

BARRIERS AND DESIRE OF WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES TO BE INTEGRATED TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

Donila Pipa, PhD
University “Vitrina”

Abstract

This article aims to analyse the integration process of Western Balkan countries to be integrated to the European Union.

This paper is divided into two parts. Through the comparison, the first part analyses the process of integration of the Western Balkan countries.

The second part consists on a questionnaire which is conducted by the author regarding to the faith and adherence conditions that the Albanians have to the European Union.

Even though the European Union is in crisis, it still remains attractive for Western Balkan countries, which will have to overcome many obstacles to become as a part of the European family. Croatia accession on July 1, 2013 is the concrete example to realize the dream of other Balkan countries that want to join the EU.

EU enlargement is a completely open process, which aims to create a stronger and sustainable Europe, with an important role on the world stage and also a single, broaden and more integrated market, which intended to stimulate the economic growth, to the countries that are already members of EU, and also the other countries which are in the process of this integration.

As a conclusion the accession process is necessary, because countries can't create the future alone. This thing would be achieved only through the cooperation between each-other. The European Union is the only opportunity for the advancement of Western Balkan countries, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the artificial division between East and West. Only through the EU assistance, the region may have economic development, unemployment decrease, crime reduction and peace etc...

Let us hope that the Western Balkans will be regenerated as part of the European family.

Keywords: European Union, integration, potential candidate, future

The Western Balkan countries and the adhesion process

After the fall of Berlin Wall and joint of two Germany, the Western Balkan countries looked their future in European family.

Thessaloniki Summit was like a stamp for these countries to start the adhesion process.

Integration is a process with stages and an individual process at the same time, because it depends on which country how and for how long it fulfills the adhesion criteria or named as Copenhagen criteria.

Thessaloniki Summit represents a historic step for these countries, because this union has been an opportunity and a perspective for the adhesion and enlargement of this region in European Union. So, date 21 June 2003, brings also the approach of connections between European Union and Western Balkan.

Western Balkan region is composed of seven states: Albania, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo which is the youngest country in the world.

The common thing of this region is the fact that although nationalism exists between them, they have only one and common purpose, integration in EU.

Enlargement is the most ambitious Project of European Union, based in the idea of economic, political and military reunion.

As M. Bogdani says in her book “Europe is not complete without Western Balkan”, but this integration must be earned with the work of state and especially of parliament, from a consensus between them so a political stability is achieved, “depends on how quick or how slow we’ll go forward with the reforms, with economic and political stability to walk toward the adhesion and full rights integration in European Union.”

Comparative aspects of Gross Domestic Product and GDP per capita

Table 1-1

Countries	Comparing aspects of GDP and GDP per capita	1999	2003	2006	2008	2009
Albania	GDP \$ USA	2199 (95)	3146 (99)	7145 (04)	8532 (05)	9273 (06)
	GDP per capita \$USA	670 (95)	930 (99)	1918 (04)	2899 (06)	3354 (07)
Croatia	GDP \$ USA	15508 (95)	20222 (99)	31343 (04)	36230 (05)	41542 (06)
	GDP per capita \$USA	3250 (95)	4530 (99)	5440 (04)	9558 (06)	11576 (07)
Macedonia	GDP \$ USA	1813 (95)	3348 (99)	4672 (03)	5711 (05)	6214 (06)
	GDP per capita \$USA	860 (95)	1660 (99)	2248 (04)	3059 (06)	3659 (07)
Serbia	GDP \$ USA	15910 (95)	13742 (98)	20492 (03)	25747 (05)	31594 (06)
	GDP per capita \$USA	1510 (95)	1289 (98)	2626 (04)	4220 (06)	5596 (07)
B&H	GDP \$ USA	5900 (92)	4706 (99)	8446 (04)	9568 (05)	12815 (06)
	GDP per capita \$USA	1500 (92)	1210 (99)	1883 (04)	2533 (06)	3712 (07)
Montenegro	GDP \$ USA	–	–	–	2042 (05)	2462 (06)
	GDP per capita \$USA	–	–	–	3310 (05)	3745 (06)
Kosovo	GDP \$ USA	–	–	–	–	–
	GDP per capita \$USA	–	–	–	–	–
Slovenia	GDP \$ USA	16328 (95)	19862 (99)	27671 (03)	34146 (05)	36715 (06)
	GDP per capita USA	8200 (05)	10000 (99)	15214 (03)	18610 (06)	22933 (07)
Romania	GDP \$ USA	33488 (95)	33034 (99)	59694 (03)	97660 (05)	118370 (06)
	GDP per capita USA	1480 (95)	1470 (99)	2535 (04)	5633 (06)	7697 (07)
Bulgaria	GDP \$ USA	11225 (95)	11572 (99)	23142 (04)	26960 (05)	31469 (06)
	GDP per capita USA	1330 (95)	1410 (99)	2347 (04)	3995 (06)	5186 (07)

The Source: Istituto Geografico De Agostini Novara, *CALENDARIO ATLANTE DE AGOSTINI*, 1999, 2003, 2006, 2008 and 2009

From table no. 1.1 we see an economic decrease of Western Balkan comparing to two countries of East and Central Europe, due to wars and conflicts among them, based in macroeconomic indicators. Ex Yugoslavia was composed of 6 countries and among them, Slovenia was the country with more developed economy and highest level of living compared to other 5 countries.

- **Slovenia** lies among Austria and Italia Alpes and this is the reason that it is part of Central Europe. It has a population of 1 million and 900 thousand inhabitants and it is a homogenous population, that means it is composed only from slavic population.

In year 1995, the war was occurring in B-H, and serbian and croatian corps, bombed and massacred different cities of B-H. Of course that this war was bringing economic damages not only to the states where the war was happening, but also to the neighbour countries. This is the reason why the GDP was lower when compared to Romania, but higher when compared with Bulgaria, whereas the GDP per capita were higher compared to both Romania and Bulgaria. In year 1999-2000, we have increasement at two main indicators. This is the reason that Slovenia together with 9 other states of Central and Eastern European joined EU.

- It is known that **Romania and Bulgaria** became members of EU on 1 January 2007. Romania compared to Bulgaria referreing to GDP, stays in higher tank than Bulgaria, whereas in GDP per capita is a little more than Bulgaria, with a small difference. If we compare **Romania with Croatia** we can distinguish that it is higher referring to GDP and regarding GDP per capita Croatia is better, and this increasement is reflected more afte Dejton Conference in year 1995, which set up between Croatia-Serbia-Bosne-Hercegovina and here we have a highlighted increasement per capita compared to Romania. This shows that after the death of Tujman President, Croatia was fulfilling the criteria to integrate to NATO and EU and fact is that on April 4, 2009, it became a member of the North Atlantic Tretay Organization (NATO).

Romania, comparing to Serbia, shows to be far away regarding GDP and GDP per capita. This fact, has its own explanation, Serbia continued the violence pressure to Albanian people in Kosovo, after the war with Croatia and BH was over. This is the reason that Serbia is not a member of NATO. There is a chance for Serbia to adhere faster than Albania to the EU after Mladic was arrested and extradited to International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia to stand trial, and Goran Hadzic was the last indicted fugitive to be arrested.

- Let us analyze the data for three other countries in Western Balkan; Albania, Macedonia and Bosne Hercegovina. These countries are the most economically regressed region of Western Balcan. Referring to GDP, Albania is higher that Macedonia but lower than BH, and referring to GDP per capita, Albania is a little lower than Macedonia and much more lower than BH. Macedonia comparing to Bosnia Herzegovina is lower referring to GDP even though they are at the same level referring to GDP per capita.

Both indicators have been increased in Albania after the 1997 poltical chaos, comparing to the economy of our country. After 2005, there is a political stabilization, reform fulfillling in Albania, in 2006 Stabilization and Association Agreement was signed and so this made possible that on April 1, 2009 it was ratified by countries id EU. On 04. 04. 2009 Albania and Croatia became members of NATO. On 28. 04. 2009 Albania applied for candidate status to EU, but in order to be a member of EU, 100 questions that EU will deliver must be answered. As the integration is a step by step process, Albania passed the visa liberalization with the European countries and depends on her how fast or which steps will take to integrate with full rights to European Union.

- **Macedonia**, a member of former Yugoslavia, became a Republic in 1992 as the former Macedonia Republic. This brought a strong reaction from Greece which doesn't recognize this name, being afraid that Macedonia will pretend to take Thessaloniki. I have to emphasize that two countries have recognized Macedonia with this name, USA and Albania. Macedonia is one of the first countries that have signed the SAA but the political situation has not been stabled. There exist inner conflicts between Albanian and Macedonian-Slavain who request their rights to be known as the second nation in Macedonia, to have their own language, schools where they can learn their language and to have their own flags in regions where they have 25% of the population. The war between them brought the Ohri Meeting in 2001 where the albanians' rights were accepted. Adriatic Card 3 (Albania, Croatia, Macedonia), predicted that these countries to be candidates for members of NATO, but Greece again put veto by requesting changing of the name of Macedonia. The Prime Minister

Nikolla Grujevski with his government, declined their request and even though USA and EU made efforts that these two countries could reach consensus, which did not succeed and the consequence was that Macedonia did not participate at Bucharest Summit in 2008, and at the same time Macedonia did not apply for the NATO membership. As President Bush has said: “NATO doors will be open for Macedonia”.

- **Bosnia Hercegovina**

One of the six countries of Yugoslavia Federation. It became apple of discord between two of the most military strong countries of Yugoslavia. The battles started since 1992-1995 with Dayton Conference where President Clinton met with 3 presidents, Tujman, Milosevic, Alia-Izet of B-H. In this Conference it was decided that Bosnia would join Croatia and create a Federation that would include 51% of BH territory whereas Serbia Republic would include 49% of BH territory. This was a very fragile agreement but at least armistice and serenity were reached. Dayton Agreement was so fragile that war started again if the international troops leave, but a protectorate, for which the occupier force would not like to take political charge. The way that maps are prepared, that determine the territories to Serbian, Croatia and muslim people does not encourage cooperation between them. Bosnia issue is not settled yet. Today BH is a military protectorate that is guided by United Nations Organization and Albania has sent military troops to BH.

- **Kosovo**

On 16.02.2008, Kosovo, the youngest country in the world, proclaimed the independence. Kosovo has a 85 year long history full of pain, disasters and violence. Serbian committed many crimes in Kosovo especially after the World War II and only in 1974 President Tito named Kosovo and Vojvodina as autonomous province with self governing rights. The first shock for the system of Yugoslavia came on March 1981, when Albanian students in Pristina, supported by most of the Kosovo population, started political demonstration requesting equality with other nations of Yugoslavia, self governing for the region and their region to be republic. The demonstration was stamped out by the Serbian army and police, however this problem could not be hidden or covered with violence. As the Albanian writer from Kosovo has said “this war started in Kosovo and will end in Kosovo”. After this demonstration in 1991, there started conflicts and the first republics that voted for the break-away from the Federation were Slovenia and Croatia. After the Dayton peace, the first independent republics of the former Yugoslavia started to deal with the economical development of their country but the other Serbian criminal Milosevic denied the self governing right of Kosovo as an autonomous region and started terror against Albanian civil people in Kosovo.

5 months after Dayton Conference, Kosovo Liberating Army (UÇK) was established. This army fought for the Kosovo Independence so it could be a Republic on her own. The battles between UÇK and Serbian troops aggravated a lot and day after day UÇK members' number was increased by young people. This caused a big concern for the Great Powers especially for the American and EU politicians. This made them to interfere in order to solve the conflict, but Milosevic started massacres to civil population and obliged the international community to interfere by NATO after the diplomatic negotiations failed.

So, on March 14, 1999 NATO airplanes began bombing the Serbian army positions in Kosovo and the industry in Serbia. In June Milosevic gave up and accepted to retire the Serbian troops from Kosovo. Since then Kosovo was a protectorate of United Nations Organization and was led by different Governors from European countries. Kosovo nation could not accept this situation because they fought for Kosovo to be a Republic. They achieved this on February 16, 2008 when President Sejdiu and Prime Minister Thaçi proclaimed the Republic of Kosovo. Today, not only Kosovo, but Serbia also and other neighbor countries need help from the international community for investments in order to

disappear the war signs. As Misha Glany says “bombs caused big damages to Kosovo and Serbia” whereas their neighbor Balcan countries passed through other economical damages, it is evaluated that loss of Serbia including Kosovo during the first three months, is 7-10 milliard dollars. But other countries too need short term help in order to compensate gross domestic product caused by was approximately 5% in countries affected by, Macedonia, B-H until 0.5% in Romania and Hungary. However if Great Powers do not achieve to exploit the actual opportunity to invest in this region, then the problems in Balkan will surely continue for some other 10 years.

Albania and EU integration process

Diplomatic relations of Albania and European Union were established in 1991. The most important milestone for Albania and EU was one year later, on May 11, 1992 with the signing of Cooperation and Trading Agreement which came into force on December 1, 1992.

