intervene in complementarity with the NATO alliance, which is a long-standing ambition that has largely remained an aspiration until now. Also, the war accelerates transformations in EU foreign policy because Brussels is forced to adapt to the new geopolitical reality. This could reinforce the trend in Europe to emphasize a strong EU as a protective factor for European countries. Bearing in mind that it is a geographically inseparable part of Europe, the Balkans, and especially the area of Serbia, conveniently served to absorb a multitude of externalized political, ideological and cultural frustrations that stem from tensions and contradictions inherent in regions and societies outside the Balkans. Also, it is very important to highlight the place and role of the Balkan countries in this reorganization of the power relations of the great powers. From concrete European, Eurasian and global centers of geopolitical power, the Balkans are viewed from a different geographical perspective. Bearing in mind that it is a geographically inseparable part of Europe, the Balkans, and especially the area of Serbia, conveniently served to absorb a multitude of externalized political, ideological and cultural frustrations that stem from tensions and contradictions inherent in regions and societies outside the Balkans.

Keywords: *European union; Russia; The process of geopolitical recomposition; The power relationship.*

INTRODUCTION

International relations are a dynamic and changing category, without final solutions, which at certain historical moments manifests itself as an international order. From the perspective of the influence of the so-called of great powers on international relations, the international order, most often, is named as unipolar, bipolar and multipolar. The European Union, as an idea, has existed for several centuries, and

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significant forms of its organization were evident only after the Second World War. The official name European Union was created in 1992, when 12 European countries finalized a stage in the development of European integration. After its formation, the Union carried out several expansions, but it is also evident that one country left its membership (United Kingdom, 2020), so that today there are 27 member states.

The European Union primarily developed as an economic community of states, and at the beginning of the 21st century it tried to grow into a global political power. But there is no political influence without military force. In this sense, the EU tried to get rid of American influence in the field of defense and exert a more significant influence on peace and security in the world. However, the war in Ukraine since February 2022 has strengthened the influence of the US and NATO, especially in Europe, to the extent that the question arises – what is the EU's influence on the security situation of the old continent?

By applying the methods of content analysis, case studies and comparative methods, this paper analyzes the position of the EU in the creation of the latest international order. As part of that analysis, consideration of the position and perspective of the Western Balkans is also included.

GLOBAL SECURITY POSITIONING OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The security threats in contemporaneity have changed substantially, and yet, as Schopenhauer argued, we live in a „worst of all“ world, and given that „God Mars still continues its apocalyptic march“, all these facts must not stop the struggle of the democratic world in changing the driving forces, dimensions, forms and procedures, and mechanisms of operational-strategic processes of global security protection (Vukonjanski & Sekulović, 2019). The first forms of organizing European countries, as the forerunner of today's European Union, began in 1951 with the formation of the Coal and Steel Community, and continued in 1957 with the formation of the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community. Those three European communities, with the Treaty of Rome from 1957 (entered into force in 1958), are practically the forerunner of the European Union (*The Treaty of Rome, 1958*).

Before the formation of the first communities on European soil, the question of defense arose, in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter. In this sense, in 1948, the Western Union (France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg) was formed as a barrier against a possible new attack by Germany (*The Treaty of Brussels, 1948*). In the years that followed, several attempts to establish a European Defense Community failed. Therefore, in 1954, the Western Union was expanded and renamed the Western European Union (*The Treaty of Paris, 1954*). However, with the formation of NATO in 1949, the Western Union and later the Western European Union could not find their place in the defense system of the future European Union.

The „European Twelve“, in Maastricht (Holland) in 1992, formed the European Union as a three-pillar structure, where the so-called second pillar was the Common Foreign and Security Policy (*The Maastricht Treaty, 1992*). The formal emergence of the EU in Maastricht comes after several significant processes, named as *the end of the Cold War*. The key processes of that period were: The demolition of the Berlin Wall (1989), as a symbol of the division of the world into East and West; Unification

of Germany (1990); the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact (VP) and the collapse of the USSR (1991); the breakup of the former SFR Yugoslavia, which has not yet been completed, and the survival of NATO. In the aforementioned conditions, two strong integration processes are beginning in the North Atlantic area: 1) EU expansion and 2) the survival and expansion of NATO to the east (Forca, 2018).

