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CONTEMPORARY SECURITY CHALLENGES

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EDITORIAL

Contemporary security challenges ───────

───── *Assoc. Prof. Dr. Juelda LAMÇE* ─────────

In today's rapidly evolving global landscape, the significance of discussing and understanding security issues cannot be overstated—particularly as countries like Albania confront a multitude of security challenges. This discourse not only informs but also engages the public and policymakers, fostering a broader understanding of the complexities that nations face in maintaining stability and safety. It helps to better appreciate the nuances of the security strategies that nations must adopt, amidst threats that range from traditional military confrontations to modern challenges like cyber threats, environmental crises, and socio-economic disparities.

Security challenges have evolved from the traditional state-based conflicts to a much wider and more complex range of threats. Today's critical security concerns include geopolitical tensions, cybersecurity threats, criminal organizations, and nuclear proliferation, alongside issues such as health, poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, and resource scarcity. Addressing these challenges to ensure the stability, prosperity, and well-being of nations and individuals demands a multifaceted approach that extends beyond military solutions. Such an approach includes diplomatic, economic, and developmental strategies, as well as increased international cooperation.

This edition encompasses not only stimulating reflections on national, regional, international and global security issues on both historical and contemporary background, but other valuable contributions on related fields as well. On the historic and theoretic background, the analyses of the Regional Security Complex Theory are scrutinized through Japan's rise in the Asia Pacific region (1931-1945) and the changed dynamics of the security complex in the region. Over the past decades, the Western Balkans Region has experienced a dramatic transformation in its geopolitical, security, and defense landscape. Particular attention in this edition is paid to Kosovo's national security, as Europe's youngest nation. Specifically, the influence of international actors and frameworks, including NATO and the EU,

in shaping Kosovo's security policies and practices. Political instability, economic underdevelopment, and lingering effects of ethnic tensions are considered among the main factors affecting its stability. The importance of alliances in the security environment is highlighted by NATO's role in safeguarding the security of Western democracies. Additional contributions address contemporary challenges, such as energy security threats, and the stability of the banking and financial system. The first one, focuses on Albania's strategy toward green renewable energy and achieving energy self-sufficiency, while the latter examines innovative financial instruments such as the "Convertible Contingent Bonds" and their potential to create a safer and more stable environment in the banking sector.

As we navigate a world marked by complex and multifaceted security challenges, the insights gathered in this edition underscore the critical need for comprehensive approaches to ensure regional and global stability. The diverse perspectives offered highlight both historical lessons and forward-looking strategies, emphasizing the necessity of international alliances and innovative policies in addressing current and emerging threats. Ultimately, this edition aims to inspire continued dialogue and collaboration among nations, fostering a secure and sustainable future for all.

Decrypting the Balkan underworld. A theoretical analysis of encrypted communication in organized crime

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Abstract

This article delves into the pervasive deployment of encrypted communication platforms within Balkan criminal entities, including Albanian organized crime, offering a meticulous examination and legal scrutiny spanning the period from 2019 to 2023. Focusing primarily on communication channels such as "Matrix," "Sky ECC," and "EncroChat," this study unveils the intricate interplay between these technologies and criminal activities, shedding light on their implications for investigation of such sophisticated organized crime groups. Case studies of Balkan Mafia on the use of EncroChat and Sky ECC during 2019-2022 reveal their unprecedented influence on criminal activities, offering anonymity, non-traceability, and facilitating organized crime on a global scale. This research employs a multifaceted methodology that seamlessly integrates descriptive analysis, literature review, and theoretical exploration. It supports an inclusive perspective, urging scholars and policymakers to move beyond outdated frameworks to effectively combat the evolving impact of organized cybercrime on societies worldwide.

Keywords: cybercrime, Sky ECC, EnroChat, Balkan mafia, Albanian organized crime, hybrid communication, technological shift

Introduction

The relentless progress of technology has instigated profound changes in societal structures, concurrently driving a transformation in criminal methodologies. Within the contemporary digital landscape, the activities of organized crime groups have undergone discernible influences. This digital terrain accommodates a diverse array of organized crime entities, each characterized by distinct organizational models. This spectrum encompasses the sophistication of communication methods employed by organized crime groups, leveraging advanced technological means. Hybrid communication forms are evolving, characterized by the integration of human-machine collaboration within networks that encompass both human and non-human participants.

A pivotal dimension of this evolution lies in the utilization of encrypted communication platforms, notably exemplified by EncroChat and Sky ECC. These technologies have precipitated a paradigm shift, enabling a spectrum of organized crime activities that range from technologically sophisticated endeavors to more conventional practices. The smooth shift between online and offline realms is enabled by the strategic utilization of encrypted communication tools. Criminal organizations, operating at both local and transnational levels, have traditionally utilized encrypted messaging systems to evade surveillance. Companies like Sky Global offered comprehensive services, including phone modifications to disable cameras, microphones, and GPS, automatic deletion of messages after a designated period, and resistance to cooperation with authorities (Saito, 2021).

The successive shutdowns of EncroChat and Sky ECC have sparked optimism that this technological advantage will be temporarily diminished. The closures have dealt a significant blow, particularly in Belgium and parts of the criminal market in the Netherlands, where Sky ECC was highly trusted as a secure communication system. According to police experts the police now possess extensive information on the underworld's structure, bank accounts, and corrupt contacts, leading to the arrest of numerous individuals. The unraveling of these networks, which took years to establish, signifies a major setback for criminal organizations (Saito, 2021). The use of these platforms, however, should be seen with the lenses of a shift of the organized crime groups to a different age and model, the so called digital "criminal" area.

Theoretical discussion

The confluence of technology with criminal enterprises has eroded the heretofore unequivocal delineation between the corporeal and virtual dimensions inherent to organized criminal activities. Despite these profound shifts, it is evident that existing criminological theoretical frameworks have yet to fully absorb the transformative ramifications of the digital society, particularly regarding the deployment of encrypted communication tools like EncroChat and Sky ECC by organized crime entities. This gap underscores the imperative for the formulation of contemporary research hypotheses within this context (Di Nicola, 2022).

While there is a scholarly exposition which delves into the inquiry of conventional distinctions between offline/online or physical/digital crimes, what is missing is the classification of certain advanced technological features of organized crime groups, particularly those leveraging encrypted communication platforms like SKY ECC and EncroChat, as organized crime entities. This categorization may hinge into the adoption of a contemporary and adaptive framework for understanding the new perspective of the sophistication of organized crime. Several studies have drawn the attention to the use of technology by organized crime as an indicator of quick adaptation to the new digital sociology of the criminal world.

Referring to the literature review of main theoretical threads by Whelan, Bright and Martin (2023), one may argue that encrypted methods of communication by organized crime groups should not come as a surprise. We live in i digital criminal area, what Powell et al., (2018) calls it a "digital criminology" contending that conceptualizing technological and non-technological aspects as two different or yet oppositional categories are no longer valid to an over digitalization of societal mindset. Other authors support this paradigm by emphasizing that technology is now a contemporary tool for breaking cyber security (Dupont & Whelan, 2021), committing crimes online (Mackenzie, 2022), enabling violence on online platforms (Henry et al., 2020) and facilitating the communication of organized crime (Di Nicola, 2022).

Di Nicola (2022) introduces the concept of "digital organized crime," offering an interpretive framework to capture how encrypted communication platforms, notably SKY ECC and EncroChat, may induce shifts in the organizational structures of criminals and their activities. The unfolding of organized crimes within a digital society follows a continuum, determined by the extent to which criminal groups, particularly those employing SKY ECC and EncroChat, leverage these technologies. While the continuum concept is valuable, this approach, akin to other scholarly endeavors emphasizing the relevance of organized crime

conceptualizations to cybercrime (e.g., Broadhurst et al., 2014) does not explicitly address contentious elements in organized crime definitions, such as extra-legal governance as a core feature. On the other hand, Wall (2021), considers the use of technology not only for communication but also for extortion and threats.

Aligned with the perspective that narrow, inflexible definitional paradigms employing "partially obsolete frameworks" (Di Nicola, 2022) have surpassed their pragmatic utility, our contribution to scholarly discourse introduces an approach to organized crime pertinent to both traditional and cyber contexts. In this advanced academic exploration, the focus centers on the intricate dynamics of encrypted communication platforms, specifically SKY ECC and EncroChat, as emblematic exemplars in the evolving landscape of organized cybercrime. We contend that pivotal concepts integral to existing understandings of extra-legal governance, such as violence and territory, require nuanced reconceptualization to account for their multifaceted physical and digital properties, particularly within the context of these encrypted communication tools.

Methodology

This study seeks to conduct a thorough examination of the dynamic evolution of the Balkan organized crime in the digital era, concentrating on the nuanced impact of advanced communication technologies, particularly the utilization of encrypted platforms such as EncroChat and Sky ECC. The research aspires to elucidate the transformative influence of these technologies on the organizational structures and operational modalities of criminal entities. Furthermore, it aims to scrutinize the ramifications of recent law enforcement interventions, notably the closures of EncroChat and Sky ECC, on the technological prowess formerly enjoyed by criminal organizations with focus on Albanian organized crime. The overarching objective is to contribute significantly to academic discourse by providing insights into the intricate dimensions of organized crime within the context of technological advancements.

This research employs a multifaceted methodology that seamlessly integrates descriptive analysis, literature review, and theoretical exploration. The initial phase delves into a discerning descriptive analysis, shedding light on the evolving landscape of organized crime in the digital era, with a particular emphasis on the crucial role played by sophisticated communication methods. The literature review extensively draws from the works of renowned scholars, including Whelan, Bright, Martin, Powell, Dupont, Mackenzie, Henry, and Di Nicola. This compilation culminates in the establishment of a robust theoretical framework, aimed at comprehending the intricate intersection of technology and organized crime.

The theoretical discussion serves as a pivotal point for advancing the scholarly argument, proposing a nuanced reconceptualization of core organized crime constructs that takes into account the pervasive digitalization of criminal activities. Building upon the foundational work of Di Nicola in "digital organized crime," this research introduces an innovative approach relevant to both traditional and cyber contexts. It highlights the complex dynamics inherent in encrypted communication platforms. The focus then shifts to contextualizing the theoretical discussion within the sophisticated communication patterns of the Balkan mafia, with a specific emphasis on Albanian organized crime. Although the methodology does not explicitly detail empirical research or data collection, it depends on amalgamating existing scholarship and perspectives offered by various experts, often in the form of concise legal or policy analyses. This comprehensive approach aims to provide a refined understanding of the intricate interplay between technology and Balkan organized crime. Additionally, it sheds light on the profound implications of recent developments in encrypted communication platforms for the realm of criminality. The discussion on the Albanian organized crime within the Balkan mafia adds a layer of complexity and specificity to the theoretical framework, contributing to a more comprehensive analysis of the subject matter.

Findings

The findings underscore a significant gap in existing criminological frameworks, highlighting the urgency for contemporary research hypotheses. The proposed approach transcends traditional and cyber contexts, emphasizing encrypted platforms as pivotal in the landscape of organized cybercrime. This perspective challenges conventional definitions, urging nuanced reconceptualization of fundamental concepts such as extra-legal governance, violence, and territory. Case studies of Balkan Mafia on the use of EncroChat and Sky ECC during 2019-2022 reveal their unprecedented influence on criminal activities, offering anonymity, non-traceability, and facilitating organized crime on a global scale. The dismantling of these platforms by law enforcement illustrates a dynamic interplay between technology and crime prevention. Beyond EncroChat and Sky ECC, the study examines instances like Ennetcom, Phantom Secure, and platforms created by law enforcement agencies like ANOM. These examples illuminate the dual role of technology in enabling and countering organized crime, emphasizing adaptability and global reach. The integral role of encrypted communication platforms is evident in the operational strategies of Albanian criminal groups, showcasing adaptability in exploiting advanced communication technologies for illicit activities. The study supports an inclusive perspective, urging scholars and

policymakers to move beyond outdated frameworks to effectively combat the evolving impact of organized cybercrime on societies worldwide.

Originality/value

This study advocates contemporary research hypotheses that can comprehensively capture the transformative implications of these communication platforms to transnational organized crime. A distinctive focus on Balkan Mafia groups provides a nuanced understanding of the integral role played by encrypted communication platforms in their strategies. This specific lens offers insightful perspectives on how criminal entities leverage advanced communication technologies for illicit activities. In conclusion, the research emphasizes the enduring relevance and originality of the research in the dynamic field of criminology, particularly in shedding light on the multifaceted relationships between technology and organized crime.

EncroChat and Sky ECC: unveiling cybercrime dynamics (2019-2022)

The EncroChat and Sky ECC platforms emerged as prominently utilized tools by organized crime and high-ranking corrupt officials during the years 2019-2022, and this was not without reason. EncroChat phones represented a modified version of Android devices, with certain models utilizing the "BQ Aquaris X2" versions, a phone produced in 2018 by a Spanish company (Cox, 2020a). The development of EncroChat phones occurred around the period of 2015-2016, following access to the server of the Canadian company Blackberry by Canadian and Dutch authorities (Hamilton, 2020). Initially used by individuals in the business world to conceal their private lives, these phones gradually gained favor within the criminal sphere due to the services they offered (Hughes, 2019).

According to Europol, EncroChat phones facilitate encrypted communication, ensuring users complete anonymity, non-traceability of the device and client account, and swift deletion of communications from phones. These devices featured an encrypted and inconspicuous interface, devoid of traceable services or accessories such as cameras, microphones, GPS, and USB ports. They also boasted functions to secure user immunity, including automatic message deletion, a PIN code to instantly erase all data on the device, and wiping all data in case of repeated entry of an incorrect password.

These functions allowed the elimination of messages in case of device loss, use by third parties, attempted hacking, or seizure/confiscation by law enforcement

agencies. Additionally, the devices offered the capability to remotely hide messages from the service provider (seller) or through assistance provided by the seller to users online. EncroChat phones cost approximately 1000 euros, with an international usage subscription fee of 3000 euros per year, along with 24-hour customer service throughout seven days a week (Europol & Eurojust, 2020).

These phones could facilitate communication only if they had internet access, and only those in possession of them could communicate through them with a password of at least 15 characters (Hughes, 2019). The identity of the company that developed EncroChat phones is unclear, as its representatives presented the company as a legitimate business with clients in at least 140 countries worldwide. It is believed that the financiers and developers of this company are Dutch citizens, but its servers were in France, in the city of Roubaix (Sky News, 2020). As per Court Decision of the German Federal High Court, no.5 StR 457/21, date 02.03.2022, during the investigation, French authorities found nearly 66,134 SIM cards of a Dutch company.

