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EUROPEAN STUDIES 3

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**REGIONAL POLITICS  
AND ECONOMICS OF  
EU ENLARGEMENT**

**East European Regions and Small States  
in the Changing Architecture of European  
and Global Integration**

Edited by István Hülvely and Imre Lévai

BUDAPEST *FORUM* – Institute for Political Science, HAS  
2003

EUROPEAN STUDIES 3

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# **Societal Security Dilemma and the Prospect for Cooperation and Conflict in the Balkans: The Case of Kosovo/a**

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## **Introduction**

Intra-state conflicts are not a new phenomenon. Since 1945 they have been more frequent and more violent than inter-state warfare (SIPRI-UNESCO Handbook, 1998: 13-25). With the end of the Cold War, these tendencies exuberated following mostly in the lines of ethno-national and separatist-armed conflicts, bringing a significant shift in the perception of security issues and alternative approaches to it, especially in Europe. In particular, the changing discourse of sovereignty, identity and security, and international responsibility appears to be increasingly significant. Considering that the conditions for international relations depend on both empirical validity and logical soundness, a theoretical exercise on the case of intra-state conflicts questions the validity of the traditional state developed concept of security. The path is open for new interpretations and understanding of normative, operational and structural issues in contemporary world politics.

The paper will take a closer look at the case of Kosovo so as to consider the applicability of the arguments raised in it. Nevertheless, the aim of the paper is neither to reveal the large-extended problematic by enumerating all circumstances and effecting factors relevant to the case, nor to detail all means and strategies that can be used to resolve the case. These limitations are done with the intention of preserving cohesion and consistency within the limits of a paper.

## 1. Prospects for Conflict and Peace in the Post-Cold War Order

The lenient end of the Cold War raised the expectations for an "end of the history" of wars, especially in Europe (Fukujama 1990). The peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia cheered the expectations. The brutality of the events in Yugoslavia and other spots of the world brought the attention to intra-state security situations and their implications.

The lessons from intra-state conflicts revealed that the traditional schools of International Relations do not provide enough and satisfactory tools for the understanding of "the current status of war and peace in the international system" (Jung and Schlichte, 1999: 35). There is a tendency in the literature to cut up the reality in a way that corresponds to the practice the international affairs are organized by assuming states as actors acting in an anarchical ordering principle and subject of security. Focused on the state-centric view, security remains a 'commodity concept' associated with power distribution, and related legacy effects with the international system of states, while human and social dimensions remain in a subordinated position (McSweeney, 1999). Facing the dynamics of intra-state conflict, this fragmented analysis appears to be increasingly arbitrary and revealing anomalies to the present security studies, where there is confusion as to the nature of the actors subject to security and to the relevance of domestic structures in the relations between the states, as well as to the security issues in the international system.

Coming from a quantitative generalization, traditional approaches do not count for the peculiarities of war events (either war is bilateral or multilateral, general or regional, intra-state or inter-state); and consequently, in the peace building process, the effect of democratic norms on the strategic behavior of actors is overemphasized while culture, social identities, and cognitive processes are ignored (Maoz 1997). Going beyond traditional understanding of the prospects of war and peace, these factors should be taken into account in the case of conflict understanding and peace building processes.

Intra-state conflicts have proved not to be state affairs any more. The distinction between inter-state conflicts and intra-state conflicts is becoming less clear, and it depends on from which point of view one is looking at the conflict. Therefore, "if a province, an integrated portion

of the state's territory or a fraction of the population, refuses to submit to the centralized power and undertakes an armed struggle, the conflict, though civil war will regard to international war, will be considered a foreign war by those who see the rebels as the expression of an existing or nascent nation" (Aron, 1981: 7). Furthermore, in more than few cases, the state-centric concept of authority and related practices and strategies have been revealed to be detrimental in the sense of sacrificing human values for the values of sovereignty and territorial inviolability/integrity. The state failed to be the protector of its citizens and turned into a security threat to them (Møller, 2000) instead. Not always can the state be personified and identified with its own citizens or considered as the most optimal form of organization that in the best of ways looks first and foremost after its own citizens' interests and security. The state of citizenship... "is being jeopardized by the trend toward national, sub-national and ethnic re-territorialisation" (Hassner, 1993: 129). The claims of different ethnic-groups for self-determination in the face of minority oppression are transformed into conflicts involving disputes over autonomy and sovereignty. The existence of the state is at stake but the threat this time is not coming from hostile and inimical states but from within the state itself. The dichotomy of self-determination and sovereignty is perceived as the challenge of the post Cold War order.

