

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Imre SZILÁGYI The Hungarian Government's Western Balkan Policies since the 2006 Elections	3
Iván HALÁSZ The Hungarian Republic and the Western Balkans: A Short Comparison of Perspectives and Opportunities for Hungarian and Slovak Policies	26
Milan ŠAGÁT Slovak Foreign Policy towards the Western Balkans: Potemkin Villages	45
Július LŐRINCZ Assisting the Painful Process of Coming to Terms with the Past	63
Geoffrey PRIDHAM Democratizing the Western Balkans: Challenges and Burdens for the European Union	72
REVIEWS	
Česká zahraniční politika v roce 2007. Analýza ÚMV. (Czech Foreign Policy in 2007. An IIR Analysis.) By Michal Kořan et al. Prague: Institute of International Relations, 2008 Juraj MARUŠIAK.....	90
The New Paradigm for Financial Markets: The Credit Crisis of 2008 and What It Means By George Soros. New York: PublicAffairs, 2008 Tomáš DUDÁŠ	97

Imre SZILÁGYI

The Hungarian Government's Western Balkan Policies since the 2006 Elections

Summary: The author argues that during the period of the second Gyurcsány-government Hungary continued its previous policies vis-à-vis the Western Balkans and managed to preserve good relations with all of the countries of the region. He reflects on the government's policies with respect to the entire Western Balkans – more precisely the countries of the former Yugoslavia, except Slovenia – as well as its guiding principles and activities supporting the Euro-Atlantic integration of the region; policies vis-à-vis the individual countries; efforts to improve the situation of the minorities and the enhancement of the Hungarian economic role in the region. He concludes that due to the fact that the greatest aspiration of Western Balkan countries is to join the Euro-Atlantic integration processes and because Hungary – as an EU and NATO member state – is an important partner country in regional relations will ostensibly become more dynamic in the years to come.

The second Gyurcsány government took its oath on June 9, 2006. The government program prepared on May 30, 2006¹ revealed that the new government – albeit with some modifications – intended to continue the foreign policy of previous governments. This does not merely indicate – as inferred to in a sentence under the sub-heading 'Energy Safety' of the program

¹ "New Hungary Freedom and Solidarity. The Program of the Government of the Republic of Hungary for a Successful, Modern and Just Hungary 2006-2010"; http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/domain2/files/modules/module25/fileok/New_Hungary_Program.pdf.

Imre Szilágyi works as a research fellow at the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs, Budapest.

that “we shall continue our already successful foreign policy”, but other parts of the program, too, bear witness to this intent.

According to the government program “as elected, responsible leaders of the Republic, we want to govern on behalf of 10 million Hungarian citizens and for the interest of 15 million”. It is worth comparing this statement to the much criticized and often purposefully distorted statement uttered by the first prime minister after the fall of communism, József Antall, in which he stated that: “although by the constitution I am the prime minister of ten million Hungarian citizens, in my heart I would like to be the prime minister of 15 million Hungarian people.”² In my opinion, there is only a slight difference between the two approaches. We have to mention that already in December 2005, Ferenc Gyurcsány said the above mentioned sentence in the government program. At that time he said that the expression he used is more precise than that of József Antall, since it could give rise to groundless disputes, which could lead to quarrels and insecurities in this region.³

According to the program of the Antall-government, the tripartite priorities of Hungarian foreign policy include Euro-Atlantic integration, good neighborly policy based on new foundations, as well as the improvement of the situation of Hungarians in the neighboring countries. The fact that the main objectives of Hungarian foreign policy in essence remained the same between 1990 and 2003 has been pointed out by others, too.⁴ However, Pál Dunay also drew attention to the fact that – apart from the identical content – the previous four governments had differing views as to how the three main priorities should relate to one another.⁵ There is ostensible continuity between the foreign policy objectives of the Antall government and parts of the 2006 government program, as well as in some of the statements of Ferenc Gyurcsány and Foreign Minister Kinga Göncz. It is true however that the government program declares (p. 80) “that the European Union no longer represents a direction of foreign policy, but a system of economic, social and cultural relationships”, but further on we learn that European integration remains a top priority for Hungary, which is already a EU-member state. “We have been active shapers of the common foreign and security policy, as

² B. Kiss, Cs. Zahorán, “Hungarian Domestic Policy in Foreign Policy”, *International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* Vol XVI, No 2/2007, p. 47.

³ “A kormányfő az autópálya-építésről” (December 13, 2005); http://gss.mssgov.ionlab.net/gss/alpha?do=2&pg=11&st=1&m9_doc=712&m23_curr=5.

⁴ G. Szabó, “Változások állandósága”; http://www.poltudszemle.hu/szamok/2005_2szam/2005_2_szabog.pdf.

⁵ P. Dunay, “Az átmenet magyar külpolitikája”, L. J. Kiss, F. Gazdag (eds) *Magyar Külpolitika a 20. században*. (Budapest: Zrinyi Kiadó, 2004), p. 226.

well as community policies of the European Union” (p. 84). The following is also emphasized: “the assistance of the strengthened integration of our neighbors represents a specific Hungarian interest” (p. 84). The program also highlighted that “Hungarian people living in the Republic of Hungary and in the Carpathian Basin can be successful in their mother country only as members of one and the same political and economic community of interests, in alliance with the democratic forces of a majority nation, preserving their Hungarian identities. Reunification implemented within the European frames represents a historical chance to renew the contents of national solidarity. (...) In an effort to strengthen these processes, the Government supports the demand of Hungarian people living abroad in terms of autonomy, in line with European principles and practice and in alliance with the democratic political forces of the countries involved” (pp. 86-87). The government program emphasizes that the country will pay more attention than before to the influx of Hungarian capital-investments to the Balkan region and supports the European perspectives of the Western Balkans, but will not say any more on the matter.

On February 27, 2008, the government endorsed a document called *Hungary’s External Relations Strategy*, which is in force until 2020.⁶ In the preamble of the document, the government declares that the changes that have taken place since the regime transformation necessitate the rethinking and extension of “the tripartite – integration, neighborly relations and nation policy – priority system formulated at the time”. The document marks the European Union as the most important framework for Hungarian policy-making and declares that Hungarian foreign policy can attain its neighborhood – and nation policy objectives successfully only, if they are realized in harmony. Consequently, the European Union is the top strategic priority. The second most important objective is the success of the Hungarian nation in the region and hence, the subtitle of the program on the subject:

There is ostensible continuity between the foreign policy objectives of the Antall government and parts of the 2006 government program, as well as in some of the statements of Ferenc Gyurcsány and Foreign Minister Kinga Göncz.

⁶ “Magyarország külkapcsolati stratégiája”; http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/Kulpolitikank/kulkapcsolati_strategia/hu_kulkapcs_strat.htm.

Regional cooperation and internal integration. Consequently, the government made a decision in regards to the dilemma mentioned by Pál Dunay, i.e., it intends to deal with neighborhood and nation policy objectives under the same umbrella. With the validation of this objective, the government is breaking with an earlier tradition whereby one government would subjugate neighborhood policy to nation policy and another would reverse the order. In the context of the third main objective “Hungarian foreign policy systematically aims to enhance the validation of democratic values globally in harmony with the principles of international

The government intends to deal with neighborhood and nation policy objectives under the same umbrella.

law enshrined in the *Founding Charter of the UN* and the *Helsinki Final Act on the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe*”.

The following chapter will reflect on the government’s policies with respect to the entire Western Balkans (more precisely the countries of the former Yugoslavia, except Slovenia) as well as its guiding principles and activities supporting the Euro-Atlantic integration of the region; policies vis-à-vis the individual countries; efforts to improve the situation of the minorities and the enhancement of the Hungarian economic role in the region.

Hungary and the Western Balkans as a Whole and its Euro-Atlantic Integration

The newly appointed foreign minister, Kinga Göncz, embarked on a two-day tour of the Balkans in August 2006. Before her departure she declared that Hungary deems it necessary, at a time the region is passing through a period of crisis (Serbia and Montenegro separated, the status of Kosovo is to be settled soon), to prove its commitment and involvement. She stressed that the foreign policy priorities remain unchanged and moreover, we endeavor to expand our presence in the Western Balkans.⁷

The foreign minister of the previous government had pointed out already that the “specific political, security, economic and national policy interests of Hungary – as a NATO and EU member country – demand that the respective

⁷ “Göncz Kinga külügyminiszter Belgrádban, Podgoricában és Pristinában”; http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/Aktualis/latogatasok_es_esemenyek/060802_podgorica_pristina.htm.

counties of the region, which fulfill the conditions required for integration – should become members of the Euro-Atlantic integrative institutions as soon as possible”.⁸ In this respect, the new government did not merely continue the policies of its predecessor, but enhanced its role as an architect. In November 2006, Ferenc Gyurcsány – at the end of a brief tour of the Balkans – attended a prime ministerial summit in Tirana of the Central European Initiative. He declared that one of the objectives of his trip to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Albania is to gather more information into the ongoing developments in the region and thus help the decision-making processes within the Union. He opined that it is a fundamental interest of the EU member states – including Hungary – that white spots in the context of economic and security considerations – should be eradicated in the region. In order to prevent the total breakdown of the democratic and modernization processes in the Western Balkans, he urged the EU member-states to enhance the integration of the region, to provide more transparent perspectives for the countries of the region and outline the timetable of EU integration, since the hope of accession is the strongest driving force behind the aforementioned processes. He acknowledged, too, that the countries of the Western Balkans should fulfill the conditions required for integration, but stressed at the same time that newer and newer conditions should not be demanded from them.⁹

At the NATO summit held a few days later, the Hungarian prime minister urged the alliance to make it clear that Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina could become members in the Partnership for Peace initiative, as well as offer full membership in the North Atlantic Alliance to the candidate countries (Croatia, Macedonia and Albania) in 2008.¹⁰ According to Gyurcsány, the offer of membership in NATO and membership in the Partnership for Peace initiative for the countries of the Western Balkans would render the region more secure and steer these countries on the “path of security and democratic development”.¹¹ The Prime Minister abandoned

⁸ “Az euroatlanti bővítés új helyzetbe hozta Magyarország szomszédságpolitikáját”; http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/Aktualis/Miniszteri_allasfoglalások/05040-2_Somogyi-interju.htm.

⁹ “Gyurcsány: A Nyugat-Balkán hihetetlen tudás, tehetség és erő forrása” (November 24, 2006); http://www.radio.hu/index.php?cikk_id=204876&rid=PWdUTQ==; „Magyarországnak ki kell állnia a Nyugat-Balkán európai integrációja mellett” (November 24, 2006); http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/mss/alpha?do=2&st=1&pg=2&m10_doc=630.

¹⁰ “Gyurcsány: a NATO hitelessége romlik, ha a balkáni államok nem kapnak tagságot” *Népszabadság Online* (November 29, 2006).

¹¹ “A NATO hitelessége forog kockán” (November 29, 2006); http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/mss/alpha?do=2&st=1&pg=2&m10_doc=642.

the ‘policy taker’ foreign policy principle in Tirana and Riga and adopted the ‘policy shaper’ attitude. In his view, NATO and the EU should synchronize the use of resources more efficiently, notably, with regard to the missions in the Balkans, since the EU will replace the departing military alliance in the region.¹² Following the meeting, the Prime Minister stated that he considers as one of his most important tasks to expedite the integration of the countries of the Balkans. While commenting on the offer of membership in the PFP for Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, he noted that the lobbying activities of Hungary on behalf of the region are valuable.¹³ The foreign minister, too, opined that Hungarian lobbying for the sake of the countries of the Western Balkans is desirable, since “as a result of Hungarian lobbying, the €35 visa fee will be maintained for the time being”.¹⁴

The Prime Minister raised objections with respect to the failure of the EU to formulate a common Balkan-strategy and observed that it is Hungary’s task to remind Europe that petty and short-sighted power politics should not be permitted to play a part within the realm of summits, or elsewhere. At the same time he reproached himself, too, saying that we Hungarians tend to claim that we know the Balkan region, but a special diplomatic training scheme has not been introduced in the independent Hungary, which would have created a special diplomatic corps conversant with the region and its languages. However, he did not draw the conclusion from these observations that specialists in Hungary should be trained in the future as diplomats specializing in the region, but he announced that twelve diplomats will be trained annually within the framework of extra exchange programs at the largest diplomatic academies in the world and approximately a quarter of these would focus on the Balkan region.¹⁵ In the name of the aforementioned ‘policy maker’ initiative, the prime minister summoned the Hungarian representatives of the European Parliament for consultations in order to formulate the Hungarian position with respect to the accession perspectives of the Balkan states.¹⁶

¹² “NATO: nyitás a Balkán felé”, *Népszabadság Online* (November 29, 2006).

¹³ “Gyurcsány: gyorsítani kell a balkáni államok európai integrációját” (November 29, 2006); <http://www.hirado.hu/cikk.php?id=166624>.

¹⁴ “Az időbeni schengeni bővítést sürgette Magyarország és több ország Brüsszelben”; http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/ku/bal/Aktualis/Szovivoi_nyilatkozatok/061113_schengeni_bovites.htm.

¹⁵ “Stabil Európához stabil Balkán kell” (November 29, 2006); http://www.radio.hu/index.php?cikk_id=205531&rid=PT1RTjJBVE0=.

¹⁶ “Gyurcsány Ferenc meghívója az Európai Parlament magyar tagjainak” (November 29, 2006); <http://www.objektivhir.hu/display/hir.php?hirid=27919>.

Hungary represented its position on the Western Balkans not only at the level of the two integrative organizations, but in bilateral relations, too. For instance, political director Iván Udvardi and his Italian colleague, Giulio Terzi di Sant’Agata, emphasized in the course of their discussions that the position of the two countries with regard to the situation surrounding the settlement of the Kosovo issue is similar, i.e., that the destabilization of the region must be averted, while Serbia should be guaranteed a European perspective.¹⁷ The Hungarian Prime Minister, too, reiterated these two positions during his discussions with Angela Merkel.¹⁸ On the other hand, at a meeting in Luxembourg, the foreign minister emphasized that the European integration of Serbia and the rest of the Western Balkan countries is vital for the stability of the region.¹⁹

The respective politicians had been actively engaged in voicing support for the Western Balkans not just during the period of forming a government, but have been lobbying for the region ever since. For instance, at a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in March 2008, Hungary, too, had been among the countries advocating NATO membership for Croatia, Macedonia and Albania as early as possible.²⁰

In April 2008, the prime minister emphasized that Hungary played a key role in the establishment of an informal, political foreign policy group called friends of NATO expansion, which advocated that the three candidate countries should commence concrete accession talks already in Bucharest, as well as to be admitted to the alliance in the next one-and-a-half years.²¹

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¹⁷ “Magyar-olasz politikai igazgatói konzultáció – nagyfokú egyetértés a koszovói rendezést illetően”; http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/ku/bal/Aktualis/latogatasok_es_esemenyek/070517_koszovo.htm.

¹⁸ “Merkel budapesti hat órája”, *Népszabadság Online* (August 22, 2007).

¹⁹ “Magyarország és Luxemburg egyaránt az európai uniós integráció elmélyítésére törekszik”; http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/ku/bal/Aktualis/latogatasok_es_esemenyek/GK_Lux_080418.htm

²⁰ “A magyar diplomácia három nyugat-balkáni országot NATO-csatlakozását szorgalmazza”; http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/ku/bal/Aktualis/latogatasok_es_esemenyek/GK_NATO_080306.htm.

²¹ “Gyurcsány Ferenc nemzetközi sajtótájékoztatója a Parlamentben” (April 4, 2008); http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/mss/alpha?do=2&st=1&pg=2&m10_doc=1725.

With regard to the foreign political activities of the government during the last two years, the foreign minister highlighted the dominant features and consequentiality of these policies. In particular, she stressed that throughout the convoluted Balkan situation, Hungary emphasized that not only the security of a single country, but also of the rest of the region must be taken into account.²²

However, all these do not imply that an all-round consensus existed vis-à-vis Hungary's Western Balkan policies. In this respect, I shall briefly mention a heated debate that erupted within the ranks of Hungarian foreign policy analysts in the summer of 2006. I shall not dwell on the issue in more detail, on the one hand because the Western Balkans was barely mentioned in the course of the debate and because the Hungarian political leadership has already accomplished the main demands of the participants of the debate, on the other. (Hungary should formulate a new foreign policy strategy²³ and Hungarian foreign policy should be more active²⁴). However, a debate that surfaced in the media at the beginning of 2008 is more noteworthy. Pál Dunay, who had been the director of the Hungarian Foreign Policy Institute from January 2007 to October 2007 and for a period he was a member of the foreign- and security policy council too, which collaborated with Ferenc Gyurcsány, formulated a sharply-worded criticism. He accused the Hungarian prime minister of repeated inconsistency between the summer of 2007 and January 2008 with respect to his declared position vis-à-vis the Kosovo settlement. "In my view it was not right to change our position so frequently. Hungarian foreign policy should have had an operative strategy on this question a year ago, in which my views and the position of the prime minister last summer were in agreement", he said. Dunay objected to the fact that in theory the Prime Minister conducts foreign policy matters, which is not the de facto case. He did not criticize just the prime minister, but the whole foreign policy apparatus as well. "Furthermore, the speed of the decision-making procedures of the premier is not in synchrony with the ad hoc shilly-shally of Hungarian diplomacy. Notably, the Hungarian embassies were not able to report the order in which the EU member states would recognize the independence of Kosovo", he stated.²⁵

²² "Számos sikeres lépése volt az elmúlt két évben a magyar külpolitikának" (June 12, 2008); http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/Aktualis/Miniszteri_allasfoglalások/GK_kormanysovivoi_080612.htm.

²³ P. Balázs, "Új külpolitikai stratégiát!", *Népszabadság Online* (June 14, 2006).

²⁴ G. Jeszenszky, "Aktív magyar külpolitikát!" *Népszabadság Online* (August 14, 2006).

²⁵ Dunay Pál külpolitikai szakértő, "A magyar külpolitika formálói későn eszméltek" (January 30, 2008); http://hvg.hu/velemeney/200805HVGFriss_3127/page2.aspx.

I have not been able to discover whether the prime minister responded to the allegations of Dunay. However, two days later, Foreign Minister Kinga Göncz, gave an interview to *Népszabadság*. Dunay's name does not appear in this interview, but according to the reporter "several criticisms have been aimed at the Foreign Ministry, alleging that Hungarian diplomacy is invisible". Kinga Göncz called it an absurd allegation and responded to the suggestion that "periodically an impression is created whereby our position is ostensibly uncertain in regards to matters of importance for us". "The government has clear visions on these issues. Behind the scene consultations are taking place with respect to Kosovo in order for the European Union to present a united view at the end. Hungary – being involved – emphatically represents the appropriate position of our interests. If a position is not made public, it does not mean that it does not exist."²⁶

Hungarian Foreign Policy vis-à-vis the Western Balkans

Croatia

Hungary's relationship with Croatia has been exceptionally good since 1990. Hungary had been one of the first to recognize the independence of Croatia. The most important agreements included the *Basic Treaty* signed in 1992 (*Treaty between the Hungarian Republic and the Croatian Republic on Friendly Relations and Cooperation*), as well as the *Treaty between the Hungarian Republic and the Croatian Republic with regard to the Protection of the Rights of the Croatian Minority Living in the Hungarian Republic and the Hungarian Minority Living in the Croatian Republic* concluded in 1995. Already in 1997, Hungarian President Árpád Göncz, assured Croatia of Hungary's support for Zagreb's Euro-Atlantic integration.²⁷ Since that time, Croatia has enjoyed Hungary's support in this respect, which the respective politicians repeated on numerous occasions. This was reiterated by Kinga Göncz at the beginning of 2007, adding "we are prepared to share our experiences on integration".²⁸ Following the first Croatian-Hungarian joint intergovernmental meeting in January 2006 a second joint meeting of the two governments were held in May 2007. At that time, Ferenc Gyurcsány declared "As friends, neighbors, allies and brothers we are committed that Croatia should find its place in the same

²⁶ E. Zalán, "Nagyon is látható a külpolitika", *Népszabadság Online* (February 1, 2008).

²⁷ J. Szabó, "Visszavárjuk a menekülteket", *Népszabadság* (April 22, 1997).

²⁸ "Magyar-horvát-készülődés az együttes kormányülésre"; http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/Aktualis/latogatasok_es_esemenyek/070220_magyar_horvat.htm.

common house, the European Union, as Hungary did". The Hungarian Prime Minister stressed that Hungary's interests command a broader diversification of its energy supplies within a regional framework and hence, Hungary would like to be a more active participant in the construction of a prospective liquid gas terminal in Croatia. For Hungary, this is a strategic issue "a window of opportunity to the world", he said.

Although there are no serious problems concerning the minority issue, it transpired during the joint government meeting that the situation is not without predicaments. For about ten years Hungary has urged the establishment of a Hungarian language department at the university in Osijek, but the issue was resolved only in 2007. On the other hand, Croatia opines that relations could be improved further if the Croats in Hungary were to have representation in the parliament.²⁹

The Hungarian Prime Minister stressed that Hungary would like to be a more active participant in the construction of a prospective liquid gas terminal in Croatia.

The two governments cooperated intensively with regard to the status of Kosovo and consequently Hungary, Croatia and Bulgaria – being neighbors of Serbia – jointly recognized the independence of Kosovo.³⁰

A few days later, Kinga Göncz, announced this as further proof of the special relationship between Croatia and Hungary. The foreign minister marked energy cooperation, the connection of the gas and electric grids and the transport infrastructure and the joint construction and development of the prospective joint motorways and railway lines – as special areas for cooperation.³¹

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The political relations between the two countries intensified after 2006, as a Hungarian Prime Minister visited Bosnia and Herzegovina for the first time in November 2006 since 1918. Here, too, he expressed support for the

²⁹ "Együtt ülésezik a magyar és a horvát kormány" (May 15, 2007); http://www.fn.hu/belfold/0705/egyutt_ulesezik_magyar_162893.php; "Magyar-horvát együttes kormány-ülést tartottak Zágrábban" (May 17, 2007), <https://www.magyarorszag.hu/hirkozpont/hirek/fokusz/zagrab20070517.html>.

³⁰ "Bolgár, magyar, horvát közös nyilatkozat Koszovó küszöbön álló elismeréséről" (March 19, 2008); http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/Aktualis/A_Kulugyminiszterium_allaspontja/Koszovo_kozos_nyil_080319.htm.

³¹ "Különleges, baráti jellegűek a magyar-horvát kapcsolatok"; http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/Aktualis/latogatasok_es_esemenyek/080327_GK_Luka_Bebic.htm.

country's Euro-Atlantic integration, but stressed that Bosnia must comply with the conditions required for integration.³² The Hungarian foreign minister made similar statements in the spring of 2007 as well. During their visits to Bosnia the two politicians mentioned that Hungary – in conjunction with the Visegrad Four – would lend support to the judicial and internal reforms of Bosnia, but they made it clear that a lot has to be achieved in the sphere of bilateral relations. In this regard, Hungary invited Bosnia to participate in the cultural events *inter alia*, which will be staged in Pécs in 2010, when this city will be the cultural capital of Europe.³³ Economic relations between the two countries have intensified since 2004, when a bilateral cooperation agreement was signed between the Hungarian Investment and Trade Development Agency and the Foreign Investment Promotion Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.³⁴ In August 2006, the Croatian-Hungarian joint consortium signed an agreement with the government of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Federation for the purchase of a 67% share in the largest Bosnian gas station network, the Energopetrol.³⁵ In order to intensify economic relations, an economic forum was held in Budapest and Ferenc Gyurcsány and President of the Ministerial Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Nikola Špirić, too attended the opening ceremony. Ostensibly, both sides benefited from the collaboration. Hungarian investments in Bosnia can prove to the outside world that in this respect, too, Bosnia is a secure territory, and as Špirić had put it "Hungary is the country BiH has the most intensive bilateral cooperation" and Hungary is one of the top economic partners of Bosnia. Hungary provides assistance (loans) for environmental investments in Bosnia and Herzegovina and – apart from MOL – there is Hungarian involvement in the aluminum and construction industries, too.³⁶ As a result of this cooperation, trade between the countries increased by 21.6% in 2007 in comparison to that in 2006.³⁷ The members of

³² "Magyar-boszniai megállapodás Szarajevóban" (November 22, 2006); <http://www.radio.hu/read/204639>.

³³ "Ministar alkalaj i mađarska ministrica goncz razgovarali o reformskim procesima u BiH" (June 14, 2007); http://www.fena.ba/public2/Category.aspx?news_id=FSA514476.

³⁴ "Saopćenje za javnost" (September 6, 2004); <http://www.mvp.gov.ba>.

³⁵ "Hatalmas üzletet csinált Boszniában a Mol" (August 4, 2006), http://vg.hu/index.php?a_pps=cikk&cikk=135676.

³⁶ "Špirić: a koszovói megoldás kiélezheti a helyzetet" (September 11, 2007); <http://www.stop.hu/articles/article.php?id=193883>; "Budimpešta: Održan poslovni forum bih – Mađarska" (September 11, 2007), http://www.fena.ba/public2/Category.aspx?news_id=FSA537426; "Špirić: BiH has the Most Intensive Cooperation with Hungary" (September 13, 2007); http://www.fena.ba/public2_en/Category.aspx?news_id=FSA538086.

³⁷ "Održana prva sjednica povjerenstva za gospodarsku saradnju mađarske i BiH" (April 1, 2008); http://www.fena.ba/public2/Category.aspx?news_id=FSA603799.

the Hungarian military forces have served in Bosnia since 2006 and are still a part of the EUFOR mission.³⁸ Within the framework Hungary's International Development Co-operation Activities, Hungary adopted its strategy for the 2008-2010 period on April 9, 2008, which was in essence a continuation of the present practice.³⁹

The significance of the relations between Montenegro and Hungary was demonstrated by the fact that Hungarian President Ferenc Mádl was the first European Union head of state to visit Podgorica in 2004, while approximately half a year later, Budapest and Vienna opened a joint representation in the capital of Montenegro.

Montenegro

The significance of the relations between Montenegro and Hungary was demonstrated by the fact that Hungarian President Ferenc Mádl was the first European Union head of state to visit Podgorica in 2004⁴⁰, while approximately half a year later, Budapest and Vienna opened a joint representation in the capital of Montenegro.⁴¹ On June 12, 2006 Hungary initiated the establishment of diplomatic relations, while Montenegro confirmed on June 13, 2006 that it, too, has taken the necessary steps in that direction. Consequently, Hungary became one of the first to establish diplomatic relations with the new state at an ambassadorial level.⁴² Two months later, Kinga Göncz declared in Podgorica that Montenegro has set an example in the Balkans by the peaceful transformation into an independent state without ethnic clashes and stressed that Hungary is willing to share its experiences in the integration process with Montenegro.⁴³ In the spring of 2008, the Hungarian foreign minister said "Hungary unequivocally supports Montenegro's Euro-Atlantic

³⁸ "New Commander for EUFOR Multi-National Battalion" (August 16, 2008); http://www.euforbih.org/eufor/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=511&Itemid=70.

³⁹ "Magyarország Nemzetközi Fejlesztési Együttműködési Stratégiája Bosznia-Hercegovinával 2008-2010"; <http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/NR/rdonlyres/6D0AA0C5-EFBC-4691-8225-4D6CCF4E4442/0/BIHstratvegIKBhonlap.pdf>.

⁴⁰ "Mádl Montenegróban: hazánk támogatja az integrációt" (September 15, 2004); http://www.radio.hu/index.php?cikk_id=106286.

⁴¹ "Magyar-osztrák diplomáciai irodaközösség Podgoricában"; http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/Aktualis/Szovivoi_nyilatkozatok/050414_podgorica.htm.

⁴² "Létrejötték a diplomáciai kapcsolatok Montenegróval"; http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/Aktualis/Szovivoi_nyilatkozatok/060616_montenegro_dipl_kapcsolatok.htm.

⁴³ "Göncz Kinga a montenegrói külügyminiszterrel tárgyalt"; http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/Aktualis/latogatasok_es_esemenyek/060804_gonc_kinga_montenegróban.htm.

endeavors and is ready to pass on all its expertise conducive to such efforts. She said Montenegro undoubtedly has a place both in the European Union and in NATO. She added that Podgorica's steepest uphill tasks are in the areas of justice and policing, but Hungary is ready to offer its help in these areas. (...) She noted that economic ties between Hungary and Montenegro are very close and that Hungarian investors are among the largest in Montenegro".⁴⁴ Some time later, Ferenc Gyurcsány declared that "Hungary is the largest foreign investor in Montenegro". At the same time, he stressed that Hungary conducts active foreign policy in the Western Balkans and the Euro-Atlantic integration of the countries of the region is in Hungary's fundamental interest. "Hungary is committed to Montenegro's accession to NATO – if and when it has fulfilled the required conditions – as well as finds the path to European Union membership", he said.⁴⁵

The significance of the relations between Montenegro and Hungary was demonstrated by the fact that Hungarian President Ferenc Mádl was the first European Union head of state to visit Podgorica in 2004, while approximately half a year later, Budapest and Vienna opened a joint representation in the capital of Montenegro.

Macedonia

The new Hungarian government could justly claim that its achievements had been considerable at the beginning of its mandate, since after joining the European Union, it continually lobbied the Macedonian side for a permanent visa-free arrangement, which Macedonia granted in June 2006.⁴⁶ In November 2006, Ferenc Gyurcsány reiterated in Skopje that Hungary supports Macedonia's NATO membership, but simultaneously stressed that Macedonia's path to the European Union would be ostensibly much harder and reforms in Macedonia should be hastened to succeed in this endeavor.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ "Hungary Unequivocally Supports the Euro-Atlantic Endeavours of Montenegro"; http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/en/bal/european_union/Latest+news/GK_Rocen_eng_080411.htm.

⁴⁵ "Montenegróban Magyarország a legnagyobb külföldi befektető" (May 20, 2008); http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/mss/alpha?do=2&st=1&pg=2&m10_doc=1823.

⁴⁶ "Véglegesen megszűnik a magyar turisták vízumkötelezettsége Macedóniába"; http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/Aktualis/Szovivoi_nyilatkozatok/060615_macedon_vizumkotelezettseg.htm.

⁴⁷ "Magyarország támogatja Macedónia NATO-csatlakozását" (November 23, 2006); <http://www.radio.hu/read/204757>.

Hungary had often reiterated that the most important target countries for international development cooperation are situated in our neighborhood and in this context – apart from Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina – Macedonia, too, is always mentioned.⁴⁸ The Hungarian foreign minister opined that the previously problem-ridden Macedonia has become a stable entity and a successful country by 2007. She said that the cooperation between the two countries is very close and relations are friendly, stressing that dialogue is conducted continually at various levels. She emphasized that the appearance in Macedonia of Hungarian investors is a new phenomenon in bilateral economic relations. Although Hungary refers to the Macedonian Republic in bilateral relations, it still accepts the title of Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, FYROM in multilateral relations. The two foreign ministers represented the same position in November 2007 in Kosovo's case.⁴⁹

At a meeting of the two premiers in February 2008, Ferenc Gyurcsány opined that in essence, Macedonia has fulfilled the conditions for NATO-membership and there are no problems in bilateral relations either. While he emphasized that unexplored opportunities still prevail in the spheres of business, science and culture, he stressed that Hungarian investment in the field of Macedonian telecommunications is significant.⁵⁰ Notwithstanding the consultations Kinga Göncz held with the foreign ministers of Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina at the meeting of the UN Human Rights Council as regards the recognition of Kosovo's independence⁵¹, at the end these two countries did not join the declaration issued at the beginning of March 2008 by the other three countries bordering on Serbia. Following the NATO summit held in Bucharest, Ferenc Gyurcsány revealed that Hungary initiated the establishment of an informal political foreign policy platform called the friends of expansion, which proposed that the three candidate countries should also commence concrete accession negotiations in Bucharest right there and now and become members of the alliance in the foreseeable future, i.e. in a year, or one and a half years time. Hungary therefore registered

⁴⁸ "Hazánk legjelentősebb fejlesztési célszágai a környezetünkben vannak"; http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/Kulpolitikank/Nemzetkozi_fejlesztos/nemz_fejl/071017_nefe_egyuttmukodes_pol.htm.

⁴⁹ "Macedónia a Nyugat-Balkán sikeres országa és stabil tényezője"; http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/Aktualis/latogatasok_es_esemenyek/071029_magyar_macedon_targyalas.htm.

⁵⁰ "Támogatjuk Macedónia NATO-tagságát" (February 26, 2008); http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/mss/alpha?null&m10_doc=1634&pg=2.

⁵¹ "Magyarország számára különösen fontos az Emberi Jogi Tanács keretében létrehozott kisebbségi fórum"; http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/Aktualis/latogatasok_es_esemenyek/080303_goncz_kinga_genf.htm.

with regret that the Greek-Macedonian name dispute at the end frustrated Macedonia's admission recently.⁵² The soldiers of the Hungarian Honvédség have been serving in Macedonia since 2001.

Serbia and Kosovo

Undoubtedly, Hungarian diplomacy had been and is facing the most difficult tasks in this region, since it is in this part of the Western Balkans that each and every aspect that has shaped and is shaping the main orientation of Hungarian foreign policy strategy is the most complex: minority policy, neighborhood policy, regional policy, European integration, the issues of democratic values and international law. Hungary should conduct foreign policy vis-à-vis Serbia with the aim to validate most of the aforementioned criteria simultaneously, while safeguarding Hungary's economic interests and the rights of the ethnic Hungarians in Vojvodina. The relations between the two countries had been problematic between 1990 and the autumn of 2000, notably, until the fall of Slobodan Milošević. After 2000, bilateral relations fundamentally improved, but problems still prevailed (primarily due to the acts of violence committed by private individuals against Vojvodina Hungarians).⁵³ Already in October 2005, the Political Undersecretary of State for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, András Bársony, formulated the Hungarian position vis-à-vis Serbia at a meeting with the deputy foreign minister of Serbia-Montenegro. In his view, it is a top priority for Hungary to support the European integration of the neighboring countries – including Serbia-Montenegro – as well as to offer Hungary's experiences to this end. As regards the enhancement of bilateral cooperation, concrete foundations should be established primarily in the spheres of the economy, domestic – and judicial affairs, science, education and culture. In the course of the debate regarding regional issues he stressed that safeguarding the multinational character of Kosovo and the peaceful settlement of the situation of the minorities are our top priorities. At the same time – with regard to Vojvodina – we expect from the Serbian authorities to do everything in their power to improve the relationship between the minorities, as well as to prevent ethnically motivated incidents, which target Hungarians, too.⁵⁴

⁵² "Gyurcsány Ferenc nemzetközi sajtótájékoztatója a Parlamentben" (April 4, 2008); http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/mss/alpha?do=2&st=1&pg=2&m10_doc=1725.

⁵³ I. Szilágyi, "Hungary's Relations with its South-Slav Neighbours After 1990", *Foreign Policy Review* Vol. 3, Nos. 1-2 (2005), pp. 184-200.

⁵⁴ "Bársony András tárgyalása Szerbia-Montenegró külügyminiszter-helyettesével"; http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/Aktualis/latogatasok_es_esemenyek/051013barsony.htm.

Hungarian foreign policy adhered to these positions later as well, but at the same time paid attention to the changing situation in Serbia and Europe, as well as the bargaining over the status of Kosovo. Kosovo constituted one of the focal points of Kinga Göncz's negotiations in Belgrade in August 2006. While the Hungarian foreign minister formulated a position in line with the European stance, she represented an independent view: "Hungary supports a consensual and not an enforced solution in the dispute over Kosovo. For us, it is of great importance that the so-called Western Balkans should become stable and stronger and not weaker. For us it is important, too, that Serbia should recognize the European perspectives as soon as possible." She noted that Hungary considers it important that Serbia should recognize that European integration promises more than isolation over war criminals, or Kosovo. She told a Hungarian reporter covering the issue that there are significant opportunities for Hungarian investment in Serbia. However, the reporter – without disclosing a name – noted that Hungarian circles are ostensibly wary of the fact that if and when nationalist sentiments were to flare up once again because of Kosovo, directly, or indirectly the Vojvodina Hungarians would also suffer.⁵⁵

Commenting on the decision of the NATO summit held in Riga, the foreign minister stressed Hungary's supportive role and said that Serbia holds a key position in the region and thus, it is exceptionally important that the country should take steps toward integration instead of isolation. With respect to the extradition of war criminals, she opined: "Motivating factors and a balance between promises and expectations vis-à-vis Serbia are necessary for the sake of Serbia's modernization."⁵⁶ At the beginning of December 2006, a parliamentary delegation traveled to Serbia in order to demonstrate that (despite the domestic bickering) every parliamentary party agreed that Hungary should provide political and other support to Serbia to keep it on track towards European integration. The members of the delegation stressed that the lives of the Vojvodina Hungarians could improve considerably only, if the lives of Serbs improve, too.⁵⁷ Thus, instead of the earlier policies based on grievances they attempted to improve the situation of the Hungarian minority by supporting the endeavors of the majority nation.

⁵⁵ O. Füzes, "A tét Koszovó jövője", *Népszabadság Online* (August 4, 2006).

⁵⁶ K. Göncz, "Szerbiának izoláció helyett integrációs irányt kell mutatni" (November 30, 2006), http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/Aktualis/Szovivoi_nyilatkozatok/061130_Goncz_Szerbia.htm.

⁵⁷ "Segíteni Szerbiának Magyar parlamenti küldöttség Belgrádban és Vajdaságban" (December 9, 2006), <http://www.hhrf.org/magyarszo/arhiva/2006/12/08/>.

From the beginning of 2007, Hungary desperately searched for a way to deal with the ostensibly irresolvable Kosovo problem, which would satisfy all the parties involved, as well as adhere to international law. In a letter written by Ferenc Gyurcsány – unpublished in Hungary – to the highest officials in the EU pointing out that Hungary's interests demand a solution regarding the Kosovo issue, which guarantees enduring stability in the region, as well as allows each and every side to express its views within the framework of a prudent timetable. According to the prime minister, the passages in the Ahtisaari proposal, referring to the rights of the communities in Kosovo and to the question of autonomy are particularly important for us. Kinga Göncz added that a key element in the Hungarian position demands that the UN Security Council should decide on the future status of Kosovo.⁵⁸

In April 2007, the undersecretary at the foreign ministry, Iván Udvardi, summed up Hungary's position vis-à-vis Serbia, the Kosovo settlement and the Western Balkans:

- "It is of primary interest that Kosovo's status settlement strengthens stability in the region. Stability in the Western Balkans in the long term will be a determining factor for the whole of Europe and, from this point of view, internal stability and Serbia's democratic future is crucial.
- A final and reassuring resolution to the problems of the Western Balkans must lie in the complete European integration of the whole region. It is important to contend that in the long term both Serbia and Kosovo's future lies in the EU; it is European integration which can best serve the peace and well-being of the people living there.
- The Hungarian government has a constitutional responsibility and aim to help ethnic Hungarian communities outside its borders. The Hungarian government has always maintained that it has a special commitment to helping Kosovo's settlement, as instability in Serbia and a potential risk of migration of Kosovo Serbs could have an immediate effect on the

From the beginning of 2007, Hungary desperately searched for a way to deal with the ostensibly irresolvable Kosovo problem, which would satisfy all the parties involved, as well as adhere to international law.

⁵⁸ "Február 21-re halasztották a koszovói tárgyalásokat" *Népszabadság Online* (February 9, 2007).

everyday lives of Hungarian communities in the North Serbian province of Vojvodina.”

Udvardi summed up the essence and outcome of Ferenc Gyurcsány’s aforementioned February letter in four points:

- “1. Opportunities for direct negotiations between the partners must be seized to the last. The negotiation process – partly as the result of this proposal – was extended by two weeks, but in March 2007 it was still finally closed without any measurable result.
2. The UN’s Security Council must issue a decree on Kosovo’s status. A situation where partners can pronounce independence unilaterally or take advantage of a status decision lacking in explicit clarity or the highest level of international legitimacy should be avoided. In response to Gyurcsány’s proposal, the EU’s General Affairs and External Relations Council stated in its conclusions of February 2007 that the EU unanimously urges a settlement sealed by a UN Security Council decree.
3. Hungary calls attention to the importance of the Ahtisaari report’s sections on community rights. The Ahtisaari plan on securing a wide range of community rights can guarantee that Kosovo Serbs remain, and seek their future, in their place of birth.
4. A settlement for Kosovo cannot be reassuring without progress made in Serbia’s European integration. Hungary encourages the EU to give backing from the highest levels to Serbia’s future in the EU and to reopen negotiations on the Stability and Accession Agreement, which was suspended in 2006 because it declared Belgrade’s co-operation with the Hague Tribunal unsatisfactory. Hungary proposes that unconditional co-operation with The Hague Tribunal should be a pre-requisite not for restarting talks on the *Stability and Accession Agreement* but of actually signing it.”⁵⁹

Observing the disputes and uncertainties in the ranks of the international community and after the famous statement of G. W. Bush: “At some point in time, sooner rather than later, you’ve got to say enough is enough, Kosovo is independent,”⁶⁰ – a series of more or less contradictory Hungarian statements – referred to by Dunay – followed. In his speech delivered at an ambassadorial conference on June 10, 2007, Gyurcsány focused on three issues. In the first he

⁵⁹ “Hungary Supports a Settlement in Kosovo which Contributes to the Stability of Serbia, Kosovo and the Whole of the Western Balkans”; http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/en/bal/actualities/spokesman_statements/070413_kosovo.htm.

⁶⁰ “Bush Says Kosovo to be Independent, Delights Albania” (June 10, 2007); <http://www.reuters.com/article/newsOne/idUSTZO01747120070610>.

pointed out that there are signs that due to Russia’s negative responses there will be no agreement at the UN. He raised the question: what happens if we cannot come to an agreement. Although in his view “we should do everything we can to avoid unilateral, single-sided recognitions”, which foreshadowed the second point: “the process of Kosovo towards independence cannot be stopped any more.” The third point pondered the possibility that the EU and NATO would not be able to arrive at a common conclusion. After a convoluted set of deliberations he concluded “I think we should clearly march together with the United States. We should go along with them, as we have no other choice. It is true even if we, Hungarians are not in a very easy situation because of Vojvodina. Honestly, I don’t think that there can be any other policy here.”⁶¹ Thus, perceiving foreign political coercion, the prime minister abandoned the second point of his February letter.

However, on the occasion of Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Koštunica’s visit to Budapest, a new twist was introduced. On this occasion, the prime minister raised three issues simultaneously.

1. “It is in the interest of both Hungary and the European Union to find a compromised solution between Belgrade and Pristina, but negotiations should not proceed without and end in sight.”
2. “The sides should reach an agreement by December 10, before the UN Security Council decision.”
3. Hungary cautions each and every international entity to refrain from taking unilateral steps on the issue, since unilateral decisions do not yield long-term solutions.⁶² Thus, he more or less reverted to the position Kinga Göncz represented in August 2006.

In December 2007 he approached the problem from another angle once again... “If the European Union is incapable of contributing effectively and meaningfully to the settlement of Kosovo, it would substantiate for sometime to come that the common foreign and security policy – which is our aspiration and I support whole-heartedly – is an illusion. We cannot expect the United States to assume the leading role on this issue, too. The European Union must take the leading role in this respect. Each country, including Hungary has a thousand and one reasons to observe the process with prudence and with a supportive intent. We should avoid – while we invest our energy in the

⁶¹ “Address of Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány to the Annual General Assembly of Heads of Diplomatic Missions held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 30 July 2007”; <http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/domain2/files/modules/module25/7546937FEBBE4DB6.pdf>.

⁶² “Kompromisszumos megoldás szükséges Belgrád és Pristina között” (November 13, 2007); http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/mss/alpha?do=2&st=1&pg=2&m10_doc=1453.

Kosovo settlement – the creation of other types of insecurities in the region. We should ensure peace not just in Kosovo, but in the region as a whole, including Serbia.⁶³

At the plenary parliamentary session of the Council of Europe, he was ostensibly more accommodating with respect to unilateral recognition, saying, the current situation of Kosovo is unsustainable, as well as stressed

The recognition of Kosovo – apart from the temporary recall of the ambassadors – did not create much commotion in Hungarian-Serbian relations and the fact that the so-called Europe-friendly political forces came to power has simplified the tasks of Hungarian politics.

the importance of the principles enshrined in the Ahtisaari plan.⁶⁴ The recognition of Kosovo – apart from the temporary recall of the ambassadors – did not create much commotion in Hungarian-Serbian relations and the fact that the so-called Europe-friendly political forces came to power has simplified the tasks of Hungarian politics. Consequently, at the end of June 2008 the foreign ministry once again advocated the acceleration of Serbia's integration.⁶⁵ Furthermore, it has to be mentioned, too, that in comparison to the other Western Balkan countries, Serb-Hungarian relations have not been without problems. In the autumn of 2007, analysts have advised that co-chairmen should be appointed to the intergovernmental mixed committee in the

first place. The minority mixed committee has not held a meeting for over two years and still does not have a Serbian co-chairman.⁶⁶

At the beginning of September 2008 Kinga Göncz officially visited to Belgrade and met Serbian politics. Although the two countries' standpoints diverge with regard to the independence of Kosovo the relationship between the two countries has improved. Both sides made some gestures towards each other. The Hungarian foreign minister urged the two sides to sit down together again and discuss substantive issues with the involvement of mixed

⁶³ "Erősíteni kell a globális politikai integrációk szerepét" (November 28, 2007); http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/mss/alpha?do=2&st=1&pg=2&m10_doc=1502.

⁶⁴ "Koszovó függetlensége egyre elkerülhetlenebbnek látszik" (January 22, 2008); http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/mss/alpha?do=2&st=1&pg=2&m10_doc=1574.

⁶⁵ K. Göncz, "Magyarország pártolja Szerbia EU-csatlakozását" (July 28, 2008); <http://www.mti.hu/eu/cikk/292975/>.