EncroChat purportedly established sales outlets in prominent cities such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Madrid, and Dubai (Cox, 2020a). Nevertheless, the company engaged in the distribution of phones through informal channels, as reported by Sky News (2020). Notably, instances have been documented wherein individuals with prior affiliations to law enforcement agencies or military entities were involved in the sale of these phones (Barnes, 2020). Law enforcement authorities contend that these devices witnessed widespread utilization within organized crime networks (Cox, 2020a). The French authorities first became aware of EncroChat phones in 2017, which led them to frequently seize such devices after numerous arrests within criminal organizations (Sky News 2020). Subsequently, these authorities discovered that the servers of this company were in France, prompting French authorities to engage in gaining access to this encrypted network.

The company behind EncroChat employed a cover company in Panama and an international bank account in Luxembourg for payment transfers. The company had a complete organizational structure with directors and employees in various countries, often playing fictitious roles to conceal the true purpose of the company. In the year 2022, the apprehension of eight individuals transpired, with three arrests taking place in Spain, three in Dubai, and the detention of a central figure, Paul KruSky, accompanied by his Canadian spouse, who was initially apprehended in the Dominican Republic but subsequently released under undisclosed circumstances (Daly & Cox, 2022). Concurrently, the encrypted communication platform Sky ECC emerged as a consequential counterpart after the operational disruption instigated by French, Dutch, and British law enforcement agencies against EncroChat in 2020 (Europol & Eurojust, 2020). Proclaiming itself as a prominent

entity within the domain of encrypted communications, Sky ECC purportedly boasted a user base exceeding 70,000 individuals. However, the company faced cessation following a security breach orchestrated by Belgian police in March 2021, paralleled by investigative endeavors initiated by U.S. authorities targeting its administrative figure.

The exploitation of compromised data from SKY ECC prompted Belgian law enforcement to execute raids in no less than 200 residential abodes, leading to the apprehension of a minimum of 48 suspects, including three legal professionals. Concurrently, Dutch authorities conducted searches in 75 residences, culminating in the arrest of 30 suspects and the seizure of weapons and 1.2 million euros in cash (Goodwin, 2021). The collective efforts of Belgian, French, and Dutch authorities, after the penetration of this communication application in 2021, afforded access to an expansive corpus of approximately 80 million messages (The Brussels Times, 2022). The meticulous analysis of these messages facilitated the initiation of around 276 novel investigations in 2022, encompassing 888 suspects, and resulted in the confiscation of over 90 tons of narcotics valued at 4.5 billion euros, in addition to the sequestration of cash and assets totaling 60 million euros (The Brussels Times, 2022).

In parallel with the trajectory of EncroChat, Sky ECC, established in 2008 by Jean-François Eap, operated transnationally from the United States and Canada. The company claimed high security, purporting protection from specialized eavesdropping like Pegasus. The company highlighted that encrypted messages were not stored on its servers, being destroyed immediately after reading within 30 seconds. If the user was unreachable and the phone was off, the sent message was stored for only 48 hours and then became irretrievable. Sky ECC phones were sold online or through authorized partners, with prices ranging from 900 to 2,000 euros, depending on the model, and were compatible with Android, Blackberry, and iOS systems. An additional enterprise providing encrypted communication through mobile devices was Ennetcom, an entity disbanded by Dutch authorities in 2016. The clientele of this service primarily comprised organized criminal elements operating within the Netherlands, amassing a subscriber base of 19,000 individuals. Interestingly, despite its Canadian origin, the company's servers were situated in Canada. The retail value of phones offered by Ennetcom was approximately 1,500 euros (The Guardian, 2016).

A similar phone to EncroChat, mainly used in the United States and Australia from 2008 to 2018, was Phantom Secure, with administrator Vince Ramos, a legitimate businessman. According to FBI investigations that led to Ramos' arrest in 2018, these phones were primarily used to facilitate the activities of drug traffickers. Criminal motorcycle gangs in Australia, known drug traffickers in California, and even members of the Sinaloa Cartel utilized such phones (Cox,

2020b). The company was legal and registered in Richmond, Canada, since 2008, initially considered a luxury phone and only used by VIPs for security reasons at its inception in 2008. However, over time, the services of this company fell into the hands of the criminal world. The company operated through an infrastructure outside of Canada, directing data through servers in Panama and Hong Kong to prevent accessibility by third parties (Cox, 2020b). The company provided customer services through call centers in Jalandhar, Punjab, India (Cox, 2020b). Phantom had domain addresses and registered companies in Bulgaria, Ireland, Singapore, and Thailand. Phantom sold around 7,000 to 10,000 phones primarily in Central and South America, Europe, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and North America. Phantom phones allowed users to choose pseudonyms to hide their identity (Cox, 2020b).

Conversely, law enforcement agencies have actively devised encrypted platforms to ensnare criminal organizations and conduct covert surveillance on their activities. Referring to the US Embassy in Belgrade (2021, June 08), this is the case of the "ANOM" application, invested in by the FBI and Australian authorities. Starting in 201, ANOM managed to sell more than 12,000 encrypted devices used by at least 300 criminal organizations, including international drug trafficking organizations operating in more than 100 countries. Within just 18 months, the FBI, in the "Trojan Shield/Greenlight" operation, extracted over 25 million messages from members of various criminal groups discussing criminal affairs. Similar to WhatsApp, ANOM enabled encrypted conversations with text, photos, and videos. The application in question was pre-installed on mobile devices disseminated within the clandestine black market, typically accompanied by contractual agreements with annual fees reaching up to $4000. As corroborated by FBI assessments, a predominant concentration of ANOM users was discerned in Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Australia, and Serbia (Farzan & Taylor, 2021).

Underworld cryptography: Balkan mafia and encrypted platforms

The adoption of encrypted communication platforms, exemplified by EncroChat and the SKY ECC application, has experienced a conspicuous increase in criminal activities carried out by groups originating from the European Union, the Balkans, and Great Britain. An exhaustive analysis conducted by the Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime (GITOC) substantiates the pronounced surge in the utilization of these platforms, notably during the period subsequent to 2021 (Risk Bulletin no.13, September-October 2022). According to the GITOC analysis, the number of SKY ECC users in Bosnia and Herzegovina is estimated to be around 2,500 subscribers (Risk Bulletin no.13, September-October 2022).

In December 2019, in Republika Srpska, 19 individuals were apprehended for drug and arms smuggling, communicating through SKY ECC. In April 2022, in Montenegro, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Vesna Medenica, was arrested based on transcripts of communications between her son Milos Medenica and police officer Darko Lalovic, negotiating a drug shipment and cigarette contraband. According to Medenica, the judge was aware of these criminal activities and pledged assistance when required (Kajosevic, 2022).

Members of the criminal group led by Veljko Belivuk and Marko Miljkoviq, suspected of serious crimes including murder, were also found to have used SKY ECC. It is believed that their communications may have involved high-ranking officials and members of the state police. They were arrested in Belgrade in April 2022 (Risk Bulletin no.13, September-October 2022). A former high-ranking official in the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Serbia, Dijana Hrkaloviç, accused the Minister of Defense, Nebojsha Stefanoviç, of collaboration with certain media outlets presenting photos and videos of Danilo Vuçiç, the son of the Serbian president, Vuçiç, communicating with individuals from the criminal world through encrypted platforms. Hrkaloviç publicly accused Stefanoviç of supporting the criminal group led by Veljko Belivuk (Risk Bulletin no.13, September-October 2022).

As of April 2022, an excess of 100 individuals have been detained in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Montenegro, and Slovenia, according to data provided by SKY ECC in collaboration with French and Dutch law enforcement agencies. These apprehensions were effectuated in connection with severe criminal transgressions, including but not limited to drug trafficking, homicides, and instances of forcible deprivation of liberty (Jeremic, Stojanovic, & Kajosevic, 2022).

Encoded modes of communication have become integral tools within the operational dynamics of Albanian criminal groups. In testimonial evidence related to contract killings, Nuredin Dumani delineates that communication and directives were effectuated through the utilization of "Matrix." (Gazeta Shqiptare, 2022). This platform, established by a non-profit entity registered in the United Kingdom, operates as an open protocol for internet communication and is recognized for its encrypted messaging application, "Element" (formerly known as "Riot"). Conceived with an emphasis on secure and private internet communication, Matrix adheres to open coding standards, providing a versatile range of communication modalities, encompassing encrypted messages, audio and video calls, group communication, and an array of other functionalities.

A notable illustration of the integration of encrypted communication platforms within the operations of Albanian criminal groups is evidenced in the case of Ardian Isufaj. Tasked predominantly as an intermediary between cocaine suppliers in South America and criminal markets in the European Union, Isufaj divulges

in intercepted communications with an Italian infiltrated agent. The disclosure unveils the strategic use of a secure phone, colloquially referred to as "Israeli," with features including non-interceptability, absence of a conventional number, and exclusivity for specified contacts. Isufaj asserts the dedication of this phone for the singular purpose of their criminal endeavors and introduces the term "Matrix" to describe its Israeli origin, emphasizing its 100% encryption (BalkanWeb, 2023).

Moreover, Albanian criminal entities have extensively employed applications such as SKY ECC and EncroChat-enabled phones. This utilization is conspicuous in significant investigations conducted by the Special Structure against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK) during the period 2019-2023. Notably, "Operation Metamorphosis" reveals the efficacy of encrypted conversations in identifying and pursuing the arrest of individuals associated with a prominent criminal organization in the Shkodra district. According to the SPAK press release (2023a, July 28), this conglomerate includes key figures such as influential businessmen, high-ranking state police officials, and a prosecutor in the year 2023.

A further achievement for SPAK emerges from a successful investigation wherein the decoding of encrypted conversations facilitated the identification and subsequent inquiry into a perilous criminal group in central Albania. Referring to SPAK press release SPAK. (2023b, January 2023), this group, responsible for attacking and injuring a prosecutor in 2019, led to the apprehension of six individuals, with four others subject to international search warrants.

Another significant case involves the dismantling of the "Kompania Bello" cocaine trafficking organization in September 2021. Dritan Rexhepi, considered the leader of this organization, was found to utilize encrypted communication platforms to engage in direct negotiations with South American drug cartels. The subsequent orchestration of an extensive network for transporting substantial quantities of cocaine from Ecuador to Europe involved collaboration with other group members operating in Italy, Holland, and Albania, as revealed by Europol (2020). Considering the widespread adoption of encrypted communication platforms by criminal groups in the Western Balkans, including Albania, the ensuing discourse presents a synthesized overview of jurisprudential stances emanating from some of the highest courts in EU member states and beyond.

Theoretical perspectives

Going back to the theoretical discussion, this article underscores the transformative impact of encrypted communication platforms, namely EncroChat and SKY ECC, on the investigation of organized crime. Several key theoretical perspectives emerge from the detailed examination of these platforms and their utilization

by criminal entities in the European Union, the Balkans, and Great Britain. It suggests a form of technological determinism, where the capabilities of encrypted communication platforms play a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of organized crime investigations. The advent of platforms like EncroChat and SKY ECC has not only facilitated sophisticated criminal activities but has also presented law enforcement agencies with unprecedented challenges. The encrypted nature of these platforms, with features such as non-traceability and swift data deletion, highlights the deterministic influence of technology on the strategies employed by organized crime groups and the subsequent adaptations required by investigative agencies (Lavorgna, 2016).

The digital criminology of coded forms of communication by organized crime notes the need for a paradigm shift in theoretical frameworks to accommodate the intricacies of crimes in the digital era. The integration of technology, particularly encrypted communication platforms, into the modus operandi of criminal organizations necessitates an updated criminological lens. Traditional distinctions between offline and online crimes are blurred, demanding a holistic understanding of the evolving dynamics within a digital society (Powell, Stratton & Cameron, 2018). The ramifications of EncroChat and SKY ECC extend beyond national boundaries, catalyzing the globalization of organized crime. The instances elucidated in the discourse encompass criminal activities that traverse multiple countries, necessitating synchronized endeavors among global law enforcement agencies. This corresponds with theoretical frameworks addressing transnational organized crime, underscoring the interlinked nature of criminal operations across borders and underscoring the imperative of international cooperation for efficacious counteraction against these threats (Leukfeldt, Lavorgna, & Kleemans, 2017).

The manifestation of criminal adaptation and innovation within organized crime is notably exemplified by the utilization of these communication platforms. Organized crime groups display a remarkable ability to adapt to technological advancements, leveraging encrypted communication platforms for their illicit activities. Simultaneously, law enforcement agencies are compelled to innovate in their investigative approaches, forming collaborations with technology providers and adapting to the changing landscape of organized cybercrime (Lavorgna & Sergi, 2016).

The instances observed within the Balkan Mafia elucidate a rapid assimilation of advanced encrypted communication tools, underscoring the notable adaptability of Albanian organized crime entities to dynamic technological landscapes. The purposeful utilization of platforms such as SKY ECC reflects a strategic imperative for safeguarding operational secrecy, thus highlighting a conscious integration of sophisticated communication technologies. These illustrative cases further manifest

instances of transnational collaboration facilitated by encrypted platforms, thereby providing tangible evidence of the expansive global outreach characterizing these criminal networks. Noteworthy is the strategic diversification represented by the adoption of multiple encrypted tools, a nuanced approach aimed at mitigating potential risks associated with compromise and infiltration.

On the other hand, the inherent adaptability of encrypted communication platforms to a diverse spectrum of criminal activities reveals a level of organizational sophistication within Albanian organized crime. The success of law enforcement in decoding these encrypted communications accentuates an enduring technological arms race, emblematic of the perpetual challenge authorities confront in maintaining pace with the technological advancements embraced by criminal enterprises. This dynamic underscore the pressing need for an adaptive and technologically proficient law enforcement framework in the face of evolving criminal methods of sophistication.

Finally, this is an area with a significant research deficit, which as this article highlighted is limited of the existing criminological theoretical frameworks in fully grasping the transformative ramifications of the digital society. The gap identified in theoretical frameworks highlights the need for critical reflection on the conceptual tools applied in understanding the complexities of organized cybercrime, urging scholars to revisit and adapt their approaches.