Since Maastricht in 1992, the EU has been moving towards a union of European states, as the „Fathers of Europe” said, from the beginning of the first economic integrations. Thus, one of the „fathers of Europe”, the French politician Jean Monet, said: „Europe must not remain dependent on the community for coal and steel. It must grow into a union of political influence” (Forca, 2017). Taking advantage of the situation in Europe after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the USSR, the EU was the first to begin expansion and already in 1995 it accepted Austria, Finland and Sweden as members. Aware that they have economic strength, but that there is no political influence without military power, the leading countries of Europe, primarily Germany and France, are undertaking initiatives to strengthen the EU’s military capabilities for defense, as well as preparations for a more significant contribution to security, globally. Those initiatives culminated in the adoption of the first *EU Security Strategy* in 2003 (*European Security Strategy, 2003*) and the preparation of the draft EU Constitution. At the same time, since 2003, the EU has been involved in peacekeeping missions and operations with its own forces. The first civilian-police *mission* (EUPM) begins in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the first military peace *operation* (Concordia) in Macedonia.

However, the ideas of self-defense, advocated by Germany and France, are opposed by Great Britain and some other members of the Union, considering that NATO is a sufficient guarantor of EU security. Thus, in terms of security and defense, the EU moves „on two tracks”. Disagreements in the EU culminate in the rejection of the draft Constitution (2005), which is blocked by France and the Netherlands, and the Czech Republic also joins. These disagreements arise just at the time when the EU is making the largest expansion of its membership (2004) by admitting 10 new countries („enlargement burst”). In such conditions, the EU receives two more countries (Romania and Bulgaria) in the year in which it prepares and implements the summit in Lisbon (2007), which results in the adoption of the most reforming treaty – *the Treaty of Lisbon*. After the summit in Lisbon (2007), only one country was admitted to the EU – Croatia (2013), but Great Britain left the Union (2020) (Sekulović, 2021).

Some of the ideas of the failed draft of the Constitution were incorporated into the Treaty of Lisbon, and the main novelties in the document are: the three-pillar structure of the Union was deleted and the EU becomes a single legal entity, which is not fully adequate to international subjectivity; the position of the President of the European Council was introduced, which is elected for 2.5 years; The European Security and Defense Policy was renamed the Common Security and Defense Policy, as part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy; the European External Action Service was formed, with the introduction of the function of High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy; the possibility of the country’s withdrawal from the EU was introduced (Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon); the foundations from the former so-called of the third pillar – judicial and political cooperation and others (*Lisbon Treaty, 2009*).

Within the framework of the Joint Security and Defense Policy – CSDP (Lisbon Treaty, Art. 42-46), a number of novelties were also introduced, the most significant of which are: since the so-called pillars of the EU, the common foreign and security policy has become an integral part of the Union's external action; the position of High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy was introduced; the tasks from Perersberg, which refer to participation in peace operations and missions, have been expanded; the joint defense clause was introduced; the clause on permanent structural cooperation and the clause on solidarity were introduced, as well as the arrangement of positions on the European Defense Agency (Ateljević, Forca, Župac, 2015).

As stated, in the Treaty of Lisbon (Article 42) a clause on common defense was introduced, which is mentioned for the first time in any of the Union's treaties. However, common defense is not the only way to defend the Union. Namely, in order to reconcile all currents within the Union, in the Treaty of Lisbon, defense is defined in three ways: 1) common defense, 2) NATO remains as the guarantor of the Union's defense and 3) the right of (military neutral) states to determine their own defense (Forca, 2021).

The defense of the EU and its participation in peacekeeping missions and operations, as two key CSDP issues, remained insufficiently precise in the Lisbon Treaty, and thus in practice, primarily due to the great influence of the US and NATO, which requires a slightly broader analysis.

NATO, which was formed in 1949 as a defense alliance of two North American and 10 Western European countries, and in the context of the East-West conflict, overshadowed the formation of the Western and then the Western European Union, to the extent that this union was absorbed into the EU and ceased to exist in 2011. years. The outcome of the Cold War, in addition to the formation and expansion of the EU, also resulted in the survival and expansion of NATO. Namely, the USA, as the only superpower, managed to convince the official UN of the need for NATO to survive in the fight against the spectrum of new challenges, risks and threats, primarily terrorism. Essentially, however, in observation, NATO has survived as a lever of US power to rule the world.

After Austria, Sweden and Finland were admitted to the EU in 1995, it was the turn of the European socialist states: 1) the states of Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans, as former members of the former Warsaw Pact, 2) the states created on the territory of the former USSR and 3) states formed on the territory of the former SFR Yugoslavia. The EU established new rules for the admission of those countries, but the key and unwritten principle became – first in NATO and then in the EU. That rule, without exception, applies to this day. That is, all the socialist countries of Europe on their way to EU membership first became NATO members (Table 1).