⁶⁶ "Budapestre jön a szerb kormányfő" (November 12, 2007); <http://www.stop.hu/articles/article.php?id=225371>.

committees on government, economic and minority issues. She noted that with the opening of three border-crossing points and their expansion, common traffic at the borders could be eased. The Serbian prime minister said that Hungarian intentions coincide with Serbian endeavors. He confirmed the invitation for Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány to pay an official visit to Belgrade.⁶⁷

Finally, I would like to stress that Hungary – within the aforementioned Hungary's International Development Co-operation Activities program – endorsed a Serbia strategy. In this – emphasizing the comparative advantages – the transmission of higher training techniques and experiences related to EU accession were marked as priorities. The document principally emphasized that cooperation could be enhanced by the "curtailment of migration, good governance, combating organized crime and corruption, as well as rural development in the agricultural sector, the EU pre-accession codification and legal harmonization within the framework of the NEFE-program.⁶⁸ Economic relations, too, improved considerably. In 2006, the sum of bilateral trade amounted to 1 billion USD. Albeit, import from Serbia increased markedly, Hungary's trade surplus vis-à-vis the neighboring country still stands at hundreds of millions of USD. Many Hungarian companies (OTP, MOL, Betonút RT.) are firmly rooted in Serbia already – according to a survey by the Serbian National Bank Hungary is in the 6th position in the ranks of foreign investors. Hungarian companies endeavor to expand further and to participate in the prospective privatization of more large Serbian companies.

Kosovo

Shortly after the recognition of Kosovo, the Hungarian Foreign Minister opined that the best medicine against separatism was to guarantee the rights of minorities. She added that cultural autonomy was not tantamount to regional autonomy and was far removed from the intention of separation. She said a favorable arrangement would be if self-administration were based on an agreement between the majority and minority. She added that the Hungarian Liaison Office in Pristina will soon be converted into an embassy.⁶⁹ In July

⁶⁷ "With the Opening of New Border Crossing..."; http://www.mfa.gov.hu/kum/en/bal/actualities/visits_and_events/GK_SR_eng_080902.htm.

⁶⁸ "Magyarország nemzetközi fejlesztési együttműködési országstratégiája Szerbiáról"; http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/NR/rdonlyres/C442113D-A7FE-4DD2-B07A-2716309A65DE/0/070419_szerbia.pdf.

⁶⁹ "Hungary's Liaison Office in Pristina will Soon be Promoted to an Embassy"; http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/en/bal/actualities/ministers_speeches/GK_FA_Society_080327.htm.

2008 it was announced that Hungary – whose soldiers have been participating in peace-keeping operation in Kosovo for the past nine years – will be present as an independent unit as of September and thus assume a greater role in the peace-keeping mission.⁷⁰

Concluding Remarks

During the period of the second Gyurcsány government, Hungary – albeit with some adjustment to the changes in the international arena – continued its previous policies vis-à-vis the Western Balkans. In this respect – primarily due to the status of Kosovo – some ambiguities were ostensible, but in this precarious situation, Hungary managed to preserve good relations with all of the countries of the region. Furthermore, in some spheres – primarily in economic relations – considerable progress has been made. In light of the fact that the greatest aspiration of Western Balkan countries to join the Euro-Atlantic integration processes and because Hungary – as an EU and NATO member state – is an important partner country in the region relations will ostensibly become more dynamic in the years to come.

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⁷⁰ Á. Kiss, “Offenzíva: fokozott magyar jelenlét Koszovóban” (July 25, 2008); http://www.hirszerto.hu/cikk.offenziva_fokozott_magyar_jelenlet_koszovoban.73715.html.

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Iván HALÁSZ

The Hungarian Republic and the Western Balkans: A Short Comparison of Perspectives and Opportunities for Hungarian and Slovak Policies

Summary: This study deals in its first part with the approach of Hungarian foreign policy in general to problems of the Western Balkans after 1990. It describes the policy of Budapest at the time of the so-called Yugoslav war and then the participation of the Republic of Hungary in the peace settlement and solutions in the aftermath of the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This part is followed by a presentation of the relation of Hungarian foreign policy to Kosovo and to the problem of its declaration of independence especially. The next part of the article compares the starting points, goals and perspectives of foreign policies of the Republic of Hungary and the Slovak Republic in the Western Balkans and looks for areas where the positions of both countries find the biggest concurrence. Despite important differences – for example the issue of Kosovo’s independence and collective rights of national communities – Bratislava and Budapest have a lot in common – both countries actively support stabilization of the statehood of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the idea of acceleration of Serbia’s eurointegration process. On the issue of Kosovo there is still a considerable phase shift between the two countries, it can however potentially encourage both countries to participate in a more intense and mutually beneficial cooperation.

The space that came to be known recently as the Western Balkans has traditionally belonged to areas of interest of Hungarian foreign policy – whether it was during the Republic or the Empire. In fact, it was important

Iván Halász works as an associate profesor at the Faculty of Public Administration, Corvinus University Budapest and Institute of Slavonic and Central European Studies at the Faculty of Humanities, Pázmány Péter Catholic University.

Halász, I., "The Hungarian Republic and the Western Balkans: A Short Comparison of Perspectives and Opportunities for Hungarian and Slovak Policies", *International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* Vol. XVII, No. 3/2008, pp. 26-44.

already in the Middle Ages since the times of rule of the Árpád lineage. During Austro-Hungarian dualism this area as well belonged to priorities of interest of the Hungarian ruling circles. Hungarian interests and Hungarian experts (as for example Béni Kállay, specialist on the Balkans and later Minister of Foreign Affairs) have played an important role in the formation of Balkan policy of the whole monarchy.

Situation has not changed even after 1918 when independent and relatively ethnically homogenous Hungary emerged in its present borders. Of course, the position and weight of the reduced post-Trianon Hungarian state in the region after 1918 were very different from the previous one. With a certain level of exaggeration one can say that all the conflicts that have begun in the Balkans marked the whole tragic 20th century. Hungary participated in both world wars and it intensely followed the events in the Balkans after 1991. In the period between these events, that is after 1945 and even more after 1949 all states of the region became a part of the sphere of Soviet influence but as a consequence of the Yugoslav-Soviet dispute (Stalin vs. Tito) the relations between Hungary and Yugoslavia cooled. They began to normalize only after the death of the Soviet dictator and it can be stated that from the end of the 50s in the 20th century they reached a correct even good level.

Hungary and War in Yugoslavia

The new period in development of these relations emerged after the change of system in 1989-1990 and mainly after the breakout of fratricidal war between dominant nations of the former Yugoslavia in 1991 – the world labeled it the Yugoslav war. In comparison to the rest of the countries of the so called Visegrad Group, Hungary was during the crisis on territory of former Yugoslavia in a considerably more difficult situation. It lied in the immediate neighborhood of the crisis region and the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has been inhabited by a Hungarian minority counting several hundreds of thousands of people.

Hungary adopted its stance to the Yugoslav crisis relatively early – already in 1991. The new conservative right-wing government of Prime Minister József Antall, elected in the first free elections in 1990 and consisting to a great extent of historians, had considered, during escalating tensions in the Yugoslav federation, the Croats and the Slovenes to be historically, confessionally and also when it comes to values, closer from the Hungarian point of view than the Serbs. This new line of foreign policy towards the south was partly expressed by Minister of Foreign Affairs Géza Jeszenszky in

a speech to the parliamentary foreign affairs committee, when he declared, that with Croatia and Slovenia, Budapest will try to have 'friendly' relations, and with Serbia 'correct' relations.¹ The policy that Budapest carried out in the following years was more or less in line with this sincere yet perhaps a bit diplomatically inappropriate expression.²

The beginning of armed struggles on the territory of Yugoslavia that was falling apart got Hungary in a very inconvenient situation – on one hand Hungarian leaders more times hinted that they recognize the right of nations to self-determination and they made several gestures towards Slovenians and Croats (these were good foundations for future friendly relations)³, on the other hand they had to try at the same time to have normal and good neighborly relations with the rest of Yugoslavia under leadership of Serbia, simply because it was a home to hundreds of thousands of Hungarians.

The Hungarians in Vojvodina sympathized with democratic efforts of Croats and Slovenians, on the other they felt that the breakup of Yugoslavia will have negative consequences on them.

In such a sensitive situation Budapest thus tried to have its policy in line with the position of the international community and mainly with the policy of decisive Atlantic resp. West-European powers and relevant international organizations. In accordance with this line it also tried to protect interests of Hungarian minorities on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, and this was not easy at all. On one hand the Hungarians in Vojvodina sympathized with democratic efforts of Croats and Slovenians, on the other they felt that the breakup of Yugoslavia will have negative consequences on them – in contrast to these two nations the Hungarians would stay inside Serbia, where radicalism and nationalism had been growing and there would be no one left to limit its politics inside the

¹ I. Szilágyi, "A magyar külpolitika és a délszláv térség 1990 után", F. Gazdag, L. J. Kiss (eds) *Magyar külpolitika a 20. században. Tanulmányok.* (Budapest: Zrínyi Kiadó, 2004), p. 261.

² Ibid, p. 261.

³ It is important to emphasize that as good relations between Croatia and Hungary as were created after 1991 and last in fact until today are in fact unique in the history of these two nations.

⁴ I. Szilágyi, "A magyar külpolitika és a délszláv térség 1990 után", F. Gazdag, L. J. Kiss (eds) *Magyar külpolitika a 20. században. Tanulmányok.* (Budapest: Zrínyi Kiadó, 2004), pp. 265-266.

country. Therefore they in essence did not fancy the break up of Yugoslavia, their interest-political organizations were supporting a peaceful solution and they wanted to avoid involvement of Hungarian community in the fratricidal Yugoslav conflict.⁴

In the end, the Republic of Hungary managed to maintain neutrality in the years 1991-1995 and it was not drawn into conflict. It hosted on its territory thousands of refugees from the former Yugoslavia, not taking nationality into account. On the international level it tried to support initiatives that would lead to a peaceful solution of the crisis. Logically, the war in its neighborhood did not have positive impact on Hungarian economy and the number of Hungarians in Serbian Vojvodina dropped radically – many of them feared the conflict and persecution and thus definitely left their homes and settled in Hungary or further in the West.

Peace Settlement – Hungarian Participation

The Republic of Hungary, as a former socialist state of medium size (in European context) had neither opportunity nor potential to play a more important role in the peace process. It however tried not to stand aside the events. Already in September 1992 Hungarian diplomacy proposed an international presence in Bosnia and Hercegovina and supported almost all efforts for peace. Since post-Dayton Bosnia and Hercegovina was not a neighboring state for Hungary anymore and no Hungarian minority lived there, Budapest could more or less relax on this issue and could make politics similar to other Central European states – i.e. within the Partnership for Peace (NATO) framework it sent soldiers to the country as part of peacemaking forces; it rendered policemen and civil specialists to international administration and it gradually searched for information about opportunities of economic cooperation, resp. opportunities of participation on renewal of a destroyed country. Perhaps the most specific contribution of Hungary to the launching of a peace operation in Bosnia was allowing the military base and airport in Tazár to serve the needs of American armed forces, taking part in peace operations in the former Yugoslavia. This is in fact how the first temporary American military base was formed on the territory of a state that used to be part of the Warsaw Pact.

A bigger problem was the second request of then American president Bill Clinton, who asked Hungary to become a member of the South European Cooperation Initiative (SECI), as the only state from Central Europe. Budapest, trying to become a member of NATO, was not in the situation that it could refuse

the American president, on the other hand it feared, that this 'reclassification' from stable Central Europe to the Balkans is not a fortunate solution for a country, that does not consider itself Balkan and did not have much in common with the war in the region. In the end Clinton however, assured the Hungarian leadership that participation in SECI will not have any negative impact on Hungary's efforts to become a NATO member state.⁵ Hungarian soldiers served in the peace operation as part of IFOR and later SFOR near Okučani. In 2004 the EU took over the command of operation from NATO and launched the EUFOR mission. This mission was significantly smaller than the previous ones, mainly as a consequence of gradual consolidation of Bosnia and Hercegovina. The number of soldiers under EUFOR has been decreasing since then, from 7,000 to approximately 2,200 currently. Though the mission has been reduced, Hungarian peacemakers are still present in Bosnia, together with the Polish, Spanish and Turkish soldiers.⁶

Hungarian participation in the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina was not however limited to soldiers and policemen. Perhaps the most important Hungarian civilian in Sarajevo was Professor Viktor Masenkó-Mavi, human rights expert and member of specialized commissions of the Council of Europe. As the only citizen of a former socialist state (with the exception of local judges), Masenkó-Mavi became a member of the Human Rights Chamber for Bosnia and Herzegovina. This body was established together with the office of the ombudsman on the basis of the 6th additional protocol to the *Dayton Peace Treaty*. The Human Rights Chamber operated in the period 1996-2003, was seated in Sarajevo and consisted of 14 lawyers – 2 Bosnians, 2 Croats and 2 Serbs from Bosnia and Herzegovina and 8 international judges⁷, appointed by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe for five years. The Chamber did not deal with issues related to war crimes, but rather with violations of human rights after December 14, 1995, antidiscrimination measures and redress of some grievances that took place during the war or after its end (retirement pensions, issues related to flat ownership, etc.).⁸

⁵ Ibid, pp. 274-275.

⁶ *Magyarország infrastrukturális és turisztikai beruházások iránt érdeklődik Bosznia-Hercegovinában – Göncz Kinga Sarajevóban*; www.kulugyminiszterium.hu.

⁷ The international judges came from France, Iceland, Hungary, Germany, Austria, Italy, Turkey and from the United Kingdom.

⁸ V. Masenkó-Mavi, "A Daytoni egyezmény és az emberi jogok Bosznia és Hercegovinában", *Állam- és Jogtudomány* Vol. XLII, No. 3-4 (2001), p. 275. and V. Masenkó-Mavi, "Konfliktusok és emberi jogok: a jogsértések orvoslásának módszerei", *Dayton, 10 év után*. (Budapest: MTA Jogtudományi Intézet – MTA Társadalomkutató Központ, 2006), p. 165.

It is interesting to note, that peace action in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in which over the years hundreds of Hungarian soldiers, policemen and civilian experts participated, has not, except for a few expert articles, caused greater interest from the public at large. The population was aware that Hungary is taking part in this action and considered it to be a logical consequence of humanitarian commitments of the country. Participation in the mission was mostly not understood in terms of some special Hungarian interests. The fact, that Bosnia and Herzegovina is not a neighbor anymore has perhaps played its role here. Recently, Bosnia and Herzegovina is mentioned in the press or on conferences also in economic terms – as a country, where one can invest and export goods.⁹

The Kosovo Crisis and Hungary

The Kosovo crisis and its solution have caused much bigger disputes and complications in Hungary than previous peace operations. It is enough to recall the issue of the bombing of Yugoslavia and allowing NATO planes into Hungarian airspace. Although parliamentary parties supported the position of the government of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in this issue, the debate in the press was quite sharp and in Budapest there was even pacifist demonstration protesting against the use of NATO military force, where a few thousand people participated. Thus, Kosovo, even though it is geographically more distant, represents until today for Hungarian leadership and partly also for the public represented by the press a somewhat bigger problem than participation in the peace operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This however is not so much related to some special Hungarian interests, but rather to generally a bigger sensitivity and problematic character of the Kosovo issue.

In the context of Europe and the world, even bigger disputes than humanitarian intervention in 1999 were caused by the issue of Kosovo independence that became a topic of the day in 2006 and its aftermath still remains. It is however necessary to point out that Ahtisaari's peace plan and in general the tension

⁹ The trade volume between the RH and BiH in 2006 was approximately 300 000 000 Euro, approximately two thirds of this sum was the sale of Hungarian goods. Approximately 5.2 % of Bosnian export goes to the RH. Import from the RH to BiH comprises 5.5% of local import. In spite of these numbers Hungary belongs among the 10 main trade partners of BiH. Hungarian businesses try to invest mainly in the field of construction and aluminium production. MOL is present in the form of consortium with Croatian INA. See "Magyarország infrastrukturális és turisztikai beruházások iránt érdeklődik Bosznia-Hercegovinában – Göncz Kinga Sarajevóba"; www.kulugyminiszterium.hu.

associated with bilateral Kosovar (Albanian)-Serbian negotiations resp. policy of the powers so far found significantly smaller resonance in the Hungarian press and public at large than it has found for example in Slovakia, which was in 2006-2007 a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council and thus had in this issue an even bigger responsibility and opportunity to influence the events. Kosovo independence has been, in Slovakia, a significantly more important issue than in Hungary, also in domestic politics.

More than 400 Hungarian citizens have served or worked in KFOR units, international civilian police and UNMIK civilian administration. This contribution of Hungary to peace operations is not negligible and it testifies

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that the Republic of Hungary has actively participated in one of the most extensive peace operations in Europe after 1990. The fact, that the international community has recently chosen a Hungarian expert as the position of head of the international police force is additional evidence of the role Hungarian experts have played in the peace process. Hungarian lawyers took part in discussion and expert training for the new post of Kosovar ombudsman. The

soldiers have participated in restoration of some objects of destroyed Kosovar infrastructure.

The year 2007 and the beginning of the intense quest for a solution to the problem of Kosovo's final status have naturally activated also Hungarian foreign policy. As an active member of NATO, EU and the UN and at the same time Serbia's neighbor, Hungary too had to adopt a position in this sensitive issue. With the developments in bilateral negotiations between Pristina and Belgrade as well as with changing positions of decisive powers, naturally, also the Hungarian position was developing and changing.

It was mainly Iván Udvardi, state secretary of the MFA, who communicated with the press regarding the Kosovo issue. Of course, the most important have always been positions of the highest representatives in this sphere: the Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Kinga Göncz. The development of the Hungarian position up to now can therefore be reconstructed mainly on the basis of analysis of their positions, declarations and speeches.

The first reactions to the plan of the Finnish mediator Martti Ahtisaari introduced early in 2007 can be found in the letter by the Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány to the Chairman of the European Commission José Manuel

Barroso, the EU's High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana and the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, whose country held the EU presidency at that time. The Prime Minister declared in his letter that Hungary is interested in finding a solution that would secure enduring stability for the whole region. This solution should be adopted by the UN Security Council. At the same time the Prime Minister considered it important during the negotiations for all parties to get the opportunity to present their positions in a rational time frame. From the point of view of Hungary the Prime Minister highlighted mainly the issue of collective rights for Kosovar national communities as well as that Serbia, which is going through a very difficult period of its history, should get a European perspective.¹⁰

The Minister of Foreign Affairs Kinga Göncz noted in the press conference in which she interpreted this Prime Minister's letter¹¹ that the Hungarian position is not grounded first of all in whether the international community would give a positive or negative answer to the question of Kosovo independence but rather in the fact, that what is important is the stability of the whole region, stability comprised of many elements. She again emphasized that for Budapest stability of Serbia and preservation of the European perspective for this neighboring state are important. Therefore, the EU should offer Belgrade versatile help in this issue.¹²

The Hungarian position adopted in February 2007 was presented in the spring conference of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences on Kosovo again by State Secretary Iván Udvardi. In his lecture he marked the solution of the Kosovo issue as one of the most important international issues of these days, through which the process of territorial changes in the Western Balkans should

¹⁰ "Magyar Köztársaság Külügyminisztériuma. Magyar álláspont a koszovói rendezésről" (February 9, 2007); www.kulugyminiszterium.hu.

¹¹ The content of this letter was briefly summarized later in an academic conference also by István Udvardi in the following points:

1. The possibility of direct negotiations between the parties involved should be used to the maximum.
2. The final status of Kosovo should be formulated in the UN SC resolution.
3. Hungary considers it important to point out those parts of Ahtisaari's plan that concern collective (community) rights.
4. The solution of the Kosovo issue cannot be satisfactory unless progress is achieved in the issue of Serbia's Eurointegration.

See: "Magyar Köztársaság Külügyminisztériuma. Magyarország olyan koszovói rendezést igyekszik elősegíteni, amely hozzájárul Szerbia, Koszovó és az egész Nyugat-Balkán stabilitásához – Udvardi Iván előadása az MTA Koszovó-konferenciáján" (April 13, 2007); www.kulugyminiszterium.hu.

¹² "Magyar Köztársaság Külügyminisztériuma. Magyar álláspont a koszovói rendezésről" (February 9, 2007); www.kulugyminiszterium.hu.

come to an end. Regarding the future status of Kosovo Udvardi declared that Hungarian interests are in this issue in accordance with the interests of the whole Europe and he framed them in the following way: the primary goal of Hungary is that a solution to the Kosovo issue would strengthen the stability of the whole region. Longterm stability of the Western Balkans is important for the whole of Europe and from this point of view the key lies in inner stability of Serbia and its democratic future. The Republic of Hungary sees the final solution to the problems of the Western Balkans in the European

Serbia's instability and mass emigration of the Serbs from Kosovo would have a direct impact on life opportunities for the Hungarian community in Vojvodina.

integration of the whole region. At the end he emphasized that the guarantee of opportunities for development of Hungarian minorities beyond borders of the country is a constitutional duty and a goal of every Hungarian government. Thus, Hungary has its special interest in the solution of the Kosovo issue, because Serbia's instability and mass emigration of the Serbs from Kosovo would have a direct impact on life opportunities for the Hungarian community in Vojvodina. Although Hungary was neither part of the so called Contact group nor of the UN

Security Council, and thus it had limited options to influence the solution to the Kosovo issue, it managed in 2004 to pass through a Regional partnership; a non-paper which stated that during the Kosovo process, the Kosovo Serbs should be guaranteed broad rights on the level of communities as well as protection of their sacral monuments.¹³

It is clear from various statements and documents of the leading representatives and from their interpretation, how important for Budapest were those parts of the plan for solution of the situation in Kosovo that dealt with collective rights of ethnic communities in Kosovo – that is mainly the issue of collective rights for the local Serbs. This stand has two causes: firstly, for the Republic of Hungary the question of individual and collective minority rights is very important and it always tries to support, both on a bilateral and multilateral level, the legitimate efforts of Hungarian minority communities

¹³ “Magyar Köztársaság Külügyminisztériuma Magyarország olyan koszovói rendezést igyekszik elősegíteni, amely hozzájárul Szerbia, Koszovó és az egész Nyugat-Balkán stabilitásához – Udvardi Iván előadása az MTA Koszovó-konferenciáján” (Április 13, 2007); www.kulugyminiszterium.hu.

beyond borders of the country and their efforts to achieve guarantees of minority rights inside the countries where they live. Secondly, guaranteeing efficient collective rights to the Serbian minority in Kosovo is important for Budapest and in general for Hungarians in the Carpathian basin also because if it were otherwise, there is a threat that further tens of thousands of Kosovo Serbs would leave their homes and settle in multiethnic Vojvodina, where the tension between local ethnic groups would rise again, as was the case already a few years ago. Hungarian leadership as well as the public, has traditionally feared that frustration from the so called ‘Serbian Trianon’ – something for which many in Hungary harbor understanding based on their own national experience – will turn mainly against the local Hungarians and other minority communities.

Since it turned out in the summer 2007 that the negotiations between the parties involved got blocked and a compromise solution is far from sight and moreover, that the Russian Federation would perhaps use its right of veto in the Security Council, some Western powers (USA first of all, but also the UK and France) began to hint at the possibility of unilateral recognition of Kosovar independence. This of course influenced the search for a solution to the problem as well as the positions of the countries that had to adopt their stance to this issue.

Diplomatic activities in the Kosovo issue have become considerably more intense since the summer. Hungary during various negotiations continued to emphasize the need for consensus and adoption of a solution that would mean neither absolute victory nor absolute defeat for anyone, because, according to Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, such a situation would always be a source of threat to peace and stability.

In the summer of 2007 the official positions of the leading representatives still emphasized the need for the adoption of a UN SC resolution, but in case it would not be possible to adopt such a document, Budapest wanted to at least exert effort for the achievement of a unanimous position in the EU and NATO and in parallel with this process it wanted to attempt to help approachment of Serbia to Euro-Atlantic structures and also a renewal of talks between Brussels and Serbia about the *Stabilization and Association Agreement*.