Conclusions

The integration of technology into criminal enterprises has undeniably blurred the traditional boundaries between physical and virtual dimensions of organized crime. This article has delved into the profound shifts brought about by the use of encrypted communication platforms such as EncroChat and Sky ECC by organized crime entities, revealing a critical gap in existing criminological theoretical frameworks. Our exploration underscores the urgent need for contemporary research hypotheses that can fully comprehend the transformative ramifications of these digital tools. While conventional distinctions between offline and online crimes have been extensively studied, the specific classification of advanced technological features employed by organized crime groups using encrypted communication platforms is notably absent.

Drawing on the evolving landscape described by Di Nicola as "digital organized crime," we propose an approach that transcends traditional and cyber contexts. Our focus centers on encrypted communication platforms like SKY ECC and EncroChat, serving as emblematic exemplars in the realm of organized cybercrime. This perspective challenges narrow and inflexible definitional paradigms,

emphasizing the need for a nuanced reconceptualization of fundamental concepts like extra-legal governance, violence, and territory.

The case studies of EncroChat and Sky ECC during the period 2019-2022 vividly illustrate the impact of such technologies on criminal activities. These platforms provided complete anonymity, non-traceability, and swift deletion of communications, facilitating organized crime on an unprecedented scale. The dismantling of these platforms by law enforcement agencies further highlights the dynamic interplay between technology and crime prevention.

On the other hand, this study sheds light on other instances such as Ennetcom, Phantom Secure, and the creation of encrypted platforms by law enforcement agencies like ANOM. These examples illustrate the dual role of technology in both enabling and countering organized crime. The global reach of these technologies, their intricate organizational structures, and the adaptability of criminal entities underline the necessity for a comprehensive and adaptive framework in understanding the sophistication of modern organized crime.

Furthermore, the case of Albanian criminal groups exemplifies the integral role of encrypted communication platforms within their operational strategies. The use of platforms like "Matrix" in contract killings and the strategic deployment of secure phones, such as the "Israeli" phone in cocaine trafficking operations, highlights the adaptability of criminal entities to exploit advanced communication technologies for their illicit activities. In essence, our contribution to scholarly discourse advocates for an inclusive perspective that encompasses the intricate dynamics of encrypted communication platforms. It encourages scholars and policymakers to move beyond outdated frameworks, recognizing the multifaceted nature of organized crime in the digital age. As technology continues to evolve, so must our understanding and methodologies to effectively combat and mitigate the impact of organized crime on societies worldwide.

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Contingent Convertible Bonds (CoCo bonds) and their market development in Albania

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Abstract

Convertible Contingent Bonds are important financial instruments for the stability of the banking and financial system in general. The role of innovative financial instruments is crucial to help address the challenges posed by these critical situations. One of these reintroduced instruments with ambitions to enhance the stability of the banking sector is the "Contingent Convertible Bond," abbreviated as "CoCo."

This paper aims to explore the impact of the use of Convertible Contingent Bonds (CoCo) in financial crisis situations and their effect on avoiding the domino effect of a bank failure. Starting from the critical factor of the stability of the financial system, this analysis aims to shed light on the potential of these innovative instruments in improving the stability of the banking sector as well as the need for their modeling in the Albanian banking sector, considering the lack of treatment particular of these instruments in the current legislation. The analysis of the possibilities for their application in the Albanian banking system shows that, if implemented successfully, they can increase the regulatory capital of banks, strengthen financial stability and

reduce the risk of government intervention in cases of crises. In conclusion, the use of CoCo bonds in Albania should be accompanied by the improvement of legislation and the encouragement of financial institutions' investments in these instruments, to create a safer and more stable environment in the country's banking sector.

Keywords: *Contingent Convertible Bonds (CoCo bonds), Basel III, resolution, financial crisis.*

Introduction

Financial shocks have been a persistent event in the global economic landscape, significantly impacting the stability of the financial system. In this context, the role of innovative financial instruments is crucial to help address the challenges posed by these critical situations. One of these reintroduced instruments with ambitions to enhance the stability of the banking sector is the "Contingent Convertible Bond," abbreviated as "CoCo." Contingent Convertible Bonds, also known as CoCo or CoCo bonds (Contingent Convertible bond), are hybrid debt securities that exhibit characteristics and features of both equity and debt. According to Basel III rules, these valuable papers are recognized as regulatory instruments under certain conditions. This complex instrument aims to serve as a regulator in times of financial crises. CoCos are issued as bonds and, in financial crises or bankruptcy risks, have the ability to convert immediately into shares (equity) or be written off (De Spiegeleer, Schoutens & Van Hulle, 2014). Thus, they display loss-absorption qualities, creating a cost advantage. The conversion of the CoCo bond occurs when the financial institution, specifically the bank, hits the minimum regulatory capital level. This conversion is accompanied by a devaluation or weakening of existing shares and shareholders. On the other hand, investors in these bonds, in the best-case scenario when their bond converts to equity, automatically become shareholders with voting rights (De (De Spiegeleer, Schoutens & Van Hulle, 2014). Meanwhile, the bank increases the likelihood of not defaulting, also enhancing its repayment ability, which would otherwise be very difficult or impossible in other circumstances.

Objectives, research questions and hypothesis

The objectives of this paper are the following:

1. Highlighting the positive effects brought about by the use of contingent convertible bonds.
2. Exploring how these types of bonds would function in Albania.

Research question:
"How would the utilization of CoCo bonds impact the financial market in Albania during a financial crisis"? This research project aims to examine the influence of employing CoCo bonds in the context of a financial crisis. To achieve this goal, we will explore a primary hypothesis:

Hypothesis:
"The use of Contingent Convertible Bonds in the Albanian banking sector contributes to better financial stability and protection against the impacts of financial crises".

This prediction is based on the belief that employing CoCo bonds can help enhance the resilience of banks in challenging financial situations. This positive impact may result from the capacity of these instruments to alter the capital structure of banks and automatically convert a portion into common equity in case of a specified capital loss.The research project aims to thoroughly explore this hypothesis and provide a better understanding of the impact of utilizing CoCo bonds in financial storm scenarios. By reviewing relevant literature and analyzing the situation in Albania, we aim to shed light on the potential of these instruments to improve the stability of the financial sector during difficult times.

Methodology

The analysis used in the methodology of this paper is a qualitative one. This analysis will employ a combination of relevant bibliography research and data analysis concerning Albania's regulations, extraordinary interventions, and public offerings. The analysis will evaluate how the use of CoCo bonds is linked to banks' responses to financial crises. The expected results may confirm the formulated hypotheses, demonstrating the positive impact of CoCo bonds on bank stability and their ability to mitigate the spread of the domino effect in case of bankruptcy. These results will contribute to the current discourse on financial crisis management and the role of innovative financial instruments in enhancing the resilience of the financial sector during challenging times. The qualitative analysis methodology in studying CoCo bonds will assist in a better understanding of the impacts and opinions of investors and provide a comprehensive perspective on this complex financial instrument.

Literature Review

Historical background

CoCo bonds, or contingent convertibles, combine debt and equity features by activating loss absorption mechanisms when a bank's capital falls below a certain threshold, preventing bankruptcy (Avdjiev et al., 2015; Bolton et al., 2012). Robert Merton conceptualized CoCo bonds in 1990 to provide investor guarantees during financial crises, influencing regulatory changes post-2008 financial crisis (Sundaresan et al., 2010; Pelger, 2012). Lloyds Banking Group (LBG) issued the first CoCo bonds in 2009, addressing challenges from its acquisition of Halifax Bank of Scotland, with subsequent issuances by Credit Suisse, UBS, Rabobank, and Allianz. CoCo bonds gained prominence in 2014 due to Basel III capital requirements but faced scrutiny after Banco Popular Espanol's case in 2017 (Basel III, 2014; Reuters, June 7, 2017).

Hybrid Instruments

Hybrid instruments blend equity and debt features, offering a predictable return with conversion options (Kimmel P., & Warfield T., 1995; Wiedermann-Ondrej, 2006). Hybrids are subordinated to traditional debt but rank above equity in insolvency (Liberadzki, K. & Liberadzki, M., 2016). Hybrid securities are favored for financial protection but can be challenging due to complexity (Johannesen, 2014). Convertible bonds allow conversion into equity, usually with lower coupon rates. They offer potential equity conversion, coupon payments, and tax advantages. Conversion occurs when profits from equity exceed face value and interest payments (Lewis & Verwijmeren, 2011). Convertible bonds benefit young companies with low coupons and tax deductibility. CoCos differ by converting to equity only when bank capital falls below a threshold.

Basel III Regulation

Basel regulations, starting with the 1988 Basel Accord, aimed to increase banks' capital to absorb losses and reduce risky behavior (Baily, Litan & Johnson 2008). The crisis revealed flaws in dealing with complex financial instruments and high bank leverage ratios (Admati & Hellwig, 2014; Koziol & Lawrenz, 2009). Basel III was introduced in the EU to improve loss absorption capacity and address financial vulnerabilities (Basel III, 2014). Lehman Brothers' bankruptcy in 2008

triggered a financial collapse and highlighted the inadequacy of capital standards, exacerbating the crisis (De Haas & Van Horen, 2012; BCBS, 2010b). Governments globally took unprecedented measures to stabilize the financial system, including providing liquidity and capital support, and established supervisory bodies like the European Banking Authority (EBA). Basel III, coordinated by the G20, increased capital requirements, introduced measures to mitigate leverage and liquidity risk, and aimed to improve the quality, consistency, and transparency of banking activities. It also sought to reduce procyclicality and prevent government bailouts (BIS, 2013; BIS, 2018).

Basel III includes the countercyclical capital buffer to curb credit extension during economic peaks and contingent convertibles as additional Tier 1 capital (BCBS, 2015). Basel III's primary objectives are to limit excessive bank risk-taking, bolster capital reserves, and enhance financial stability to prevent future financial collapses.

CoCo Structure and Design

CoCo Bonds function like regular bonds during prosperous economic periods for the issuing institution but convert into common equity when the capital ratio falls below a specified threshold (De Spiegeleer et al. 2014). This conversion aims to lower the bank's debt-equity ratio significantly, thus reducing the probability of the bank defaulting. Furthermore, upon conversion, the bank automatically recapitalizes, mitigating bankruptcy costs (De Spiegeleer et al. 2014). As a result, CoCo Bonds are widely regarded as a valuable regulatory tool for decreasing the likelihood of bank defaults, minimizing bankruptcy expenses, and internalizing the consequences of poor performance (Maes and Schoutens, 2012). These characteristics, coupled with high expectations, make CoCo Bonds and their structure both economically and politically intriguing for further examination (Maes and Schoutens, 2012).

Design

CoCo bond design significantly influences their intended objectives. Key design elements include the trigger event, threshold value, loss absorption nature, and bond volume (Avdjiev, Kartasheva & Bogdanova, 2013). The trigger event marks when the loss absorption mechanism activates, with one or more triggers possible. Decisions regarding trigger basis (book or market values) and the use of mechanical or supervisory authority-driven triggers are essential (Flannery, 2010).

Mechanical triggers activate when capital falls below a specified ratio of risk-weighted assets, triggering automatic conversion or write-down (Maes and Schoutens 2012). They are clear and observable but lack consideration of additional

information (BCBS, 2015). In contrast, discretionary triggers rely on supervisory judgment of a financial institution's solvency prospects. They offer flexibility but may suffer from timing uncertainty and market signals (Pazarbasioglu et al., 2011). CoCo bonds can also employ a mix of trigger types, like a mechanical trigger based on specific bank assets coupled with a discretionary trigger considering broader financial system conditions (BCBS, 2015). In the EU, CoCos typically use accounting value triggers to align with prudential requirements, reflecting regulators' preference (Maes and Schoutens 2012; Glasserman & Nouri, 2012).

Purpose

CoCo bonds serve multiple purposes in the financial industry. They are issued by financial institutions to enhance their loss-absorbing capacity alongside CET1 Capital, allowing banks to bolster their ability to absorb losses before a financial downturn occurs, all while paying a lower market price for risk assumption and without diluting the control of the owners' rights during a crisis (Flannery, 2010).

CoCo bonds are recognized for their cost advantages compared to CET1 capital, helping prevent banks from restricting their lending activities (Pazarbasioglu et al., 2011). These cost advantages are attributed, among other factors, to the tax deductibility of coupon payments, especially in most European Union countries (Albul, Jaffee & Tchistyi, 2010).

Moreover, the conversion feature of CoCo bonds aims to provide financial institutions with additional CET1 capital when needed, helping to prevent deterioration in the bank's balance sheets (Pennacchi et al., 2011). The use of CoCo bonds is also intended to enhance supervision and risk management through a customized contractual structure.

The primary purpose of these hybrid instruments is to reduce the risk for individual banks and, consequently, for the entire banking system, lessening the need for government rescue measures at the expense of taxpayers and contributing to stabilizing the overall economy (Glasserman & Nouri, 2012).

Loss Absorption Mechanism

CoCo bonds have a crucial loss absorption mechanism determining conversion or write-down outcomes (Martynova & Perotti, 2016). The conversion rate in CoCo bonds is significant, representing the dilution of equity holders' claims and the CET1 capital CoCo bondholders receive (Pennacchi et al., 2011).Dilution involves a shift in control rights and profit/loss distribution, depending on fixed or variable conversion rates, but once conversion occurs, it's irreversible (Avdjiev et al., 2015). Significant dilution redistributes profit and loss claims to CoCo bondholders,

possibly prompting original equity holders to avoid conversion by selling their bonds in advance, causing price declines (Albul, Jaffee & Tchistyi, 2010).CoCo bonds encourage better risk management and determining when substantial dilution is needed (Henkel & Kaal, 2012).

Regulatory perspective favors substantial dilution to incentivize responsible risk management (Johannesen, 2014). Principal write-down reduces bank debt via CoCo bonds but doesn't grant equity, with options for partial or full write-down specified in the contract. It motivates equity holders and bank management to take risks, leaving control and participation rights unaffected (Pennacchi et al., 2011).CoCo bonds with conversion mechanisms are generally preferred, but contract specifics on full or partial conversion/write-down and gradations are essential (Avdjiev, Kartasheva & Bogdanova, 2013).In European markets, around 49% of CoCo bonds feature principal write-down, likely influenced by bank equity holders' decision-making power (Admati & Hellwig, 2014; Albul, Jaffee & Tchistyi, 2010).