Table 1. Admission of the socialist countries of Europe to the EU and NATO

COUNTRY	ADMISSION TO NATO	ADMISSION TO EU
Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary	1999	2004
Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovakia and Slovenia	2004	2004
Romania and Bulgaria	2004	2007
Croatia	2009	2013

Albania	2009	Candidate
Montenegro	2017	Started negotiations
North Macedonia	2020	Candidate

Source: Editing by the authors

In order to preserve its leadership position in the world, the US relies on NATO and undertakes numerous military interventions in many countries of the world. The pinnacle of NATO's armed engagement, for the first time outside the Euro-Atlantic area, was the aggression against FR Yugoslavia in 1999. That aggression was carried out without the mandate of the UN Security Council, contrary to the provisions of Article 5 of the Washington Agreement on the formation of NATO and contrary to the constitutions of the member states of the Alliance (Forca, 2021). The US and NATO military engagement in Afghanistan (2001-2021), Iraq (2003-2014), the African Spring (since 2011), Syria, Yemen and other countries continues the aggression against FRY. How much did the US and NATO undertake armed activities and the so-called hard power, so the EU turns to peace missions and operations using the so-called soft power. This is, on the one hand, understandable, because most of the EU members are also members of NATO. In 2022, NATO will have 30 member states, of which 21 are also EU members.

In the first, and especially in the second decade of the last century, the US and NATO became more and more mired in armed conflicts, while Russia returned to the world stage and China grew stronger. According to numerous analysts, the world is becoming multipolar. Seeking to neutralize Russia in Europe, America is asking EU members to invest more in defense and reduce economic relations with Russia. The „first ally” of the US in Europe – Great Britain – responded to that call, along with some other reasons, and in 2016 voted to leave the EU in a referendum. Great Britain's exit from the EU formally ended in 2020. The EU was left without one of its militarily strongest and most economically developed members. It will be difficult for the Union to recover from that.

In the first question, we will look more broadly at the global positioning of the European Union, primarily from a security perspective, analyzing the EU remaining in the shadow of the US (NATO) and the fact that the United Kingdom left the Union.

In the second question, the focus is on the attitude of the EU towards the war in Ukraine, from the aspect of the complete loss of the Union's compass and submission to the goals of the USA.

A special aspect is looking at the position of the Western Balkans on the way to the EU, especially the situation in Kosovo and Metohija and the Republic of Srpska, because their position will depend on the outcome of the war in Ukraine.

THE WAR IN UKRAINE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

After the dissolution of the VP and the collapse of the USSR, the absorption of countries from the created buffer zone between the EU and NATO, on the one hand, and Russia, on the other, began. Although the Union was the first to begin enlargement, NATO gained primacy. The leaders of the USA and other Western countries practically deceived Soviet President Gorbachev that NATO would not expand to the east (<https://hr.rbth.com/povijest/80983-kako-je-obmanut-gorba%C4%8Dov->

objavljeni-zapisi-zapadnih-obe%C4%87anja-o-ne%C5%A1irenju-natoa-na-istok), and they trampled on that promise after the collapse of the USSR in 1999 and in the following years.

In the first years after independence and separation from the USSR, Ukraine declared itself as a neutral country. At the summit in Budapest in 1994, for the sake of guaranteeing territorial integrity, it agreed to denuclearization (*Memorandum on security assurances, 1994*). However, with the encouragement of the West, Ukraine is turning to the EU and, in particular, NATO and establishing a strategic goal – membership in the Euro-Atlantic integration. Thus, at the NATO summit in Bucharest (2008), along with Georgia, Ukraine received an invitation to join the Alliance (*Bucharest Summit Declaration, 2008*). Unrest is emerging in Ukraine and a conflict between pro-Western and pro-Russian forces. Russia, after militarily attacking Georgia and recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states (2008), is turning to Ukraine. Thus, in 2014, Russia returned Crimea to its composition. Since that (2014) year, Lugansk and Donetsk, as parts of Ukraine, have sought to go the way of Crimea, leading to violent unrest and civil war in Ukraine. Tens of thousands died in those conflicts, and over two million emigrated, mostly to Russia.

Russia constantly warned the UN and the world about the events in Ukraine (Dombas), while the West condemned Russia for all that. Several peace summits fail, especially the Minsk II Agreement, which, in addition to Ukraine (Poroshenko) and Russia (Putin), was signed by the Chancellor of Germany (Angela Merkel) and the President of France (François Orland) as EU guarantors (Duncan, 2020).

Sensing the danger of NATO's expansion into Ukraine and considering the situation in Dombas (Luhansk and Donetsk), Russia recognizes the Luhansk People's Republic and the Donetsk People's Republic as independent states and on February 24, 2022, it will start a „special military operation” in Ukraine, which the General Assembly The UN characterized it as aggression (*Resolution GA UN, 27.02.2022*).

On February 24, 2022, the Cold War really ended, which was thought to have ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the USSR. A „hot war” has begun in Ukraine, which is wholeheartedly supported by the „collective West” Thus, analysts agree that a „proxy war” is underway, in which Russia and NATO clash through Ukraine.

The European Union was unprepared for the war in Ukraine, for several reasons: 1) It does not have its own armed forces and is powerless to confront Russia without NATO, primarily the USA; 2) It is extremely dependent on the import of energy and fossil fuels from Russia; and 3) After leaving, Great Britain is not unique in any respect. In such a position of the EU, at the head of the „collective West” in support of Ukraine, and against Russia, the powerful USA is placed, partially shaken by the shameful exit from Afghanistan in 2021. Seemingly, all the „trouble” within the EU and beyond – in Western countries, was canceled by Russia with a military attack on Ukraine. The collective West is homogenized, but everyone is in a position to listen to America.

Following (listening to) the US, the EU is reacting to the war in Ukraine in several ways. First, all EU countries condemned Russia's aggression against Ukraine and imposed sanctions on Russia. Secondly, sanctions against Russia were introduced successively, and the so-called packages. As many as seven packages of sanctions, unprecedented in history, were introduced. Third, most EU countries, in addition

to their declarative support for Ukraine, have started donating weapons and military equipment to that country. As expected, the biggest proponents of support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russia, when it comes to the EU, are Poland, the Baltic States and Germany. On the other hand, some countries, such as Hungary, do not accept all EU measures and sanctions, do not deliver weapons and military equipment to that country, and even propose the lifting of some sanctions, such as the import of oil and natural gas from Russia.

In parallel with the introduction of sanctions against Russia and the donation of weapons and equipment to Ukraine, there is an accumulation of military personnel of NATO member countries in Eastern Europe, primarily in the countries bordering Ukraine. Therefore, the USA and NATO are taking the situation into their own hands. The European Union has lost both its compass and its identity. Few pay attention to the messages of Chancellor Scholz (Germany), the President of France (Macron), and the President of the European Commission (Ursula von der Leyen). Mostly, they listen to the American president and the British prime minister.

In order, as much as possible, to match the military efforts of the US and NATO, the EU publishes a document called the *Strategic Compass (A Strategic Compass for Security and Defense, 2022)*. That document, in essence, is an announcement of the formation of ready-made EU forces (initially 5,000 soldiers) that will be able to be activated „where needed”. The projection of those ready-made forces (battle group) is completely unclear, because they come precisely from countries that are also members of NATO. Thus, EU-NATO dualism, as well as the weakness of the Union, once again comes to the fore in Europe. And if it wasn't clear until now, now it's increasingly clear: the USA doesn't need the EU, but NATO. In this sense, „NATO Europe” is being created according to the USA, not the European Union. In other words, the EU was tasked by the USA to „dig a trench” towards Russia and permanently expel that country from Europe, with which geopolitics, for the umpteenth time, „cuts geography”.

THE POSITION OF THE WESTERN BALKANS IN THE LIGHT OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE

The policy of destabilizing the Balkans, this important European region, serves to legitimize the presence and existence of the largest and only military alliance in the world – NATO in the region, which practically justifies its existence, but also its further expansion. The end result is the control of European states and European borders by a single military alliance, the subordination of the EU to a rigid and dangerous Leviathan, behind which, of course, are the interests of the global Hegemon (unlimited master) – the USA, which has a primary role in decision-making in this military alliance (Sekulović, 2018). The term *Western Balkans* is gradually introduced into the diplomatic-political dictionary, first in a colloquial and informal sense. It soon became an oft-mentioned official name, which is also used in international documents. At the same time, its use in scientific literature in the field of geopolitics, security and international relations begins. The consequences of the breakup of SFR Yugoslavia and European integration processes can be considered as the cause of this term. The Western Balkans, as a territorial entity designated by the international community for its specific political, economic and security char-

acteristics, includes newly created states in the former SFRY with Albania, but excluding Slovenia and Croatia. The principles that the Western Balkans left aside are controversial! The first possibility is that it is a regional-integration area where countries that have been marked by war conflicts for the past decades are located. Second, that the Western Balkans is a syntagm – a remnant composed of a „desperate” state, that is, it is an arbitrary artificial construction of „Brussels” for an unstable area in transition and a specific position in relation to its environment (Sekulović and Jakovljević, 2020).