The crisis and intra-state conflicts in the Balkans, in the last decade were an expression of the erosion of the state's ability to deal with the problems of its own citizens and developments in its territory. The fierce break-up of Yugoslavia and the continuation of its dissolution is part of this eroding process. Abhorrent phenomena of extreme human rights violations, such as massive killings, ethnic cleansing, and deportations of population with the purpose of territorial dispossession were part of the process. The answers of the international community to such developments have moved beyond traditional practices, bringing "humanitarian and human rights law closer to the forefront of modern conflict resolution processes" and "interventions as an important response option available to international society" (Ryan, 1997: 77).

Solution and peace-building processes in the case of intra-state conflict tend towards cultural integrity rather than territorial integrity, as well as towards the promotion of human rights versus self-determination in short term and regional integration in long term. Actually, the

acting framework is not clear; an expression of such uncertainty is the coexistence of two perspectives in the international practice: the neo-realist perspective of focusing on the state as a central point of authority, and the liberal perspective based on liberal principles of universal respect for human rights and rights of self-determination, which are meant to coexist as parts of the same process especially in the peace building stage. In the 1992 *Agenda for Peace*, the then Secretary General of the United Nations framed as such this controversial existence: "respect for [state] fundamental sovereignty and integrity are crucial to any common international progress" even "the time of absolute and exclusive sovereignty.... has passed; its theory was never matched by reality" (Butros-Ghali, 1992).

### *1.1. Intra-State Conflict and the Nature of Threats to Security*

Intra-state conflicts speak out for tensions that exist in the internal realm of the state, while not all of them are a threat of security to the existence of the state. When a group's security spells insecurity for others, then it certainly constitute a serious 'societal security' problem that can be translated as a threat to "sustainability, within acceptable conditions for evolution, of traditional patterns of language, culture and religious and national identity and custom" (Buzan, 1991: 19). This societal security dilemma may escalate as far as the exhaustion of the resources or the elimination of one party through such abhorrent manifestations as ethnic cleansing, or genocide, or through weakening the adversary, thus causing enormous and especially irreparable damages to the participants. The objective of such manifestations is the elimination of the other's social existence, and that is why civilians, women, children and youth, as the seeds of society continuation and generation, are the preferred targets. The situation reveals "the collapse of the state monopoly on the use of force and recognised social relations which forces an ethnicization of society" (Schoch, 2001:57). Under these considerations "society is not just a sector of state security, but a distinctive referent object along side it" (Waever, 1993: 26-27).

Nevertheless, not all the internal conflicts, not even dissolution movements can break out into war. Intra-state conflicts erupt in a vio-

lent manner and become separatist movements when they "involve an armed confrontation between a sovereign independent state and a regionally-based movement seeking to break away or seeking an extended form of internal territorial self-rule" (Heraclides, 1997: 682). In essence, they witness the complexity of the security question as well as the linkage between state, societal and human security (Møller 2000:33), where "the state is at most a mean but never an end in itself" (Møller, 1993:12).

Accordingly, societal security conflict threatens to become a political security problem affecting the state in question, if it is manifested in a struggle for secessionism challenging the fundamental principle of its existence, sovereignty. Obviously, the events in one country would impact the other countries of the region if "[r]egional security define a group of states, whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from an other". From such perspective, security is a complex concept, which implies the security at three levels: individuals, states, and the international system; complementarily "the security of each become in part, a condition for the security of all" (Buzan, 1991:26-27). To sum up, "individual and global security are the two sides of the same coin" (Møller, 1993:13).

