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## **WESTERN BALKANS AND NATO: FALSE PROMISE OF THE LONG-TERM REGIONAL SECURITY**

### **ABSTRACT**

The author describes Western Balkans as a region of deficient security, with several “frozen conflicts” and many unresolved political issues among its countries and within them. Given their position within the Western sphere of interest, countries in this region have a narrow range of options in reaching and maintaining their security. However, it does not necessarily mean they are obliged to become members of the Western military alliance (NATO). The author offers an explanation why NATO membership, intended or already achieved by some of the Western Balkans countries, does not ensure their long-term security, in the light of the ongoing Russian-American security dialogue, as well as the contemporary turmoil in Greater Middle East and shifts in global power relations.

*Key words:* Western Balkans, NATO, regional security, conflict, great powers.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The end of Cold War in Europe brought an eastward expansion to the “zone of peace and prosperity”, once established among economically advanced Western European countries, and now also encompassing parts of Central and

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Eastern Europe which had previously been a component of the Soviet-led socialist bloc. However, a relatively small region in Southeastern Europe remained outside of this zone, as a consequence of ethnic conflicts and uneven outcomes of economic transition. This region is politically referred to as Western Balkans, a term coined for the new countries that emerged in post-Yugoslav space, minus Slovenia, plus Albania. These countries are lagging behind their ex-socialist neighbors in European integration, which is also the case in terms of security. Western Balkans today is perceived as a region of deficient security, with several “frozen conflicts” and many inadequately or incompletely resolved political issues among its countries and within them. What kept the region relatively stable during the last decade is not capability or willingness of the local political elites to find mutually acceptable solutions to these issues, but the interference of a powerful third party – countries of the West represented by the EU and NATO, who made the region its own sphere of interest during the last two decades. Therefore, security and stability in Western Balkans are not self-sustainable; they require joint work of local elites and relevant foreign actors, especially the West. However, is the solution for the long-term regional security that Western politicians and analysts prefer – eventual membership of all Western Balkans countries in NATO, which also means their acquiescence to the exclusively Western-defined solutions of the local security problems – an adequate choice for the countries in the region? In this paper, we offer a stance against this option. Our argument that NATO membership can bring only a short-term, but not a long-term security is based on two premises. One is that “frozen conflicts” in the region have a potential of turning into hot ones; the potential which cannot be suppressed, but only further inflamed by enforcing inadequate political solutions to the conflicts through NATO. Another is that NATO’s eastward expansion undermines global security in the long run, because it alienates Russia and restrains its dialogue with the West about equal security for all in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space; the integration of Western Balkans into NATO would not be an exception. Before we proceed with further explanation of these premises, we must “scan” the current security situation in Western Balkans, and its level of integration into the existing European security architecture.

At the moment, there are 6 independent and internationally recognized countries in this region: Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, and Macedonia. Kosovo is still only partially recognized. As we mentioned, there are several “frozen conflicts” throughout the countries of the region. Kosovo is just one case – a partially recognized state, actually a protectorate of the West. Independence of Kosovo is objected by its former sovereign, Serbia, who claims that it has been illegally proclaimed in 2008 as a result of NATO aggression in 1999; majority of the countries in the world, including several great powers, also reject recognition of Kosovo independence.

Its territorial integrity is disputed, too; it is undermined by the lack of authority in Northern Kosovo, where defiant Serbian majority lives. Bosnia and Herzegovina is another example – a state that cannot count on unconditional loyalty of about half of its citizens – namely Serbs and Croats, both of whom seek greater autonomy, or even independence (Republic of Srpska case). The current constitutional framework in BiH is a result of a Dayton agreement (1995), which ended bloody war, and was supported by NATO and the EU; removal of the international protectorate could leave local actors in position to pursue their own aims and revive their enmity. Macedonia is a third case; a country whose internal stability relies on Ohrid agreement (2001), which gave greater autonomy to ethnic Albanians. However, it remains uncertain whether this ethnic group will limit itself to autonomy requests, or will seek full independence once it becomes powerful enough, both demographically and politically. There are also a few other spots in which potentially dangerous security situations can emerge, but we do not include them into “frozen conflicts”, because these are not cases of previously open violence that is “frozen” now. However, issues in those spots are also important for potential consequences of integration of Western Balkans into NATO, and will be discussed in the next chapter.

Another aspect we are addressing in this introduction is the level of Western Balkans countries integration into the current European security architecture. All of these countries (excluding Kosovo, of course) are members of the OSCE, an organization that is proclaimed (but not implemented) to be a rooftop security agency spanning area “from Vancouver to Vladivostok”. OSCE also performs its field operations in all of them, including Kosovo. All the countries (again without Kosovo) are UN members, and two of them (Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina) even managed to become non-permanent members of Security Council. When it comes to EU integration (which also has security aspects), at the moment only Croatia is close to receive a full membership, while Montenegro and Macedonia are official candidates; the others are still far away. And finally, considering membership in NATO (an organization that is really an influential actor in this regions’ security), two states are already members from 2009 – Croatia and Albania, while Macedonia was invited, but not in a position to join them, due to Greek objection to this country’s name. Montenegro (2009) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (2010) received Membership Action Plan. Only Serbia has not expressed intention of joining NATO yet, although it is a member of Partnership for Peace program since 2006.

This asymmetric position of Western Balkans countries regarding “frozen” conflicts they are involved in, level of integration into security structures and their policies towards this integration, makes this region’s security a very complex and delicate matter. In the West, it is usual that when one speaks of integration of the region into broader structures, they do not make difference

between “European” (which is EU, or, in security matters, OSCE integration) and “Euro-Atlantic” integration (which is joining NATO). These two things are considered the same, and single strategy for all the countries in the region – i.e. NATO membership – is seen as appropriate for achieving and maintaining their security.<sup>2</sup> It is undeniable that the whole region is part of the sphere of interest of the West. But, does it mean that all countries should unconditionally join the alliance, and if they do, what would it mean for their long-term security? As we said, we shall examine this issue by looking into the two aspects we have mentioned: NATO and “frozen conflicts”/open political issues; NATO and global security.

### NATO AND “FROZEN CONFLICTS” IN WESTERN BALKANS

By “frozen conflict” we consider a situation where a certain violent dispute has ended without a durable political solution accepted by all relevant sides. Instead, there is a status quo situation as a result of “freezing” positions of each side in the conflict, based on the principle – he who has troops on the ground, controls the situation.<sup>3</sup> With such status quo, at least one side in the conflict is dissatisfied (if not all of them) and seeks to alter it in its favor. To this goal, it is likely to use force, if and when the necessary conditions appear. This makes such kind of situations highly unstable, and usually requires foreign intervention which involves great powers that prefer status quo to “thawing” the conflict by turning it from “frozen” to hot, when it is unlikely (or unwanted) that it can be “thawed” by reaching an acceptable political solution for all. Most often these intervening powers are not impartial, but take sides in the conflict in order to enforce status quo that is favorable to their interests. In such cases, withdrawal of intervening power’s troops could send a call to a revisionist side in the conflict to use a shift in power relations to alter a situation in its favor by force. That is why such a partial intervention undermines security in a regional set in the long run and may turn against the intervening power’s interests,

<sup>2</sup> See: *The European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of the Western Balkans*, Hellenic Center for European Studies (EKEM) and NATO Public Diplomacy Division, Internet, <http://ekem.program.org/awg/images/stories/staff/con-doc.pdf> 11/05/2011; Karin Grimm, “Integrating the Western Balkans into NATO and the EU: Challenges, Expectations and Needs”, Internet, [http://www.bmlv.gv.at/pdf\\_pool/publikationen/pfp\\_rssee\\_policy\\_recommendations\\_2010.pdf](http://www.bmlv.gv.at/pdf_pool/publikationen/pfp_rssee_policy_recommendations_2010.pdf), 11/05/2011, pp. 61-72.

<sup>3</sup> On “frozen conflicts”, see: John Peet, “Frozen Conflicts – Europe’s Unfinished Bussiness”, *Economist*, 12/20/2008 World in 2009, p. 95; Jim Hedley, “When Frozen Conflicts Melt Down”, *Transitions Online*, 12141615, 8/18/2008; Cory Welt, “The Thawing of a Frozen Conflict: The Internal Security Dilemma and the 2004 Prelude to the Russo-Georgian War”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Jan2010, Vol. 62 Issue 1, pp. 63-97.

unless it is willing to engage in the long-lasting deployment of troops on the ground. Therefore, any design for regional security that foreign actors (great powers and their organizations) apply, should be based on durable and (by all relevant regional actors) acceptable political solutions in order to be self-sustainable, while “freezing” the conflict by partial intervention can only bring short-term stability, but increase the prospects for a renewal of violence in the long haul. We shall test this hypothesis on three cases of “frozen conflicts” in Western Balkans, which have been one way or another handled by NATO: Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia.<sup>4</sup>

Kosovo is undoubtedly a typical example of a “frozen conflict”. A *de facto* independent state which also adopted a *de jure* declaration of independence, yet unrecognized not only by its former sovereign Serbia, but also by the majority of UN members, including those that can veto Kosovo membership (Russia and China). This situation was made possible by the presence of NATO troops on the ground, who came there in 1999 as a result of an illegal bombing campaign against Serbia and the adoption of UN SC Resolution 1244, the document that does not envisage Kosovo independence. From then on, NATO troops have been crucial for maintaining Kosovo’s *de facto*, and from February 2008 proclaimed independent status. Besides Serbian opposition to independence and its wish to reintegrate the province, as well as absence of wide recognition, Kosovo is facing two more challenges that make its status more difficult to sustain. First, its territorial integrity is not secured, given that Priština does not have control over Serb-populated Northern Kosovo – any attempt to recapture that part of territory by force could provoke Serbian reaction and turn this “frozen conflict” into a hot one. Second, Kosovo independence and dominant position of Albanian majority were partly established by ethnic cleansing of at least half of pre-war Kosovo Serbs, which makes Serbia even more hostile to the newly created state. That is why it is hard to imagine Kosovo’s survival as an independent country in its territorial integrity and with domination of Albanians without NATO as a deterrent factor against possible Serbian revisionism. The admission of Serbia into NATO is unlikely to change much in the long run, and could even appear counterproductive. It would require Serbian consent to Kosovo independence (for NATO would not allow a state with an open territorial question to become a member), and this consent under these circumstances could be expressed only by a decree of a certain ruling political elite, not followed by widely popular and other political forces’ support. The opponents of Kosovo independence (who blame NATO for stealing Serbian territory by bombing Serbia) would only get

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<sup>4</sup> Although it may be contested that Macedonia, or even Bosnia and Herzegovina can be enlisted as cases of “frozen conflicts” – for their internal stability relies on agreements accepted by all sides – we shall consider those cases because it is obvious that not each side is equally satisfied with the way mentioned agreements are being implemented.

further infuriated by such decision, and more likely to try reversing it once they come to power. The example of Cyprus is illustrative enough – the fact that both Greece and Turkey are NATO members did not prevent Turkish army from intervening in Northern Cyprus in order to protect Turkish minority, or bring an appropriate political solution up to date.

The second “frozen conflict” in Western Balkans is Bosnia and Herzegovina case. Here we also see a clear NATO role in reaching and maintaining political solution. Dayton agreement in 1995 was feasible because NATO bombed positions of a dominant force in three-and-a-half-year-long Bosnian war – army of Republic of Srpska, and forced Serbian side to sit to a negotiating table. Subsequently, NATO troops had the primary responsibility to secure the implementation of this agreement; now this responsibility is in hands of European Union, but there is no doubt NATO is still the main actor capable of intervening if something goes wrong. The problem is that Dayton political solution, enforced by NATO, is still an asymmetric one – that is the reason we include Bosnian case in “frozen conflicts” after all. Although all sides in the conflict initially accepted the agreement, it is clear that only a half of Bosnian population – namely Bosniak people – sincerely identify themselves with Bosnian state. Croats and Serbs strive to get greater autonomy, and even to secede from Bosnia and join their own (neighboring) countries. Their ambition is further provoked by many systematic Bosniak government and international High Representative’s measures, aimed at stronger centralization of BiH and enforcing common “Bosnian” identity to non-Bosniak peoples. As in Kosovo case, NATO membership for BiH would not change much either. BiH stability would still rest on enforced asymmetric arrangement that strong local actors (especially Serbs) would try to alter if a chance for it appeared.

Finally, the Macedonian case also has some elements of an asymmetric status quo that is hardly sustainable without NATO support. NATO was the one to help Macedonian government and Albanian rebels to negotiate ceasefire and sign Ohrid agreement in 2001, and to make sure it was implemented. Although this saved the state unity, it is unclear whether Macedonian Albanians will try to get greater concessions in the future, with an ultimate goal to secede and join neighboring Albania (and/or Kosovo), or not. The problem became even more acute after the declaration of Kosovo independence, because many ethnic Macedonians now see NATO as a supporter of Albanian irredentism, and would become prone to act preventively by denying concessions to Albanians. The membership of Macedonia in NATO could only turn them against “Albanian-loving” government (similar to the case of Serbian nationalists), while the very fact that both Macedonia and Albania are NATO members would not solve anything (similar to the case of Greece, Turkey and Cyprus).

Besides these three cases of “frozen conflicts”, we will mention several other “hot spots” where NATO involvement might not bring appropriate solutions,

but even greater security dangers. First, there is Sanjak, a region in Serbia where Bosniak minority wants greater autonomy (or even independence). It is probable that NATO would require greater concessions from Belgrade to Bosniaks if Serbia wanted to join NATO, which is likely to provoke nationalists' reaction similar to the one we mentioned in Kosovo case. Second, there is a possibility of ethnic clash in Montenegro, where current government is trying to enforce "Montenegrin" identity upon ethnic Serbs, and is likely to be supported by NATO. Third, recent protests in Albania against the corrupt government did not receive an adequate response from NATO, who is obviously not willing to support democracy in its own member country, while bombing Libya with similar pretext.

So, what does the membership of all Western Balkans countries mean for regional security in the light of "frozen conflicts" and other possibly dangerous political situations? Given NATO's partial approach and willingness to enforce asymmetric political solutions that are not acceptable for all relevant sides, it could only mean further provocation of the dissatisfied regional actors to alter the status quo by all means, including force. This would require NATO's permanent military presence in the region, in order to maintain arrangements imposed by itself, and this is not payable in the long run. Genuine Western Balkans security would require a real dialogue between all relevant local and foreign actors, aimed at achieving a comprehensive solution that would be a benefit to all, not only to the sides protected by NATO. To fulfill this complex task, countries of the region cannot rely solely on the membership in a military alliance, especially if it is not accepted by the majority of their people. Of course integration of the region in some wider security regime is needed to support this kind of comprehensive solution once it is agreed upon; but is NATO an appropriate mechanism for this? This leads us to the second aspect of our topic – the connection between NATO role and expansion and global security.

## NATO AND WESTERN BALKANS IN THE LIGHT OF GLOBAL SECURITY

How would the membership of all Western Balkans countries in NATO change position of the region in global security? This question leads us to examining the role of NATO in global security relations and its geographical scope. It is beyond question that NATO is a security organization; it was founded in 1949 as a military alliance aimed at protecting Western European and North American capitalist states against Communist threat from the East. With the removal of that threat and disintegration of the Soviet Union, NATO did not cease to exist; on the contrary, it expanded both geographically and functionally by incorporating several former Eastern bloc states and taking a new role – crisis management in order to respond to a growing number of "new threats".

However, its main task remained the protection of the West, which means “liberal democracies” in North America and Europe (including “New Europe” - former socialist countries in the East) from an external aggression, although it is no more clear who could commit such aggression. Geographical course of NATO expansion (eastward) and vague definition of “liberal democracy” (which is being applied to very questionable regimes in several countries in Balkans and post-Soviet space, that are already members or candidates for membership in NATO), together with some controversial plans (such as American antiballistic shield in Eastern Europe) lead us to the conclusion that there are clear strategic imperatives under the ideological mask of NATO expansion, and that Russia is still perceived as the main threat to the West. This is exactly why Russia enlists NATO expansion as number one security danger in its newest military doctrine.<sup>5</sup> It is not NATO expansion itself, but the exclusion of Russia from this process (and its encirclement instead), together with former socialist Russophobic countries lobbying against Russia in Brussels, that alienates this great power and makes its security cooperation with the West more difficult.<sup>6</sup> Why is this cooperation important? Because during the last several years, we are witnessing a set of Russian propositions for the final abandonment of Cold War division in Europe and the establishment of a real Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian system of comprehensive and indivisible security. Let us say something about these propositions and how NATO expansion affects them.