Advantages

CoCo bonds serve as effective instruments for financial market regulation, benefiting both issuers and bondholders. They shift the burden of risk-taking from taxpayers to bank owners and enhance bank stability (Goodhart & Taylor 2006; Pennacchi et al. 2016).The key difference from standard convertible bonds is the trigger mechanism, initially proposed as a single trigger but later studies suggested multiple triggers (Huertas 2009; Albul, Jaffee & Tchistyi 2010; Pennacchi 2011; Plosser 2010). CoCo bonds gained prominence after the financial crisis, addressing the need for a capital buffer and reducing the "too big to fail" problem (Blundell, Wignall & Roulet 2013).They offer a cost-effective way to recapitalize banks, replacing the bankruptcy process (Bolton & Samama 2012) and improving bank solvency under specific conditions. Effectiveness depends on managerial caution and supervisory autonomy, and CoCo bonds are seen as a useful instrument when capital needs and regulatory actions are inversely related (Hilscher and Raviv, 2014).In summary, CoCo bonds have the potential to enhance financial stability, although their impact may vary depending on circumstances (Flannery 2014).

Disadvantages

CoCo bonds, while praised for their potential to enhance financial stability, face skepticism and concerns in the financial literature. Critics argue that simpler solutions like increased equity may be more effective and that CoCo bonds' complexity can complicate financial systems. Concerns also revolve around the

conversion mechanism's potential to spread economic distress and create incentives for risky behavior. Some worry that CoCo bonds may not completely avert bank failure and that their trigger mechanisms may be inefficient. Additionally, they could exacerbate bank weaknesses during crises, lead to destabilizing effects in markets, and generate negative externalities. Overall, CoCo bonds remain a topic of ongoing debate in the financial community.

Development of the CoCo Market in Albania

Regarding the Albanian legislation, contingent convertible bonds are financial instruments that have not received specific treatment in Albanian law. Not only for CoCos, but for many other financial instruments, Albanian legislation does not anticipate their treatment, as the economic development and the absence of a well-established securities market make them less of a priority. Consequently, since Albania does not have a well-established stock exchange, financial institutions such as banks will find it harder to issue contingent convertible bonds. This is because investors would be hesitant to risk their portfolios for value papers that have a higher probability of being written off than being converted into shares.

Resolution

The law on recovery resolution outlines how banks and investors should handle dematerialized bonds in cases of extraordinary intervention. The custodian plays a crucial role in this process and has the right not to pay the bonds until their issuer has fulfilled its obligations. The regulation requires custodians to inform their investors about the purchase and sale prices of dematerialized bonds in over-the-counter markets, including any commission or fee. This information is crucial for investors to make informed decisions regarding their bonds. The regulation also specifies the criteria and procedures for converting liabilities into capital for banks. This is an important tool for recapitalizing banks when needed to maintain financial stability. It sets the criteria and minimum requirements that banks must meet to ensure an adequate level of regulatory capital and accepted liabilities. This is a crucial aspect of bank supervision to mitigate financial risks. It sets the criteria and conditions that must be met to recognize financial instruments as accepted liabilities. This process ensures that the instruments banks use to fulfill their obligations are reliable and meet necessary standards. If banks meet the minimum requirements for regulatory capital and accepted liabilities using first-tier capital instruments, they can fulfill the macroprudential capital buffers.

The Resolution Authority (Bank of Albania) is responsible for developing and updating methodologies and policies related to meeting the minimum capital and accepted liability requirements. This ensures continuous updates and effective intervention by authorities in the banking sector. Overall, extraordinary intervention in Albanian banks is essential to ensure financial stability and protect the interests of investors and depositors. The defined regulations and procedures are the primary means to achieve these goals.

Minimum Requirements for Regulatory Capital Instruments and Accepted Liabilities

According to Regulation No. 78/2020 of the Bank of Albania, a minimum requirement for the levels of bank capital and accepted liabilities has been established. This requirement concerns the absorption of losses and the need for recapitalization. For banks that, according to the extraordinary intervention scenario, will not face mandatory liquidation, there is a value to absorb losses. This assessment represents the losses that the bank must be able to withstand, reaching the regulatory capital requirement. At the same time, there is also a recapitalization value, which is the amount of capital the bank must hold (after extraordinary intervention) to ensure compliance with licensing conditions and continue licensed operations. Banks that, according to the extraordinary intervention scenario, will be subject to mandatory liquidation, must primarily fulfill the absorption of losses requirement, but they are not required to fulfill the recapitalization value.

In accordance with Article 6 of Regulation No. 78/2020, the value for absorbing losses is calculated as follows:

Loss Absorption Value = Risk-weighted Exposures t-1 * (Capital Adequacy Ratio (12%)t + Additional Capital Buffer Rate (%)t
In accordance with Article 7 of Regulation No. 78/2020, the value for recapitalization is calculated as follows:
Recapitalization Value = Risk-weighted Exposures t-1 * (Capital Adequacy Ratio (12%)t + Additional Capital Buffer Rate (%)t)

According to Regulation No. 78/2020, the Bank of Albania has the possibility to adjust the recapitalization value by considering a significant reduction in the bank's balance sheet size after an extraordinary intervention, as well as restructuring plans and measures. This adjustment is based on a detailed analysis for each bank. One of the methods to consider the reduction in the bank's balance sheet size is by incorporating the credit risk magnitude into the bank's overall risk profile. For example, if the bank's repayment ability is affected by credit risk losses, the bank

may have a smaller balance sheet. The impact of reducing the balance sheet size on the regulatory capital requirement is more significant when credit risk has a substantial contribution. However, the reduction in the balance sheet size should not exceed 10% of the total bank assets. Reducing the balance sheet size through divestments and planned sales in restructuring plans can be considered to adjust the recapitalization value by removing high-risk-weight assets from the balance sheet.

This activity is appropriate when the bank is not in default. If the planned restructuring actions are mandatory and have restricted timelines, the Bank of Albania may influence the determination of the recapitalization value. The Bank of Albania has the right to regulate the bank's balance sheet size based on recovery plans, in extraordinary cases and in accordance with the specified conditions. Recovery measures can be considered only if they are seen as reliable, achievable, and immediate after the extraordinary intervention, with a positive impact on loss scenarios. The Bank of Albania has the possibility to intervene to reduce the balance sheet size after an extraordinary intervention, reducing it by up to 5% of the balance sheet size.

Issuing of Bonds

According to the issuance guidelines by the Government of the Republic of Albania, in force since 25.01.2014, bonds have the following characteristics:

- Have a maturity period of more than one year, issued in the local currency (Lek), as well as foreign currencies (USD/EUR).
- Are sold in auctions conducted by the Bank of Albania, in the name and on behalf of the government represented by the Ministry of Finance.
- Are issued at par value, meaning the purchase price is 100% of the nominal value, excluding bonds issued in reopened auctions.

The coupon (interest earned from investing in bonds) is paid every 6 months and calculated as:

$C = Vn * i * 180/360$
C- coupon
Vn- nominal value
i- interest
In the secondary market, bonds have a 30/360 basis for coupon calculation and price.
Reopened bonds are calculated as:
Price = Clean price + Accrued interest

It is worth noting that the variable interest of the bonds is determined by the average of the 3 yields of the last 3 auctions (held before the auction of these bonds) of treasury bonds with a maturity of up to one year. If the maturity date is a holiday, the payment is postponed to the next working day without adding interest or incurring additional delay charges. Entities eligible to participate in the auction are individuals and legal entities, who can be domestic or foreign, and their requests can be competitive or non-competitive. The minimum value for participation in the auction is ALL 500,000 in the national currency and Eur/USD 3,000 in foreign currency. If the demand is equal to or greater than ALL 50,000,000 or Eur/USD 100,000, the demand will be classified as competitive regardless of the entity. As for taxation on income from bonds, it is retained at the source for individual investors and non-profit subjects. Tax resident entities that are subject to income tax and entities registered as local tax-paying subjects for small businesses are not withheld at the source, as they are recorded as income in the balance sheet. Exempt from tax or those with concessions are those with disabled status (according to the respective law), except in cases where the investment is made through economic activities.

The Ministry of Finance exempts itself from liability for delays in bond redemptions or negative market impacts due to the following cases:

- Natural disasters
- Actions caused by other authorities (threat of war, war, or popular uprisings)
- Events affecting the continuity of the Ministry of Finance's work
- Other major forces with widespread impact

All securities are sold in the primary market, which is the auction conducted by the Bank of Albania. The secondary market, or the retail market, includes any transactions carried out on these securities after they have been traded once in the primary market. In the Republic of Albania, we can mention these secondary markets: the interbank market for government securities, the retail market for government securities, and the market on the Tirana Stock Exchange.

Transactions that can be conducted by financial institutions and other licensed entities in the capital market are as follows:

1. Acquisition of treasury bonds in the primary market (through auction) by the investor through a bank or licensed entity.
2. Sale of government securities to the investor from the bank's portfolio or licensed entity.
3. Purchase of government securities by the bank or licensed entity before the maturity date from any investor, regardless of whether previous transactions were not conducted by the same bank or licensed entity.

4. Use of government securities as collateral for other loans or other financial transactions.
5. Redemption of the nominal value of government securities on the maturity date.

Public Offering

A public offering of securities is considered public when it is made to more than 100 individuals (Albanian Financial Supervisory Authority). Companies with a public offering are companies that distribute their shares to the public through stock exchanges or other legal means. The need to increase capital is associated with the goal of expanding activities and improving technology, aiming to become strong competitors in the market. One of the ways to increase capital is by issuing and selling securities by the company. These new issuances, which can be shares, bonds, or securities, are usually traded publicly in what is known as the primary market. Offerings in the primary market can be offered for sale in two ways:

- Public offering, which includes a public offer to communicate to the public the distribution of securities to a minimum of 100 individuals (based on the Capital Markets Law).
- Direct allocation, which includes an offer to distribute securities only to a small group of large investors or a limited number of institutional investors.

To consider an issuance as public, the following conditions must be met:

1. The offer must be distributed to more than 100 investors.
2. The company must be listed simultaneously on the Stock Exchange to enable small investors to convert their investment into liquidity.
3. During the initial public offering, an advertising campaign must commence in the media.

Companies aiming to finance their business activities by involving the public must be organized as publicly traded companies. This results in a complex set of additional rules related to publication, transparency, control, and other aspects of public company management.

The "Traders and Companies" Law stipulates that private offering companies must have a minimum registered capital of ALL 2 million, while those with a public offering must have this minimum capital of at least 10 million lekë (Article 1052). On the other hand, the Law "On Capital Markets", in Article 245 defines public companies as those which offer their securities via Public Offerings, either

initial (IPO) or secondary (SPO), at an amount of ALL 130,000,000, to more than 100 investors.

Initial Public Offering (IPO) involves the distribution of a private company's shares to the public for the first time and their listing on the stock exchange to raise capital as an effective way of financing operations. IPO is an obligation for the company offering shares to the public and allows investors to convert shares into liquidity if they wish to exit their investment after a specified period. This is a common way for companies to secure additional funding by distributing portions of their ownership to the public.

Secondary Public Offering (SPO) is the distribution of securities of a company that has previously distributed securities in a public offering. The purpose of this offering is to increase capital to make investments in the company or to fund previous debt. The securities distributed through an SPO are also listed on the stock exchange to create liquidity for their investors. The procedures for conducting an IPO include several important steps, starting with the gathering of shareholders, selecting the form of the registration statement, preparing the necessary documentation, and approving the prospectus. After these steps, the marketing period begins, along with the sale of shares on the capital market. If market conditions are favorable, IPOs can be an efficient way for companies to secure the necessary funding to develop their business activities and increase the company's value.

If contingent convertible bonds were to be issued in Albania, a complete restructuring of legislation would be necessary, also supported by "Basel III Agreement". However, considering what happened with these bonds at Credit Suisse Bank, their implementation in Albania would be even more challenging. Investors would not be eager to enrich their portfolios with these high-risk bonds, regardless of the yield they possess. Furthermore, to invest in contingent convertible bonds, institutional investors would be needed, who must have a well-diversified portfolio.

Another difficulty encountered in the Albanian market is that banks in Albania cannot yet offer public offerings. A public offering brings improvements in financial conditions by ensuring permanent funds that improve the financial situation. The company benefits from the distributed shares as public information about products and services is higher. It increases access to secure capital, thus increasing financing resources and making it easier to obtain loans on favorable terms. Public offerings bring facilities for securing additional capital from banks, offers of shares and bonds, and easier registration forms for additional capital. Since banks cannot offer public offerings, they cannot issue contingent convertible bonds either.

For a country like Albania, the implementation of contingent convertible bonds would increase the minimum regulatory capital requirement and contribute to the development of the banking network. It would provide security for bank depositors

and taxpayers because immediate government intervention would not be needed in case of bankruptcy. The bank would be "rescued" from these bonds. Other benefits that the bank will have are increasing the first-tier capital, higher valuation of shares during the life of the CoCos, improving liquidity position during banking stress periods, and strengthening the bank's balance sheet.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Considering the abovementioned analysis, we conclude that:

1. Albanian legislation has not specifically addressed contingent convertible obligations and many other financial instruments. This has rendered these instruments unenforceable in the financial practice of Albania.
2. The absence of a well-established securities market has made it difficult for financial institutions, such as banks, to issue contingent convertible bonds and other securities. Investors are not inclined to risk their portfolio with securities that do not have a developed market.
3. Regulations and procedures related to extraordinary interventions in the banking sector are crucial to ensure financial stability and protect the interests of investors and depositors in emergency situations.
4. Naming government bonds is an important and well-regulated process, where the nominal value, coupons, and payment conditions are clearly defined.
5. The limitation in the Albanian banking sector, where banks are unable to offer public offerings and contingent convertible bonds, poses a significant obstacle. This restriction hinders the improvement of financial conditions, access to secure capital, and favorable loan terms. It also restricts the distribution of shares and the ability to capitalize on public awareness of products and services.

Recommendations

Considering the abovementioned conclusions, it is recommended as follows:

1. Improvement of Albanian legislation to specifically address contingent convertible bonds and other financial instruments. This would aid in the development of the securities market and increase interest in such investments.

2. Encouragement of establishing a fully functional securities exchange in Albania to facilitate the issuance and trading of various securities. This would make investments in securities more attractive and help increase available capital for financial institutions.

3. Continued improvement of regulations and procedures related to extraordinary interventions in the banking sector to ensure they align with international standards and maintain financial stability.

4. Encouragement of banks and financial institutions to explore the possibility of investing in contingent convertible bonds, viewing them as a means to raise capital and strengthen their position in the financial market. This could be done through incentives and rewards for institutions that utilize these instruments with long-term maturity.

5. Advocate for regulatory reforms that allow Albanian banks to conduct public offerings and issue contingent convertible bonds. These changes would enable banks to enhance their financial stability, access additional capital, and improve their overall financial situation. Additionally, it would facilitate the dissemination of public information about their offerings, attracting more investors and contributing to a more robust financial market.

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National and Civil Security in Kosovo: Premises, Components, Challenges, and Risks

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Abstract

This paper explores the complex landscape of national and civil security in Kosovo, focusing on the premises, main components, challenges, and risks associated with establishing a secure and stable environment in Europe's youngest nation. Kosovo's journey towards statehood and security is hindered by a myriad of factors including political instability, economic underdevelopment, and the lingering effects of ethnic tensions. The research delves into the intricate dynamics between national security measures and human security needs, emphasizing the impact of political instability on the broader security framework. By examining the roles of various security institutions such as the Kosovo Security Force and the Kosovo Police and assessing their effectiveness in the face of external threats, particularly from Serbia and its allies, this study highlights the ongoing struggles and the necessary reforms in Kosovo's security sector. Additionally, the paper discusses the influence of international actors and frameworks, including NATO and the EU, in shaping Kosovo's security policies and practices. Through a comprehensive analysis, this study calls for a concerted effort from both local leadership and international partners to enhance Kosovo's security architecture, ensuring a stable, secure, and prosperous future for its citizens. The recommendations provided aim to fortify Kosovo's institutional capabilities and address the socio-political challenges that impede its path to a secure statehood.

Introduction

This paper aims to analyze the premises, main components, challenges, and risks of National Security in Kosovo. Much has been researched and written about the challenges and potential for Kosovo's further development as a state, economy, and society. It is acknowledged that the country's economic policies have primarily focused on the sustainability of the public sector, a sector that is substantial and consequently costly. National and Human Security in the Republic of Kosovo is far from what it should be. Despite numerous contributing factors to Kosovo's slow progress and the human security of its citizens in the last decade, a fundamental (and often overlooked) issue has been political instability, including recurrent premature elections resulting in a series of unresolved government mandates. As a result, implications for human security have been low, as the negligence in addressing political instability, which is solely responsible for Kosovo's progress, has led to increased challenges in food security, employment security, and, among others, healthcare security.

Kosovo, Europe's youngest nation, still encounters obstacles in solidifying its state sovereignty. As it progresses from a critical phase of establishing statehood and strengthening democratic institutions, Kosovo continues to be an unfinished item on the agendas of global powers. Serbia's territorial assertions, the inability to secure UN membership, and non-recognition by five EU countries impede Kosovo's overall political, economic, and social progress (Perera, 2018, p.8). In the crucial undertaking of state-building, it is vital to strengthen both national security and the institutions that safeguard it. Effective security frameworks are foundational to a stable and autonomous state. Additionally, Kosovo's efforts to establish a robust national security system are complicated by the presence of Serbian parallel structures. These entities, which operate within Kosovo's borders, are endorsed and supported by officials from Belgrade, posing significant challenges to Kosovo's sovereignty and internal security. This external interference undermines Kosovo's quest for stability and recognition as an independent state.

This paper serves as a call for awareness. It is a warning for policymakers and civic actors in directly affected countries, as well as leaders in Western Europe and the United States, who are parties interested in Kosovo's secular, pro-Western democracy.

Factors of Slow Development and the National Security System in Kosovo

Kosovo has traversed a long journey since the 1999 war. The extended transition phase from peacekeeping to state-building has yielded relative stability in Kosovo. The political progress in Kosovo has been significant. The Republic of Kosovo is recognized by 113 UN member states (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo, 2017). Moreover, Kosovo has made considerable strides in consolidating its state institutions. Notably, progress has been achieved in Kosovo's economic development (Coleman, 2016).

Research by Alesina, Ozler, Rubini, and Swagel (1996) identifies political instability as "the tendency of a government collapse... a pattern in which such political instability and economic growth are determined together." Furthermore, their findings indicate that while low economic growth increases the likelihood of government changes, political instability and subsequent government collapse enhance the chances of future government collapses (Alesina et al., 1996).

Since Kosovo's independence, the political sphere has been marred by division, even when critical national interests, questioned in this perspective, seemed uncertain for a population that desperately needs a united front to address its numerous fundamental needs. In these conditions, Kosovo still grapples with the inability to meet the basic needs of its citizens, as mentioned above. Moreover, Kosovo has not overcome the major obstacles to progress, including corruption, organized crime, and finding realistic solutions to ethnic disputes. Nevertheless, unstable governments and the now-established tradition of premature elections remain significant obstacles to progress (Global Security, 2017).

Immediately after independence, governments resulting from the national elections of November 17, 2007, were all short-lived. This government's mandate was interrupted when, after independence, Kosovo held its national elections on November 15, 2009. Subsequently, due to the Constitution of Kosovo, the court ruled on President Sejdiu that he had violated the constitution by mentioning the violation of not holding the positions of president and party political leader simultaneously (Democratic League of Kosovo) and President Sejdiu's resignation on September 27 created a deterioration in the coalition relations between the LDK (Democratic League of Kosovo) and PDK (Democratic Party of Kosovo).[1] With the vote of no confidence in the Assembly of Kosovo against the Thaçi Government, early elections occurred again on December 12, 2010. While international observers deemed the elections successful, local elections were scandalized by irregularities

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[1] The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Article 88.

and electoral manipulations, irregularities in counting, intimidation, and pressure on local observers, violations of election procedures, forgery of signatures on the voter list, and family voting, leading to reruns in some municipalities in early 2011 (Global Security, 2017).

Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy called the NATO presence in Kosovo a new security vocation seeing the defense of human security as a global concern and the humanitarian imperative that galvanized NATO into action (Lloyd, 1999).

The People of Kosovo and Their Human Security

Despite the aforementioned political instability being a common denominator in a series of challenges for the country regarding human security, institutions and people, in general, still do not comprehend security beyond the traditional perspective. Hence, they are not directly recognizing the negative correlation that political instability has with their human security. In this sense, Kosovo's institutions and society predominantly focus on security issues traditionally understood, such as the military, police, and intelligence, while paying less or no attention to issues related to human security and social security (DCAF, 2015, f. 2). These aspects are equally crucial for national security, especially for a state like Kosovo.

The concept of human security encompasses various factors, including economic, health, food, political, communal, environmental, and personal security. According to Kofi Annan (2001), human security, in its broader sense, involves much more than the absence of violent conflict. It includes human rights, good governance, access to education and healthcare, and ensuring that every individual has the opportunity and choice to fulfill their potential. Each step in this direction is also an improper step toward poverty reduction, economic growth, and conflict prevention. Freedom from want, freedom from fear, and the freedom of future generations to inherit a healthy natural environment, where these can be called the connecting blocks that build human security and consequently national security (Center for Global Development Research, p. 1). Although the focus on human security in Kosovo differs from that of national security, both are closely linked. Human security is crucial not only for the well-being of the country but also for national security, stability, and overall development.

The majority of the focus in Kosovo, on security issues, has been on establishing the Armed Forces of Kosovo and preventing radicalization and violent extremism (OSCE, 2022). Focusing solely on these two aspects of security has allowed the neglect of serious fundamental issues related to human and social security in the country. If not addressed, these issues pose a serious threat to national security as a whole. The lack of economic growth and opportunities for the citizens of

Kosovo has become a serious challenge in consolidating Kosovo as a stable state. Its national security and approach to countering violent extremism have so far failed to address one of Kosovo's key issues—the crisis of identity in a mostly young population burdened with information and change in an environment that has provided no adequate support (Coleman, Human Security in Kosovo: Another Facet of National Security, 2016). While the goal of a new country like Kosovo should be to create a capable state ready to fulfill its duties and obligations to its citizens, significant shortcomings in various areas related to human security of the citizens of Kosovo remain (UNODC, 2008). These shortcomings make Kosovo's citizens even more vulnerable, especially in an environment where political stability is at its worst, and snap elections seem to challenge almost every term of the central government, making Kosovo's progress even more unattainable.

National Security as a Vital Component of Power: A Synthesized Analysis

National security is a fundamental aspect of power, essential for protecting a society's core values. To ensure comprehensive national security, states develop policies and establish institutions. This requires implementing protective measures at both national and international levels. States must engage in a series of strategic actions to secure their interests and safety. An analysis of the current security situation, its trends, and the nature of external threats, challenges, and risks to critical assets is imperative. It is also crucial to assess the legality of the emergence of negative security situations and to identify the causes behind these adverse security events (Stankovski, 2013, p. 137).

Security is a variable value that nations may possess in varying degrees and to which they may aspire in different extents. When juxtaposing it with wealth and power—where wealth quantifies a nation's material riches, and power gauges its capability to influence or control the behavior of others—security takes on a distinct dimension. In an objective sense, security can be measured by the absence of threats to a nation's established values, indicating a state where these values are not actively endangered. Conversely, in a subjective sense, security reflects the absence of fear among the populace that these valued assets or principles are at risk of being compromised or attacked. This dual perspective on security underscores its role as both a tangible and psychological state within the context of national stability and wellbeing (Wolfers, 1952, pp. 485-486).

The national security system, which includes two principal components—national security policy and national security structures—ensures the safety of society's members (Grizold, 1999). Given the complex global landscape marked by frequent political disagreements and conflicts both worldwide and within regions, it has become crucial for states to prioritize enhancing their national security

framework. Consequently, national security must be regarded as a top priority by both the government and public security bodies. This necessitates substantial investments in financial resources, infrastructure, and human capital to equip the state to face global and regional security challenges effectively.

Over the past 15 years, the Western Balkans has undergone a dramatic transformation in geopolitical, security, and defense circumstances. This transformation commenced with NATO interventions against former Yugoslavia (1995, 1999) and continued with the Ohrid Framework Agreement (2001), the independence of Montenegro (2006) and Kosovo (2008), the NATO membership of Albania and Croatia (2009), and Croatia's accession to the EU (NATO, 12 May 2022). The relations between Kosovo and Serbia, still in the early stages of normalization, deviate from this general trend (Peci, 2014, p. 9). Among all Western Balkan countries, only Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Kosovo are not NATO members. Serbia, due to the events of the 1999 war, is not interested in joining this organization.

Intervention and Russian Influence in the Western Balkans

The security sector encompasses all structures, institutions, and personnel responsible for offering, managing, and overseeing security at the national and local levels. Effective Security Sector Governance (SSG) denotes the provision of responsible state and human security within a framework of democratic civil control, rule of law, and respect for human rights. The primary goal of Security Sector Reform (SSR) is to establish a strong and efficient security sector governance (SSG). SSR is both a political and technical endeavor that seeks to boost state and human security by improving the effectiveness and accountability of security provision, management, and oversight. This is achieved within a framework that emphasizes democratic civilian control, adherence to the rule of law, and a commitment to human rights (DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, 2022). While SSR can be targeted at specific components of the security sector, it may also encompass the entire system, provided the overarching aim is to enhance both the efficiency and the accountability of the security operations.

A critical aspect of national security is the development of a security policy. This policy is grounded in national interests, which serve as both the basis for formulating the security policy and the benchmarks for managing security threats and evaluating strategic alternatives (Bartholomees, 2010, p.5). Furthermore, national security objectives play a pivotal role in safeguarding and promoting these national interests, guiding the strategic direction and operational priorities of the security policy (Peci, 2014, p.18).

An examination of the security and military landscape reveals that Kosovo is not confronted with direct and significant threats from any of the Western Balkan nations, with the notable exception of Serbia. Serbia continues to make territorial claims and sporadically threatens the use of force. The primary security concern for Kosovo arises from Serbia's aggressive defense and security strategies, which involve using its military forces for political ends. As such, it is difficult to dismiss the possibility that Belgrade maintains military strategies for potential unforeseen conflicts with Kosovo. Clearly, Kosovo itself does not represent a military threat to Serbia, neither now nor in any future scenario. This is despite the so-called "security" issues[2] that Belgrade raises, which fundamentally stem from its refusal to recognize Kosovo. Moreover, the ongoing dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade, though supported by Brussels, has yet to address initiatives that would foster trust and cooperation on security and defense matters between the two states. Consequently, achieving a substantial normalization of relations, which could pave the way for mutual recognition, seems implausible without first resolving the doctrinal disputes that currently hinder defense cooperation between Kosovo and Serbia (Peci, 2014, p. 64).

The withdrawal or cessation of NATO's mission in Kosovo would be detrimental to the security of the youngest state in Europe—Kosovo. This risk is further compounded by Kosovo's non-membership in the United Nations (NATO-Nato`s role in Kosovo,2021). The most plausible option in the Serbia-Kosovo relationship is that Serbia seeks the partition of Kosovo, with its northern, predominantly Serbian-populated part being annexed by Serbia. This scenario is speculated to be executed by Serbian leaders and poses the greatest risk to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Kosovo. Kosovo has established armed forces and should become a NATO member as soon as possible.

Institutions of the Security of Kosovo

Key institutions and mechanisms play pivotal roles in Kosovo's security architecture. These include the Parliament, the President, the Government (comprising the Prime Minister and various ministers), the Kosovo Security Council, the Kosovo Police, the Kosovo Security Force, as well as the Kosovo Intelligence Agency and the Civil Aviation Authority. Among these, the Kosovo Police holds a unique and critical position as it is currently the sole local security entity authorized to exercise any form of physical force. This exclusive authority positions the Kosovo Police as the most significant local security institution in the region (Qehaja and Vrajolli, 2012, p. 111).

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[2] The EU-facilitated Belgrade-Pristina dialogue chaired by High Representative Josep Borrell, 27 February 2022

The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, which became effective following Kosovo's declaration of independence, includes a detailed revision of the security apparatus under Chapter XI. This chapter is critical as it outlines the framework and responsibilities of the security organs within Kosovo. Specifically, Article 125, titled "General Principles," delineates several key aspects: (a) It affirms the Republic of Kosovo's sovereignty over law enforcement, security, justice, public order, intelligence, civil emergencies, and border control within its borders; (b) It mandates that security institutions in Kosovo are tasked with safeguarding public security and the rights of all citizens. These institutions are required to operate transparently and adhere to internationally recognized standards of democracy and human rights. Furthermore, these institutions are expected to reflect the ethnic diversity of Kosovo's population in their composition; (c) It asserts Kosovo's commitment to honor all binding international agreements and rights and highlights its collaboration with international and regional security organizations; (d) It ensures that security institutions are subject to civil and democratic oversight, guaranteeing accountability and governance in line with democratic principles. Additionally, the Constitution stipulates that the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo is responsible for supervising the budget and policies of the security institutions, which are to be regulated by national laws. This constitutional framework was established on June 15, 2008, in alignment with the Comprehensive Plan for the Resolution of the Final Status of Kosovo, commonly referred to as the Ahtisaari Plan (Brosig, 2011, p.2). This plan played a crucial role in shaping the constitutional and security architecture of the Republic of Kosovo, aiming to provide a robust legal and operational foundation for the country's governance and security mechanisms (Perrit, 2009).

Kosovo's political framework is shaped by the Ahtisaari Package, which has led to the establishment of security and defense institutions, including defense forces. To facilitate the formation of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Kosovo, constitutional amendments were necessary. These changes represented significant challenges for Kosovo's institutions as they navigated the complex process of establishing a national armed force (Hallenberg, 2006, p.337). With the establishment of these armed forces, it is evident that Kosovo's security architecture has been comprehensively enhanced, reflecting a more robust defense capability.

Under the current provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, the Kosovo Security Force is designated as the national security force of the Republic of Kosovo. It has the authority to deploy its members internationally, in line with the country's international obligations. This force is primarily responsible for the protection of Kosovo's citizens and communities, operating within the legal competencies outlined by national legislation. The President of the Republic of Kosovo holds the role of Commander-in-Chief of the Kosovo Security Force,

ensuring that the force remains under the supervision of democratically elected civilian authorities (O`Neill, 2002). The Kosovo Security Force is notable for its representation of the ethnic diversity within Kosovo, recruiting members from all segments of the country's population. This inclusivity is a fundamental aspect of its operational ethos. The appointment of the Commander of the Kosovo Security Force is made by the President, based on a recommendation from the Government, which underscores the integration of democratic oversight in its command structure. The internal organization and operational parameters of the Kosovo Security Force are governed by national laws, as stipulated in Article 126 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo. This legal framework ensures that the force's activities are conducted within a structured and regulated environment, reinforcing its role in national and international security contexts.

The functioning and competencies of the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) are governed by Law No. 03/L-46, which was enacted by the Assembly of Kosovo on March 13, 2008. This law outlines the structure and duties of the KSF, defining it as an entirely voluntary organization, recruited from all segments of society, thereby reflecting the diverse makeup of the country (Sur, 2010, p.178). Furthermore, the official languages for the KSF are Albanian and Serbian, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity within the force. English is also used for communications with international organizations, facilitating international cooperation and engagement. The Kosovo Security Force is tasked with specific security functions that are distinct from those of the police or other law enforcement agencies. These functions are carefully monitored and must adhere to international standards. The deployment of these functions is coordinated with the International Military and the International Civilian Representative, as specified in Article 9 of Law No. 03/L-46. This framework ensures that the KSF operates within a structured and regulated environment, contributing effectively to the national and international security landscape.

Following Kosovo's declaration of independence, the Kosovo Security Council (KSC) was formed in line with the legal frameworks set out in the Ahtisaari Package, marking a significant component of Kosovo's new security sector architecture. Central to the council are key national figures who play a pivotal role in the council's operations. The KSC is primarily advisory and evaluative, tasked with shaping policy and reviewing legislation pertinent to the national security sector (Security Forum, 2010, p. 9). This body is constitutionally established, following the stipulations laid out in the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo. Unlike in many developed countries where the president often heads the national security council, in Kosovo, the Prime Minister leads the Kosovo Security Council. This arrangement underscores the distinct governance structure of the country (Murphy, 2009). As per the Constitution, the Kosovo Security Council works collaboratively with both

the President and the Government of Kosovo to devise the security strategy for the Republic, ensuring a cohesive and comprehensive approach to national security planning and implementation. This strategic collaboration is essential for aligning the security objectives and initiatives across the different branches of government.

The Kosovo Intelligence Agency is a key constitutional security institution in Kosovo, established under the guidance of the Constitution in Chapter XXI, titled "Security Sector," more precisely in Article 129. This agency plays a crucial role in maintaining national security by detecting, investigating, and monitoring security threats within the Republic of Kosovo. The Constitution outlines several fundamental characteristics of the agency: (a) Its primary function is the surveillance and analysis of security threats. (b) It is designed to operate as a professional body that is politically independent and ethnically diverse, ensuring broad representation and impartiality. Additionally, it is subject to legislative oversight as prescribed by law. (c) The leadership of the Kosovo Intelligence Agency, including the director, deputy director, and general inspector, is appointed jointly by the President of the Republic of Kosovo and the Prime Minister following consultations with the Government (Kastrti & Shala, 2017). The qualifications and tenure of these positions are strictly regulated by law. (d) Both the President and the Prime Minister are privy to the same intelligence reports, facilitating a unified approach to national security issues (Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Article 129). This structure ensures that the agency operates transparently and is accountable to the country's top elected officials, reinforcing its role in safeguarding Kosovo's security.

In June 2008, the Assembly of Kosovo passed the Law on the Kosovo Intelligence Agency (KIA), Law No. 03/L-063, which delineates the specific mandate and operational framework for the KIA (Knoll, 2009, p.184). This legislation provides a detailed outline of how the KIA is to be structured and function within the legal confines established. Notably, the law sets clear boundaries on the executive powers of this agency by explicitly prohibiting the use of force, either directly or indirectly, the arrest of citizens, and even the initiation of investigations. Further, the Law on the Kosovo Intelligence Agency governs various aspects of the institution, including its establishment, operational scope, methods for verification, as well as the organizational and management structures. It also dictates the KIA's protocols for cooperation with other domestic institutions. Importantly, the legislation clearly identifies functions that are outside the permissible scope of the KIA, reinforcing the agency's role as one that must operate within strict legal and ethical guidelines to ensure transparency and accountability in its operations. This framework aims to create a well-regulated environment for the intelligence agency, ensuring that its activities align with democratic norms and the protection of civil liberties.

The Kosovo Police stands as the pivotal institution for ensuring the security of citizens in the Republic of Kosovo. Initially established by the international community as the Kosovo Police Service, this organization has undergone significant transformation to become the robust and credible entity known today as the Kosovo Police. This evolution aligns with the mandates outlined in the Constitution and the Law on the Kosovo Police (Eckhard, 2016, p. 53). The operations, organizational structure, and responsibilities of the Kosovo Police are meticulously governed by specific legislation, particularly the Law on the Kosovo Police, adopted on March 2, 2012, under Law No. 04/L-076. This statute details the powers and duties of the police, their organizational framework, and various aspects pertinent to their functions and activities within the Republic of Kosovo (Law No. 04/L-076, Article 1).

The Kosovo Police operates as a public service within the Ministry of Internal Affairs framework, functioning under the authority of the Minister of Internal Affairs. While operational management does not fall under the Minister's direct control, oversight and supervision are provided by the General Director of the Police. The General Director maintains a direct reporting line to the Minister responsible for Administration and Management of the Police, ensuring regular communication through reports and updates as stipulated by law.

The police force executes its duties through a unified command chain that extends across the entire territory of the Republic of Kosovo. It is also distinguished by a uniform, emblem, and flag that have received official approval from the government of Kosovo. In its operational capacity, the Kosovo Police collaborates extensively with both central and local government institutions, the state prosecutor, and judicial courts. Additionally, it holds the mandate to engage with international counterparts through cooperation outlined in existing laws or international agreements (Gojani & Curri, 2021, p. 63). This comprehensive framework supports the Kosovo Police in effectively maintaining law and order and safeguarding public security across the nation.

Since June 1999, Kosovo has been under the administration of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), with the security sector falling within the mission's jurisdiction. According to UN Security Council Resolution 1244, this arrangement encompasses not only the civilian presence and police but also the NATO forces, which are recognized alongside the Kosovo Security Force. Following Kosovo's declaration of independence, the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) has maintained its presence in the region. Additionally, the scope of international involvement has broadened with the integration of the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX). This expanded mission reflects a continued

commitment to Kosovo's stability and governance, providing both military and civil law enforcement support to ensure a secure and lawful environment in the post-independence era.

Challenges of National Security of Kosovo

Kosovo, despite its status as a new and small nation, faces a complex array of geopolitical and security challenges. The dynamic nature of international relations has necessitated that small states like Kosovo adapt their foreign policy strategies to address security concerns effectively. Kosovo has strategically navigated these challenges to mitigate the impacts of power vacuums in the global political landscape. Different state strategies have emerged, ranging from adopting neutrality and maintaining a passive stance to taking a more proactive role as key players in international relations. These strategies are tailored to align with national interests and are intrinsically linked to the sovereignty of these small states (Vladychenko, 2017, p. 44). Often, this necessitates a delicate balance between integration, security, self-defense, and the partial relinquishment of sovereignty to achieve broader goals (Elezi, 2015, p. 140).

Strategic documents approved by the institutions of the Republic of Kosovo outline a significant spectrum of challenges. These challenges are categorized into 'Common Responsibilities' and 'Opportunities for Progress'. Under the first category, challenges are broadly defined, underscoring the essential role of institutional cooperation within Kosovo to tackle these issues effectively (Hensel, 2006, p. 17). It also highlights the importance of international cooperation and the benefits of membership in regional and global organizations, which not only enhances Kosovo's security but also contributes to regional stability.

The second category offers a detailed analysis of Kosovo's specific security challenges. It addresses issues such as governance, corruption, organized crime, terrorism, the proliferation of weapons, explosive devices, and civil emergencies. Additionally, it encompasses economic development, education, research, the integration of diverse communities into public institutions, agriculture, public health, the environment, and cultural heritage preservation (Kosovo Security Council, 2010, pp. 11-16).

However, while this strategy outlines a broad range of issues, it lacks depth in addressing potential threats to Kosovo's security and state integrity, which are considered in a separate strategic document, the "Strategic Sector Security Review Analysis of the Republic of Kosovo." This comprehensive approach ensures that from planning through to execution, every aspect of the strategy is subject to rigorous control and evaluation. This process tests the strategy's rationality and effectiveness in achieving its intended outcomes (Chappella, Mawdsley & Petrov,

2016). In this universal context, even for a small state like Kosovo, the national security strategy acts as a crucial document. It not only outlines the country's fundamental national interests but also guides the formulation and execution of policies aimed at leveraging opportunities and countering threats to national security.

National Security as an Essential Component of Central Power

National security is the foundation through which a society protects its most vital values. States develop policies and establish institutions dedicated to maintaining this security across both national and international arenas (Kononenko, Novikova, & Kharchenko, 2022). Ensuring national security involves a comprehensive approach, necessitating a variety of strategic actions aimed at safeguarding a nation's stability.

Critical to this process is the thorough analysis of the current security environment. This includes assessing trends, identifying external security risks, challenges, and threats, and examining the legality and causes of negative security events. Such analysis results in a synthesized evaluation that not only describes the incidents in detail but also forecasts their potential impacts on future security scenarios (Stankovski, 2013, p. 137).

Security is a multifaceted value within a nation, comparable in importance to wealth and power, which are prominent in international relations. Whereas wealth quantifies a nation's material assets and power reflects its influence over others, security is uniquely characterized by the absence of threats to a nation's cherished values and, subjectively, by the absence of fear among its populace regarding potential attacks on these values (Wolfers, 1952, pp. 485-486).

At its core, the national security system includes two primary components: national security policy and structures. Together, these provide comprehensive protection for all members of society (Grizold, 1999). The evolving global landscape, marked by frequent political divergences and conflicts, necessitates that nations prioritize the enhancement of their security frameworks. This involves significant investments in financial, infrastructural, and human resources to fortify national preparedness against both global and regional security challenges.

Over the past 15 years, the Western Balkans have experienced significant geopolitical, security, and defense transformations. This period has seen pivotal events such as NATO's interventions in Yugoslavia (1995, 1999), the Ohrid Agreement (2001), the independence declarations of Montenegro (2006) and Kosovo (2008), and the NATO admissions of Albania and Croatia (2009), along with Croatia's entry into the EU (Peterson, 2021). These developments reflect a transition from conflict to peace, from peace to fragmentation, and from fragmentation to an

era of cooperation. However, the early dialogues between Kosovo and Serbia show deviations from this broader trend of cooperation, indicating unique challenges at various discussion levels (Peci, 2014, p.9).

Within the region, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Kosovo remain outside NATO, partly due to Serbia's reluctance to join the alliance following the 1999 conflict. The absence of NATO membership for these nations opens avenues for Russian intervention and influence, posing significant geopolitical and security concerns in the Western Balkans (Oxford Analytica, 2021).

New National Security of Kosovo

The security sector encompasses all the structures, institutions, and personnel tasked with providing, managing, and overseeing security at both national and local levels. A robust security system is characterized by its capacity to deliver effective and responsible state and human security, all within a framework governed by democratic civilian oversight, adherence to the rule of law, and a steadfast commitment to human rights (Monshipiuri, 2012, p.17). The enhancement of such a system is the primary objective of security sector reform, which involves a comprehensive political and technical process aimed at optimizing the efficacy and accountability of security provision, management, and oversight. This process adheres strictly to principles of democratic control, legal conformity, and human rights respect (Center for International Policy, 2014). The focus of these reforms can vary, targeting specific parts of the security sector or enhancing the functioning of the entire system to ensure improved effectiveness and accountability.

Formulating a national security policy is a critical component of national security. This policy is fundamentally based on national interests, which guide the assessment and response to security threats and the exploration of strategic options (Bartholomees, 2010, p. 5). Furthermore, national security objectives are instrumental in directing efforts to protect and promote these interests, thus serving as a vital framework for the operational goals and strategic directions of the security sector (Peci, 2014, p. 18). These elements combine to form a cohesive strategy that ensures national security is maintained in alignment with the country's overarching goals and values.

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Kosovo has established its Armed Forces, a development deemed essential for maintaining peace and security within the state. The potential withdrawal or end of NATO's mission in Kosovo was viewed as a critical threat to the security of Europe's youngest state (NATO, 2008). This concern was exacerbated by Kosovo's lack of membership in the United Nations, highlighting its vulnerability on the international stage. In the context of relations between Serbia and Kosovo, the most concerning possibility is Serbia's aspiration to partition Kosovo (Mehmeti & Radeljic, 2016). Specifically, Serbian leaders are thought to favor the annexation of northern Kosovo, which has a Serbian majority. Such a move would pose a significant threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Kosovo. Consequently, the creation of Kosovo's Armed Forces and the pursuit of NATO membership have been prioritized by Kosovo's government. Unlike some states that may choose a path of military neutrality, Kosovo has explicitly expressed its intention to join NATO, underscoring its strategic decision to align more closely with Western security frameworks as a means of bolstering its national defense and sovereignty.

The national security system of Kosovo is structured around three fundamental components, each crucial to its comprehensive security strategy. These include: (a) the Constitution, relevant legislation, and various strategic documents that outline the security framework; (b) the security institutions tasked with implementing these policies; and (c) the overarching national security policy that guides the country's defense and security priorities (Bartholomees, 2010, p. 5; Peci, 2014, p. 18). Legal frameworks are essential not only for defining the scope and function of these security institutions but also for shaping the national security policy that drives their operations. These documents provide the legal basis required for

the effective realization and maintenance of national security, ensuring that all measures are grounded in law.

Moreover, the protection of Kosovo's territorial integrity and sovereignty is a collaborative effort, involving both national mechanisms and international support. This effort is characterized by close coordination with the international military presence led by NATO and reinforced through partnerships with Kosovo's strategic allies. This cooperative approach is integral to the country's security strategy, as outlined in the Kosovo Security Strategy 2022-2027, page 10, ensuring a robust defense posture aligned with both national interests and international support frameworks.

Russia in the Western Balkans

Russia's Policies in Kosovo

Alongside China, Spain, and other influential states, Russia's resistance to the international sovereignty of Kosovo poses a serious challenge to policymakers in Pristina and supporters of Kosovo in Europe and North America. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, Russia's "original" views on Kosovo, which invoke the authority of international law, present a challenge for Kosovo's policymakers and the international community aiming to secure "international legal sovereignty" for the government of Kosovo (Milano, 2010, p.2). This paper evaluates Russia's policy in Kosovo (and consequently, in the Balkans), analyzes briefly Russian perspectives on the international system, conflicts, and institutions, and highlights some of the soft and hard power tools it practically employs.

There are three broader points related to Russia's policy towards Kosovo since the mid-1990s. Firstly, both Yeltsin's and Putin's governments have pursued highly realistic policies towards Kosovo and the Balkans (Özlem, 2021, p.122). These primarily serve the broader agenda of Russia's foreign policy, the main objective of which is for the Russian government to regain its position as a global power. For this purpose, the Russian government uses a full range of tools of both soft and hard power.

Secondly, Russia's policy towards Kosovo (and the Balkans) remains peripheral, enabling small Russian investments in support of Serbian interests against Kosovo's sovereignty (Capussela,2015). It serves to hinder Western efforts to strengthen its influence networks in Kosovo and the Balkans. Furthermore, Russia's support for the continuous international legal sovereignty of the Serbian population in Kosovo aligns with its preference for security in its near abroad and support for rising powers against post-Soviet governments that may wish to join NATO and the EU, such as Ukraine, Georgia, or Moldova (Pouliot, 2010, p.194).

Lastly, the projection of soft power in Kosovo and the Balkans is also a reminder of the assumed cultural affinities between Orthodox Slavs through the Russian Orthodox Church and a demonstration of Russia's goodwill by supporting Serbia's capacity to respond to crises. Russia dismisses its actions in the current regional "great game" repetition (Meyendorff, 2017).

Russia as a Global Power

Several authors establish a connection between Russia and the Western Balkans by on their shared historical pasts (Kaplan, 2013) claims that Russia has historically focused its attention on the countries of the Western Balkans.

The Russian partnership with Serbia has been built on Russia's opposition to Kosovo's independence. Belgrade has sought Moscow's help in rebalancing the power balance with Pristina, which has been backed by the US and other key EU/NATO nations in the past. It has been crucial in keeping Kosovo out of international organizations such as the UN and its agencies (Bechev, 2019).

Focused on encouraging independence, Moscow has done all possible to prevent the Bosnian Serb leadership from being censored by the Implementation of Peace Council (Bechev, 2019). The Russian government has consistently pursued a policy aimed at strengthening its position as a global power. This key consensus has remained relatively stable since the end of the Cold War, emphasizing Russia's role as a regional power with global reach. This effort aimed to popularize a favorable image of Russia and raise interest in the language and culture of that nation among the rest of the globe (Loss, 2021).

President Putin, akin to Ivan the Terrible and the Assembly of Russian Lands in the fifteenth century, steadfastly asserts Russia's place at the table as a government with both regional command and global extension (GovInfo, 10 Jan 2018). It was hard for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ignore the risk that the Kosovo leadership's policies have increased tension and interethnic strife in the region (Ministry of foreign affairs of the Russian Federation information and press department 216-17-02- 2008). Unofficially, Russian nationals assist in funding and managing nationalist and paramilitary organizations, including contentious military-style boot camps for young Serbs (McBride, 2022).

Furthermore, media and propaganda play a significant role in shaping public opinion about Russia and its influence in the Western Balkans, including Kosovo. Following the arrests of the former president, Hashim Thaçi, and the former speaker of the Assembly of Kosovo, Kadri Veseli, in November 2020, the Specialized Chambers of Kosovo received appreciation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia among others. Additionally, a report from the Kosovo Institute for Policy Research and Development (KIPRED) in March 2021 found that the Russian-

controlled media are very active in disinformation campaigns against Kosovo (SOT.COM.AL. 27 Aug 2022).

Remodeling Relations between Kosovo and Turkey:
Between Facts and Emotions

Turkey implements its "outside-in" policy in the Western Balkans, and Kosovo holds a significant place in this context. A brief historical background of Turkey's policy towards Kosovo since the early 1990s Kosovo Crisis (1998-1999) marked a new era in Turkish foreign policy (Tabak, 2017). At the end of the Cold War, Turkey adopted a more assertive and multidirectional foreign policy. Turgut Ozal's vision of Turkey as a regional power, extending its influence from the Adriatic to China, implied a new approach to foreign policy (Dogan, 2013). In this geopolitical environment, during the 1990s, Ankara viewed the Western Balkans as a new strategically important gateway to Europe and was inclined to involve NATO in the region (Foteva, 2014). According to then-President Demirel, the crisis in Kosovo gave Turkey the opportunity to demonstrate that it was a "first-class member of NATO" during NATO's bombing campaign against Serbia in 1999. In addition, the Turkish public and political elite paid special attention to the historical Ottoman legacy in the Balkans, including Kosovo, which is also home to a vibrant Turkish-speaking minority (Aksin, 2011). Complex factors elicited a mixed reaction from Ankara to the Kosovo crisis. In the first half of the 1990s, Ankara maintained a low profile, focusing on the Turkish-speaking minority in Kosovo (Baykusoglu, 2009). Other issues emerged because of the war, particularly the humanitarian emergency and the risk of regional conflict spreading. Religious issues were also a factor for Turkey. The Serb-Orthodox union, foreign policy based on the Serb-Orthodox axis, could be much more dangerous than ideological polarization, warned Turkish Prime Minister Ecevit.

Against this background, on October 13, 1998, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared that NATO was preparing for possible actions in Kosovo, and Turkey would participate in such an operation (Legvold & Norris, 2005). As NATO intervention began, Turkey provided F-16 fighter jets, which initially conducted monitoring flights and later joined the U.S. and other allies in the attack on Serbian targets. Turkey's engagement in Kosovo expanded when the war ended, and the international administration of the UN was established in Kosovo in June 1999. Turkey significantly contributed to the implementation of the NATO-led peace and the mission of the UN civilian administration in Kosovo.

Independence of Kosovo and the new era in Kosovo-Turkey relations where February 17, 2008, represents a turning point in relations between Kosovo and Turkey. On that day, Kosovo declared its independence. Turkey, along with the

United States, the United Kingdom, and France, was among the first countries to recognize Kosovo's independence. Kosovar officials were deeply grateful to Turkey for the swift recognition of Kosovo and its role in the coordinated declaration of independence. Kosovo is aware that many countries recognized Kosovo because of Turkey's direct diplomatic influence, stated the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo during a visit to Turkey in February 2015 (Martin, 2015, p.31). In addition to supporting the recognition of its independence, Turkey has supported the overall state-building progress of Kosovo since 2008.

For Turkey, the benefits of quickly recognizing Kosovo outweighed any possible costs. Turkey was motivated by geopolitical considerations and historical paradigms. With Kosovo's independence, Turkey valued the key role of the Albanian factor in the Balkans. The large number of citizens of Albanian origin in Turkey and the presence of the Turkish ethnic minority in Kosovo were also motivating factors (Resnick, Vogel & Luisi, 2006). Erdogan's aides mentioned, as anecdotes, the pressure Erdogan faced to recognize Kosovo from his personal friends in Turkey, many of whom have Albanian ethnic origins. The Turkish Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, during a discussion with his Kosovar counterpart in Ankara in 2009, stated that more citizens of Kosovo origin live in Turkey than Kosovars in Kosovo (Tabak,2017).

Conclusions and Recommendations

National security is a cornerstone of sovereign statehood and a fundamental aspect of central governmental power. It involves the deployment of specific measures and actions aimed at safeguarding the country from both internal disturbances and external threats. It is recognized that a robust national security framework encompasses a combination of legal acts, strategic documents, dedicated security institutions, and clearly defined national security policies. In the Republic of Kosovo, the constitution and various laws have been established to regulate this critical sector, along with strategic documents that guide security operations. However, these legal frameworks are periodically subject to reviews and updates to ensure they remain relevant and effective in addressing the evolving needs and challenges facing Kosovo today (Jakupi, 2019).

The security institutions within Kosovo are currently undergoing a significant phase of consolidation, enhancing their capabilities across all dimensions. This development necessitates both mobilization and substantial investment to enable these institutions to operate efficiently and achieve operational excellence. Such advancements are essential to ensure the safety of Kosovo's citizens and to fortify the state against external threats. In line with these efforts, notable progress has

been made through constitutional amendments aimed at establishing the Armed Forces of the Republic of Kosovo. These armed forces have been structured as a modern military entity, crafted to meet NATO standards. This alignment not only enhances the operational capabilities of Kosovo's military but also integrates it more closely with international security frameworks, marking a significant step in Kosovo's engagement with global security operations.

The Republic of Kosovo encounters numerous security challenges and risks. A primary source of risk is Serbia, which maintains organized structures within Kosovo and influences Serbian political parties that are part of Kosovo's institutions, directed by official Belgrade. Additionally, foreign intelligence services, particularly those from Russia and Serbia, pose a significant threat as they aim to destabilize Kosovo. Challenges also arise from the need to strengthen institutions such as border police and customs to effectively combat border-related crimes, tackle terrorism, and address the issue of citizens participating in conflicts in Iraq and Syria, all of which represent substantial risks to national security.

To remain effective and responsive to these evolving threats, it is crucial that strategic documents governing Kosovo's security measures are periodically reviewed and updated. These revisions must reflect the new conditions and circumstances that Kosovo faces, ensuring that security strategies are robust and adaptive (Sterie & Brunhart, 2010). This process of continual assessment and adaptation is vital for maintaining the integrity and effectiveness of Kosovo's security framework.

How can the Government of Kosovo improve? To address the challenges facing Kosovo as a country and a people, state institutions, and consequently, the government must operate sustainably within the mandate obtained. In this way, sufficient time can be ensured to review the handovers from the previous government. This can be considered as an initial phase of understanding where systems are challenged in meeting the needs of the population, followed by sufficient time to provide facts that need to be reviewed and redefined to reflect the country as it is today. This may also imply that the role of the state needs to be reviewed in light of these changes.

What is clear, both theoretically and practically, is that national security is linked to human security. To safeguard national security, states must ensure human security and the social security of their population. This means that ultimately, people living within a state must be provided with the space and means to fulfill their needs for human security and to preserve their ethnic, cultural, religious, and national identity to maintain national security (Lineberger, 1998). In this sense, the responsibility for ensuring such space and means falls on the political leaders in the country, and their ultimate responsibility, as elected representatives, is to represent the people.

Furthermore, their political decisions should be based on a fair determination of priorities, starting with how their political decisions would impact their political agendas. The vicious circle of political instability can be broken only by changing a mentality that shifts the focus more on what Kosovo and its people truly need and what is crucial for the survival and sustainability of this country than the interests of political parties (Gjojani & Curri,2021). In the short term, only a conscious decision to change the political mentality can break the vicious circle of political instability that has undermined Kosovo.

Even after a decade of international administration and thirteen years of independence from Serbia, Kosovo continues to face ethnic and socio-economic problems that have the potential to undermine the progress made and threaten the country's stability (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2011). In 1999, the international community intervened to stop the violence by Serbian authorities against Kosovo Albanians and began its ten-year administration of Kosovo, aiming to coordinate reconstruction, maintain order and the rule of law, protect human rights, and establish democratic institutions. From 1999 to 2008, the international administration (UNMIK and its partners) coordinated the deployment of over 20,000 NATO troops, provided over three billion euros in foreign aid, and undertook significant projects in peacebuilding and institution-building (Tansey, 2009).

Despite these investments, many criticize the international administration for being ineffective in meeting the real needs of the Kosovo population, building social trust between ethnic communities, and achieving economic recovery and psychosocial reconstruction (Havolli, 2018, p.5). The international administration is also criticized for deepening ethnic fragmentation (thus strengthening parallel Serbian institutions), claiming international primacy, hindering local ownership, and making it impossible for bottom-up approaches to transition and normalization. Instead of supporting the strengthening of social security and increasing the participation of all communities in political decision-making, international actors have prioritized short-term security at the cost of long-term sustainable peace and economic development (McKinnon, 2022).

This work also examines factors that have harmed social progress and improvement of human conditions in Kosovo from the perspective of human security. Although human security was implied in the mandates of the international administration and local institutions, this material explores how human security has been instrumentalized as 'ethnic security' in post-conflict Kosovo. It is argued that the international administration in Kosovo has undertaken activities related to human security primarily as a conflict resolution and short-term stability solution, allowing Kosovo institutions to use it as a tool to justify their self-governing capacities and to act as the main provider of public services and human security

(Huszka, 2014). Parallel Serbian institutions engage in similar activities with human security, aiming to legitimize their 'contested' presence in enclaves around Kosovo. As a result of these numerous agencies and their implied human security, it is argued that human security has not been a goal in itself for these three agencies but has functioned as a means to achieve various political agendas.

Referring to many similar studies, it can be reiterated that there is no consensus definition for the scope and nature of human security. Nevertheless, in a broad sense, it challenges the traditional view of security, which focuses on military capabilities and state security, supporting the expansion of the human development paradigm (Kumra, 2015). In essence, human security involves a shift in focus from a state-centric understanding of security, which is top-down and territorial, to an individual-based model and, consequently, to a bottom-up and non-territorial model (Wilson, 2003). It reorients the conceptualization of security, taking into account specific dimensions of the concept. 'Security for whom' focuses on individuals and people and has a broader meaning for values and goals such as dignity, equality, and solidarity. 'Security from what' identifies the causes of insecurity based on agency and structures, such as economic threats, personal security, environmental threats, and political threats "(Stevens & Williams, 2016)

In conclusion, 'security with what means' empowers individuals to become 'agents' who can actively engage in identifying potential security threats and participate in efforts to mitigate them. The UNDP Human Development Report (HDR) of 1994 synthesized human security threats into seven components: (a) economic security, (b) food security, (c) health security, (d) environmental security, (e) personal security, (f) community security, and (g) political security. The objective of human security is to protect the fundamental essence of all human lives from widespread critical threats without hindering long-term human fulfillment. In parallel, a European concept of human security perceives it as the security of individuals and communities, an interconnection of freedom from fear and freedom from want (Hanlon & Christie, 2016). A research group convened by the EU has formulated several principles of new conflict management informed by human security. These principles include (a) the primacy of human rights that distinguishes the approach to human security from state-based traditional approaches; (b) legitimate political authority, which has enforcement capacity and can gain the trust of the population; (c) multilateralism, as human security is global, it must be implemented through multi-actor actions; (d) a bottom-up approach, considering communication, consultation, and dialogue with local residents as essential means for development and security, with a regional focus, as new wars have unclear boundaries (UNDP, 2022).

However, with the increasing consideration of human security, various criticisms have questioned its conceptual meaning, scope, and political and moral

implications. The main conceptual criticism revolves around its lack of precision as a concept, its broadness in considering responses to threats, the absence of a concise research agenda complicated by its interdisciplinarity and intersectionality. Regarding the political implications of human security, Buzan is skeptical about its effect and sees it as a new tool for existing government agencies to shape and control the civilian population. He argues that human security remains at the core of the state regardless of the international dimensions of the concept, allowing a prominent role for the state as a necessary condition for individual security.

Moving from theory to practice, human security is increasingly used in post-conflict situations. From Bosnia and Herzegovina to Timor-Leste, Kosovo, and Afghanistan, the comprehensive nature of these interventions, including the building of democratic institutions, support for civil society, economic development, promotion of human rights, accountability for war crimes, and so forth, closely aligns with key concerns related to human security[3]. From these cases, the Report of the Commission on Human Security (CHS) called for a new framework and financing strategy that rebuilds states shattered by conflict and focuses on the protection and empowerment of individuals. Such a human security framework, according to CHS, should emphasize the connections between many issues affecting people, such as ensuring human security through strengthening civilian police and demobilizing combatants, addressing the immediate needs of displaced persons, initiating reconstruction and development, promoting reconciliation and coexistence, and advancing effective governance (Matute,2021). Furthermore, CHS acknowledges that in conflict situations, it is necessary to go beyond the presence of peacekeeping and peacebuilding by creating a unified leadership for all actors near the point of providing human security.

However, the call for human security as a strategy to address various issues in underdeveloped societies, war-torn territories, and weak or fragile states poses some challenges. For example, the involvement of various national and international agencies to provide human security may hinder the development of a single political structure responsible for providing services to its voters and accountable through democratic mechanisms. On the other hand, assistance from weak governments is considered a sustainable approach to providing public security and well-being but risks jeopardizing the long-term goal of improving human rights and investing in people. Thus, a balanced approach of having functional and accountable public institutions that ensure the balance between public domain public security and simultaneous investment in people through prioritizing education, health, and social well-being would be a comprehensive strategy to ensure overall social stability and development (Yevsuykov & Shvedum,2021). As idealistic as it may

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[3] Human Rights Watch, Bosnia and Herzegovina (2006): Looking for Justice. The war crimes chamber in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Vol.18, No.1D, 44 pp.

sound, effective aid and political conditioning combined with on-the-ground assistance would serve as a mechanism for gradual progress in this direction".

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Classical alliances and their evolution in the contemporary security environment

_____ **Artan SADIKU, MSc.¹** _____

Abstract

This paper explores the evolving global landscape over the past two decades, emphasizing the imperative for alliances, particularly NATO, to earnestly reevaluate their objectives. The absence of a unified purpose is identified as a hindrance to alliances in delineating suitable policies, structures, and capabilities essential for goal attainment. The paper underscores the resilience of NATO as an alliance that remains pertinent amidst shifting security paradigms, acting as a deterrent to Russia and a values-centric framework for addressing challenges posed by China. Emphasizing the critical need for trust among alliance members, the paper explores potential risks, including eroding political will and accusations of transactionalism. Furthermore, it discusses NATO's significance in preserving the security of Western democracies and highlights ongoing changes spurred by the conflict in Ukraine, leading to a renewed focus on alliance cohesion and expansion. The abstract concludes by noting the announcement of a forthcoming Strategic Concept to guide NATO's activities in the next decade.

Keywords: *alliance, international system, security, cooperation*

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Introduction

The historical context of alliance formation, deeply ingrained in strategic thought, underscores the significance of alliances in warfare and conflict. Sun Tzu emphasizes the strategic advantage gained by dismantling adversaries' alliances, cautioning against the pitfalls of neutrality. Thucydides highlights the enduring role of alliances throughout history, criticizing neutrality for its false hope. Machiavelli reinforces the need for decisive positions and active engagement. Alliances, fundamentally collaborative endeavors, provide nations with enhanced capabilities to achieve shared objectives. Membership in alliances alleviates burdens and amplifies benefits, often intertwined with security concerns and the establishment of international order. In the realm of International Relations, alliances emerge from interactions between sovereign entities driven by motives to dominate, secure, or balance power.

In the contemporary international system, states remain defining entities, shaping their environment through collaborative relationships. States strategically form alliances to bolster survival prospects, even at the expense of autonomy. Major powers, seeking increased influence or balancing power, engage in alliances broadly, leading to cooperative relationships. Defined as formal agreements between parties working together to advance common interests, alliances, as per the USA's doctrine, play a crucial role in achieving shared objectives, particularly in mutual military defense. Alliances, encompassing various domains, are examined here within the security context.

States forge alliances to protect against threats posed by other states, with powerful states engaging to enhance global influence. The core objective of alliances is to combine capacities for mutual benefit, characterized by cooperation, formality, and a focus on security. Alliance variations encompass formation circumstances, engagement typology, internal cooperation, and operating sector, along with factors like ideology, objectives, size, influence, capabilities, and leadership.

The overarching goal of alliances is to bolster member capabilities collectively, exerting greater influence on the international stage. For smaller states, alliances are pivotal for strength, while larger states shape the global power balance through alliance structures. Most alliances arise in response to existing or anticipated threats, offering alternatives to rebalance forces against emerging challenges. Internal cohesion strengthens when national and alliance interests align, and institutionalized cooperation fosters routine collaboration. The dynamic nature of alliances acknowledges their dissolution or reformulation based on evolving circumstances or exhausted issues over time.

Understanding the Alliance

The Creation of Alliances

In a complex world, small states engage in ongoing alliance formation to improve their prospects for survival. Aligning with a 'greater' power is viewed as the optimal strategy for survival, even if it involves partial concessions of independence or sovereignty. Conversely, major powers, aiming to amplify their influence globally or counter a formidable adversary effectively, establish alliances not only with states considered great but also with a broader array of partners.

In most current dictionaries, an alliance is defined as a formal agreement or treaty between two or more states to cooperate for specific purposes. While in international relations, the concept of alliance is understood as: "a formal agreement between two or more states for mutual support in case of war. Contemporary alliances foresee combined actions... and are generally of a defensive nature, obliging allies to unite forces if one or more of them are attacked by another state or coalition. Although alliances can be informal, they are usually formalized by a treaty of alliance" (Britanica.com/History & Society/Alliance).

Alliances come in various types, with this paper specifically concentrating on security alliances. All definitions in contention acknowledge the involvement of a minimum of two actors. Debates center around the number of actors and whether they are exclusively state actors. Ideally, the rules established in such organizations should encompass as many actors as possible to exert influence on international relations. These actors may include not only state but also non-state entities. The definition above specifies that cooperation is voluntary, prompting questions about the obligatory nature of accepted rules, applicable to both great powers and small states. We presume that the majority, if not all actors, make choices when deciding to participate in multilateral cooperation, irrespective of existential issues related to power dynamics in international relations.

On the necessity of forming alliances, Waltz (1979) argues; believing that the international system is anarchic and that each state must independently seek its own survival, weaker states try to find a balance with their rivals and form an alliance with a stronger state to obtain security assurance against offensive action from an adversary state. On the other hand, Mearsheimer (2014) and other realists argue that anarchy encourages all states to always increase their power.

According to Waltz (1979), since the world does not have a common government, thus is "anarchic," survival is the main motivation of states. States are not reliable for the intentions of other states and consequently try to maximize

their security, resulting in the situation a security dilemma. States tend toward interests to dominate, secure, or balance power. According to Snyder (1991), under a security dilemma, there are two reasons why alliances will form.

- First, a state that is dissatisfied with the amount of security it has forms an Alliance to increase its security.
- Second, a state doubts the reliability of existing allies who may assist it and thus decides to establish another alliance or ally. The fact that states can never be sure of the intentions of other states. Considering this fear, which can never be eliminated, states accept that the more powerful they are in relation to their rivals, the greater their chances of survival.

Along with alliances, we often encounter the term coalition. A coalition is a temporary alliance for combined action, of interest groups or individuals engaged to achieve a common outcome. Through political mobilization, you create a group that has some sense of common purposes and/or a sense of related interests. A coalition is an alliance for joint action. In short, a coalition is an alliance to achieve a specific goal. Both terms are closely related and even interchangeable in many cases. However, both words focus on different things. An alliance has more to do with mutual interests or benefits, while a coalition has more to do with performing certain actions. The use of both terms is not limited to the political context only. They can be used in other contexts: military, financial, commercial, technological, etc. An alliance is looser than a coalition. A coalition is a group identified with the same action. Alliances are more for protection, while a coalition is more for joint attack.

Typology of the Alliance

Alliances have been a fact of international political life since antiquity. They perform various functions for states, often simultaneously, making categorization challenging. However, their primary function is military, and the three main classifications used in academic literature affirm this:

- Defense pacts, obliging signatories to militarily intervene on behalf of any treaty partner attacked militarily;
- Neutrality and non-aggression pacts, which require signatories to remain militarily neutral if a co-signatory is attacked (non-aggression pacts are usually more specific than neutrality pacts); and
- Agreements where signatories agree to consult with each other and potentially cooperate in a crisis, including an armed attack (Small and Singer, 1969, p.5)

The common features of all three types of alliances lead to a definition like that proposed by Stephen Walt (1997): alliances are formal or informal commitments to security cooperation between two or more states. "Although the precise agreements embodied in different alliances vary extraordinarily, the defining feature of any alliance is a commitment to mutual military support against certain external actors under certain circumstances." (p.157).

Alliances, viewed broadly, can take the form of either formal, written treaties or informal, unwritten agreements grounded in tacit understandings or verbal guarantees. Despite the formalities, written treaties may not necessarily reflect the actual commitment of the parties involved. The primary purpose of alliances is to collectively advance the interests of their members by leveraging diverse capabilities—industrial, financial, and military—for military and political success. The combinations of these abilities can vary, as indicated by academic classifications. The institutionalization of alliances varies, with many throughout history being loose and often ad hoc arrangements. Notably, European alliances, like those against Napoleon (Moore, 1999), were typically of this nature. These loose coalitions persisted until the participants realized that enduring unity was essential for lasting freedom from conflict, outweighing short-term gains through individual deals.

Ad-hoc alliances often contain strange bedfellows. Britain, a constitutional monarchy with laws passed by Parliament, joined forces with autocratic Russia to defeat Napoleon. Similarly, in World War II, the Anglo-American democracies found it necessary, to defeat Nazi Germany, to ally with Stalin's totalitarian state, who had been and would again be their enemy. Throughout the conflict, each side was suspicious that the other might make a separate deal with the German dictator, and the desire to ensure that neither side did so, supported the alliance as much as military capabilities. In fact, as Robert Osgood argues, "near to aggregation, the most prominent function of alliances has been the restraint and control of allies" (1968, p.22).

The Theoretical Aspect and Origin of Alliances

The origin of alliances is a highly debated topic in International Relations theory, with numerous studies seeking to explain why states form alliances, when they become allies, and the conditions under which specific alliances are likely to emerge. Regarding the first question—why alliances are formed—the prevailing speculation revolves around the collective security of national interests. In essence, nations primarily create alliances in response to perceived threats to their national security. The diverse sources of threats, whether external or internal, give rise to two broad categories that reflect different perspectives on alliance formation. The first,

focusing on external security, aligns with realism, which grounds itself in relations among great powers. The second, concentrating on internal security, examines how smaller states, particularly developing countries, form alliances. In addition to these main approaches, some scholars have presented alternative explanations, highlighted the significance of social, cultural, and political similarities, or considered alliances as tools that shape and constrain state behavior.

Approaches Based on External Security

Alliance theories have traditionally been dominated by realist and neorealist schools of thought. According to this tradition, systemic structure, structural polarity, and systemic anarchy determine the formation of alliances. Specifically, the characteristic anarchy of the international system compels states to prioritize their security. As Martin Wight notes, the function of an alliance is to "reinforce the security of the allies or promote their interests in the outside world" (in Piccoli, 1999). States unable to unilaterally confront a stronger enemy decide to cooperate with other states in the same situation to enhance their security by pooling their capabilities against a common enemy.

Essentially, this is what is commonly referred to as the "power aggregation model," (Piccoli, 1999) the most recognized explanation for the origin of alliances. This model assumes that allies value each other for the military assistance they can provide to each other to deter a common threat. In other words, facing external threats, states seek alliances primarily to increase their effective military capabilities through combination with others. Therefore, military power, security interests, and external threats, not internal factors, determine the alliance behavior of states.

In this context, the relationship between the theory of balance of power and alliance theory must be emphasized: alliances, from this perspective, are how states maintain an approximately equal distribution of power among themselves, according to Morgenthau's (1948) words, "a necessary function of the balance of power that operates in a multi-state system" (in Piccoli, 1999). According to his view, within the struggle for power that characterizes international politics, each state can unilaterally increase its power with internal means, aggregate its power in that of other states, or prevent other states from aggregating their power with the enemy. The first choice implies an arms race, while the second and third options lead to the formation of alliances.

Recently, Stephen Walt has developed a deep analysis of alliance formation, in which the concept of "external threat" is central in his "balance of threat theory." