

## Is Regional Cooperation of Balkans likely to develop as a new dimension of EU policy?

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**Summary:** *As we know, nowadays Balkans or more precisely South-East countries of European Union are among the most diversified, complex and dynamic issues and are on high priority agenda of the EU. That's why, I try to show processes as EU dimensionalism more precisely in order to give some evaluation of the europeanization processes on Balkans and also to present some overview about further development as if these countries are real candidates for the future EU enlargements and dimensions. So in this context the question of keeping in and out became even more controversial and it was more than clearly formulated in the title of paper. Because of that, it was essential to give more clear lines and forms of the dimensionalisation concept.*

**Key words:** *Integration, Enlargements, European Union, Dimensions of European Union, Security, Candidate countries, Big Brother Syndrome*

I would like to start from the two current political issues: to be in and to be out of European Union. As it is known, during last 50-60 years Europe has met with very controversial political systems and problems that were dividing not only the different countries but also nations within the same country. So, nowadays the new democracies of East Central Europe are therefore rejoining a Europe that is gradually but ineluctably being transformed by globalization, institutional integration and democratization. A new and complex configuration of power relations is emerging in Western and Central Europe that is very different from the old Westphalian states system of the past three centuries. (a system based on discrete, legally, sovereign territorial states). This has created 'a new, supranational social formation' within which 'new concerns for a European division of labor appear to outweigh the old concerns for a Continental balance of power'.<sup>54</sup> Hereby, I also want to add that, the East Europe, especially Balkans were always the place, where were mixed a lot of different interests not only of the local state, but also the interests of the major political players, and during the recent history, the problems of self-identification and self-determination of Balkan countries were transformed even in more sharp forms. By their nature the wars on Balkans were mostly the wars of resistance –the periodically natural activity. In particular, the European buffer zone was activated from the beginning of IX century and continuing till nowadays. The result is the logical structure of the organization of socio-cultural spaces of this zone.<sup>55</sup> So, because of all above mentioned factors, not only Balkans but also EU are highly interested in the keeping processes and conditions of Balkans under some control, because it is understandable, that in recent context the processes, happening there, will have the direct impact on such huge, complex and at the same time, particularly week security issues of the Union. Moreover, since the enlargement of 1 May 2004, the EU and the western Balkans have become even closer neighbors, and so the situation in the western Balkan countries, their progress on the road to European integration and their present and future relations with the EU really are of immediate concern to the EU itself. When Bulgaria and Romania become EU members, the entire western Balkan region was surrounded by Member States of the European Union.<sup>56</sup> Here, I would like to list the countries, about which we are going to speak later- Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo (Limited recognition), FYROM, Montenegro, Croatia, and Serbia. Hereby, appears the question - how to make this involvement and control over the processes of Balkans more appropriate and less violent, using only the democratic and good-will tools. So the question of keeping in and out has become in this

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<sup>54</sup> A. Hyde-Price (1996), "The international politics of East Central Europe", p 283

<sup>55</sup> [http://ygyg.net/10488-Balkanskoe\\_izmerenie\\_voivny\\_i\\_mira.html](http://ygyg.net/10488-Balkanskoe_izmerenie_voivny_i_mira.html)

<sup>56</sup> EU Commission: Regional priority for western Balkans -[http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/nf5703249enc\\_web\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/nf5703249enc_web_en.pdf)

context even more controversial. That's why, further I would like to give more clear lines and forms of the dimensionalisation concept. According to the above mentioned matters, I can already think and underline the hypotheses, which can possibly appear in everybody's mind:

1. The policies of EU only/mainly as a tool for avoiding military conflict condition in the region, but also used as a tool for avoiding further integration (again dimensionalism)
2. Encouragement by technical and financial assistance of new emerging western Balkan countries to be more European: Europeanization→ Accession→ Dimensionalisation

*The question* of dimensions was almost unthinkable at the very begging of the Union's Integration, because the main idea and aim of the integration was to focus on the interests of already existing states and to avoid the mutual misunderstanding. But afterwards, when Union started to grow, it was evident that it is going to be more than one actor, which would like to have some benefits both from political and economical points of view. From that moment, some states which could have some particular interests, started to create specific political and economical frameworks in order to draw the attention of the core to their particular issues and territories. In general sense, Dimensionalism fits into the logic of 'complex interdependence', according to which EU has only limited control over own security and is highly sensitive to external environment. Neighbors who are engaged in violent conflict, weak states where organized crime flourishes, dysfunctional societies or exploding population growth on its borders all pose problems for Europe. According to the logic of complex interdependence, cooperation with neighbours should be perceived not as a vehicle for national interests, but rather a long-term strategy for the whole Union. However, the fact that some member states are interested in cooperation with particular neighbours and engage own skills and funds to promote certain dimensions in EU's foreign policy suggest, that national interests are also much involved here.<sup>57</sup> As the EU itself, its' policies as well as the dimensionalism, can be accepted as some kind phenomenon- phenomenon of dimensionalism has a strong national background because nearly all member states and most new states in particular define their role within the EU in terms of their own history and geography. Becoming members they don't abandon previous foreign policy dimensions but rather try to settle it into a Common Foreign and Security Policy framework.<sup>58</sup> The main concepts of dimensionalism we can more or less clearly see in the politics of the Northern Dimension. So in this framework for the concept of dimension in general, we can underline some main criterias:

1. Geostrategical interests
2. Place for mutual cooperation (infrastructure, economic and political issues)
3. The certain set of actors
4. Mutual positive reaction- reaction of the center
5. The last but not least- The main driven force (state)

So, as a short summary to all above mentioned, I would like to add, that on the model of Northern dimension, we can enough clearly see, that The EU has subsequently developed kind of framework policy, called the Northern Dimension, which we can also evaluate as more general concept - the concept of dimensions, that, brings together all programmes, projects and policies related to Northern Europe. A bigger social and economic gap between the EU and its neighbouring countries might be a source of instability in the EU's periphery and may affect the security situation in Europe. Nevertheless, at the same time the EU enlargement becomes more and more a "process of inclusion and exclusion", which is still marked by a strong territorial emphasis.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Adrianna Kosowska(2006) - "Dimensionalism as a national policy in the EU"

<sup>58</sup> Adrianna Kosowska(2006) - "Dimensionalism as a national policy in the EU"

<sup>59</sup> Jeroen Dubois (2004): " THE NORTHERN DIMENSION AS PROTOTYPE OF THE WIDER EUROPE FRAMEWORK POLICY" Liverpool

Here, firstly, it is good to emphasize that mostly, the main incentive for Europeanisation is the concept of golden carrot, whereas after the latest round of enlargement, only this region stayed out of the EU area and policies. Furthermore, the regional cooperation in Balkans, which always was the problem during the history, mostly driven by the values and incentives of Europeanisation concept. They have linked their future with the EU, and regard their Europeanization as a desirable and modernizing change.<sup>60</sup>

By this definition, it is easy to say that the main way which nowadays can lead Balkans towards the EU is to be more europeanized, and if they will do so, probably, they will be insiders, and they will be able to benefit from the emerging chances of dimensionalisation. It is also important to realize that, nowadays, the Europeanisation in broad sense means mostly the EU-isation, because if we will remember the case of Turkey's accession procedure, which is also considered as the influential actor of Balkans, it is quite evident the difference between these two concepts- the Europe, as the wider Europe and the EU-isation. As it was mentioned in the above given parts, the one of the main prerequisites in the forming of the dimensions' incentives, mostly are given by the leadings countries of the region, or the countries which are trying to become so. So if we will consider, that the processes of regional cooperation, happening recently in the Balkans, will lead to future formation of the South-East dimension, the form and direction, which it is going to take, mostly depends on the country which will be the main force in the formation of these preferences. After the 2004 enlargement process, appeared at the same time different actors, who is supposed to be or already tries to be the driven force of region in various policies, areas and ways. Regarding these facts of being Big Brother on the international stage of influence we can find out that there are at least 2 main actors: Bulgaria (timely with Greece), Czech Republic. Somehow to this list we can add Hungary as well. Surrounded by Balkan states (Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, and Romania) Bulgaria had a major stake in promoting stability and the rule of law in this traditionally unstable region. The Commission noted Bulgaria's strong support for efforts to promote better relations among Balkan states, including the EU's Stability pact for southeastern Europe and a Bulgarian initiative to create a Southeast Europe Brigade. Some progress was also noted in Bulgaria's control of its external borders, but The EU still regarded Bulgaria as a major transit country for illegal immigrants attempting to enter the Union.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, one of the main projects directed to support regional co-operation was The South East European Co-operation Process (SEECF), which also was launched on Bulgaria's initiative in 1996. At the Bulgaria-chaired meeting in Sofia, the SEE countries laid the foundations for regional co-operation for the purposes of creating an atmosphere of trust, good neighbourly relations and stability.<sup>62</sup> It is worth to add that it is also beneficial for Bulgaria to be the leading part in this region, also for avoiding the status of Periphery and the status of the new club member as well. By creating, the regional policies together with other Balkan countries, they can become more important and influential, and gain the respect already not as a new member, but as powerful actor. We shouldn't forget, that Western Balkan countries are the first in the waiting room (as long as Island is not concerned) for EU membership, even before controversial Turkey and countries covered by European partnership.<sup>63</sup>

In order to make these countries more encouraged in joining the Union, EU have introduced the access to the various types of assistance as no longer subject to status as candidate/potential candidate, but dependent on readiness to implement, combined with a phased approach to decentralising the management of assistance.<sup>64</sup> But there is just one catch: A number - perhaps the majority - of EU members are actively working against this

<sup>60</sup> Othon Anastasakis(2005): "The Europeanization of the Balkans"

<sup>61</sup> Peter A. Poole (2003) Europe Unites, the EU's Eastern Enlargement vol.7 p.172

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.mingorp.hr/UserDocsImages/zakoniugovorieng/SEECF-Aboutit.pdf>

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.visegrad.info/eu-enlargement-western-balkans/factsheet/european-future-of-the-western-balkans.html>

<sup>64</sup> Proposal for regulation of the European parliament and of the council on the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II)-  
[http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/finance/documents/prop\\_reg\\_instrument\\_pre-accession\\_assistance\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/finance/documents/prop_reg_instrument_pre-accession_assistance_en.pdf)

vague promise of membership made to the Serbs, the Bosnians, the Montenegrins and the Albanians. Brussels has to walk the tightrope of offering these countries the prize of membership without actually ever giving it to them. The reason for this is clear: With the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the European Union on Jan. 1, 2007, the group's willingness to expand further has shrunk to zero.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, it is clear that, the European Integration is the most important incentive for reform. This does not mean of course that problems will solve themselves. We know too well that integration will not bring growth by itself and that it is up to the national governments to make the right political and economic choices. "<sup>66</sup> It is quite possible, that if the regional cooperation will go smoothly as it was planned by EU, we will face with the emergence of very controversial, but strategically important region, which in deeper co-operation can be evaluated as a new South-East dimension. Why exactly dimension, because as it was said- "The development of the new dimension can place various interests of various actors at one concrete position." But if the countries in and out of the EU will put their main interest above the common interest of mutual co-operation and peace-keeping issues and will preserve only the power over borders and security matters as not mutual, but mostly national concern, it will lead to making the existing conflicts deeper and sharper. Referring to this, there were established several programs and instrument to promote regional co-operation. Also I would like to add here, that infrastructure development is of vital importance for developing the economies of the western Balkans; it is an initial and indispensable requirement for an increase in economic growth. However, infrastructures without the reforms necessary to strengthen institutions that will promote some development policies cannot promote economic growth and social cohesion nor achieve much by way of regional and cross border integration.<sup>67</sup>

That's why, the main part of the integration and the building of further dimensions is the political dimension of regional South-east cooperation. Regional cooperation in the western Balkans is:

- needed as a crucial ingredient of stability;
- a catalyst for reconciliation, good-neighbourliness and good political relations;
- about helping overcome nationalism and intolerance and promoting mutual understanding and political dialogue in the region.

Making Europe a safer place is high on the EU's agenda as defined in the Stockholm Programme. The improved strategic orientation of financial assistance for pre-accession will help support enlargement countries in preventing and tackling organized crime and corruption and in strengthening their law enforcement, border management and migration control capabilities.<sup>68</sup> Here the key roles are played by different programs and mostly by Stabilization and Association Process (SAP), which is the framework for EU negotiations with the Western Balkan countries, all the way to their eventual accession. It has three aims:1) stabilising the countries and encouraging their swift transition to a market economy; 2)promoting regional cooperation;3) eventual membership of the EU.<sup>69</sup> Regional cooperation amongst the western Balkan countries constitutes a key element of the SAP, stabilisation and association agreement (SAA), which represents a contractual relationship between the EU and each western Balkan country, entailing mutual rights and obligations.<sup>70</sup> According to financial framework for the establishing of the regional cooperation was suggested the special program- CARDS (Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation)- Promoting regional cooperation between the Western Balkan countries as well as between the region and EU member states and

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,536643,00.html>

<sup>66</sup> Proposal for regulation of the European parliament and of the council on the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) - [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/finance/documents/prop\\_reg\\_instrument\\_pre-accession\\_assistance\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/finance/documents/prop_reg_instrument_pre-accession_assistance_en.pdf)

<sup>67</sup> EU Commission: Regional priority for western Balkans - [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/nf5703249enc\\_web\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/nf5703249enc_web_en.pdf)

<sup>68</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/ia\\_carried\\_out/docs/ia\\_2011/com\\_2011\\_0838\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/ia_carried_out/docs/ia_2011/com_2011_0838_en.pdf)

<sup>69</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/enlargement\\_process/accesion\\_process/how\\_does\\_a\\_country\\_join\\_the\\_eu/sap/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/enlargement_process/accesion_process/how_does_a_country_join_the_eu/sap/index_en.htm)

<sup>70</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/nf5703249enc\\_web\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/nf5703249enc_web_en.pdf)

candidate countries is a further major objective. Moreover, since 1991 the European Union has committed, through various assistance programmes, € 6.8 billion to the Western Balkans. One of the main attempts from the inside cooperation is SEECP, which was launched by the Bulgaria's initiative. The South-East Europe Cooperation Process was initiated in 1996 with a view to transforming South-Eastern Europe into a region of stability, safety and cooperation, in line with the European integration processes. Twelve countries, as full-fledged members, participate in the work of the SEECP: Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Montenegro, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Croatia, Slovenia and Moldova. SEECP activities are taking place at Summits of Heads of State and Government, Meetings of Foreign Ministers, as well as on the level of Political Directors of the Foreign Ministries of the participating states. The basic goals of regional co-operation within SEECP also include the strengthening of security and the political situation, intensification of economic relations and co-operation in the areas of human resources, democracy, justice, and battle against illegal activities. It is the intention of the SEECP to enable its members to approach the European and Euro-Atlantic structures through the strengthening of good neighbourly relations and transformation of the region into an area of peace and stability.

It is still hard to conclude in such wide and specific political themes as the issues of EU policies and find the real desires of the EU towards its' neighbors. Nowadays, the EU pays obviously more and more attention to its neighborhood. It would even get a legal basis in the future constitutional treaty as drafted by the European Convention. The conflict in the former Yugoslavia has remembered that even severe armed conflicts in Europe are still possible. In the event of the Communication of the Commission of 2003 on Wider Europe, a new Title ("The Union and its immediate environment") has been drafted by the European Convention. Article 56(1) of the Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe states: "The Union shall develop a special relationship with neighboring States, aiming to establish an area of prosperity and good neighborliness, founded on the values of the Union and characterized by close and peaceful relations based on cooperation."<sup>71</sup>

After analyzing several issues and reading the works of scholars, I started to support my second hypothesis about that EU trying to support Balkans not only because of own interests but also to include them in the group of Europe not only geographically but also politically, as the future member states, which we can nowadays observe on the case of Croatia. But we should not forget that there are still a lot of issues both political and cultural, that won't let these countries to join the union and further to create the South-East dimension at least for one decade.

The Commission has therefore chosen for a complex policy framework, with a complex network of actors that have their own specific mutual relations and which are dependent of a multiplicity of circumstantial factors. The whole European integration is therefore an example of getting globalisation under control. The Northern Dimension is in that respect an example of how the EU tries to manage globalisation, the increasing interdependence in particular, as well as the "domestication" of foreign policy.<sup>72</sup> Therefore the EU has no other option but to make dimensionalism work. But in general sense, the EU's tendency to dictate the terms of cooperation one-sidedly should change. The EU must ensure that in the future messages from the new neighbors, to quote Karl W. Deutsch, would not "merely be received, but would be understood, and that they would be given real weight in the process of decision-making." Therefore, fostering genuine partnerships and encouraging true dialogue with its new neighbors is the best policy for the EU to ensure that the stabilizing logic of enlargement is preserved also in the future.<sup>73</sup> And if all above mentioned criterias will work together, most probably in future, we will

<sup>71</sup> Jeroen Dubois (2004) : " THE northern dimension as prototype of the wider europe framework policy" liverpool

<sup>72</sup> Jeroen Dubois(2004) : "THE NORTHERN DIMENSION AS PROTOTYPE OF THE WIDER EUROPE FRAMEWORK POLICY" The University of Liverpool, p.7

<sup>73</sup> Hiski Haukkala (2003): A Hole in the Wall Dimensionalism and the EU's "New Neighborhood Policy" WP41.pdf

have the regional cooperation of the South-East European countries transformed into the new dynamic dimension.

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