The term *Western Balkans* is a geopolitical coin launched by the EU and NATO at the end of the last century and at the beginning of this century, initially implying a region that includes new states on the territory of the former SFRY, without Slovenia, (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, now North Macedonia and Serbia) plus Albania. With Croatia's entry into NATO (2009), and especially into the EU (2013), its place within the Western Balkans, according to the West, is „taken” by the territory of Kosovo and Metohija (KiM), which the West (in the majority) names and recognizes as independent Kosovo. Thus, the Western Balkans gets the symbol WB6 (Western Balkans six). Considering that Serbia does not recognize independent Kosovo, in the talks between EU and NATO leaders and officials from Serbia, the symbol WB5+1 is used for the Western Balkans.

After the collapse of the SFR Yugoslavia, and especially after NATO's aggression against FR Yugoslavia (1999), all Western Balkan countries, including Slovenia, strategically opted for membership in Euro-Atlantic integration (NATO and EU). An exception to this approach is Serbia in relation to NATO membership. Namely, after the separation from Montenegro (2006), the National Assembly proclaimed the military neutrality of Serbia in 2007 (*Rezolucija Narodne skupštine, 2007:t.6*). That declarative decision of the National Assembly on military neutrality will be explicitly incorporated into the Serbian security documents in 2019 (*Strategija nacionalne bezbednosti, 2019; Strategija odbrane Republike Srbije, 2019*). Also, the attitude towards NATO has been changing in B&H for the past few years. Namely, Bosnia and Herzegovina was oriented towards NATO and the EU, and even established a „road map” towards the Alliance. But, since a few years ago, following the example of Serbia, the National Assembly of the Republic of Srpska adopted the Resolution (*Rezolucija o zaštiti ustavnog poretka i proglašenju vojne neutralnosti Republike Srpske, 2019*), according to which military neutrality is proclaimed. Thus, RS blocked B&H's road map towards NATO. The RS resolution is opposed by the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose leaders point out that the road map to NATO is included in the Law (*Zakon o odbrani, 2005: Čl. 84*). After the enlargement to Romania and Bulgaria (2007), but even before that, „enlargement fatigue” is becoming more prominent in the EU, which divides the member states into *those* for and *those against* enlargement. The Western Balkans, which since 2003 have been formally put in the focus of EU enlargement (*EU-Western Balkans Summit, Thessaloniki, 2003*), remains on the sidelines. Thus, since 2007, only Croatia (2013) has been accepted into the Union. There are numerous reasons for putting the Western Balkans outside the focus of EU enlargement, which have the character of problems in the Union itself, but also in the countries of the Western Balkans. The key problems that deter the Union from enlargement are: the great global financial crisis, starting in 2007; conflicts with Russia since 2008 (war in Georgia), and especially since 2014, when

Russia annexed Crimea; the consequences of the war in Africa, Syria and the Middle East, in which the EU countries are involved, and which results in strong migration precisely towards the developed countries of the Union, which leads to the so-called migrant crisis and the exit of the United Kingdom from the EU. The key problems in the Western Balkans, as seen by the West, were: the dispute between Macedonia and Greece over the name „Macedonia”; the problem of resolving the status of Kosovo and Metohija and dysfunctional institutions in B&H and constant efforts to revise the Dayton Peace Agreement from 1995, i.e. the aspiration towards the unitization of that country, to the detriment of Republika Srpska.

In the conditions when they are left aside from the EU, the countries of the Western Balkans, formally and essentially, fall under the influence of other power centers in the world, primarily Russia, China and Turkey. Given that all the countries of the Western Balkans, with the exception of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, are becoming NATO members, Russia’s influence is growing stronger in Serbia and the Republika Srpska. Serbia and Russia signed the *Declaration on Strategic Partnership* (2013). China, in addition to the development of the „Belt and Road” initiative, and as part of it, is strengthening the China+17 initiative, which strongly develops economic and other cooperation with the countries of southern, central and eastern Europe, which are or are not members of the EU. Viewed from its own interests, Turkey is strengthening its influence in the Western Balkans, primarily in BiH, Kosovo and Metohija, and Albania. Some analysts link such performance of Turkey to Davutoglu’s *Strategic Depth* (Davutoglu, 2014), with which Turkey tries to „revive” its influence in the wider geospace of the former Ottoman Empire.

Realizing that other influences are strengthening in the Western Balkans, the EU is trying to return to the region with various projects and strategies. Important initiatives of the EU, in this sense, are: *the Berlin process*, since 2014; *Strategy for the Western Balkans*, from 2018; *The new model for the Western Balkans*, from 2020, as well as the initiative of the French president (Macron) on the *Political Union* (2021). In addition, resolving the issue of normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina from the UN is placed under the jurisdiction of the EU, specifically specified in the *Brussels Agreement*, from 2013 (*Brussels Agreement, 2013*). Also, with the wholehearted help of the USA, the EU influences Macedonia and Greece to agree on the name of the country and with the *Prespa Agreement* from 2018, Macedonia gets the name North Macedonia (*Prespa Agreement, 2018*). However, despite these initiatives, the admission of the countries of the Western Balkans to the EU is slow and takes place through membership in NATO, so that three countries have become members of the Alliance, and none of the Union (Table 2).