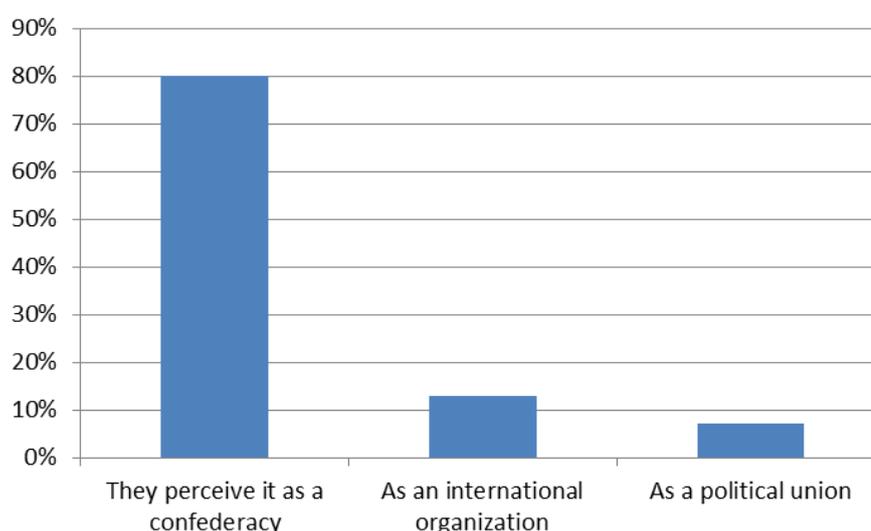
On May 1999, European Union approved a new initiative for 5 countries of Balkan, Albania, former Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia, Croatia, Bosnia-Hercegovina and Yugoslavia Federal Republic, called Stabilization Association Process.

Thessaloniki Summit held on June 2003, named also Zagreb II confirms the future for integration to EU of Western Balkan region and gives a chance to the exploitation of instruments used in new member countries.

2010 year gave to the Albanian citizens the chance to travel without visa in European region. Let’s hope that Albania will fulfill the conditions to be a candidate country in EU and to continue through reforms the way to be a member with full rights and duties in European family.

How do Albanian percept European Union

Graphic no. 1.



- 80% consider as nation union
- 13% as international organization
- 7% as political union

Source: Questionnary realized by author

From Graphic no. 1.1 we can notice that Albanians have knowledge for EU:

- 80% consider as nation union
- 13% as international organization
- 7% as political union

We ask many times what is European Union. Is it a confederate or a federate? Which is its identity? European Union should report its purpose but it is difficult to answer this question because European Union owns a confederate and federate character.

But EU depends on his citizens, in faith for political integration and in this way EU will have another formality. One thing is for sure, EU is the most advanced and favorable formality for European citizens.

To conclude, as Herodotus says: “None knows about Europe ... where is this name taken either who gave this name” whereas as according to Grigore Silasi opinion “*European Union is not an European nation and will be not one European nation, it will be a federate like American model or like German governing meaning which is a federate in classic style.*”

European Union is based on international treaties, but it is much more than a traditional nation country. Being neither a country or a federal country, it is in a continuing integration process, as a governing institutions which can't be classified according to the existing models.

Conclusion

The world runs with fast rhythm toward integration and globalization.

China Wall and Berlin Wall taught us that none of the countries who build walls, barriers could not develop and walk toward development.

Western Balkan countries, being a region that always had wars, have understood that not being part of the European family can not develop. Only integration could bring profits. Nationalism and wars bring only regress. The war in B-H and in Kosovo shows this very well. As a part of Western Balkan and a member of this region, each of us have to contribute to be one family, regardless the faith, economical or nationalism changes. Western Balkan must REBORN!

Referencess:

Bogdani Mirela, Loughlin I, Albania and European Union, European Integration and Adherence Perspective, Printing House “Dajti 2000”, Tirana, 2004

Giuliani J-D., Lărgirea hotarelor Europei., Ed. Ideea Europeană., București, 2007

Glenny M., Balkan's History 1804-1999, Nacionalism, Wars and Great Powers, Institute of Dialogue and Communication, Toena Publishing, Tirana, 2007,

Puto A., Albanian Independence and Great Powers' Diplomacy, 1912-1914, Publishing House “8 Nentori”, Tirana, 1978,

***, The Western Balkans in Transition, www.europa.eu access date 30.11.2009

***Lecture Cycle, PhD. Donila Pipa, European Economical Integration, Tirana, 2013