### *1.2. Societal and Identity Security Dilemma*

Intra-state conflicts jeopardise the societal relationships within a multiethnic state. Obviously societal security concerns relate with identity preservation as the process and practice that construct peoples' and groups' self-image and perpetuate their group existence (McSweeney, 1999: 69; Waeber, 1993: 25). Societal security dilemma in most of the cases is translated as an identity security dilemma. In Buzan's terms, "societies are fundamentally about identity. They are about what enable a group of peoples to refer to themselves as 'we'... The defining modes of 'we', 'us' and 'them' are all challenged by the formation of new identities, and the movement of peoples carrying different identities" (Buzan, 1993: 5-6).



Identity is a social "process of constructive negotiating, manipulating or affirming a response to the demand – at times urgent, mostly absent – for collective image" (McSweeney, 1999:78). Societal identity is mainly defined in function of ethnicity and religion, which "have acquired prominence...because of their historical association with the development of the modern state" (Waeber, 1993:23).

Social identity speaks out differences depending on group "inter-subjective understandings and expectations, on the 'distribution of knowledge' that constitute... conceptions of self and others" (Wendt, 1992: 397). Spelling out collective differences do not self-generate security problems. Differences can be a source of richness, dynamics and progress or vice versa, depending on the negotiated interest and collective norms whereabouts understanding reveals the patterns of mutual responsiveness in the process of interaction. Identity procreates a security dilemma when it is used as a political leverage that reflects conflict of interests on the preservation of power dominance and structure of relationship. The conflictual interaction is manifested with the imposition of identity in egoistic manifestations rather than co-operative ones, "with the ethno-national collective seen as the only guarantor of protection in an increasing climate of fear" (Schoch, 2001:58). The escalation of conflict leads to chain reaction effects, which entail fragmentation. At this point the process raises security concerns for the state since its sovereignty and territoriality are threatened.

The conflictual interaction is legitimised by a historical discourse that procures authority and legitimacy upon the applied argument that interprets identity in function of the effects of discourses of danger. Although the arguments are accurately selected, historical past overemphasises the dramas and features that will help national distinctiveness and will establish a culture of resistance towards the 'others' in order to reclaim and reinhabit the pretended land. Culture groups (i.e. ethnic, language and religious groups) in particularity attach primordial importance to the territory since they are related to specific territories and habitats.

The net infusion of cultural factors with historical selective evidence raises the hostility levels while reducing the likelihood of non-violent conflict resolution opening the way to war (Singer, 1970:166). In most cases the cultural differences do not light belligerence but they can be exploited successfully by elites to mobilize support for war. Elites can

highly influence the redefinition of national interests, inclining them towards the 'common good' by using the authority of knowledge<sup>1</sup> and formal institutions (Haas, 1997)<sup>2</sup>. Each community is forced to believe that its well-being is conditioned by the disadvantages of the other communities and that they can make progress only at the others' costs. Violence erupts because of the radicalisation of the internal fears and suspicions producing the counter-values of what previously existed, spelling out fragmentation and disunity. And that is exactly what happened in the case of Yugoslavia.

## 2. Internal Dimension of Kosovo/a Conflict

After the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Kosovo/a remained a simple province of Serbia, having lost its autonomous status in 1989. The fragile internal equilibrium that existed before the conflict ended up in total jeopardy and the parallel administration that existed as a *de facto* partition created ground for a *de iure* partition. The long existing conflict between the Serb and Albanian communities turned into a real war. In Heraclides' (1997) terms, the causes that lead to this situation are attributed to too many factors. They are of historical nature related to the drawing of the borders, of ethnic nature regarding the definition of nationality and citizenship and thus the status of minorities and the status of autonomy. Furthermore, the internal changes that are particular to multinational, multiethnic or multi-religious states

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<sup>1</sup> Here it is important to understand the way knowledge is generated and its discursive relationship with power, rather than its anonymous imposition of structural reason or presupposed modes of enunciation. Truth in knowledge is quite often dependent on power. See Foucault (1984, 1990) for the power-knowledge relationship. For an example see the "Memorandum" issued by the Serbian Academy of Arts and Science that provided the scientific guidelines for solving "the Serbian Question" (Anastasijevic, 2000). This was the ideological platform that justified Milosevic's actions.