Table 2. Status of the countries of the Western Balkans in relation to NATO and the EU

COUNTRY	NATO	European Union
Albania	Member since 2009	Candidate for membership
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Undefined status due to RS relations	A potential candidate
North Macedonia	Member since 2020	Candidate for membership
Serbia	Military neutrality	Began accession negotiations in 2014
Montenegro	Member since 2017	Began accession negotiations in 2012

Source: Editing by the authors

In Table 2, the position of Kosovo and Metohija is not listed for a reason, because it is a territory and not an internationally recognized state, although the so-called independent Kosovo was recognized by 22 of the 27 EU member states. The unilaterally proclaimed independence of Kosovo was not recognized by the following EU members: Spain, Slovakia, Romania, Greece and Cyprus.

Kosovo and Metohija and Republika Srpska

Kosovo and Metohija and Republika Srpska are two extremely important issues for the Serbian people, on the one hand, as well as key problems in the Western Balkans, as seen by the so-called Western experts, on the other hand. Thus, Danijel Server saw three key problems in the Western Balkans: 1) the conflict between Greece and Macedonia over the name Macedonia, 2) the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, and 3) the non-functioning of BiH institutions (Server, 2018). Given that Macedonia and Greece „resolved” the issue of the name of the country (North Macedonia), according to Western analysts, the burning problems in the Western Balkans are those generated by the Serbs. Therefore, there is a need to briefly review the issues of KiM and the Republic of Srpska, without going too far back in history.

Kosovo and Metohija, as an integral part (autonomous province) of the Republic of Serbia, is a decades-long problem of Serbia, both during its existence in other state entities, and especially since its independence in 2006. Strong intensification of the „issue” of Kosovo and Metohija, with the whole-hearted support of the West, occurred during the break-up of the SFR Yugoslavia. Prompted by the disintegration of the SFRY, separatists in Kosovo and Metohija embark on a „final” fight for their own independence. Insurgent activities in Kosovo and Metohija intensified in the period from 1995 to 1998, to which the then FR Yugoslavia responded with security forces (Army and Police).

However, under the pretext of a humanitarian disaster and excessive use of force in Kosovo, the West, led by the US, after quasi-peace negotiations (Rambuje), and using a staged situation (the village of Racak), he undertook aggression against FR Yugoslavia in 1999. NATO's aggression against the FRY was stopped by the Kumanovo *Military Technical Agreement* of June 9, 1999, (*Military Technical Agreement, 1999*) and the next day (June 10, 1999) the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution no. 1244, which introduced the UN protectorate in Kosovo and Metohija (*Resolution SC UN 1244, 1999*).

With the Kumanovo Agreement and UN Security Council Resolution 1244, the UN peacekeeping mission – UNMIK began in KiM and the multinational forces – KFOR were deployed, and many issues were regulated, among which the following stand out: the security forces of the FRY must withdraw from the territory of Kosovo and Metohija; the return of hundreds (not thousands) of members of the security forces to K&M is allowed; the security forces that allow the return to Kosovo and Metohija are expected to perform the following tasks: cooperation with the UN civilian mission in Kosovo and Metohija; demining the area; preservation of Serbian cultural heritage and control of border crossings; international security forces in K&M will demilitarize the former KLA and all armed paramilitary formations and guarantee the safety of everyone in the region; a land security zone (5km) and an air security zone (25km) were established from the administrative line between

Kosovo and Metohija and central Serbia. The key provision from the UN Security Council Resolution 1244 is: „Political process aimed at establishing an agreement on a temporary political framework that will ensure essential self-governance for Kosovo, fully taking into account the Rambouillet agreements and the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the FR Yugoslavia and other countries in the region, as and the demilitarization of the KLA. Negotiations between the parties in the direction of reaching a solution should not delay or hinder the establishment of democratic self-governing institutions” (*Resolution SC UN. 1244, 1999:Annex 2*).

The security forces of the FRY withdrew from Kosovo and Metohija, a land and air security zone was established, the UNMIK mission was established and KFOR forces were deployed to Kosovo and Metohija. Since then, practically, the support of the West for the creation of an independent Kosovo began. Surrounded by the support of Western countries, the Albanian side is terrorizing the Serbs and other „disloyal” non-Albanian and Albanian populations. A great pogrom of Serbs took place in 2004, which KFOR failed to prevent. After the failure of Ahtisaari’s plan for Kosovo and Metohija, the separatists unilaterally proclaimed independent Kosovo in 2008. Very soon, this independence was recognized by the majority of countries in the world, led by the USA and leading EU member states (Germany, France and Great Britain). Kosovo’s independence was not recognized by China and Russia, as permanent members of the UN Security Council, as well as by a large number of countries in the world.

Logically, Serbia did not recognize the unilaterally proclaimed independence of Kosovo, protested strongly, and through the UN General Assembly sent a question to the International Court of Justice in The Hague: „*Is the unilateral declaration of independence of the temporary institutions of self-government in Kosovo in accordance with international law?*” (Hrnjaz, 2022).

The International Court of Justice in The Hague stated that the above-mentioned declaration of the temporary authorities on the proclamation of Kosovo’s independence is not in contradiction with international law. It was an additional impetus for the separatists in K&M to move more decisively towards the final goal – an independent Kosovo.

Under the existing conditions, the Serbian authorities, in cooperation with the EU, propose a UN General Assembly Resolution transferring the issue of Kosovo and Metohija from the UN to the jurisdiction of the EU (<https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/politika/762580/usvojena-rezolucija-o-kosovu.html>). It was the second strategic mistake of the Serbian authorities. Thus, *de iure*, the negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina are placed under the monitoring of Brussels (EU). In this sense, the *Brussels Agreement* was signed in 2013. The key issues from that agreement relate to: the formation of the Community of Serbian Municipalities in Kosovo; solving some issues of the judiciary and the organization of the police, as well as ensuring that the parties will not be hindered on the way to European integration.

It is precisely the attitude of non-interference by the parties towards European integration that is characterized by part of the Serbian public as recognition of Kosovo’s independence. By the way, Kosovo is moving towards the Union and signed the *Stabilization and Association Agreement* in 2016, thereby gaining the status of a potential candidate for membership. All provisions from the Brussels Agreement have been implemented, except for the formation of the Union of Serbian Muni-

palities in Kosovo. The Kosovo side, with the strong support of the West, behaves exclusively in accordance with its own interests and constantly undertakes activities to strengthen its statehood. In addition to the Constitution and other regulations that are passed in every independent state, the Albanian side in Kosovo is starting to form the Kosovo Army (2018), which does not encounter strong resistance from those who should prevent it – KFOR (NATO) and the United Nations.

The European Union, although neutral in the negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina, sides with the provisional authorities in Kosovo. It was illusory and it was to be expected otherwise, because the key EU countries and most of the members recognized independent Kosovo. But only when the USA is more strongly advocating for Kosovo's movement towards independence and EU leaders are pressuring Serbia to recognize an independent Kosovo, i.e. mutual recognition of Belgrade and Pristina. It is legal *nonsense* to demand that a sovereign state recognize the independence of its part. But the power of God does not beg.

The actual situation in K&M is far from the provisions of the Constitution of Serbia and closer to the actual independence of Kosovo, regardless of whether Serbia will recognize (accept) this independence and whether Kosovo will become a member of the UN. Kosovo is lost to Serbia. The final act of losing Kosovo will be the pressure of the West (USA) on the Pristina authorities to form the Association of Serbian Municipalities, which will „gain something” for Serbia, i.e. it will be put before the *fait accompli* (Forca, 2020).

According to the Dayton Peace Agreement (*Dayton Peace Agreement, 1995*), Republika Srpska is one of the two entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Dayton peace agreement stopped the war in BiH, but peace did not come! Since its adoption until today, that agreement has been constantly violated to the detriment of Republika Srpska, all for the sake of creating a unitary BiH. The key forces that support unitary Bosnia and Herzegovina are the USA, leading EU countries, Great Britain and Turkey.

The outlines of the agreement that will be signed in Dayton (USA) in 1995 have been visible since 1994, when the representative of the Bosnian Muslims, Alija Izetbegović, and the Croat, Franjo Tuđman, were invited by the then US Vice President, Bill Clinton, to Washington in 1994 to sign the agreement that were initialed before that (March 1, 1994) by Haris Silajdžić and Mate Granić (<https://balkans.aljazeera.net/opinions/2017/12/3/od-karadordeva-do-haga-suocavanje-s-istinom-probuditi-ce-nadu>). Then the Muslim-Croat Federation (Federation of B&H) was formed, which will wage war against Republika Srpska with the combined forces of Muslims (Bosniaks) and Croats until the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