Hungarian diplomacy thus gradually and carefully started to modify accents in its position. Linking the issue of Kosovo independence with the issue of integration perspectives of Serbia as well as emphasizing the biggest consensus possible, at least within the Euroatlantic structures, have however remained constant elements of official speeches and hints. Budapest however was aware of the fact, that a unanimous EU position

without a UN SC resolution is an uncertain matter.¹⁴ Nevertheless the issue of Kosovo declaration of independence seemed, in the context of speeches of politicians and diplomats of various Western powers, an irreversible thing and Hungarian politicians were aware of this. All in all it can be stated that despite the change of the international political situation and trends in the issue of Kosovo, the Republic of Hungary tried in 2007 to have a balanced approach to this extraordinarily sensitive issue, an approach that would take into consideration efforts of the Kosovar Albanians and Serbia as well. At the same time, it was not easy for Hungary to formulate its position, for besides its commitments in international organizations and integration groupings, as well as in the frame of balancing in the field of bilateral relations, it always had to consider the fact that Serbia is a neighboring country and home to a significant Hungarian minority, lives of which would be perceivably influenced by any development in Kosovo.

The events took on a more dynamic course early in 2008. After unilateral declaration of Kosovo independence, resp. its recognition by the USA and relevant Western European states also other EU member states have gradually adopted their positions. Hungary did not belong to the group of countries which have refused unilateral declaration of Kosovo independence in principle and it tried to accept the step that was taken. With regard to Serbo-Hungarian relations, it however did not want to be among the first states to recognize Kosovar independence. Therefore, it proceeded to recognition only after the initial emotions subsided and the situation calmed down. The government decided to recognize the former Serbian province at its session on March 19. In the position to this issue published on the website of the MFA of the Republic of Hungary it is highlighted that a solution to the problem which would be completely optimal and acceptable for all parties involved does not exist, at the same time, the status quo existing until then in Kosovo is no longer bearable. Therefore, in line with the majority opinion of EU and NATO member states, also the Hungarian government considers the independence of Kosovo controlled by the international community to be the point of departure from crisis. The government does not consider this solution to be a precedent for solutions to other similar crises. The implementation of principles and values of the so called Ahhtisaari plan such as democracy, rule of law, a functioning market economy and rights of national minority communities in Kosovo is considered by the Hungarian

¹⁴ "Koszovó státusának rendezésével együtt biztosítani kell Szerbia EU-integrációs jövőjét – a Népszabadságnak nyilatkozott a magyar álláspontról Udvardi Iván szakállamtitkár, politikai igazgató" (September 2, 2007); www.kulugyminiszterium.hu.

government to be extremely important. For the future it is important to develop bilateral relations between Serbia and Hungary and avoid the Kosovo issue becoming an obstacle to development of contacts between the EU and Serbia.¹⁵

One more fact needs to be mentioned – Hungary recognized Kosovar independence in parallel with two other Serbian neighbors – Bulgaria and Croatia. They adopted also a common declaration, in which uniqueness of this step is underlined, stressing that it is not a precedent resp. while it was not possible to find an acceptable compromise, the change of status quo had become inevitable. Strengthening of contacts between the EU and Serbia was mentioned here as well.¹⁶

For the future Hungary considers assistance of the international community to Kosovo structures to be important, it actively takes part in the launching of the EULEX mission, for which it provided many experts. The Republic of Hungary has also become a member of the International Steering Group, task of which is international supervision over the process of Kosovo independence. At the same time Budapest supports the further presence of the OSCE in Kosovo. Moreover, the Hungarian contact office in Pristina will soon be transformed to an embassy.

Although the Republic of Hungary is personally and politically active in the process of international supervision over the building of Kosovar independence, this new state does not belong among priority areas of Hungarian international development assistance. An official document adopted in 2007 lists the following countries as priorities: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Vietnam, Moldova, Serbia and Palestinian Autonomous Administration. For these countries a development strategy for three to five years is being prepared.¹⁷

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¹⁵ "Magyarország elismeri Koszovo függetlenségét"; www.kulugyminiszterium.hu.

¹⁶ "Bolgár, magyar, horvát közös nyilatkozat Koszovó küszöbön álló elismeréséről"; www.kulugyminiszterium.hu.

¹⁷ "Bosznia, Vietnam, Moldova és a Palesztin Hatóság lesz a magyar fejlesztési politika legfontosabb célpontja az idén – a külügyminiszter tájékoztatója az irányítással foglalkozó kormányközi bizottság első üléséről"; www.kulugyminiszterium.hu.

The Main Problems of the Western Balkans

The Western Balkans is not only a problematic region of Europe, but at the same time, a relatively heterogeneous space, in which many potential conflicts, tendencies and interests intersect. Which of the problems can be considered fundamental and burning? The following issues can be considered basic in the Western Balkans:

1. the problem of inner stabilization of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
2. the issue of Kosovo recognition;
3. the problem of the European integration of Serbia; and
4. potentially, in the air also, is the issue of influence of demographic and international changes currently in progress in the space of the Southwestern Balkans on the overall political and social situation in the region.

Also the problem of Macedonia needs to be mentioned, not only because of a growing Albanian minority but also because of the dispute between Skopje and Athens about the name of the state. Since the Western Balkans region belongs to priority regions of the foreign policies of both Hungary and Slovakia, both diplomacies have to in some extent adopt a position on these issues. Of course, in one short article it is not possible to embrace all these issues. Therefore at this point it is necessary to focus first of all on the main tendencies, positions and points of departure.

A Short Comparison of Position and Options of Hungarian and Slovak Foreign Policy in the Region

Common Characteristics and Anchorage

Firstly it is necessary to clarify basic characteristics of position and options of Hungary and Slovakia in the region. Both countries have a lot in common: currently they are stable and reliable EU and NATO members. Their foreign policy is influenced by values of Euroatlantic civilization. This currently determines their geopolitical anchorage and basic direction of their foreign policy. In specific sensitive foreign policy issues both Budapest and Bratislava mostly try to look for balance between the EU and the USA, while of course being formally more bound by solidarity in the EU. As this is in principle a democratic space, they can to a certain extent assert their own interests and values. In the Balkans both states have been active since the second half of the 90s of the 20th century. The Western Balkans represents, for both of them, foreign policy priorities that have an economic and security dimension too.

Of course there are also several important differences between the Republic of Hungary and the SR, in comparison to previously mentioned similarities they however look much less important especially now, after the eurointegration has been successfully mastered. Where do these differences lie? To understand them it is necessary to again briefly recap characteristics of the overall position of Hungary and basic points of departure of its policy in the region. Then it is necessary also to outline the position of the SR.

Hungarian Foreign Policy and the Western Balkans:

- The Republic of Hungary *directly neighbors* important actors in the region (Serbia, Croatia).
- Bilateral relations between Hungary and its neighbors (Serbia especially) are traditionally influenced by *the presence of a significant Hungarian minority in Vojvodina* (while Slovakia also has there its minority, it is smaller and in the local politics it represents a less significant issue than the Hungarian community. Recently however it seems that also Bratislava has started to dedicate enhanced attention to its fellow countrymen). Budapest always has to (and wants to) take this fact into consideration.
- *Protection and support of Hungarian minorities has traditionally played a role (publicly declared always and everywhere) in the Hungarian foreign policy.* Also within the EU Hungary strives to be a flagship of international protection of ethnic minorities. This fact has been displayed almost in all official statements and declarations issued by Hungary regarding Kosovo.
- *The approach to two important actors of Yugoslav conflict is to a certain extent different – historically uniquely ‘friendly’ relations with Croatia (and partly with Slovenia as well) and ‘correct’ contacts with Serbia.* This line was originally set by the national-conservative government of József Antall, but its influence can be felt until now.
- Current relations between Hungary and Serbia are not bad, *Hungary belongs among the main advocates of Serbian integration into European structures.* Historically however these relations were not at all without problems. One should realize that in the past (1848-1849, 1914-1918, 1942, 1944-1945) quite a lot of blood had been shed in Hungaro-Serbian conflicts (though in spite of this for Hungarian national consciousness is Romania perhaps the biggest ‘historical competitor’.) Therefore Budapest tries to maintain a sensitive approach to the problems of Serbia.
- Hungarian *economic presence in the region*, though it does not reach the level of a Slovenian or Czech presence. It is important to note that also Hungarian medium-size enterprises are present in the Balkans.

- In Hungary there is a relatively good expert base for Balkanist research. This has a long tradition. In the Pécs University a preparation of experts on the region is taking place, in Budapest a Balkanist center was established by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, under the auspices of influential historian and former Minister of Education, Ferenc Glatz. The center coordinates various Balkanist projects.

The Slovak Republic and the Western Balkans:

- The SR *does not* directly neighbor the Western Balkans, what in many aspects makes the situation easier for Bratislava and offers a bigger maneuvering space.
- Slovakia has had *traditionally good and historically appropriately anchored relations with both dominant nations of the former Yugoslavia* – Croatia and Serbia. A certain role is played as well by memories on cooperation of nationalities inside the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Slavic solidarity, memories on cooperation within the Little Entente resp. on solidarity of Yugoslavia with the Czechoslovak state in two crisis periods (1938, 1968). Recently Serbia especially has found significant resonance in Slovak foreign policy.
- The issue of minorities represents, for the Slovak foreign policy, a completely different (smaller) problem than for the Hungarian. Though Slovakia takes care of its fellow countrymen and it even seems that this interest has been growing significantly on the political level, this issue has smaller relevance for foreign policy. On the contrary *Slovakia*, which has its own experience with external pressure (mainly from the side of international organizations, resp. neighboring countries) on the issue of minorities, is relatively *distrustful on the issues of international legal protection of national and ethnic minorities*.
- The independent Slovak Republic was established in 1993 and thus in the 90s of the 20th century it had to focus, not only on market and democratic transformation, but as well on finding its place in the international field. This process was not easy at all, because *Slovakia*, that lacked domestic political stability was *in the period 1993-1998 also a problematic state of the Central and Eastern European region* (of course, to a lesser extent than the states participating in the Yugoslav war). Therefore, Slovakia could have become involved in the process of stabilization and democratization in the post-Yugoslav sphere only a bit later. Bratislava has however early caught up on this disadvantage and it even managed to profit from its special experience with transformation. As part of this process it managed to maintain good relations with both decisive Slavic nations (Croatian and Serbian) as well as with a majority of local players.

Positions in International Institutions:

Hungary and Slovakia have had different opportunities to influence the events in the Western Balkans through decisive international organizations. Slovakia has been, from the beginning of 2006 till the end of 2007 (that is exactly in the period when the Kosovo issue resonated the most), a non-permanent member of the UN SC and thus its possibilities to influence the course of events were in principle larger than those of Hungary. Since 2007 a Slovak diplomat Miroslav Lajčák has been in the very important position of High Representative of the International Community and EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is also relevant though sensitive for Slovak foreign policy. These exclusive posts however don't seem so unproblematic from the point of view of Slovak diplomacy, domestic politics and positions in the Balkans. The question of recognition or non-recognition of Kosovo's independence, its resonance in domestic politics as well as harmonization of the Slovak position with the EU majority are evidence of that. A Slovak diplomat's mission under the EU colors can bring many positives for Slovakia but in case of failure it can as well cause certain problems in bilateral relations.

Hungary and its diplomats have not held in recent years such important leading posts in international organizations,¹⁸ on the other hand, the Republic of Hungary got in Kosovo two very important posts – a Hungarian expert was appointed as head of the international police and the Republic of Hungary became a member of the International Steering Group, task of which is international supervision over the process of Kosovo independence.

It can thus be stated that while the Slovak Republic had, during the Kosovo crisis, on international level a bigger opportunity to influence the course of events in Kosovo than the Republic of Hungary, currently the Republic of Hungary has 'directly on the ground' important positions that influence local events.

Differences and Similarities – a Summary

In which issues do the Hungarian and Slovak approaches to the fundamental problems in the Western Balkans concur and in which do they differ? Perhaps the most visible difference exists in the Kosovo issue. Budapest, although carefully and not among the first ones, recognized independence of this former Serbian province. Through its experts and diplomacy it tries to facilitate the process of modern state-building.

¹⁸ A fact needs to be mentioned here, that also Hungarian diplomats are in important positions in international administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On the contrary, Slovakia belongs to those EU states that refuse to recognize legitimacy of the unilateral declaration of Kosovo independence. It seems that Slovakia will maintain this position for a longer time, although Kosovar independence is already a fact. This means that Hungary can get a certain headstart in bilateral relations with this new Balkan state with a majority Albanian population. For the future, this can be a certain advantage for Hungary. Another advantage can by the way also be the fact, that in Albanian circles, Hungary as an important part of Austria-Hungary is still quite often mentioned together with Austria, to which many Albanian intellectuals are grateful for assistance to the first steps in Albanian state building at the beginning of the 20th century.¹⁹

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After a certain time probably also Bratislava will be solving this problem. Since Slovakia – on the grounds of principles and domestic politics – so far has not recognized Kosovar independence, for a time it had limited its own opportunities in the new state. This does not mean that it would lose its positions within the international presence. One however needs to keep in mind that in relation to Kosovo, the means of bilateral diplomacy will probably play a greater role in the future than international crisis management, although the latter will not lose its importance. This so called phase shift in the approach of Hungary and Slovakia to Kosovo and its independence could however in theory move both parties

to say ‘help each other’ in the given space, of course, within the frame of their EU duties and national interests.

The biggest consensus among these two Central European states could come in the issue of support of Serbia’s eurointegration efforts. Both countries belong among main supporters of Belgrade’s integrationist ambitions. Despite having recognized Kosovar independence, Hungary has made many gestures towards Serbia and it exerts effort for Belgrade to get integration compensation. On the other hand, by not having recognized Kosovo, the SR had formally gained sympathies of Serbia and its leadership, so to speak.

¹⁹ K. Csaplár-Degovics, “Az albán nemzeti gondolathoz és a magyar külpolitikai gondolkodáshoz – hozzászólás”; www.balkancenter.hu, p. 5.

It remains a question which issue will in the years to come play in Serbian politics: a bigger role – the issue of lost Kosovo or acceleration of full-fledged integration into the EU. On the background of the recent events it seems, that it would rather be the second one.

Collective rights for the Serbian minority in Kosovo belong as well among the favorite topics in Hungary, which unambiguously supports such an idea. In this respect there can be a concurrence between Belgrade and Budapest, while the SR is significantly more reserved in this issue – mainly as a consequence of Slovak domestic politics. Of course, when it comes to the Slovak position, for Serbia Slovak refusal of a unilateral declaration of Kosovo independence is much more important than the issue of support of community rights of local Serbs. In spite of that, in case there would be ethnic tension in Vojvodina, it can happen, that minority communities will cooperate more intensely and this could potentially have a certain influence on Hungaro-Slovak cooperation in this area. It is of course better to hope that such a situation will not occur, for it would probably be only a reaction to very serious problems.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina the interests and efforts of both countries seem to be similar and compatible with the efforts of international organizations involved, therefore quite a broad sphere for fruitful cooperation exists here. Of course, the room for cooperation of Hungary and Slovakia in the region remains open also in other areas – the economic sphere, the humanitarian area, in the process of facilitation of gradual integration of the whole region in the international and European diplomatic field, as well as in the already mentioned process of stabilization of common federative statehood of Bosnia and Herzegovina, important for both countries. So far the least clear seems to be (both for the SR and the RH) the so called Albanian matter – that is the question of how to react to the process of potential changes that were launched or will be launched by the process of demographic changes in the southern space of the Western Balkans. Hints of reactions are already visible, mainly in the case of Hungary, they were mentioned earlier in this text, but this is perhaps a question for a different article.

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Milan ŠAGÁT

Slovak Foreign Policy towards the Western Balkans: Potemkin Villages

Summary: Slovak Foreign Policy towards the Western Balkans: Potemkin Villages is a short analysis of Slovak foreign policy towards the Western Balkans in 2006 and 2007. The text stresses that not much has changed in terms of Slovakia modus operandi in and with the region. The main issue within this period is Kosovo which profoundly contested the nature of Slovak foreign policy, and its coherence with the European one. The biggest change after 2006 is visible with regard to the values which are promoted in the execution of Slovakian foreign policy. After 2006, the pursuit of Slovak economic interests prevailed also in regards to the Western Balkan, but with limited outcomes. The region, moreover, is one of many foreign policy priorities after 2006 and not the most important. After 2006 we can also observe increased influence of the domestic politics on the foreign policy towards the Western Balkans which remains predominantly focused on Serbia.

The aim of this essay is to provide the reader with a short overview and analysis of Slovak foreign policy towards the Western Balkans in 2006 and 2007. It is the period after early parliamentary elections from June 2006 which gave birth to the new Slovak, left-wing and populist government under Robert Fico. The essay presents the main trends in foreign policy towards the Western Balkans, for which the Foreign Ministry was mainly responsible.

Milan Šagát works as an analyst at the Bratislava-based Pontis Foundation.

The author would like to thank to Milan Nič and Karen Collins for their outstanding help, without which this article would not have been written. The author would also like to thank to Kinga Dąbrowska and Tomáš Strážay for their useful comments and inputs.

Šagát, M., "Slovak Foreign Policy towards the Western Balkans: Potemkin Villages", *International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* Vol. XVII, No.3/2008, pp. 45-62.

The author is aware that foreign policy, as any other kind of public policy, is complex and multilayered and an analysis of foreign policy cannot be confined within the limits of a two-year period. Therefore, this essay mentions and uses examples which do not strictly fall into this period but they are necessary for understanding the bigger picture, and the wider logic underpinning Slovak foreign policy.

The text begins with a short description of the political environment in Slovakia after June 2006, in which the seeds of future foreign policy (including that towards the Western Balkans) were sowed. In the following pages, it focuses on several specific aspects of Slovak foreign policy towards

the Western Balkans, such as promoted values, institutional capacities, its internal and external coherence, development assistance, etc. Conclusions are to be found at the end of the essay.

The essay stresses that not much has changed in terms of Slovakia's foreign policy *modus operandi* in and with the Western Balkans. But already in 2006, the independence of Kosovo was approaching. When it came to a head in February 2008, the Kosovo issue profoundly contested the nature of Slovak foreign policy, and its coherence with the European one; this issue also overshadowed other issues of foreign policy as debated in Slovakia. In the end, and after several u-turns, Slovakia fell

out of the mainstream when she decided not to recognize an independent Kosovo. Instead of becoming part of the solution, Slovakia became part of the problem. In this refusal to recognize the independence of Kosovo, Slovakia's reputation and chances to shape international community's policy in Kosovo and the broader region were destroyed.

Between 2006 and 2008, Slovakia's foreign policy towards the Western Balkans avoided critical challenges, but lost many unique opportunities meanwhile (not only in the case of Kosovo, but also in that of Montenegrin independence). Slovakia's foreign policy towards the Western Balkans is therefore reminiscent of Potemkin villages: shiny on surface, empty inside.

Between 2006 and 2008, Slovakia's foreign policy towards the Western Balkans avoided critical challenges, but lost many unique opportunities meanwhile (not only in the case of Kosovo, but also in that of Montenegrin independence).

Slovak Foreign Policy towards the Western Balkans: Where We Are Today?

In 2008 it is still claimed that the Western Balkan remains one of Slovakia's top foreign policy priorities. As Ján Kubiš, the Slovak Minister of Foreign Affairs, said, we "have long time ago and correctly defined the Western Balkans as one of our priority areas. Because we, in a matter of fact, speak about ourselves here: about our security, our stability, and our economic background"¹. More explicit is the *Slovakia's Foreign Policy Orientation 2007* (SFPO), a document which defines policy goals and which is prepared annually by the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). According to the document, "the significant impact of the situation in the Western Balkans on the stability and development in Central Europe and the historic links make this region a priority of Slovakia's foreign policy"².

In addition to this, Slovakia still donates the largest proportion of money from its official development assistance, to the Western Balkan countries (most notably Serbia). Diplomats maintain friendly bilateral relations with the region and Balkan-related debates occupy policy-makers in Slovakia. Ján Kubiš mentions the Western Balkan issue also on multilateral level, as it was case for example with the Council of Europe when Slovakia took presidency over the CE's Committee of Presidents in the end of 2007 or during meetings of Central European Initiative. In this sense, there is continuity with the previous governments.

Generally, it is almost a common consensus, even mantra, that the Western Balkans is one of Slovakia's top priorities. Several arguments, referred to as 'comparative advantages' over other nations are habitually mentioned and provide arguments for Slovakia's active involvement in the region.³ If we combine these comparative advantages with two other major factors –

¹ From the speech given by Ján Kubiš to the International Club of the Slovak Republic on March 5, 2007 in Bratislava.

² "Slovakia's Foreign Policy Orientation 2007", (Bratislava: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2007), p. 20.

³ *Historical experience* with totalitarianism, post-communism and democratisation including its short reverse wave to authoritarianism and then at the last stage EU integration and consolidation of democracy is the first comparative advantage. Not to mention the fact that Slovakia shared with several parts of the former Yugoslavia a common destiny within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Secondly, we formulate *geographical and cultural proximity* as Slovakia's comparative advantage in the Balkans. Belgrade or Zagreb are just few hours' drive away from Bratislava, and there are commonalities of language between these regions, Last but not least, the individual *successes of Slovak diplomats* provides Slovakia with a solid basis for being active in the region.

geopolitical and strategic interest of Slovakia in the political, economic and social stability in the region, and common presence of minorities – we have to conclude that for Slovakia, being not engaged in the Western Balkans would be a costly strategic mistake.

But if we take a closer look at Slovak foreign policy towards the Western Balkans, we will see that its priority is bigger on paper than in reality, that Slovakia doesn't really exploit its own comparative advantages and doesn't follow its strategic interests with pragmatic action. In fact, the idea of comparative advantages has become an empty catchphrase, and thanks to Slovakia's policy on the issue of Kosovo, our potential field of operation in the Balkans is narrowed. This trend, despite many successes achieved by the Slovak official or civic diplomacy in the Western Balkans – since 1999 and after 2006 – does not change.

When Slovakia ended the authoritarian rule of Vladimír Mečiar in 1998, its main foreign policy agenda was to enter the European Union and NATO. In the fact, it was an agenda which helped to defeat Vladimír Mečiar in elections; – people desperately wanted to end their country's international isolation. Subsequently, EU and NATO integration, overcoming isolation and fighting a negative international image inherited from Mečiar, times were the highest priorities of Slovak foreign policy until 2004. Of course, Slovakia has wanted to share its success story and the Balkan region was already on its foreign policy radar screen.

The Bratislava Process from 1999, which was facilitated by Slovak diplomacy and assisted Serbian opposition and civic leaders to find common ground in fighting and eventual toppling the Milošević regime, is well documented. Also well-known are the coordinated activities of the Slovak non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and official diplomacy in the field, which enabled regime change in Serbia in the late 90's. Slovakia also nominated many election observers after 1999 to almost every Western Balkan country. Later, Slovakia together with Austria has been one of the most rigorous advocates for Croatia in the EU. A notable example of Slovakian advocacy was the case of Ante Gotovina. We cannot forget about Slovak official development assistance (ODA) which was launched in 2003. The Western Balkan region was chosen as its main priority; at that time the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro was its program priority.

When Slovakia joined the EU in 2004, it had already been an OECD and NATO member. This has tremendously influenced the perspective from which international relations and its own role were seen by Slovakia. Suddenly, we had new responsibilities and opportunities. Slovakia had to learn, especially in the case of EU, how to behave as a member; EU affairs became the top priority.

Between 2004 and 2006 we had also a lot of homework to do – Slovakia had to: update our representation in Brussels; organize its Permanent Mission to the UN, and organize elections to the European Parliament. Moreover, Slovakia was already preparing for its elected membership of the UN's Security Council (2006-2007), and had soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq. Despite these bigger issues, the Western Balkans got more attention in Slovakia's foreign policy between 2004 and 2006. As Eliška Sláviková, analyst of the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association points out, Slovakia "strived to more consistently reach its goals... and make its-self active also in those countries in the region where it used to be more or less not present before"⁴. But simultaneously, Slovak diplomacy has strengthened its 'Eastern policy' and intensified cooperation within the Visegrad Group.

After parliamentary elections in 2006, in contrast to dynamics in the Western Balkans, past successes of the Slovak diplomacy there and trends within the Slovak foreign policy as such, the region is in reality given smaller attention. Whether affected by objective reasons (change of political climate in Slovakia and its influence on foreign policy) or subjective ones (the desire of the new government to pursue different values), the MFA has been dealing predominantly with issues other than the Western Balkans. Slovakia's foreign policy focus is on European and Euro-Atlantic affairs, as well as Visegrad cooperation, and the Eastern dimension. And if the Western Balkans was in question between 2006 and 2008, it was the Kosovo issue which dominated it. Moreover, there have been new important issues emerging:

1. *Slovak-Hungarian bilateral relations*, which have deteriorated after 2006. There were several reasons for that, but one of them was presence of the nationalist party in the government.
2. *International perception of Slovakia* has also deteriorated. This was caused not only by external factors (Kosovo, bilateral relations with Hungary,

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⁴ E. Sláviková, "Slovak Foreign Policy Towards the Western Balkans", P. Brezání (ed) *Year-book of Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic 2005*. (Bratislava: Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, 2006), pp. 101-114.

neglecting human rights dimension and EU affiliation while dealing with non-democratic regimes such as China, Libya, Venezuela, etc.) but also internal ones: adoption of controversial law on media, PM's verbal attacks on civil society organizations and attempt to adopt restrictive law on NGOs, etc.

3. *Energy security* has become a relatively new issue for Slovak foreign policy. Specifically, the *Department of Policy Planning and Analysis* at the MFA was entrusted with this agenda as its priority.
4. *Institutional reform* took attention of the MFA. This 'restructuralization' of the state administration is one of the pre-elections pledges made by SMER to decrease the overall state administration by 20%.

Kosovo Fairy Tale or How Strong is Domestic Politics?

If we want to understand a state's foreign policy "we have to take both its domestic and international considerations into account"⁵. Specifically with regard to Slovakia, domestic politics have always influenced foreign policy, both before and after 2006. The parliamentary elections in 2006 have brought no change into this general approach; however they have changed the values which underpin Slovak foreign policy, and which that foreign policy has been promoting.

Between 2006 and 2008, the Western Balkans region has undergone substantial developments: Montenegrin independence; political stability in Macedonia, Serbia or Bosnia and Herzegovina; cooperation with ICTY; Croatia and Albania's being invited to join NATO; and Kosovo's independence from 2008, which was probably the most exhausting and controversial issue. Within this period, Slovak foreign policy was exposed to take and pursue fundamental decisions. We had to suddenly adopt policies which had low support among Slovak decision makers. And that's why we sometimes didn't make the decision or simply passed the buck – as in the case of Kosovo. The issue of Kosovo was the most dominant issue of our Balkan foreign policy between 2006 and 2008, and even became an important issue in terms of domestic political struggles. As the political commentator of the Slovak Daily *SME* Marián Leško concludes, domestic political parties "behaved in this issue the same way as in the domestic politics: irresponsibly and opportunistically"⁶.

⁵ G.C. Alons, "Predicting a State's Foreign Policy: State Preferences between Domestic and International Constraints", *Foreign Policy Analysis* Vol. 3, Issue 3 (July 2007), pp. 211-232.

⁶ M. Leško, "Kosovo po slovensky", *Sme* (February 15, 2007).

The Kosovo affair exploded in Slovakia in February 2007, after Martti Ahtisaari published his plan for solution for this south Serbian province. Ján Kubiš appeared before the Parliamentary Committee on European Affairs on the February 6, 2007 and stated that approaching Kosovo's independence 'is a one-way process'. Then he continued: "We cannot stop it. And I think that it would be even dangerous."⁷ Kubiš advocated in the Committee for Ahtisaari's proposition – which was *de facto* independence for Kosovo – and the Committee at the end gave support to Kubiš and MFA's positive standpoint against Ahtisaari's plan. Kubiš was also given a mandate to interpret the position of Slovakia during the meeting of EU foreign ministers scheduled for the very next week. But meanwhile, the things changed dramatically in Slovakia.

Robert Fico, and to some extent President Ivan Gašparovič, entered the arena. Fico's rigorous opposition to Kosovo's independence changed the message with which Kubiš went to Brussels on February 12-13. Due to Slovakia's new position, the Council simply thanked Ahtisaari for his effort and left the final status of Kosovo open for future agreements. Since then, Slovakia's is one of the few European countries (together with Spain or Romania), which strongly opposes any kind of independence, supervised or conditional, for Kosovo. In his article published on the December 13, 2007, Ján Kubiš says: "We will not anyone left in doubt that we, from very principal reasons, do not identify ourselves and agree with unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo, even if we are in massive minority position within the EU."⁸ The same mixed messages were sent to Belgrade in February.

Slovakia regressed further in spring 2007 and the debate about Kosovo was almost more heated than in Serbia itself. The Slovak parliament, the National Council of the Slovak Republic, debated several resolutions on Kosovo, drafted by almost every political party. Final, a pro-Serbia resolution in opposition to an independent Kosovo was adopted on the March 28, 2007. All parties except the *Hungarian Coalition Party* voted in favor of the resolution. There is no wonder why Vojislav Koštunica, at that time Serbian PM, said to Ján Kubiš during their meeting in Belgrade in April 2008 that Serbia welcomes Slovakia's principal position, which demanded respect for international law.

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⁷ J. Kubiš, "Samostatnosť Kosova sa už nedá zvrátiť", *SITA* (February 6, 2007).

⁸ J. Kubiš, "Slovenská odpoveď na Kosovo", *Sme* (December 13, 2007).

As the case of Kosovo shows, the composition of the current Slovak government and the national parliament has a profound impact on foreign policy towards the Western Balkans. Decision makers are not challenged in the area of foreign policy. This opens up space for an unchained and usually biased decision making.

Lacking Vision or Coherence? Let's do Business at least

There is a disparity between stated goals and action taken in terms of Slovak foreign policy towards the Western Balkan between 2006 and 2008. A problem yet more serious than this disparity is the tendency of the prime minister, the minister of foreign affairs, and the president to take different and even contradictory foreign policy positions. .

The values promoted by a state's foreign policy are a reflection of that state's domestic politics, as well as of its international position (membership in international organizations, antiterrorism, globalization, energy dependence, etc.). In the case of Slovakia, these values are reflected in the SFPO documents, in which the main vision and goals of Slovak foreign policy for the defined period are enlisted. The document is expected to give answers to the question of what goals are to be achieved within one year and the values which underpin them. .

Between 2006 and 2008, the goals of the Slovak foreign policy towards the Western Balkans, according to official MFA's documents, were several. They included support for European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the Western Balkans, and the fostering of regional cooperation and "increasing competences of regional structures"⁹, strengthening cooperation with the ICTY, pursuing liberalization of the visa regime between the EU and the region, continuation in providing development assistance to the region (mostly Serbia), and "enhancing the economic dimension of the cooperation with the region in the search for and creation of new commercial and investment opportunities for Slovak businesses"¹⁰.

One may object that these goals are inadequate because there is no clear vision expressed (the documents are vague). Of course, they reflect Slovakia's limited capacities but also our limited perspective on the region. Only if one reads between the lines, can one understand that the ultimate long-term goal

⁹ "Slovakia's Foreign Policy Orientation 2007", (Bratislava: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2007), p. 19.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 21.

of Slovak diplomacy is stability in the region. That is undoubtedly correct, but from this perspective some short-term objectives – such as development of civil society, promotion of tolerant and open societies, peace building, etc. – are missing.

Secondly, even if we agree that the Slovakian government's goals in the Western Balkans as defined by the MFA are enough, their real implementation remains questionable. But there is one difference between pre- and post-2006 elections. As a reflection of the change in power, a very new issue came into vocabulary of the MFA after the elections: the economic dimension of the foreign policy. This innovation may be meant well, but is neither realistic nor well prepared, and its results are minimal.¹¹ Moreover, it is not strategically convenient because it contradicts, rather than bolsters 'soft power' successes accomplished by Slovakia in the region. Thus Slovak diplomacy does not take full advantage of its internal and external potential to promote faster and more positive developments in the region; rather it pursues its own, selfish – economic – state interests.

On the other hand, everything remains subordinated to this principle with regards to the Western Balkans. For example, it was the case with SlovakAid in 2007 that the majority of development assistance grants were given to business subjects and infrastructural projects. Support for development of civil society, promotion of EU integration, or social and regional development was given less support than in previous years.¹² Economic concerns have also dominated bilateral

The scope of Slovakia to act in the international arena is certainly not limitless. Is it economically strong enough to do business everywhere with everyone, and is it moral to sacrifice a commitment to democratization in favor of business interests?

¹¹ According to official information from the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, the trade balance between Slovakia and countries of the Western Balkans has shifted increased but still remains skewed. For example, Slovakia has exported goods and services to Serbia in total amount of 300 mil USD, whereas imported goods and services in total, amount to less than 100 mil USD. Trade with Serbia is the most significant of all countries of the Balkans (excluding Slovenia), but trade between Slovakia and Turkey or Ukraine for example is almost three times more balanced than that with Serbia. In 2007 Slovakia exported more to Belarus than Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Montenegro altogether.

¹² Within the 2007 SlovakAid's Serbian call for proposals, 15 out of 17 approved projects were technical projects aimed at building primary infrastructure (heating, sewers, pipelines, etc.).

relations; when the Slovak prime minister visited Bosnia and Herzegovina in summer 2008, economic relations and joint business projects dominated his discussions.

Promotion of economic interests is, of course, a legitimate and pragmatic cause. It was an element of Slovak foreign policy before 2006. However, the difference is in priority, which the new government places upon the economic dimension of foreign policy. Thus economic interests have come to overshadow other ideological and pragmatic concerns such as the promotion of democracy and human rights, the promotion of open society, and good governance, etc. The scope of Slovakia to act in the international arena is certainly not limitless. Is it economically strong enough to do business everywhere with everyone, and is it moral – especially when our own communist past is taken into consideration – to sacrifice a commitment to democratization in favor of business interests? The Slovak MFA must provide the public with answers.

Is it Foreign Policy towards the Balkans or Serbia?

Slovak foreign policy might not be coherent, but there are few issues which have remained unchanged since 1999. One of them is the fact that Slovak foreign policy, when it comes to the Balkans, is predominantly focused on Serbia, leaving the rest of the region almost intact. On one side, there are explanations why this is the case; on the other hand there are very practical arguments why it should not be.

First and foremost, there is a Slovak minority living mostly in the Serbia's northern autonomous province, Vojvodina. Slovaks living in Serbia are given disproportionate attention, and supporting them is one of the principal positions of the Slovak ODA. With this logic in mind, Serbia is treated in some sense as our 'own territory'. Secondly, every foreign policy maker in Slovakia correctly stresses that Serbia is key to economic, political and social stability in the Western Balkans, which essentially means the stability of the EU's southern border. Due to geographical proximity to Slovakia, and from the point of views of security and economics it is in Slovakia's interest to promote a stable and secure Serbia. Thirdly, all key issues of the region – Kosovo, the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina, cooperation with the ICTY – which are at the same time challenges for the international community have been directly linked to Serbia. A Furthermore, the transformation and democratization of Slovakia and Serbia are somehow similar. Both countries experienced: authoritarianism; being the 'black hole' of the region; and then caught up with neighbors in the EU and NATO through integration. Finally, we

must not forget the strong pan-Slavic resentments among Slovak politicians; the image of Serbs as our Slavic brothers, who are the target of unmerited international condemnation, has been popularized. Verbal or physical attacks by Radical Serbs on every minority in Serbia including ethnic Slovaks appear to be without interest to Slovak politicians.

As a result, Slovak diplomacy tends to forget about other countries in the region, and to see the region through 'Serbian glasses'. Slovak development assistance, of which the largest proportion goes annually to Serbia, is only one example. The inadequate level of bilateral relations with other countries (with the exception of Croatia) is yet another way in which an obsession with Serbia inflects Slovak foreign relations. When Sven Alkalaj, foreign minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina visited Slovakia in April 2008, he was not received by any high state representative; the prime minister, minister of foreign affairs and the president all failed to welcome Mr. Alkalaj. When Slovak diplomats Lajčák and Lipka *de facto* negotiated independence for Montenegro in 2006, the MFA decided not to send representation, or open a Slovak embassy or consulate in the country. Slovakia's support to Montenegro in negotiations with the EU on a Stabilization and Association Agreement in course of 2006 and 2007, or support to Macedonia obtain NATO candidate status during the Bucharest summit was insufficient.

Another example of a myopic view of international affairs on the part of the Slovak government has already been mentioned: Slovakia's position with regard to Kosovo was certainly inflected through its relations with Serbia. Slovakia is the only European country which does not recognize documents issued either by Kosovar authorities or the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. Even if Slovak foreign policy does not exclude Kosovo completely – as evidenced by the visit of Ján Kubiš to Kosovo in 2006, or the opening of the so called Interest representation of the Slovak Republic to Kosovo in the same year – it is still perceived to be an integral part of Serbia. Albania, an important part of the Western Balkans as defined by the EU, and a future NATO member, is neglected completely by Slovak foreign policy.

The problem with the approach outlined above is the damage inflicted upon Slovakia's interests and on its international image. Gone are the days when Slovakia was perceived (at least on the European level) as an expert, in understanding the peculiar nuances of Balkan politics. Gone too is its image as a reliable partner, an 'honest broker'.¹³ After 2006, in succumbing

¹³ "Sme čestným hráčom", *Euractiv. sk* (February 14, 2006). Interview with H.E. Maroš Šefčovič, ambassador and head of the Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the EU.

to a romanticized vision of the Balkans and in giving this perception space to influence her foreign policy, Slovakia has lost the capital and potential patiently built not by ostentatious projects, but by the reasonable efforts of the official diplomacy and of Slovak NGOs since 1999.

A Few Good Men

Looking at the history of Slovak foreign policy since 1999, it is obvious that the Western Balkans – even if it has not been its top priority and its significance has often been exaggerated – had its place in the matrix of the Slovakia's international relations. In fact, Slovak foreign policy and Slovak diplomats have been influencing the course of events in the region since the 1990's. However, the indisputable successes of Slovak diplomacy in the Western Balkans the successes of several skilled and agile diplomats, rather than of a precisely planned pre-defined strategy that reflects some long-term vision. The situation has changed after 2006; it changed when these diplomats left or lost their influence within the foreign policy making process.

Slovakia's influence began with names such as Miroslav Mojžita, ambassador of the Slovak Republic to the former Yugoslavia during Milošević, and Eduard Kukan, former Slovak minister of foreign affairs who served as the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for the Balkans, and their concrete activities – like the already mentioned Bratislava process. These activities fostered a positive image of Slovak diplomacy, and was often recorded favorably when the history books were written. However, the greatest successes of the Slovak diplomacy in the Balkans came with Miroslav Lajčák and to lesser extent with František Lipka from 2006.

Lajčák and Lipka, both former Slovak ambassadors to Serbia and Montenegro, and the former Yugoslavia respectively, played an outstanding role in the referendum on independence in Montenegro in 2006.¹⁴ Miroslav Lajčák was chosen to be Javier Solana's (EU's High Representative for Common Security and Foreign Policy) personal representative for facilitation of political dialogue in Montenegro. Ambassador František Lipka was appointed the chair of the referendum committee. The legitimacy and success of the referendum (which resulted in independence for the country) were

¹⁴ More information about the referendum is available in M. Šagát, "Slovakia's Foreign Policy Towards the Western Balkans in 2006", P. Brezání (ed) *Yearbook of Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic 2006*. (Bratislava: Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, 2007), p. 113.

positively appreciated by both parties, and by the EU, which often referred to the activities of the Slovak diplomats as a 'postmodern diplomacy'¹⁵. By applying European standards in the Western Balkans, Slovakia largely through these two diplomats, has contributed to the creation of a possible model for conflict solution and regulation in post-conflict regions.

Miroslav Lajčák has further capitalized on the success of his diplomacy in Montenegro, and in June 2007 became the sixth and youngest High Representative of the International Community and the EU's Special Envoy to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the first such representative for the new EU member state. This is by far the most vivid example of successful Slovak diplomacy. Unfortunately it is a success born of individual effort and professionalism, rather than the success of a systematic MFA strategy.

Limited Capacities

The institutional, human and financial capacities of Slovak diplomacy remain limited, and it looks like there are no new 'Balkan experts' on the way. The same might be true with regards to other regional priority areas (such as Eastern Europe – Ukraine and Belarus). The MFA is not expanding its human capacities, but with growing demands and responsibilities, has to defend its share in the state budget.

After parliamentary elections in 2006 two parallel trends related to the capacities of the MFA are to be observed. The first one has already been mentioned: restructuring, resulting in a decreasing number of staff in the state administration (including the MFA). Secondly and more specifically related to the MFA, there has been an attempt to institutionally reform the MFA and to change its internal structure.

Until August 2008, there were in practice, three or four people covering the Balkan portfolio on behalf of the Slovak government. According to the latest developments, however, there is a new department to be established in September (when widespread government reform is scheduled to take place)

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¹⁵ K. Friis, "The Referendum in Montenegro: The EU's Postmodern Diplomacy", *European Foreign Affairs Review* Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring 2007), pp. 67-88.

which will be dealing solely with the Western Balkans. It is also expected that the human capacities of this department will be strengthened. This is definitely positive news and might signal that the Western Balkans can regain its position as a prime concern of Slovak foreign policy.

On the other hand, Slovakia is represented in the Western Balkans region (which includes 6 states¹⁶ plus Kosovo) by only three embassies (and one representation in Pristine). The biggest one is in Belgrade, while the smallest – with only a few staff – is in Sarajevo. The Slovak MFA also lacks internal research capacities and usually outsources its own research to think-tanks and universities. The same is the case for development aid, an area of policy in which the ministry similarly relies on NGOs and other non-state actors. Finally, there is no ‘diplomatic academy’ within the MFA, as there is, for example, in Vienna. The ministry still does not have a stable and institutionalized mechanism for capacity building and educating its employees, diplomats and civil servants.

Development Assistance

An analysis of Slovak foreign policy towards the Western Balkans cannot be complete without discussing the bilateral aspect of the official development assistance, SlovakAid, which is correctly understood as an integral part of Slovakia’s foreign policy. The significance of the issue is further underlined by the already mentioned fact, that two Balkan countries – Serbia (including Kosovo) and Montenegro – are the so called program countries of the Slovak ODA. This means that the largest proportion of the ODA bilateral budget goes annually to Serbia and Montenegro. These two countries are unique in that they are the only ones to have signed official agreements with the Slovak government on receiving the ODA, and in that their development aid is ruled by *Country Strategy Papers*. This is not case for the ODA’s remaining countries.

The period between 2006 and 2008 is without doubt a significant period for SlovakAid and the ODA provided by the Slovak Republic in general. First of all, the National Council of the Slovak Republic adopted the *Act on Development Assistance* in December 2006, which is the first regulation of this nature in Slovakia. It was adopted thanks to significant lobbying of NGOs involved in the distribution of development aid. Secondly, two administrative and contracting units (Civil Society Development Foundation

¹⁶ Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania.

and the Regional Centre of UNDP¹⁷) which were in charge of administration of the bilateral ODA since 2003 were replaced by one, common body – the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation (SAMRS). The institution was officially launched on the January 1, 2007 and its functioning has become subject to strong criticism. Finally, the previous *Medium Term Strategy for Slovak Republic’s ODA* expired in 2008, and the new strategy for next 5 years is to be adopted in autumn 2008.

In 2006, from the total SlovakAid budget of 161 million SK (approximately 5.3 million Euro), 50 million SK was earmarked to cover assistance for Serbia, Kosovo and Montenegro. The Steering Committee of the SlovakAid approved only 7 projects totaling 34 million SK. Supported projects included ones focused on infrastructure renewal and social revitalization, such as the one implemented by Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), or civil society development as the one implemented by the Pontis Foundation. However, there was neither a project focused on fostering EU integration in the Western Balkans – such as the National Convention on the EU in Serbia implemented by the Slovak Foreign Policy Association a year before – nor there was project in any Balkan country other than Serbia and Montenegro funded in 2006.

In 2007, the total SlovakAid budget for bilateral development assistance was 169 million SK (approximately 5.6 million Euros) out of which 72 million was allocated for Serbia (including Kosovo) and Montenegro. This was the first

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¹⁷ Between 2003 and 2007, Slovak official development assistance was administered by the two so-called ‘administrative and contracting units’ chosen and contracted by the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In line with this, development assistance as such was divided into two parts. The first was the ODA for Serbia and Montenegro, and it was allocated in the so called Bratislava-Belgrade Fund, which was administered by the Bratislava-based Civil Society Development Foundation. The second one, the Trust Fund, from which all remaining target countries of the SlovakAid were covered, was administered by the Regional Centre of UNDP. This model was quite unique, and can provide a model for other countries which are about to launch their own ODA mechanisms.

call for proposals announced, administered and evaluated by the SAMRS. In comparison with previous years, the composition of supported projects (which altogether exceeded the allocated budget by almost 40 million SK) was quite surprising. It left many observers with the impression that focus – despite declared priorities which included civil society development, or support for European and Euro-Atlantic integration – of SlovakAid had changed and moved towards the unencumbered promotion of economic interests of Slovakia. As already mentioned above, the list of 17 approved projects did not include projects focused on civil society, and 16 out of the total number were infrastructural projects. The balance between ‘soft development’ and ‘hard development’ projects was ignored.

This change to the functioning of the SAMRS was introduced only in the summer 2008, when its acting director was released due to suspicion of corruption.

Conclusions

Slovakia’s foreign policy towards the Western Balkans has changed in several aspects since 2006. Most profoundly, the change is visible with regard to the values which are promoted in the execution of Slovakian foreign policy. After 2006, the pursuit of Slovak economic interests prevailed over other foreign policy goals, though there have been few clear achievements, such as one might expect to accrue from substantial investments. Secondly, the Western Balkans is only one of many priorities of Slovak foreign policy after 2006, and without doubt not the most important. Other issues such as European and Euro-Atlantic affairs, Slovak-Hungarian relations, energy security, Eastern policy or even institutional reform within the MFA have been given higher priority. This is unlikely to change in the upcoming period.

Thirdly, since 2006, the influence of domestic politics on Slovakia’s foreign policy towards the Western Balkans has been felt. Moreover, the consequences of Slovakia’s engagement in the Kosovo affair (which disqualified Slovakia from the EU mainstream) persist. It is important to recall that almost all political parties in Slovakia have taken a strongly pro-Serbian, ‘national defense’ position, and have refused to recognize Kosovo’s independence. Furthermore, some of these parties, such as the Slovak National Party, have made recourse to openly nationalistic rhetoric.

Despite fundamental political changes in the region, the most significant innovation of Slovakia’s foreign policy towards the Western Balkans after 2006

has been the promotion of her own economic interests. Excluding this shift, there has been almost zero innovation in Slovakian Balkan foreign policy. There has been a visible lack of new foreign policy initiatives and impulses, as the overall Slovak position in the EU’s policy towards the Balkan region diminishes in lieu of our opposing stance on Kosovo.

Since 2006, Slovak foreign policy towards the Western Balkans has remained predominantly focused on the biggest and most problematic country of the region – Serbia. This is certainly understandable to some extent, but Slovak policy should diversify and take a balanced approach towards the entire region (including Albania). Only thus can Slovakia regain its position as an expert, relevant and reliable partner to the EU.

The financial, institutional and human capacities of the MFA, in regards to the Western Balkans remain low. A positive omen in this regards is the awaited reform, which should create a department to deal exclusively with the Western Balkans. The MFA should also continue to cooperate with non-state actors in terms of research, education and development aid. Slovakia should also rethink its diplomatic coverage of the Balkans and try to foster bilateral relations with all countries of the region.

Finally, development aid towards the Balkans had become for a short period between 2006 and 2007 a sole tool for the promotion of Slovak economic interests. Such an approach is by definition opposed to the principles of development assistance, and is inconsistent with the previous achievements of Slovak Aid. Slovak Aid is most likely to develop and consolidate a new identity in the forthcoming period (2009-2013); the character of the ODA, too, will be fundamentally affected by the new ODA midterm strategy which is to be adopted in autumn 2008.

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Július LŐRINCZ

Assisting the Painful Process of Coming to Terms with the Past

Summary: The Slovak development assistance to the Western Balkans has a tradition that emerged in the 90s of the previous century and its efficiency, mainly when it comes to Serbia, was at that time deepened also by the example of a quite successful struggle of the Slovak democratic forces for the face of the society and its integration into the EU and NATO. Slovakia’s relation to the Balkans has become one of the basic pillars of the strategy of the Slovak foreign policy and in fact all Slovak governments since the country’s independence in 1993 have followed this line. An important element of this policy was the emergence of the Bratislava process in 1999 as a platform of unification of the Serbian opposition and struggle for Serbia’s democratization. A great and a very efficient component of this policy is the Bratislava-Belgrade Fund that has funded 65 assistance projects. In the next period an opportunity has arisen to merge the forces of assistance to the Western Balkans in its stabilization and integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. It would be suitable to involve mainly the efforts of Slovakia and Hungary, who directly neighbor the Western Balkan states, and whose orientation belongs to the strategic priorities of Hungarian foreign policy as well. Different approaches of these two countries to certain issues, such as the recognition of Kosovo’s independence, should not become an obstacle to their cooperation in the region.

As I began writing this article, I recalled one personal experience from a decade ago. In a dreary autumn of 1998 when everyone in the diminished Yugoslavia and in Serbia especially, expected that in a day or two bombs would start falling – so to say in the last moment they got a delay after a partial agreement between Milošević and Holbrook. As a journalist I met with

Július Lőrincz is a freelance writer.

Lőrincz, J., “Assisting the Painful Process of Coming to Terms with the Past”, *International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* Vol. XVII, No. 3/2008, pp. 63-71.

a few people from nongovernmental organizations in Niš. One of the young men was from Otpor, in that time already a legendary movement that played a very important role in the overthrow of the regime of Slobodan Milošević two years later. He served his military duty in Kosovo and it was exactly this experience that brought him to rows of the most ardent critics of the policy of the regime in power.

Niš, was in that time, one of the islands of democracy in Serbia. Zoran Živković, the city mayor, belonged to the group of the most significant leading figures of the Democratic Party in opposition. Later, after the defeat of Milošević in 2000, he became a vice-Prime minister of Serbia and after the murder of Zoran Djindjić in 2003 he was shortly the Prime Minister.

In Slovakia a broad coalition government of Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda was already in power in the autumn of 1998 and young people in Serbia expressed deep interest in events in our country, because in the previous years they had seen too many similarities between the opinions, ideas and practices of Milošević and Mečiar and their supporters. One could thus note that traditions of the Slovak-Serbian or the Slovak-Balkan relations are so thoroughly intertwined, that we can find links, even correspondence, also in the negative sides and periods of the development of societies of our countries. It is enough to mention the very good relations of the two quisling regimes during World War II: Tiso's Slovakia and Pavelić's Ustashe Croatia. Let's however leave for now the more distant past, although the tradition of our relations to the countries and nations of the Western Balkans really reaches this far.

In that time however, in an environment of non-governmental organizations in Niš, the vision of a wide democratic coalition was already underway, which in the end the opposition parties embraced as their own and in 2000 it led to the victory of the candidate of the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) Vojislav Koštunica over Slobodan Milošević already in the first round of presidential elections. It is not necessary to remind that it was not an easy victory, rather one full of insecurity and drama, unwinding in the fight for Serbia's orientation even today. The DOS, composed of 18 political parties and movements, did not pass the test of time and the political turmoil especially, but this changes nothing on the fact, that during its birth and emergence, the Slovak case, activities of the Slovak foreign policy and the non-governmental sector played a considerable role. Many individuals took part in this process, and their deep interest in the fates of the nations of the Western Balkans – not merely an interest to help them, but, in a common endeavor to bring about stability, normal relations between people, a democratic and prosperous society, was also a strife to strengthen their self-consciousness, human

dignity, simply, the feeling, that one does not wander around this world without purpose and can be useful.

The Balkans as a Strategic Goal

The Czechoslovak diplomacy was, after the events in 1989 and at the beginning of the 90s well aware of the strategic significance and importance of the Balkans. Besides this it also followed the historical traditions and cooperation of the Little Entente in the period between the two world wars, but also the positive sides of development, for example in the 60s of the previous century. When it comes to Slovakia, on the verge of independence, already in 1992, Miroslav Mojžita, who later became a successful ambassador of Slovakia to Belgrade, together with historian Dušan Škvarna, wrote in the journal, *Medzinárodné otázky*, in the article titled *National Interests of the Slovak Republic*: "There is lot to catch up with especially in the southern vector of our policy, that should strengthen the stability of Central Europe. Despite a number of question-marks, it is necessary to maintain bonds to Yugoslavia and countries that used to belong to it until recently... Moreover, Romania, Croatia and Serbia in the past, completely or in part, created together with Hungary, Slovakia and Transcarpathian Ukraine a relatively closed geographic unit in the Carpathian basin. This factor could help to create stronger bonds between them."¹

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Such an approach then became the basis for the formulation of Slovak relations to the Balkans, as one of the fundamental pillars of the strategy of Slovak foreign policy, something every Slovak government since independence kept in mind. Also the current government that came into office after the elections in 2006 continues in this tradition. Bratislava simply considers the southeast of our continent, especially the Western Balkans, with its story that still has an open ending, to be an indivisible part of Europe and concept of its integration.

¹ M. Mojžita, D. Škvarna, "Národné záujmy Slovenskej republiky", *Medzinárodné otázky* Vol. I, No. 2/1992, pp. 46-55.

Priorities of Active Assistance

Besides political and diplomatic activities and the military contribution of Slovakia with the goal of ending the conflicts and stabilizing the situation in the countries of the Western Balkans, the so called Bratislava Process was one of the most beneficial projects of the Slovak contribution to the democratization of Serbia, as a pivotal country in the region. It was initiated in Bratislava in 1999 by the Slovak diplomacy and the non-governmental organizations as a sustainable forum for Serbian opposition forces, civic associations and independent media with the aim of uniting Serbian opposition against the repressive regime of Milošević and bringing about democratic changes in the country. Slovakia's capital became the networking place for people and organizations, who had not even contacted each other previously in Serbia. The international institutions and independent experts as well took part in a series of conferences and seminars. When the Bratislava Process came to a successful closure in 2002, Eduard Kukan, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic noted that "this justified struggle for human rights was relatively long, exhaustive, risky and lives were often at stake...".

Another big, concrete and efficient project was the creation of the Bratislava-Belgrade Fund, through which tens of millions of Slovak crowns came to Serbia and Montenegro from Slovakia's Official Development Assistance. Administered by the Civil Society Development Foundation, 65 various projects were supported, from the building of a bridge to support for spreading European values. Fifty-seven of the projects have already been accomplished and the remaining ones will come to an end this year or in early 2009. Let us remind about the priorities of this Slovak assistance, for it can be inspiring for the future and not only in Serbia but also in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo which are at the moment perhaps the most troublesome areas of the Western Balkans. The priorities were thus:

- to support the development of civil society with focus on minority groups in the society with the aim to improve their status;
- to support educational and school activities, the re-education of young people and make them more active in finding their place in labor market;
- to support projects focused on health care and counseling, mainly for women, in order to expand their opportunities;
- to support education in the sphere of taking advantage of the information resources and the support of regional multi-ethnic journalism as a tool of democratization of the society;
- to support and develop local administration and capacities of state administration with the aim to develop their cooperation with civil society;

- to support municipalities with the aim to develop environmentally oriented tourism;
- to support democratization and transformation of the armed forces of the state;
- to support efficiency of local labor market in relation to support of emerging projects of small and middle entrepreneurship;
- to support emerging entrepreneurship in rural and suburban areas.

Slovakia and Hungary – Common Opportunities

These priorities of course are not a closed system and the growing experience from development in the given area and understanding of local needs will most probably lead to their correction and amendment. It is also clear that possible merging of forces of more countries and civic associations and non-governmental organizations can deepen the efficiency and dynamics of this assistance, and this can only speed up the process of transformation and democratization of societies in the Western Balkans as well as their integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. It is in the interest of the nations of the region – support of the integration to the European Union especially is high in the population – and also in the interest of stabilization of the situation in the whole Europe, its integration and position in the global arena.

The eventual cooperation of Slovakia and Hungary in this area definitely opens interesting opportunities. For Hungary which directly neighbors Serbia and Croatia (also Slovenia, but that is of course a different category) the Western Balkans also belong to the strategic goals of foreign policy and Hungary is more economically active in the region than Slovakia. It also has experience with work of its non-governmental organizations in the region. Besides, it has, compared to Slovakia, a longer tradition of scientific research and learning about the Balkans, as well as training of experts on this region, not limited to the Slavic nations but for example researching also the Albanian factor.

One can speak about a more significant economic and scientific background of the Hungarian foreign policy in relation to the Balkans, but then, when it comes to foreign policy activities and gaining space for them, Slovakia was bolder and it achieved international recognition for that.

One can thus speak about a more significant economic and scientific background of the Hungarian foreign policy in relation to the Balkans, but then, when it comes to foreign policy activities and gaining space for them, Slovakia was bolder and it achieved international recognition for that. It is important to mention here the work of three consecutive ambassadors in Belgrade – František Lipka, Miroslav Mojžita (in the most turbulent time of the Kosovo crisis and the fundamental turn from authoritarian regime to democracy) and Miroslav Lajčák; the work of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Eduard Kukan in the position of the Special representative of the UN Secretary General after the adoption of *Resolution No. 1244 of the UN Security Council*; then the work of Miroslav Lajčák and František Lipka on the process of Montenegro's independence and currently Lajčák's work in the position of the High Representative of the international community and Special Representative of the EU in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where also Mojžita serves as the ambassador of the Slovak Republic. A question arises whether these activities are not limited merely to a handful of names. Personal contribution of the people listed above is doubtlessly dominant, but one also needs to take into account the work of many other Slovak diplomats and NGO representatives. Slovakia already has a qualified expert corps.

Of course, there are also certain differences between Slovakia and Hungary – the biggest one at the moment being the fact, that while Budapest already recognized Kosovo's independence, Bratislava has not done so yet, which wins some hearts and minds in Belgrade but loses them in the Albanian environment. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Ján Kubiš has repeatedly stated that the declaration of independence was merely a unilateral step in dispute with important elements of international law and therefore Slovakia does not recognize it just like it does not recognize the break away of Abchazia and South Ossetia and the declaration of independence of these two autonomous areas.

These cases however are not identical and the minister himself has called Kosovo a *sui generis* case, while a year and something ago he used to say that the process of Kosovo gaining independence is irreversible. His job is however not an easy one, because his boss – the Prime Minister Robert Fico has been expressing even more categorically his refusal to recognize Kosovo and what is especially entertaining, similar attitudes are shared even by such opposition leaders as Mikuláš Dzurinda and Pavol Hrušovský, who used to speak in 1999, at the time of the Serbia and Kosovo bombing by NATO forces, about the mass violation of human rights of Kosovo Albanians by the then regime in Belgrade.

The current official position of Bratislava on this issue goes a bit beyond reality and it is doubtful whether it, together with the refusal of four other EU member states, facilitates the dynamics of the process of European integration in the Western Balkans including Serbia. At the same time, to make the paradox even more puzzling, according to testimony by Miroslav Mojžita (in the book *Belehrad Poznámky 1995 – 2001 (Belgrade. Notes 1995-2000)*), by the end of the 90s it was clear even to Slobodan Milošević, that Kosovo is lost for Serbia. When Ivo Visković, professor at the Belgrade Faculty of Political Science, was asked at the beginning of this year, whether he thinks, that the belief that Kosovo might come back, prevails in Serbia, he answered: "I think that this has never been an option. Nobody in Serbia, and I had the opportunity to talk about this issue also with members of the negotiating team, who were creating Serbia's policy on this issue, thought, that Kosovo could really come back under Serbia's control."² Hungary recognized Kosovo's independence together with two other neighbors of Serbia – Bulgaria and Croatia – and in their common declaration they emphasized that this step is unique and thus not a precedent and because it was not possible to find a compromise solution and the status quo ante was unsustainable, such a decision was unavoidable.

New Projects

These different approaches however should not be obstacles to activities facilitating stabilization of the situation in Kosovo. In the end, Slovak activists mainly from the People in Peril organization have already worked in Kosovo for example on school reconstruction projects or projects aiming at the creation of multi-ethnic media. In this area it is inspiring to note the already existing communication between the students of universities in Pristina and Novi Sad. The space for interesting – and common – projects exists, especially with the goal of overcoming the communication gap between the Albanians and the Serbs. The opportunities for an exercise in tolerance between the ethnics and mutual respect as well as adoption of European values exist also in Serbia, more specifically in multiethnic Vojvodina, where Slovaks and Hungarians should continue to carry out common projects with Serbian friends.

It is exactly these kind of projects, where Slovakia and Hungary could as well gain experience for overcoming prejudice and possible hostility in their

² "Srbi i Albanci: kako odmrznuti odnose", *Most Radija Slobodna Evropa* (March 16, 2008). Debate with Ivo Visković and Škeljzen Maliči, moderated by Omer Karabeg.

mutual relations, sometimes nurtured by leading political structures on both sides of the border. In Slovakia the roots of hostility lie in the perception of Hungarians as a non-equal part of society, as a tolerated community of people who, in case they want to preserve their identity, should in fact close themselves into some kind of a ghetto. This is in fact convenient also to Hungarian nationalists, who, as Paul Lendvai, the Austrian publicist of Hungarian descent, used to say, represent the interests of the Hungarian minorities or Hungarians abroad "through confrontation with the majority nation".³

Similarly to Kosovo, unemployment is a huge problem in certain areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example in impoverished Srebrenica, which experienced in mid-90s a brutal ethnic cleansing in which over 8,000 men

were murdered. The women of Srebrenica, many of them victims of psychological trauma, have for example a concrete interest in the creation of a health and counseling centre. Slovakia could, together with Hungary, help to renew the former spa and offer inspiration for the development of local tourism based also on the existence of the healing water of Gruber. Bosnia and Herzegovina offers great space for social assistance projects with regard to the consequences of the tragic war with ethnic

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cleansing and forced expulsion of the native population. In the hearts and minds of people, feelings of hatred, mistrust and fear are still present and their removal will require the work of generations to come. The young people are torn between pro-European and nationalist feelings.

The tradition of Slovak and, in the end, also Hungarian engagement in the Balkans is also a commitment to countries and nations of the region and their future. This means that both Slovak and Hungarian diplomacy and nongovernmental organizations have to be involved at least in three spheres. The first two were defined by the late historian and political scientist Pavol Lukáč, who wrote in 2003 in an afterword titled *Boli sme pri tom* (*We were there*) to the book by Miroslav Mojžita: "many of the problems of interethnic character in the Balkans are far from being over and thus, Slovak diplomacy can, within the scope of its resources, attempt to be a mediator or at least

³ Interview with Paul Lendvai, *168 óra* No. 37/2008.

offer Bratislava or other places in Slovakia as a neutral environment for such a necessary dialogue as for example the Albanian-Kosovar and Serbian." ⁴He follows with the second sphere: "The Serbian, but the Croatian, Bosnian or Albanian society still have to overcome the painful process of addressing the past and deal with their own – in the words of Karl Jaspers – "question of guilt". They need to go through their own catharsis, nobody can do this for them, but it is necessary to remind them of the need to go again through this valley of tears. Only then it will be possible to build not only a democratic and civil society inside the closed ethnic communities, but also to build culture of good neighborly relations and regional cooperation." The third sphere of activities lies in supporting economic and social development of the areas hit by the war years, so that they could stand on their own feet as soon as possible and again find their place in the world.

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Geoffrey PRIDHAM

Democratizing the Western Balkans: Challenges and Burdens for the European Union

Summary: The European Union faces unprecedented difficulties in its integration of the Western Balkans. In particular, this applies to the requirements for political change by countries in that region wishing to join. In confronting the Western Balkans, the EU's political conditionality has moved significantly beyond its demands made on the post-Communist entrants of 2004 and 2007. But serious questions are now being asked about the EU's capacity for promoting such political change in a region still facing fundamental problems and persistent historical legacies. Brussels is encountering real difficulties in dealing on the one hand with a fragile political will in these countries for instigating meaningful change while on the other being constrained by 'enlargement fatigue' among member states. Both uncertainties – about the prospects for European modernization and about the commitment to further accession – mean that the dynamic behind enlargement to the Western Balkans is not very comparable with the historic drive that impelled the enlargement of 2004 to East-Central Europe. At the same time, rather in conflict with this complicated process are strong and longer-term geopolitical arguments that stabilizing the Western Balkans dictates integrating this region into the European mainstream.

In the past few months, there have emerged some discordant voices concerning the firmness of the EU's demands for political change with respect to the Western Balkan countries which are next in line for future accession. Such

Geoffrey Pridham is Emeritus Professor and Senior Research Fellow at Bristol University, UK.

This article is a shortened and revised version of the keynote address to the conference on Challenges to Balkan Security and the Contribution of International Organizations, held in Izmir, Turkey, in May 2008.

Pridham, G., "Democratizing the Western Balkans: Challenges and Burdens for the European Union", *International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* Vol. XVII, No. 3/2008, pp. 72-89.

criticisms, which did not seriously feature during the enlargement process that ended in 2004 with the entry of countries from East-Central Europe, have appeared against the recent background of conditionality failures on the part of the two Eastern Balkan countries of Romania and Bulgaria that joined the EU in 2007. If true, these criticisms raise questions about the credibility of EU policy which run the risk of undermining its impact. However, Brussels' approach to conditionality matters has to be fairly judged in the light of new trends – emanating from the Western Balkans but also arising from within the EU itself – which have influenced political conditionality since 2004.

For instance, the EU has been accused of a 'lack of strategy' towards Balkan states meaning that it has allowed its enthusiasm for signing agreements on stabilization and association to hinder its demands for substantial domestic reform: "paradoxically, the closer ties between the region and the Union are unlikely to translate into increased outside leverage over domestic reform".¹ In particular, it is claimed that the EU has 'squandered its leverage to promote a truly European Serbia' through backtracking on political conditionality demands towards Belgrade.² In this case, Brussels was seen as opting for 'pre-electoral appeasement' in signing the SAA with Belgrade shortly before the parliamentary elections in Serbian spring 2008 in order to promote the chances of pro-EU forces and as therefore allowing political considerations to prevail over conditionality (notably over 'full cooperation' with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in handing over alleged war criminals).³

These concerns about Brussels keeping to the path of strict conditionality raise the issue of EU leverage over countries wishing to join either through association or eventual membership. Leverage had worked with the 2004 entrants, and to some lesser extent with those of 2007, because there was sufficient commitment and consensus on both the EU side and the candidates' side, with a dynamic that gave momentum and direction to the process as well as prompting a capacity to deliver on both the EU side of fulfilling the promise of membership and on the candidates' side of carrying through change. This undoubted achievement in bringing in so many post-Communist countries into the EU and requiring them to embrace political and economic change – at perhaps a faster pace than they would otherwise have adopted – is however

¹ T. Vogel, "The EU Needs to Show Backbone in the Balkans", *European Voice* (June 5, 2008).

² K. Bassuener, "Yielding to Serb Demands Won't Make the EU Credible", *European Voice* (May 22, 2008).

³ T. Vogel, "Serbia Deal Exposes EU to Accusations of Inconsistency", *European Voice* (May 8, 2008).

not so easily repeated with the Western Balkan countries because the task there of systemic transformation is significantly greater than with East-Central Europe and because new and tougher constraints within the EU on further enlargement complicate the process. They would appear to press for stricter conditionality than before to make sure further entrants conform to the European mainstream; and yet, new negotiating procedures make eventual accession less inevitable than before and, it might be said, could undermine the drive for political change to satisfy Brussels. Cross-cutting with this situation are longer-term geopolitical considerations with the Western Balkans. Regional stability in the Balkans has since the wars of 1991-95 remained a powerful concern of the outside powers and international organisations; and, it features in some policy thinking over integrating countries from the region.

The EU is facing unprecedented tasks of transformation in the Western Balkans.

It is on the EU's role that the following discussion concentrates, looking at its policy of democracy promotion through political conditionality. In doing so, the main attention will be to the Western Balkans – which is now since 2004 the focus of further EU enlargement – with some reference back to the two Eastern Balkan countries that joined in 2007 because they have been more problematic than the East-Central European countries that joined in 2004. The former have demonstrated several of the recognised difficulties facing Western Balkan countries in democratisation such as corruption and organised crime, though not the difficulties surrounding statehood. The main argument in this article is that, on the one hand, the EU's approach to democratisation through political conditionality is an extension and modification of previous enlargement policy and that, on the other hand, the EU is facing unprecedented tasks of transformation in the Western Balkans.

The Challenges and Burdens of Democratization in the Western Balkans

One fairly recent editorial in a newspaper that is widely read within EU policy circles identified the basic reason why political conditionality was running into some intractable problems in the Western Balkans:

“The suspicion is growing that the EU ladder [‘of increasing rewards for improved performance, offering progressive access in return for steady

ascent’] which has proved so effective in enlargements to date may not be the best mechanism for the Balkans. Conditionality is not working as well as expected. Limits to this essentially technocratic mechanism are becoming clear. The process broadly suited the stable states that joined the EU in this decade. For them the main challenge was the consolidation of past achievements... But states which are unstable... cannot necessarily respond in the same way to sticks and carrots. These are unsettled states whose very make-up is still in question... The prospect of EU accession is not a sufficient answer to the problems afflicting post-crisis states like Bosnia and Serbia. It is effective only in concert with a political strategy of rebuilding the foundations of government. Enlargement is most effective once these foundations have been laid”.⁴

Put in another way, the EU was now being called on to embrace first-order regime transition problems rather than second-order problems that tend to be more associated with new regime consolidation. But, in developing conditionality policy from that followed before 2004 albeit with modifications, was the EU sufficiently conscious of this essential difference? The same editorial in fact posed this very question: “It is not yet clear how far EU policy-makers appreciate this difference”.⁵ It is therefore important to look more closely at what this comprises.

Significantly, problems of statehood have been a prominent theme in democratization in the Western Balkans. Indeed, since this has been so in a significant number of cases, there has existed in this region not only a special heavy burden for new democracies but also an uneasy potential for destabilization. Added to this difficulty, there have been severe problems in integrating ethnic minorities as well as the persistence of illiberal political forces and nationalist tendencies. By any comparative account, therefore, the Balkan countries may be collectively described as difficult democracies in terms of their legacy problems imposed on regime change, their actual functioning as political systems, the extraordinary effort required to construct and maintain domestic consensus behind political reform and, of course, the magnitude of socio-economic problems with an obvious potential for political impacts. But this does not have to mean in any absolute way that democratization is impossible in the region; and, it is here that the EU has offered some hope.

⁴ *European Voice* (March 13, 2008).

⁵ *Ibid.*

In recent times, Western Balkan countries have been either moving haltingly towards accession or – in most cases – or they are still in the early stage of an associate relationship with the EU. But uncertainty has remained over whether at least some of these countries in the region are capable of achieving sufficient momentum for systemic change in a positive direction even with EU pressure behind them. The Bertelsmann Transformation Index published a few years ago provided a fairly standardized survey of the countries in the Western Balkans. This made for rather sober reading for enlargement prospects in the region, with only one country (Croatia) having

The persistence of fundamental problems in the Western Balkans was not so surprising given their depth and historical roots; and, it was perhaps unrealistic to expect large-scale improvement in a relatively short period such as set by EU procedures.

so far acquired a positive dynamics where improvements in democratization were connected to increased cooperation with external actors.⁶ Overall, the Western Balkans were then otherwise marked by widespread disaffection with democratic performance where some observers saw a crisis of democracy in the region; while reformist political actors suffered from a weak societal basis making transformation not very sustainable.⁷ Since then, the difficulties of constructing police reform in Bosnia – the precondition for signing a *Stabilization and Association Agreement* with that country – and of moving Serbia along the path of European integration in the face of real difficulties over the Kosovo question

and of handing over the main war criminals of Karadžić and Mladić have continued to illustrate resistance to reformism.

Altogether, the persistence of fundamental problems in the Western Balkans was not so surprising given their depth and historical roots; and, it was perhaps unrealistic to expect large-scale improvement in a relatively short period such as set by EU procedures. All the same, this meant the EU was now faced with an unprecedented challenge in engaging with these countries with the membership perspective now being seriously voiced.

⁶ M. Brusis, "Assessing the State of Democracy, Market Economy and Political Management in Southeastern Europe", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* Vol. 6, No. 1 (2006), p. 67.

⁷ M. Brusis, P. Thiery, "Comparing Political Governance: Southeastern Europe in a Global Perspective", *Southeastern European and Black Sea Studies* Vol. 6, No. 1 (2006).

Were, therefore, some recent signs of Brussels toning down conditionality demands simply a belated recognition that these were not achievable within the limited time span of negotiation deadlines; or, were there other factors at work in the EU's policy towards the region?

The EU and Post-Communist Regime Change

By the time the Western Balkans became the focus of enlargement policy in 2004, the EU had already for a decade developed for enlargement purposes a political conditionality policy that was focused, had an elaborate procedure and had learned to utilize its leverage over candidate countries prior to and during negotiations for membership. Officially, conditionality policy was concerned with the stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, without providing any systemic models; but in the course of time from the mid-1990s it came to expand its agenda of specific concerns.

The Copenhagen Criteria as defined in 1993 covered as themes the stability of democratic institutions, the rule of law and human and minority rights. Since then, the EU has also specified the strengthening of state capacity, the independence of judiciaries, the pursuit of anti-corruption measures and the elaboration of a series of particular human and minority rights. Conditionality policy thus became more demanding and ambitious and hence conceivably more difficult to satisfy. At the same time, a new priority was granted political conditionality as it became locked procedurally into the accession process with democratic standards having to be broadly met before membership negotiations were opened and then rigorously monitored right up to the decision on EU entry. This strict requirement was influenced on the EU's side by anxiety among member states over the future effects of enlargement on its own political capacity and cohesion.⁸ And, at the same time, it enhanced the EU's leverage over candidate countries concerning conditionality matters, with the dynamic of accession driving compliance.

Despite this strengthening of the EU's political conditionality towards post-Communist countries, there were some major factors that qualified its impact and success even before Brussels turned its concentrated attention to the Western Balkans from 2004. Firstly, the outcome over political conditionality by the accession in May 2004 was one of incomplete implementation. This was due partly to the top-down fashion in which political conditionality was

⁸ H. Grabbe *The EU's Transformative Power: Europeanization through Conditionality in Central and Eastern Europe*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 29.

pursued but also the relatively short time span in which Brussels exerted pressures on the CEE countries before 2004. It produced most success with formal responses by candidate countries. Thus, results were evident for example in the creation of new anti-corruption agencies and in introducing new judicial structures in line with the principle of judicial independence. But consolidating such changes through eradicating corruption and furthering a new democracy-compatible culture among the traditional judiciary trained under Communism was much slower in coming. Therefore, it has to be acknowledged that some of the political conditions were intrinsically difficult to implement because they involved deep or widespread behavioral change involving respect for the law that was crucial to achieving democratic consolidation.

Secondly, nevertheless, the matter of political will and competence in carrying through decisions played a crucial part in the success of conditionality within candidate countries. A key factor in achieving progress over conditionality matters was the existence of a sufficiently committed and stable group of both political and bureaucratic reformists in national capitals which in cooperation with Brussels – and playing the EU card effectively – could drive through change.⁹ By and large, they were adequately present in those countries that joined the EU in 2004. Problems arose, however, in the two Eastern Balkan countries that joined in 2007. In Romania, these were particularly encountered with the Social Democrats in office during 2000-2004 and therefore during nearly the whole of the negotiations period. Party interest was obviously behind their resistance to serious change over both fighting corruption and real judicial reform.

Thirdly, one factor of a different kind modified the priority accorded the political conditions during accession and that was geopolitical. It was most in evidence in 1999 when membership negotiations were granted to both Romania and Bulgaria despite serious reservations about their performance on the various conditions up to that time. The reason was that they benefited from goodwill among key influential member states because of their assistance to NATO forces during the Kosovo War earlier that year. And, behind this consideration was the belief that encouragement over integration would help to reinforce the chances for stability in the Balkans a few years after the conflicts of the first half of the 1990s.

Subsequent developments suggested that this decision on geopolitical grounds had seriously underplayed the problems of conditionality in those two

⁹ This point is emphasised in W. Jacoby, "Inspiration, Coalition and Substitution: External Influences on Postcommunist Transformations", *World Politics* (July 2006), pp. 623-651.

countries. While Romania and Bulgaria were not viewed as being in the large group of post-Communist countries that would join in 2004, the final stage of admitting them into the EU was controversial not least as they were regarded as less stable, prosperous and dynamic than the East-Central European and Baltic candidate countries.¹⁰ Given strong doubts about closing negotiations with these two countries, especially on the part of the Commission, a compromise was agreed whereby the negotiations were closed but a form of extended conditionality would be exercised by means of a 'safeguard clause' during the remaining period before the entry of Romania and Bulgaria, with the actual date of that undetermined but with a choice presented between January 2007 and January 2008. Entry could thus be delayed by one year if there were 'serious shortcomings' in meeting certain 'commitments and requirements'. This clause was unprecedented since previously conditionality had been applied up to but never beyond the agreement on the invitation to become a new member state.

Despite some scepticism, the operation of the safeguard clause did serve to speed up reform efforts as national prestige was seen as at stake if entry were delayed.¹¹ In Romania's case, progress was made over judicial reform – which had stalled – primarily because of the reformist commitment of the new justice minister who came into office when a centre-right government replaced the Socialists in power at the end of 2004. New efforts were made over high-level corruption but with rather less success. When after the final monitoring report was issued in September 2006, and the entry date of 2007 was chosen, it was nevertheless decided to continue with applying conditionality to Romania and Bulgaria in the first years of their membership by means of a new program of benchmarks and sanctions (including the freezing of EU funds) in the event of relapses. This was again unprecedented in the history of EU conditionality for no new member state had previously been subjected to such a monitoring regime.¹²

The experience of the 2004 and 2007 enlargements to post-Communist countries demonstrated in the end the limitations of the role and power of Brussels over conditionality matters.

¹⁰ D. Papadimitriou, "The EU's Strategy in the Post-Communist Balkans", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* Vol. 1/3 (September 2001), pp. 72-73.

¹¹ G. Pridham, "The Scope and Limitations of Political Conditionality: Romania's Accession to the European Union", *Comparative European Politics* (December 2007), pp. 360-61.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 361.

Monitoring reports have been issued on these two new member states from the Eastern Balkans. In February 2008, it was concluded on Romania that in the first year of membership continued efforts had been made to “remedy weaknesses that would otherwise prevent an effective application of EU laws, policies and programs” but “in key areas such as the fight against high-level corruption convincing results have not yet been demonstrated”¹³. In fact, shortly after Romania’s entry in January 2007 the reformist Justice Minister – who had been committed about fighting corruption over the previous two years and had alienated many parliamentarians in the process – was ejected from office during a government crisis. This caused sceptical shockwaves in Brussels, confirming opinion, such as in the European Parliament, that Romania – the perennial ‘laggard’ of the enlargement process up till that time – should not have been admitted.

Altogether, therefore, the experience of the 2004 and 2007 enlargements to post-Communist countries demonstrated in the end the limitations of the role and power of Brussels over conditionality matters. To some extent, these related to the fact that conditionality was applied to these countries when they were already beyond the stage of regime transition and therefore when their systemic merits and faults were already becoming settled. That was also essentially true of Romania and Bulgaria since these countries did not have stateness problems. Their difficulty was related to how their systems actually functioned, such as with the EU’s persistent problems and frustrations in dealings with public authorities in Bucharest both in terms of political will but also bureaucratic efficiency.¹⁴

The Commission itself took the view that it was the manner in which conditionality policy was applied that mattered; and, it accordingly made changes when it came to confront the applicants from the Western Balkans. Deficiencies in conditionality’s implementation influenced subsequent policy reappraisals inside the European Commission after the 2004 enlargement in favor of a different approach which was ready to be much less prepared than before to compromise for the sake of meeting enlargement deadlines. However, as we shall see, the Western Balkans presented a challenge far greater than the problems which simply new and tighter procedures could resolve.

¹³ “Interim Report on Progress in Romania under the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism”, European Commission (February 14, 2008), p. 7.

¹⁴ G. Pridham, “The Scope and Limitations of Political Conditionality: Romania’s Accession to the European Union”, *Comparative European Politics* (December 2007), pp. 358-359.

Adapting EU Conditionality to the Western Balkans

The Balkan wars in the first half of the 1990s were a powerful stimulant in forcing the EU, specifically the Commission, to recognize the need for a sustained involvement in the Balkans, having previously been absorbed with East-Central Europe (ECE) insofar as enlargement affairs were concerned¹⁵; but this emerged only gradually. A commitment to consider future membership for the Balkans began to emerge at the Zagreb European Council in 2000 which recognized these countries as ‘potential candidates’, while in 2003 the *Thessaloniki Declaration* made the proclamation that “the future of the Balkans is within the EU”, a phrase that has been repeated on several official occasions since.

After the 2004 enlargement, the EU began to concentrate on the Western Balkans over enlargement policy; and, during this recent period, *Stabilization and Association Agreements* (SAAs) have been negotiated and signed with various countries in the region up to the present time including Croatia, Macedonia and Albania and eventually Montenegro, Bosnia and Serbia. Already, Croatia is as the frontrunner of the Western Balkans likely to join in a few years; while the next decade might optimistically turn out to be the period of SEE Enlargement to encompass the Balkans as a whole, although Turkey’s accession prospects still face uncertainty. As the *Thessaloniki Declaration* of 2003 had stated, the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) would “remain the framework for the European course of the Western Balkan countries, all the way to their future accession” and “the process and the prospects it offers serve as the anchor for reform in the Western Balkans in the same way the accession process has done in Central and Eastern Europe”.¹⁶

There appeared to be some similarity with the 2004 enlargement process a decade and more back in time, when an escalator effect created a dynamic so that association status stimulated the move towards membership negotiations provided of course that the countries in question met Brussels’ rigorous demands. But the internal difference for the EU compared with the mid-1990s in the case of ECE is that there has not emerged a clear and strong consensus among member states over the prospect of Balkan enlargement¹⁷; and, it

¹⁵ D. Papadimitriou, “The EU’s Strategy in the Post-Communist Balkans”, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* Vol. 1/3 (September 2001); M. Turkes, G. Gokgoz, “The European Union’s Strategy towards the Western Balkans: Exclusion or Integration?”, *East European Politics & Societies* Vol. 20, No. 4 (2006).

¹⁶ <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/see/decl.htm>.

¹⁷ M. Turkes, G. Gokgoz, “The European Union’s Strategy towards the Western Balkans: Exclusion or Integration?”, *East European Politics & Societies* Vol. 20, No. 4 (2006), p. 659.

is here that 'enlargement fatigue' is particularly significant. The persistent doubts, especially among some member states, over admitting Romania and Bulgaria only reinforced this problem. At the same time, there were serious difficulties in constructing a domestic consensus in several of the Western Balkan countries especially over certain EU political conditions.

The EU's fundamental objective for the Western Balkans has – echoing the *Schuman Declaration* of May 1950 about making war impossible – been “to create a situation where military conflict is unthinkable – expanding to the region

In effect, conditionality concerns have expanded since the inauguration of the SAP. This involved moving conditionality into engaging with primary systemic problems.

the area of peace, stability, prosperity and freedom established over the last 50 years by gradual European integration”.¹⁸ This ambition explained why the EU adopted new themes of conditionality such as regional cooperation to enhance the security environment, of which political conditions like furthering ethnic and religious reconciliation and fighting organized crime formed an integral part.¹⁹ Furthermore, the EU's political conditionality entered new territory compared with the 2004 and 2007 enlargements.

The SAAs, a variation on the Europe Agreements for the ECE countries in the mid-1990s, originally adopted a form of political conditionality influenced by the latter. Its political conditions included the usual emphasis on democratic principles and a range of specific demands like opposition to ethnic divisions and protection of minority rights as well as fighting organized crime and corruption for strengthening the rule of law – not to mention full cooperation with the ICTY – while there was a provision for political dialogue and mechanisms for this. But, in effect, conditionality concerns have expanded since the inauguration of the SAP. This involved moving conditionality into engaging with primary systemic problems.

Firstly, the EU was in devising a strategic approach to the Western Balkans compelled to embrace also basic problems of stateness. For some years now, it has insisted on police reform in Bosnia-Herzegovina as an indicator of

¹⁸ <http://www.euractiv.com/en/enlargement/eu-western-balkans-relations/article-129607>, dated September 21, 2004.

¹⁹ G. Pridham, “Change and Continuity in the European Union's Political Conditionality: Aims, Approach and Priorities”, *Democratization* (June 2007), pp. 458-59.

state reorganization and as a necessary condition before concluding that country's *Stabilization and Association Agreement*. And, on a grander scale, the EU has been a central actor in dealing with relations between Montenegro and Serbia during 2003-2006 and of course with the problem of the status of Kosovo. The latter may be described as a high-political issue that has been interlinked with prospects for Serbia's own SAA. The significance of these stateness questions for the EU's political conditionality was that previously Brussels had assumed the existence and stability of the state as a given.

Secondly, it confronted sensitive and politically charged issues relating to the past like the insistence on 'full cooperation' with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague over handing over alleged war criminals. This was regarded in EU circles as a symbolic as to the willingness of prospective candidate countries to move on in time and embrace a European future, and in particular as being relevant to respect for the rule of law.²⁰ In doing so, the EU relied regularly on the activity and advice of the ICTY over its conditionality here although in the SAA negotiations with Serbia Brussels eventually softened its promise to the ICTY that these would not begin until the war criminals Mladić and Karadžić were delivered to The Hague.²¹

At the same time, a more strict approach was adopted by the Commission following the 2004 enlargement with the intention of preventing or reducing conditionality failures in the future. Various new mechanisms were introduced to improve implementation by making progress with accession more tightly and procedurally geared to conditionality results. There was a new element of immediacy for they allowed for conditionality problems to reach the agenda of the EU more readily, making it easier procedurally to suspend negotiations. These measures included: applying benchmarks for provisionally closing and also opening negotiation chapters (thus allowing each member state 'veto points'), the introduction of safeguard clauses to extend monitoring and a more routine procedure for suspending negotiations. These provisions

The domestic environment for EU-committed leaders in the Balkans is decidedly more difficult than was the case with their predecessors in the 2004 enlargement process.

²⁰ Author interview with Reinhard Priebe, Head of Western Balkans Directorate, DTG Enlargement, European Commission, in Brussels, October 2005.

²¹ *The Observer* (December 2, 2007).

were written into the negotiating frameworks for Croatia and Turkey which commenced their membership talks in autumn 2005. And, they are likely to be repeated in any future negotiating frameworks over membership such as for countries from the Western Balkans. Already, the insistence on pre-conditions for opening or signing SAA negotiations has been evident such as with police reform in Bosnia and surrendering Mladić in the case of Serbia; but both issues have revealed difficulties of implementation which relate not merely to bureaucratic inefficiency or party-political interest but also wider problems of domestic consensus linked to nationalism.

It has become clear that this stricter approach to political conditionality will not work if governments in the Western Balkans simply lacked both the will and the capacity to carry through Brussels' requirements. The issue here involves some basic problems, as noted by the European Commission in its March 2008 report on the Western Balkans:

"Public opinion in the Western Balkans is largely favourable to EU integration. All governments have committed themselves to this objective and are implementing reforms. However, societies remain divided on a number of key issues related to the co-existence and integration of different communities and, in some cases, constitutional reform. Further efforts are needed to achieve consensus on such issues, to avoid harmful displays of nationalism, and to press on with the necessary political and economic reforms."²²

In short, the domestic environment for EU-committed leaders in the Balkans is decidedly more difficult than was the case with their predecessors in the 2004 enlargement process. Indeed, this problem has been noted in past years with the inability of reformists to gather sufficient and firm support for EU purposes, as in the Bertelsmann Transition Index on the Western Balkans.²³ It has at times been highlighted by the new conditionality issue of handing over alleged war criminals who, like Ante Gotovina in Croatia and Ratko Mladić in Serbia, have enjoyed a measurable degree of support as national heroes in patriotic circles in these countries. But there is also a problem of conflicts among the political class over major priorities, as notably shown

²² "Western Balkans: Enhancing the European Perspective", European Commission. Communication to the European Parliament and the Council, Brussels (March 5, 2008), p. 2.

²³ See references 6 and 7 above; also, D. Papadimitriou, "The EU's Strategy in the Post-Communist Balkans", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* Vol. 1/3 (September 2001), p. 83.

in Serbia this year where the question of losing Kosovo – which declared its independence in February 2008 – has a powerful symbolic meaning and has weighed in the balance of political considerations in Belgrade over the country's European course.

Serbia has been a particularly complicated case for the EU in urging to meet conditionality targets. SAA talks with Belgrade were interrupted in 2006 because of the failure to cooperate 'fully' with the ICTY but differences among member states over the strictness of this requirement as well as the shadow of Kosovo over that country's politics made this difficult to impose. There followed backtracking over the timing of surrendering Mladić in relation to the stage of negotiations combined with some obfuscation over the exact meaning of 'full cooperation'; and tensions arose accordingly between the ICTY and the European Commission.²⁴ The parliamentary elections in Serbia in spring 2008 demonstrated well the closeness between the factor of EU pressure and domestic politics because relations with the EU were a central issue of strategic choice in the campaign (as it had also been in the presidential election a few months before).²⁵ The EU's signing of the SAA just before the election to promote the chances of the pro-EU forces caused bitter controversy in Serbia with the nationalist Prime Minister Koštunica branding this move as 'unconstitutional'.²⁶ However, the new pro-EU government which emerged justified the calculations of Brussels by acting over the arrest of Karadžić in July 2008.

The process of reaching an agreement with Bosnia on its SAA proved very labored as successive attempts at police reform since 2004 under pressure from the international community ran aground, especially in the face of resistance from the Bosnian Serbs to allow a significant measure of centralization. While the police system in the Croat-Bosniac Federation was divided between ten cantons, that in the Bosnian Serb Republic was unified.²⁷ Eventually, an agreement was reached on a diluted version of the police reform and the SAA was initiated in December 2007; but questions remained about how far this reform would be effective as the EU had wearily compromised for the sake of finalizing the agreement.²⁸

Rather different from such attention to conditionality details and the on-the-ground realities of Balkan domestic politics are the powerful geopolitical

²⁴ *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (October 25, 2007).

²⁵ T. Judah, "How Many Points for Europe?", *The World Today* (May 2008), pp. 28-29.

²⁶ *The Independent* (April 30, 2008).

²⁷ *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (September 1, 2007).

²⁸ *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (December 12, 2007).

arguments that circulate in the Brussels corridors of power in reference to the Western Balkans. In late 2005, *The Economist* reflected these by saying that opening to these countries was compelling because the alternative would be more costly in the long run: "Despite resistance in some quarters, EU policy-makers seem to have decided that it is better to have these countries inside the club rather than causing trouble outside...Unless they [the Western Balkan countries] have a genuine prospect of membership, that could have serious consequences. With some 22 million people penned inside a kind of poor Balkan reservation, inter-ethnic conflict, smuggling and organized crime would be certain to flourish. Compared with the cost of all that, EU membership might look quite cheap."²⁹

Geopolitical arguments that emphasized the superior consideration of Balkan stability pressed for urgent attention to the Balkans' integration future. The seriousness of this matter was underlined by the International Commission on the Balkans in 2005 which observed "a growing trend of public pessimism and dissatisfaction with the direction of political and economic developments" in the Western Balkans which was dangerous.³⁰ Such arguments became deployed more regularly in criticizing the EU's slow and in the eyes of some lethargic approach. But outside intervention of this kind may create its own problems for regime change such as in producing a reaction to this or a dependency factor or even a vicious circle situation by provoking nationalist feeling. Moreover, this longer-term consideration of Balkan stability does not fit so comfortably with the European Commission's rather cautious and methodical approach to conditionality matters. It is a consideration more likely to be found among member states but then these have been quite divided when it comes to dealing with individual countries from the Western Balkans. And, meanwhile, 'enlargement fatigue' continues to dampen rhetoric about encouraging the expectations of countries in that region.

The EU and Political Transformation of the Balkans: Responses and Problems of Implementation

From the above discussion, it is clear there are unprecedented circumstances surrounding the integration process as regards the Western Balkans. Not only are the conditionality demands greater and in some cases more onerous than those before 2004, but also the political and institutional capacity of Western Balkan countries to meet them is weaker compared with the then candidate

²⁹ *The Economist* (November 5, 2005).

countries. Nevertheless, in the past couple of years, some movement out of this vicious circle situation in that region has begun albeit slowly; but – it would seem – there is still a long way to go before the integration of these countries has a significant impact on their domestic systems.

It may be concluded that the conditions favoring EU leverage are much less present in these countries compared with those that entered the EU in 2004 and even 2007. As a consequence, the outcome of the present integration process in that region remains uncertain and rather open, with unsettling prospects for political conditionality. For, despite official statements about the Balkans' future as lying within the EU, there is a combination of circumstances that could dictate why this may not easily happen. This combination of circumstances is as follows, drawing on the discussion above.

Firstly, the motivation to join the EU is certainly present among political elites in the Western Balkan countries. Indeed, expectations to join the EU have remained high and impatient which does not fit with the new more labored and bureaucratically more constrained accession process. However, this elite commitment to join is compromised by the incidence of nationalism which is far greater than in ECE although it is cross-nationally variable. It is especially pronounced in its impact on EU relations in Serbia and Bosnia. In its 2006 report on Serbia, for instance, the Commission warned that country that it should focus on the 'European future' rather than on 'the nationalist past'.³¹

Secondly, the burden of political (and also economic) change is much greater than before, above all because there remain and persist various primary questions relating to regime transition. The EU has in the Western Balkans been compelled to be more interventionist and thereby more ambitious in its democracy promotion if only because not doing so could lead to worse problems – as encapsulated in Commissioner Patten's apt remark that "either Europe exports stability to the Balkans or the Balkans export instability to the rest of Europe". But this has at the same time increased the risks of failure.

For, despite official statements about the Balkans' future as lying within the EU, there is a combination of circumstances that could dictate why this may not easily happen.

³⁰ International Commission on the Balkans, *The Balkans in Europe's Future*. (Sofia: Centre for Liberal Strategies, 2005), p. 11.

³¹ *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (November 9, 2006).

Thirdly, there is missing the kind of driving dynamic that characterized the 2004 enlargement process and was marked by a sense of historical opportunity over re-uniting Europe. The understood trade-off between the promise of EU membership and the satisfaction of conditionality and other accession requirements – which was present in the 2004 and 2007 enlargements (and only temporarily called in doubt during enlargement setbacks or moments of loss of confidence by one candidate country or other) – is far less clear. While it is understandable that the Commission should introduce tighter procedures, the risk involved in this weaker credibility is to undermine the will to reform. It has a special effect since in the past reform-committed leaders in candidate countries had been able to use a European leverage over recalcitrant domestic actors with the argument that they were threatening their countries' chances of joining the EU; but now this is less persuasive.

In other words, there is some danger of pre-accession limbo which, if it persists, could weaken the prospects of success in the Western Balkans' integration process. What happens now that Western Balkan countries have (almost) achieved SAA status is unclear, for moving towards membership talks is no longer so inevitable as before and further and tighter conditionality demands will be made. This problem is seen, for instance, in the case of Macedonia which as a 'candidate country' has been considered the next frontrunner after Croatia from this region. Latest developments, including electoral violence in Albanian-speaking areas and the agonizing and emotive issue of the country's very name, have called into question the opening of membership talks with Skopje.³²

Fourthly, to accompany problems of consensus within the EU over a full-scale Balkan enlargement, there are serious difficulties of achieving a viable consensus within the Balkan countries. The latter is a vital factor because it provides a reliable guarantee that governmental responses to EU requirements will be underpinned domestically. One worrying possible scenario is that these two patterns might interact negatively as when EU enlargement doubts or even tough demands weaken domestic consensus. Given the atmosphere of 'enlargement fatigue' within the EU, this suggested a potential gap emerging between defective response in the country in question and accession commitment in Brussels that could widen.

Altogether, therefore, the Western Balkans represent the most difficult set of prospective accession countries so far encountered by the EU. The EU has notwithstanding 'enlargement fatigue' found itself drawn into this process

³² D. Leonard, "Will Macedonia Come Back on Track?", *European Voice* (June 12, 2008).

for similar reasons as with earlier post-Communist accession countries; but it has hardly developed adequate instruments to deal with this more challenging task. Accordingly, there is a strong likelihood of major mishaps along the way and even the occasional accession disaster should the combination of four circumstances, discussed above, acquire an unstoppable negative dynamic.

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Česká zahraniční politika v roce 2007. Analýza ÚMV. (Czech Foreign Policy in 2007. An IIR Analysis.)

By Michal Kořan et al. Prague: Institute of International Relations 2008.

After the publication of the comprehensive volume *Zahraníční politika České republiky 1993 – 2004. Úspěchy, problémy a perspektivy (Foreign Policy of the Czech Republic 1993-2004. Successes, Problems and Perspectives.* (Prague: IIR 2004)), which analyses the development of the foreign policy of the Czech Republic (CR) during the first ten years of its existence as an independent state, the Prague based Institute of International Relations (IIR) decided to publish a yearbook, that would systematically monitor the most important events and trends in the international position of the CR. The reviewed publication is the first one from the forthcoming series. If a similar publication will emerge also next year, then the CR will follow suit of its Visegrad neighbors, Poland and Slovakia, which already have a long tradition of publishing yearbooks of foreign policy.

With its length (over 400 pages) the Czech yearbook goes beyond the usual publications of this kind. It consists of 21 chapters that could, due to their extent and depth of analysis of the researched subject, be published as separate studies. Also with regard to the fact, that this is the first yearbook of Czech foreign policy, the content of

the contributions is not limited merely to the year 2007, but they often reach into periods that preceded it.

It is important to emphasize that almost all authors (with the exception of two) work at the IIR, which is also evidence of the fact that the Czech Republic and its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that established the institute, have at their disposal a really fully-fledged expert, analytical and publishing institution, that can create an appropriate background for the adoption of fundamental decisions in foreign policy. Except for the expert qualifications of the authors, it is important to appreciate also the work of the editor Michal Kořan, who managed to avoid duplicity of the partial themes (as for example the *Lisbon Treaty* or the question of building of anti-missile defense base of the USA) and thus the publication is easy to work with.

In spite of the fact that the institute that published the book was established by the Czech MFA, the yearbook does not avoid themes related to domestic political discourse and to criticism of concrete steps resp. aspects of the policy of the state institutions. At the same time it maintains a balanced approach also in analysis of those issues of the foreign policy that polarize the Czech

Republic. It thus recognizes the fact that the difference in opinions is an irreplaceable trait not only of expert but also of democratic discourse. The reader will definitely appreciate the relatively high level of cooperation between the institute and the representatives of the decision-making sphere, since the authors of the contributions have obvious access to detailed information about the functioning of Czech diplomacy and are updated about its steps. This is an evidence of the fact that the people working at the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic are not reluctant to communicate with the experts and supply them with information.

The contributions to the volume really offer detailed analyses. Besides the political agenda of bilateral or multilateral relations, i.e. the classical agenda of international relations, the authors pay extensive attention also to the state and non-state players, as well as to specific non-political agendas of mutual relations, for example the cultural dimension and the place of the analyzed subject matter in the political and media discourse of the CR. This structure of chapters that the authors follow at the same time leaves sufficient room for their flexible approach, taking into account specific aspects of the given topic, e.g. historical (or, as the authors write, 'past-related') aspects of the Czech-Austrian or the Czech-German relations.

The yearbook begins with two studies that deal extensively with the

domestic aspects of the foreign policy. The first one, authored by Michal Kořan, focuses on the institutional framework and the role of individual actors. In the second one, the author Mats Braun analyses the political, media and social context of the foreign policy of the CR (p. 45-57), while primarily focusing on the issue of the US anti-missile defense base and the adoption of the *Lisbon Treaty*.

M. Kořan in his analysis points out the absence of a conceptual document that would define medium term and long term priorities of the foreign policy of the Czech Republic and thus would replace the already outdated *Concept of Foreign Policy of the Czech Republic for 2003-2006 Period*. The absence is, besides all else, a consequence of the change of government in the CR after the 2006 parliamentary elections. At the same time he discusses to what extent in fact the Czech Republic needs such a strategic document. Foreign policy is, in the Czech Republic, a subject of lively debate and this is evident also in the fact that until now the CR has not adopted the Concept of the Czech Republic in the EU even though this was debated already in 2004 and the strategy was expected to cover the period until 2013, which is the end of the current financial perspective of the EU. The conceptual definition of priorities is therefore in the CR a similarly problematic topic as in the SR. Although the latter adopted in 2004 a *Medium-Term Foreign Policy Strategy of the Slovak Republic until 2015*,

the document is more of a reflection of the current problems than thinking in the medium term.

Similarly to the Slovak case, in Czech foreign policy one can observe a decrease of the coordination role of the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs, although in the CR this is more obvious, with regard to establishment of the office of Vice-Prime Minister for European Affairs, who however, in contrast to his Slovak partner, speaks out more actively not only on the 'technical' but on the political aspects of European integration and the role of the CR in the EU as well. Various activities that in the past used to be the domain of the foreign policy are being transferred also to other ministries, a trend indirectly criticized by Kořan in the part dealing with the Visegrad Cooperation. On the other hand this is in fact a process accompanying the integration into the EU format and it even represents directly its purpose and essence. Kořan as well analyses the differences in the approach of the parties of the governing coalition to the foreign policy. He distinguishes here two basic tendencies – the realistic one, represented by the strongest coalition party, the Civic Democracy Party (Občanská demokratická strana, ODS) and the altruistic-idealistic, proponent of which is mainly the Green Party (Strana Zelených), (p. 15). On the other hand, even despite a certain decrease of the coordinating role of the MFA CR in the foreign policy of the Czech Republic, the executive branch

of power still plays a dominant role. This is different in Slovakia where, for example, in the issue of the future status of Kosovo, the parliament was more actively involved in the foreign policy agenda.

A different interpretation of the Czech discussion on foreign policy is offered by Petr Drulák in the concluding chapter titled *The Czech Foreign Policy between Internationalism and Atlanticism*. Contrary to Kořan, who focused exactly on the aspects that are a sign of dispute and discontinuity, Drulák points out the high level of continuity in the foreign policy of the Czech Republic even despite the strengthening of the elements of Atlanticism after the 2006 elections. Drulák's approach is different also in the typology of conceptual approaches to foreign policy issues among the Czech political parties. While the ODS represents the Atlanticist line, the opposition Czech Social-Democratic Party (ČSSD) and the governing Christian-Democratic Union – Czech Peoples' Party (KDU-ČSL) prefer the continental approach. The governing Green party subscribes to internationalist approaches while the opposition Communist party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM) prefers an autonomist approach.

Despite such a polarized foreign policy discourse, Drulák points to the fact that political parties express different positions especially when they are in opposition. During the time they are in government, their positions are less accentuated (p. 396). This however

cannot overshadow the fact that after 2006, the conflict line in Czech policy does not lie only in the relation to the EU but also in the question of support of US foreign policy, i.e. the Czech political discourse has become significantly polarized as opposed to the past.

The third part of the reviewed publication deals with the integration related aspects of the Czech foreign policy i.e. its European and security dimension. In the remaining parts the authors deal with the regional dimension of the foreign policy, part of which are also the relations with the SR, and with the bilateral relations of the CR with the individual countries of the region.

As opposed to the Slovak approach, in the Czech Republic it is not only the bilateral relations between the CR and Austria that are considered to be a part of the Central European dimension of the foreign policy, but the relations with Germany are also. The readers from Slovakia will certainly find the part dedicated to relations with Slovakia to be the most interesting. Contrary to the stereotypical image of trouble-free Czech-Slovak relations, suggested by the politicians and the majority of the media, the Czech experts speak more openly also about the problems in bilateral relations, for example in case of the reluctant position of the Czech Defense Ministry to the building of a common battle group with Slovakia in the frame of the EU's Rapid Response Force, advocate of which has been mainly the Czech MFA (p. 103).

Slovakia is perceived as a part of the V4. Although the author M. Kořan states, that the nature of the bilateral Czech-Slovak relations is above the standard (p. 134), he in fact merely reproduces a cliché instead of trying to analyze more in detail where exactly this above the standard nature lies. It is puzzling, for in the next part of the text he dedicates a great deal of attention exactly to those issues, where the approaches of the CR and Slovakia differ, such as the position on the ratification of the *Lisbon Treaty*, the issue of Kosovo independence, different opinions on building relations with Russia and the anti-missile defense bases in Central Europe. At the same time Kořan hints that these differences in opinions could have deeper implications and in the case of Slovakia it is exactly the 'Russian factor' that can have the most significant consequences for practical cooperation in Central Europe (p. 137). Regarding relations with Poland, the author claims that a certain rapprochement in opinions has taken place.

In contrast to the president Klaus, who after inauguration to the office of president in 2003 tried to marginalize Hungary in the Central European agenda of the Czech foreign policy, the strategy of foreign policy adopted in 2003 (and still valid) characterizes Hungary as a "partner from the nearest Central European region". With regard to the 2002 dispute between the CR and Hungary about the validity of the so called Beneš Decrees, opened by

then Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orbán, one can however polemicize with Kořan's claim that "in contrast to Slovakia, the relations of the CR and Hungary are practically not at all burdened by the past" (p. 146), since from time to time this controversial agenda resurges in Hungarian foreign policy.

In separate chapters, the authors then deal with relations with Germany and other important states – the USA, the UK, France and Russia. Vladimír Handl, the author of the chapter on Germany states, that only 3% of the surveyed citizens of the CR consider this country to be a threat (p. 171), something that does not correspond to activities, for example, KSČM or in certain cases the Czech President V. Klaus.

Surprising conclusions can be found in the analyses by Petr Kratochvíl of the relations with Russia and the states of the Eastern dimension of the European neighborhood policy, when the author points out the absence of a conceptual approach. He is of the opinion that the policy of the CR towards Eastern Europe is "too much Russia oriented" (p. 220), something that the external observers and analysts of Czech policy in the region, including the policy of pursuing the human rights agenda, can be perceived differently.

The next two chapters focus on bilateral relations of the CR with other regions, for example with the Middle East and the Mediterranean. This otherwise well researched and written

chapter containing also valuable recommendations has also a non-organic part – Afghanistan, which is usually analyzed as part of chapters on the region of Central Asia. The yearbook maps also the Czech policy in the region of sub-Saharan Africa and the Far East. On the other hand, some very important regions are not included, such as India, Australia, the Pacific and Southeastern Asia, which are important primarily from the economic perspective and in the case of India also a security dimension plays an important role.

The book also lacks analysis of the Czech policy in the region of Latin America, which is a relevant partner not only from the economic perspective but in the context of cooperation of Russia and Venezuela and the emergence of regimes that dispute the dominant position of the US in the region, this continent becomes a perspective space of global competition.

Another weaker point is chapter 16, dealing with the multilateral agenda of Czech foreign policy. Its author Veronika Bílková is practically focusing only on the UN and the Council of Europe, though it would have been interesting to know more about the activities of the CR in the OSCE and OECD.

The last, and seventh part of the publication, analyzes thematic aspects of Czech foreign policy, specifically the economic and cultural diplomacy, but also the issues related to human rights and development assistance.

With regard to contemporary global challenges the yearbook however lacks, for example, analysis of issues related to environmental security but also a separate chapter on the energy security. While for example Petr Kratochvíl criticizes the insufficient attention of the Czech media to this issue (p. 228), the same is true for the reviewed publication, in which the topic of energy security is discussed merely in a few paragraphs within the chapter on the security agenda.

Even though the publication draws merely on the Czech experience, various ideas it contains could be as well an inspiration for the SR and for the Slovak domestic discourse. One of such parts is the one dealing with security, in which the author, Vít Střítecký, points to the role of the state energy enterprises in securing the interests of the state and its energy security (p. 107). An inspiration for Slovakia can also be the functioning of such a structure of economic diplomacy, as is the Czech Trade, although the Czech Republic struggles with analogical, so far unresolved problems of the coordination of political and economic diplomacy and persisting disputes between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the CR and the Ministry of Economy and Trade of the CR, regarding who should be in charge of specific agendas. Since Slovakia prioritized the economic dimension of diplomacy, it could be interested in learning about the activities of the Czech entrepreneurs in the states of the former USSR,

not only in the 'traditional' partner countries, such as Russia, Ukraine and partly perhaps Belarus, but also in the countries of the Southern Caucasus, mainly in Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Filip Tesař, the author of the chapter on the Balkans, highlights the potential of the cooperation between the Czech and the Slovak republics in this region (p. 265). Tesař as well hints, that the CR, with regard to its good position in Serbia and at the same time among the Kosovar Albanians, could take up the position of a mediator between the two. Here it could, in relation to Serbia, take advantage of assistance of Slovakia, which refused to recognize Kosovo's independence. An opportunity for the Slovak-Czech cooperation exists for example also in coordination of the European neighborhood policy, mainly in the current stage of the constitution of the Eastern partnership, with the bilateral policy of the individual EU member states towards the Eastern neighbors of the Union.

Slovakia can be inspired also by the functioning of the 'human rights dimension' of Czech foreign policy that was defined as one of its most important priorities. As opposed to other states of the Visegrad Group, this dimension has gained a special status also from the institutional angle, since as a part of security-multilateral section a separate department of human rights and transformation policy was established, and thus the agenda is not implemented within the frame of development assistance. By

this the human rights agenda is on one hand strengthened, and on the other, it is not sufficiently connected to a territorial bilateral agenda, although in the case of countries like Belarus, Cuba or Burma this can even be of benefit.

The editor and the authors have established high standards for further volumes of similar publications. After a good start they will however have to avoid something that often happens with publications of this kind i.e.

sliding into cliché and repetition of already known facts and claims. The quality of work carried out on most of the contributions in the reviewed publication and the record of the IIR as a whole show, that this demanding task should be mastered without bigger problems.

Juraj Marušiak
Institute of Political Studies,
Slovak Academy of Sciences

The New Paradigm for Financial Markets: The Credit Crisis of 2008 and What It Means

By George Soros. New York: PublicAffairs, 2008.

There is no doubt that the global financial markets experienced the most turbulent weeks in the last decades. Investment banks with more than 100 years of history went bankrupt, central banks and governments continue to pump billions of US dollars and euros into the market in order to avoid massive panic and global financial meltdown. The burst of the US housing bubble last summer marked the start of the most severe global financial crisis since the Great Depression and we certainly haven't seen the worst of it yet.

Every bubble and crisis leads us eventually to the same questions: How did we fail to realize the growing signs of the problems? What will the future bring? What should we do in order to avoid the worst? Of course, there is never a lack of experts trying to explain the state of affairs and to give (more or less) useful forecast and tips. *The New Paradigm for Financial Markets* is one of the books published in the wake of the mortgage meltdown and its author is George Soros – successful speculator, philanthropist and well-known critic of free markets.

George Soros is one of the most successful financial speculators and hedge fund managers of the last decades, so it is certainly interesting

to hear his ideas about the latest crisis in the global financial markets. Unfortunately, Soros uses the pages of his book to promote the economic paradigm he invented based on the thoughts of Karl Popper. The core idea of the book is that the current paradigm of the financial markets is flawed (mainly the theory of market equilibrium) and only the new paradigm invented by Soros is able to analyze the events of the current months.

The main ideas of the new paradigm are by no means new, they were discussed in the previous books of George Soros. The theory of reflexivity is discussed in three chapters of the books, and these are regrettably the most tiresome parts of the book. The concepts and ideas presented in this chapter are often hard to understand and some paragraphs require repeated reading. Fortunately, even the author realizes his shortcomings and endorses the readers to skip this part of the book if they are interested only in the financial markets. The main idea of reflexivity is repeated over and over in the books, so the second part of the book is readable and enjoyable without the dubious philosophy of George Soros.

The latter part of the book is luckily more engrossing even though

the ideas presented by the author are controversial. According to Soros the current financial meltdown is caused by a long term super-bubble which has finally reached its crossing point. This bubble is long time in the making and is created by the excessive reliance on the market mechanism. There is too much *laissez-faire* attitude on the global markets and this led to the emergence of three harmful trends – credit expansion, globalization and liberalization. The roots of the current problems can be traced back to the 1980s when ‘market fundamentalism’ prevailed led by the policies of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. As Soros is a well-known critic of global capitalism (see his previous book *The Crisis of Global Capitalism: Open Society Endangered*) his interpretation of the recent events is certainly not surprising. According to Soros the global financial markets (and the whole global capitalism) need more regulation on the US and on the global level. Free markets are fallible, so state intervention is the only solution. As George Soros is an eminent supporter of the Democratic Party, it is not surprising that he views the current US administration as incompetent and the solution of the current financial mess could come only from a future administration led by a Democratic president.

Furthermore, George Soros states that the current governing paradigm of the financial markets – that the financial market heads inevitably towards equilibrium – is flawed. That

means all the tools and theories used by the participants of the markets are flawed and thus nobody is able to see it clearly. As Soros says the market is operating under a boom-bust cycle and therefore all the accepted equilibrium models are defunct. The only model able to analyze the current state of the financial markets is the theory of reflexivity created by Soros himself. According to this theory the participants of the market act on the basis of imperfect understanding and their decisions are based on incomplete, biased and misconceived interpretations of reality. That is why the markets tend to move away from equilibrium and create bubbles that often lead to financial crises. Therefore the current paradigm has to be abandoned and the theory of reflexivity has to be accepted as the new paradigm for the financial markets. Sadly, even Soros himself acknowledges that the new paradigm in its current state has serious limitations – it cannot offer generalizations based on empirical data and it is not able predict the future. I believe, these restrictions will greatly limit the acceptance of the new paradigm and it will not enter the mainstream economic paradigm in the foreseeable future.

In chapter 7 George Soros puts his new paradigm to the test and tries to predict the future of the financial markets for 2008. The most intriguing part of the chapter is a real-time financial experiment in which Soros uses his own predictions to

make investment decisions on the global financial markets. The readers can follow the turns of the markets and the positions taken by Soros. Unfortunately, this experiment is very short term (first three months of 2008) as Soros needed to submit the manuscript to the publisher. It is hard to draw relevant conclusions on three months and the new paradigm will need more serious empirical testing in the future. Nevertheless, the first three months were mixed for Soros as he failed to capitalize on his assumptions based on the theory of reflexivity.

The last chapter of the book is devoted to policy recommendations. It is certainly not shocking that Soros feels the markets need more control and supervision, as he was calling for more regulation of global financial markets for the better part of the last decade. Soros feels that the government has to play an active role in ‘cleaning up the mess’ made by the burst of the housing bubble. On one hand, the government has to set up a financial fund to help to refinance the subprime borrowers,

and on the other the government has to introduce serious reforms into the housing market. But again, Soros has no faith in the Bush administration as its market fundamentalist ideology is standing in the way of sound economic policies.

George Soros successfully survived several decades on the global financial markets and his skills shine through the pages also of his latest book. Unfortunately, he is vastly superior as market player than philosopher, so the strongest chapters of the book are those depicting the historical changes of the financial markets. Even though his style is sometimes tedious and he tends to repeat himself occasionally, the book offers a valuable insight into the current conditions of the global financial markets and into Soros’s head – one of the most successful market players in the last decades.

Tomáš Dudáš
Faculty of International Relations
University of Economics, Bratislava

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International Issues & Slovak
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Hviezdoslavovo nám. 14
811 02 Bratislava 1
Slovak Republic
Tel: +421 2 5443 31 57
Fax: +421 2 5443 31 61
E-mail: brezani@sfpa.sk
strazay@sfpa.sk