<sup>2</sup> In Haas vocabulary elites are named 'epistemic communities' and their role is seen as positive. Here his argument is used in more generalist terms, implying both positive or negative directions, whichever the predisposition is.

in the period of transition from a communist regime that suppressed by force such conflicts without finding a real solution to them could be added to the causal factors. And, in the case of Kosovo, they all fomented the way to conflict.

Kosovo/a technically is a province within the legal framework of the Republic of Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Albanians and Serbs have divergent historical perceptions, each side claiming the primacy of its historic and cultural rights. The Albanians trace their origins back to the Illyrians that descended in the Balkans long before the Slavic populations. For the Serbs, Kosovo/a is the historical cradle of the Serbian nation and the center of the medieval *Nemanja* Empire. With the defeat of the Serb and other Balkan forces including the Albanians, by the Ottomans at the battle of *Kosovo Polje* in 1389, the Serbian independence was lost.

The Balkan wars of 1912-1913 were successful in overthrowing the Ottoman Empire almost completely from the Balkans. Serbia, by winning the war against Bulgaria, expanded its territory to the East, including all of present day Macedonia and Kosovo/a (Skendi 1967: 36-39). This configuration continued later in the successive Yugoslav entities. In retrospect, cultural differences that emerged from various religions proved to be an effective marker of national or ethnic identity, which in turn, created distinctive customs, rituals and beliefs that shaped the everyday life of the citizens. This social diversity would later be one of the incentives to encourage and revive Serbian nationalism (Ledrer, 1963: 3-80), particularly after the eighties. In fact, the deterioration in inter-ethnic relations is also due to political, economic and social imbalances between the two communities.

Compared with other nations in Yugoslavia, the Albanians had a very different position. Little attempt was made to integrate Albanians into Yugoslav society. Kosovo remained the poorest region of former Yugoslavia, and has one of the highest birth rates in Europe (nearly 3 percent) and a very traditional social and family pattern. Albanians had a second class position in the framework of the Republic of Serbia and Yugoslavia (Malcolm, 1998: 66). Poor living conditions, repression and the second class position of the Albanians led to the street demonstrations in the capital of Kosovo/a, Prishtina in the 1960s. After the harsh repression of Albanian demonstrations in the 1960s by the Yugoslav government, Kosovo/a was given the status of autonomous province in

1969, Under the terms of the 1974 Constitution, it was given the status of autonomous region with its own institutions.

The constitution of 1974 gave more power to the units by decentralizing and delegating the power from the central authority of the federation to the republics, where republics were identified with the majority nation. This was the first step towards the new nationalism that resulted in a "constitutional nationalism" and later on completed the process of "ethnicisation" of communist policies that had started during the 1970s (Hayden, 1992: 654-673). The system prevented discussions on national issues, suppressing the national question by appeals for unification based on communist ideology and dogmas, without taking into consideration all the great differences between the nations and cultural traditions, the level of economic development and patterns of social organization. The granting of the autonomy created tensions, it being considered inadequate by both the Albanians and the Serbs.

Another important factor that arose from the tensions between the two communities was the economic crisis that swept the over-all structure of the Yugoslav self-management system during the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. This deepened the already existing gap in the relations among the republics. In theory, self-management was perceived as an appropriate instrument, considering that the economic response was going to abate the political crises (Sekelj, 1993). Economic problems affected different regions and nations in different ways, providing a fertile soil for extremist movements. To sum up, economic disparities between the regions, self-management, decentralization reform and economic crises induced regional economic nationalism within Yugoslavia (Pleskovic – Dolenc, 1982). These features became exacerbated in the framework of the Serb Republic, because a large increase in the Albanian population was added to the economic crises. The growing dissent as a result of the economic difficulties led to a massive exodus of the Serbs and Montenegrins towards Serbia and Montenegro proper. In 1981, large demonstrations of Albanians aimed at obtaining the status of Republic for Kosovo/a that ended, in 1989, in the annulment of the status of the autonomy and de facto imposition on the Albanians of direct Serbian rule. This act was followed by the proclamation of an Independent Republic of Kosovo/a in September 1991 following a referendum in which 90 percent of the population voted. The proclamation of the independence gave life to the parallel shadow government of Ibrahim

Rugova. Rugova, with his Gandhian-type policy, encouraged parallel life, and created a society of Albanians with separated political, cultural, educational, health and media structures. This political move aimed at the avoidance of conflict with Serb authorities and gain support for the international recognition of independence. This was a strategy based upon the knowledge that forceful secessionist movements are not justifiable under the present practices of international law, if the aim of international law is the preservation of the state. In nature, this effort prevents *de facto* organic groups to be regarded as states (Aron, 1981:120). In practice, in other cases, such as the one of the Biafra war, the UN denied the request for secession.

Facing the dramatic changes in the framework of Yugoslavia and their repercussions on Serbia, the interests of communities in the latter were generated in the process of reinforcing identity separateness. Close analysis of the internal situation reveals that the perceptions in the Serbian side are affected not only by nostalgic considerations that perceive Kosovo/a as the heartland of Serb nationalism, the issue on which Milosevic came to power and the defeat caused his failure but also by fears that Kosovo/a could be the first step of a long chain of secessions. That fuelled insecurities for the future of the Serbian State and perspectives that would shrink it to ethnic borders, leaving Serbs alone within their already shrunken national state (territories inhabited by Serbs are currently included in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia).

With the dissolution of Yugoslavia the Serb interests received a great blow considering that "Yugoslav project and the Greater Serbia project were... complementary to each other". Although "Yugoslavia was never pro-Serbia, ... it provided two basic guarantees" important for Serbian nation: the protection of the Serb identity and safety under the Federation roof. This logic justify the dialectics of the situation "the more the Serbs insisted on living together if Yugoslavia disintegrated, the more the northern republics wanted to secede; ...more Serbians in the remaining Yugoslavia" more it spurred secession (Wiberg, 1993: 100-101). This situation puts the question of Kosovo/a and Serbian perceptions in broader context. The secession of Kosovo/a could precipitate similar claims in Vojvodina and Sandjak by Hungary and Muslim minorities respectively (Clement, 1997).

### 3. Future Prospects for the Balkans and Kosovo/a

Working out a regime based on democratic norms and values is considered as the best approach for the Balkans. This judgment is rooted in two arguments: first, the small units are not viable, and second, drawing clear dividing lines based on ethnicity especially in the Balkans is practically impossible. The Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe represents the European Union's main mechanism for the stability and integration of the region into European structures. "Lasting peace and stability in South Eastern Europe will only become possible when democratic principles and values, which are already actively promoted by many countries in the region, have taken root throughout, including in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia" (Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, 10 June 1999). Stress is put on the creation of a sustainable regime based on democratic values, respect for human and minority rights and the development of multilateral and bilateral cooperation based on the convergence of interests, and aiming to foster social inclusion and cohesion that will lead to regional integration.

The Stability Pact has no resources of its own; it merely keeps the region on the EU's agenda. Three working tables at regional level will carry out the whole endeavor, coordinated by a High Level Steering Group<sup>3</sup> that is working out a regional assistance strategy that will provide for economic reconstruction, stabilizing reform and development of the South-East European Region. The Pact is supposed to assume the combination of three assumptions that are considered important for the maintenance of social order: exchange relations, threat system and im-

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<sup>3</sup> The High Level Steering Group (HLSG) is co-chaired by the European commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs and the President of the World Bank. Its membership includes the Finance ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States and Portugal (representing the Presidency of the European Union), as well as the Managing Director of International Monetary Fund, the President of the European Investment Bank and the President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact of South-Eastern Europe, and the Deputy-Secretary-General of the United Nations. In addition, a number of development Ministers, as well as the Finance Minister of the Netherlands and the representative of the UN Mission in Kosovo are associated to the deliberations of the HLSG.



age integration (Boulding, 1989). Exchange relations presume the development of a sustainable economic environment based on fostering economic and trade relations aiming at the convergence of economic interests. Threat system is based on an external soft deterrence related with financial aid and conditional integration in the EU and other Western institutions. Image integration will provide for the harmonization of the perceptions and interests based on the development of confidence, trust and security measures that are the result of an enhanced multi-dimensional intercourse environment.