The Dayton Peace Agreement established the institution of the High Representative for the implementation of that agreement and determined its competences (*Dayton Agreement, 1995: Annex X*). Those competencies were supplemented at the Bonn Conference of the *Peace Implementation Council* in 1997. Those „subsequent” competences („Bonn powers”) will be constantly directed and implemented by all high representatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the disavowal of the competences of the RS and the transfer of powers to the central level. Different interpretations of the Dayton Peace Agreement by the entities and constitutive peoples in B&H, and especially the view of the position of the High Representative, the Peace Implementation Council and the „Bonn Powers”, called into question the survival of B&H as

a sovereign state. Certain authors have established in their works that Bosnia and Herzegovina is an „impossible country” (Kecmanović, 2007). The fact is that numerous legal experts are of the opinion that the „Bonn authorizations” are based on the Dayton Peace Agreement and that they have no legal basis, as well as that they are, in fact, evidence of the use of force in international relations, and that Bosnia and Herzegovina is located in) to the protectorate implemented by the High Representative. Differently interpreting the so-called „Bonn powers”, high representatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina are interfered in all branches of government, passed laws, replaced high officials in several hundred cases and, practically, „exercised power from above”, denying the organization and functioning of that state established by the Dayton Agreement and the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The culmination of that action against the RS is the appointment of the last High Representative (Kristijan Schmidt) in 2021, despite the decision of the UN Security Council, which is an obligation established in the Dayton Agreement.

The war in Ukraine, since February of this year, has brought an additional rift among the Western Balkan states and additionally burdened internal issues in both B&H and Serbia. All the countries of the Western Balkans, with the exception of the RS and Serbia, have imposed sanctions on Russia and are wholeheartedly helping Ukraine, in accordance with the demands of the USA, NATO and the EU. This led to additional pressure on Serbia and the RS, which is reflected in the request that Serbia recognize the independence of Kosovo, and that the policy of the RS (Milorada Dodik) be sanctioned. There is no shortage of war-mongering rhetoric, which once again makes the Western Balkans a latently dangerous region. As merged courts, the situation in Ukraine and the Western Balkans (Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina) are directly linked to the projections that the outcome of the war in Ukraine will also determine the processes in the Western Balkans. Those processes will primarily be focused on putting pressure on Serbia to impose sanctions on Russia and recognize independent Kosovo. On the other hand, the pressures on the Republika Srpska will go in the direction of the unitization of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The bearer of pressure on Serbia and the RS will essentially be the USA, and formally the EU, Great Britain, Turkey and neighboring countries. A new „iron curtain” is coming down from the Atlantic to the Baltic and the Black Sea. This time the USA and NATO are bringing down the curtain. Serbia and Republika Srpska are inside that curtain.

CONCLUSION

International relations are a dynamic category without final solutions. International relations are primarily influenced by great powers, regardless of the establishment of a system of collective security in the 20th century. After the Second World War, the key world powers were the USA and the USSR, which entered the Cold War until the last decade of the last century. The USSR and the Eastern Bloc did not withstand the conflict with the West.

The formal winner of the Cold War – the USA, with the preservation and support of NATO, established a unipolar world order after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the USSR. The USA, with the help of NATO, maintained its leadership position in the world, most often, through the use of force. There are numerous military interventions by the US and NATO in the countries of the world with and without the mandate of the UN Security Council. The pinnacle of the il-

legal „establishment of order” in the world is the NATO aggression against FR Yugoslavia in 1999.

Formed after the Cold War, the European Union, as the second „Western integration”, fails to grow into a global power, because the USA and NATO do not allow it. And in its enlargement since 1992, the EU fails to manage the situation in Europe. Namely, NATO is imposed, so admission to the EU is based on previous membership in the Alliance.

The European Union established the term Western Balkans and tried to establish dominance in the region. However, by constantly removing the Western Balkans from the focus of enlargement, the Union allowed the influence of Russia, China and Turkey to grow in the region. The European Union tried with numerous initiatives and financial aid to tear the Western Balkans away from other influences. However, the real power in the region is the USA and NATO.

The war in Ukraine, which formally began in February 2022, is essentially a *proxy war*, which, through Ukraine, is being waged by the „collective West” led by the USA against Russia. With that war, the latest world order is being created, the outcome of which is difficult to predict. However, it is obvious that America dominated Europe, in which sense the EU is increasingly losing the position of „global player” that it intended for itself.

The position of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Srpska is unenviable, because they remain inside the „iron curtain” in Europe, which is being lowered by the USA and NATO. The hope that there will be no spillover of the conflict from Ukraine to Serbia in the Western Balkans lies in the fact that the security regime in Kosovo and Metohija was imposed by the UN, no matter how we look at the role of the international community in the new conditions. When it comes to B&H, that is, Republika Srpska, the situation is a little more difficult, because the security processes are led by the EU, which means NATO. Therefore, the pressures of the West will first start on Bosnia and Herzegovina, that is, Republika Srpska, and then continue on Serbia.

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