In June 2008, during his speech in Berlin, Russian president Dmitry Medvedev called for a conclusion of European security treaty by all states and their security organizations throughout the space “from Vancouver to Vladivostok”.<sup>7</sup> Based on this proposition, Russian government released a draft of the Treaty in November 2009. According to the draft, “the Parties shall cooperate with each other on the basis of the principles of indivisible, equal and undiminished security. Any security measures taken by a Party to the Treaty individually or together with other Parties, including in the framework of any international organization, military alliance or coalition, shall be implemented with due regard to security interests of all other Parties”.<sup>8</sup> It is clear that the intention of this proposition is to overcome behavior based on “security

<sup>5</sup> See: *The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation*, Internet, [http://merln.ndu.edu/whitepapers/Russia2010\\_English.pdf](http://merln.ndu.edu/whitepapers/Russia2010_English.pdf) 16/02/2011

<sup>6</sup> See: Konstantin Kosachev, “Values for the Sake of Unification”, *Russia in Global Affairs*, No 1, January-March 2010, Internet, [http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Values\\_for\\_the\\_Sake\\_of\\_Unification-14790](http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Values_for_the_Sake_of_Unification-14790) 15/02/2011

<sup>7</sup> See: *President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev's Speech at Meeting with German Political, Parliamentary and Civic Leaders, Berlin, June 5, 2008*, Internet, [http://www.in.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/0/C080DC2FF8D93629C3257460003496C4](http://www.in.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/C080DC2FF8D93629C3257460003496C4) 16/02/2011.

<sup>8</sup> *European security treaty*, Draft, Internet, <http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/2009/11/223072.shtml> 14/02/2011.

dilemma", and to establish genuine security cooperation throughout the mentioned area – in other words, no one should strengthen its own security at the expense of the security of others.<sup>9</sup> Following this proposition, as well as the American vice President Joe Biden's call for a "reset" in Russian-American relations, USA and Russia in 2009 started a comprehensive security dialogue, aimed at overcoming the Cold War legacy and establishing a true Russian-American strategic partnership in contemporary global security. So far, this dialogue brought positive results in some issues, such as nuclear disarmament, common approach to Afghanistan or Iran, and opening dialogue on security inside OSCE. However, several issues still remain without a consensus – besides NATO eastward expansion and antiballistic shield, there is a strong disagreement over recognition of new states and justification of intervention in other countries internal affairs.

This process is of great importance for world peace. Once they demonstrate capability of settling their own security relations, former Cold War adversaries could much more easily cooperate to face all other challenges and threats to global peace and security order – international terrorism, weapons of mass destruction proliferation, world financial crisis, energy shortages, ecological problems, and of course shifts in global power relations and possible emergence of a challenger to the present international order (most likely China, if it transforms its strategy of "peaceful rise" to a more violent form of imperialism). Conversely, if Russian-American security dialogue fails, each side is likely to act unilaterally and in its own, rather than common interest (behavior demonstrated many times, for example in cases of unilateral recognition of new countries such as Kosovo, South Ossetia and Abkhazia), spending resources on mutual confrontation instead of directing them to a joint work on addressing the mentioned threats. This would greatly undermine global security, especially in the light of financial crisis implications and recent turmoil in Greater Middle East; failure to address these challenges could encourage revisionist forces in the world to use the chaotic situation and to try to violently alter the current international order in whose stability both Russia and the West have great stakes. Although both Russia and USA had some imperialistic adventures in the last two decades as if they had not been satisfied with the global order, it is obvious that America (as a hegemon) and Russia (as the "third power")<sup>10</sup> could

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<sup>9</sup> This is what Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov says, see: Sergei Lavrov, "The Euro-Atlantic Region: Equal Security for All", *Russia in Global Affairs*, No 2, April-June 2010, Internet, [http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/The\\_Euro-Atlantic\\_Region:\\_Equal\\_Security\\_for\\_All-14888](http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/The_Euro-Atlantic_Region:_Equal_Security_for_All-14888) 14/02/2011.

<sup>10</sup> A state that is approximately third among the great powers in terms of overall power distribution, and helps hegemon to maintain the status quo against the rising challenger state ("second power").

benefit much more from keeping status quo in power relations, than from putting it in jeopardy by their own actions.

What is then the position of Western Balkans in these global security relations? Given the fragile nature of this region's security, based on the open political issues we have mentioned in the previous chapter, it is very likely that Western Balkans stability would be strongly affected by any destabilization of global security relations. This means that Western Balkans could gravely suffer if Russian-American security dialogue failed, and NATO eastward expansion works in this direction. Therefore, ensuring their short-term security by joining the strongest military alliance in the world would only undermine long-term security of Western Balkans countries. It is true that Russia itself does not object to Western Balkans countries membership in NATO<sup>11</sup> as much as it does regarding some former Soviet states (notably Ukraine and Georgia), but the very logic of NATO expansion works against comprehensive and indivisible security in Europe. By the acceptance of that logic, Western Balkans countries that join (or express their wish to join) NATO align themselves with side that strives to unilaterally increase its security by decreasing security of others, and that way they decrease their own security by exposing themselves to negative consequences of this process. It is not clear why Western Balkans countries would even follow the same pattern that other former socialist countries in Europe adopted (first NATO, then the EU integration), when they do not share the same historical experience – Western Balkans countries were not a part of the Soviet bloc and have much less justification for Russophobia in their foreign policies.<sup>12</sup> Also, there is not a formal condition that a state must first enter NATO, in order to be admitted to the EU. Thus, a broader context and long-term prospects are always something that a particular state must count on when adopting a specific strategy to improve its security, and careful examination of NATO connection with global security contributes to this – instead of unconditionally joining NATO, Western Balkans countries should follow the Russian-American security dialogue, contribute to its success and integrate themselves into a much broader global security structure that could emerge from this dialogue.

## CONCLUSION

Now we can give a final summation of what we have said regarding the implications of Western Balkans integration into NATO for this region's long-term security prospects. "Frozen conflicts" and open political issues throughout

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<sup>11</sup> With an exception of Serbia, in some way.

<sup>12</sup> One could argue that Western Balkans countries perceive Serbia as a threat, but this leaves an open question why then Serbia would join NATO?

the region allow us to say it is a region of a deficient security. Therefore, long-term prospects for Western Balkans security and stability will be better if these questions get resolved in a manner that is acceptable for all relevant sides. NATO's (which means Western) partial approach to those issues, based on imposing and "freezing" asymmetric solutions that rely not on a broad consensus, but on particular selfish interests, works against an optimistic scenario. The integration of the whole region into NATO would cement this asymmetric status quo and only further frustrate revisionist local actors who seek to overthrow it by all means, including use of force. Such destabilizing potential in regional security becomes even greater when instability in global security relations appear. NATO eastward expansion significantly contributes to erosion of global security for it preserves Cold War division in Europe, makes Russian-American security dialogue more difficult, and thus creates a turbulent situation which can encourage revisionist forces in the world to try to alter global order by force. So, integration of Western Balkans into NATO works in favor of this pessimistic scenario and in the long run against the security of the region.

In the end, what can we say about the alternative ways for Western Balkans countries to ensure their long-term security? First, they have to realize that without overcoming differences in opinions about how open political issues are to be settled, there can be no trust and stable security cooperation among them. This, of course, means that all "frozen conflicts" have to be solved in a manner acceptable to all relevant sides. Second, they have to take a broader context into account – which are global security relations. When they adopt particular security policies, they must examine how these policies will affect regional and global security trends, for these trends will certainly have a feedback influence on local actors. Third, all of this is impossible without joint work with relevant great powers. If we assume that Western Balkans is mainly a sphere of influence of the West, then USA, NATO and EU are the key players that have to adapt their policies to the real security needs of the region, if they want it to be stable. This means that the West should abandon the approach that relies on an expectation that the only solution for this region's security is its unconditional integration into the Western military alliance. As OSCE Astana Commemorative Declaration (December 2010) says, "We reaffirm the inherent right of each and every participating State to be free to choose or change its security arrangements, including treaties of alliance, as they evolve. Each State also has the right to neutrality. Each participating State will respect the rights of all others in these regards... Within the OSCE no State, group of States or organization can have any pre-eminent responsibility for maintaining peace and stability in the OSCE area or can consider any part of the OSCE area as its sphere of influence".<sup>13</sup> These

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<sup>13</sup> *Astana Commemorative Declaration – Towards a Security Community*, Internet, <http://summit2010.osce.org/sites/default/files/documents/444.pdf> 16/02/2011.

principles only have to be implemented in Western Balkans. The next step would be coming to the roots of a fragile security situation in the region – the West should reconsider its support to asymmetric political solutions it has imposed on the region and with an impartial approach work with local elites to achieve solutions that will be a result of sincere compromise.

Thus, integration of Western Balkans into NATO is a false promise of a long-term regional security. However, there are many ways by which NATO can help to establish a stable regional security, but only if it proves capable of changing its policies that are proven to be wrong.

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