The aftermath process in Kosovo/a is a mixture of different policies that, at the end, aim to provide a sustainable solution to the Kosovo/a question. First of all, the international community is working on the consolidation of internal democratic balance in the region as legitimation, if not an additional guaranty for the credibility of the process. On the other hand, with the arrival of moderate leaders in leadership, both in Kosovo/a and Serbia, a policy of rapprochement and dialogue is envisaged followed by policies that aim at reducing tensions and gradual confidence building. All these policies intend to moderate the request for self-determination as a precaution for avoiding fragmentation at a regional level. In the long term, an integration at the regional level supported by the adoption of strong measures to protect minority rights seems likely to solve the Balkans' problems.

The philosophy behind such a policy is rooted in the healing values of democracy. This is done in the belief that democracy has transformed the nature of the nation-state "giving way to a new system in which nations feel secure enough in their identities and in their neighbourhoods to make a virtue out of porous borders and intertwined economies and cultures" (Talbot, 2000: 155). It has well-developed mechanisms for opening borders and societies, protecting minorities, empowering regions, pursuing trans-national cooperation, and promoting the principle that differences in language and culture can be a source of strength rather than of division. In this regard, it contributes to the consolidation of peace stability and prosperity based on the establishment of bonds of trust between individuals, social groups and countries in the region.

The success of the politics based on these theoretical guidelines depends on many factors. First of all, it depends on the willingness of the internal factors to cooperate and be flexible towards the recommendations. Another important incentive is the willingness of the international

actors to maintain a sustained commitment in the region, not acting only when a crisis blows up. Imposed frameworks have been characterized by Beatrice Pouligny (Autumn 2000) as failing to capture, articulate or modify the routine communal and network negotiations that actually shape the societal concerns. Moreover, the international community's attention to, and investments in "elections, repatriation and measurable macro-economic stability projects on the one hand, stands in marked contrast to the limited investment in qualitative social and civil society programs on the other. Concepts of political accountability and representation have made little headway" (Pugh, 2000:17) in the region and in Kosovo/a in particular. The main problem as identified by Garton Ash "is the sheer lack of political will – that we are prepared to spend \$13 billion to fight the war in Kosovo but we have not been prepared to spend \$2 billion to secure the peace" (April 2000).

Maybe the time has come to give more space to the ignored voices and show the political courage to absorb all we have been going through during this conflict, to recognize all that has changed, and to adapt to all that is about to change again. The breach between the Albanian and Serb communities is manifested as a struggle over power and identity, which in turn acts as a critical intervening variable between external factors and internal formal-institutional outcomes. The interaction between the communities within Serbia and Kosovo as part of this struggle reveals a playing according to the imposed rules: advocating certain democratic commitments and practices while undermining many others according to the actors' interests and preferences. Democracy works when communities share the commitment to its values. Communities, Serb and Albanian alike, have accentuated the identity patterns of differentiation through processes and institutions. The last war accentuated ethnic identity and deepened hatred. Promoting a self-sustained democracy in such an environment is very difficult, almost impossible, at least in a lifetime. Democracy means the willingness to let your group be outvoted and to have courage to cooperate with the competing group or party. This needs trust and confidence that nothing threatening will come from a change in power. And this is hard to achieve after a war of attrition (Friedman, 2001).

The self-determination of Kosovo/a would help the democratization of Serbia, which is in line with the international community's objectives. In this way, the Serbs would be able to establish a state without



national problems, national hatred and Serbophobia. Nations in the Balkans have to learn to live side by side with each other through creating, reproducing, and changing the culture of conflict by way of learning to appreciate and respect each other in the shared process of building a common home for everyone.

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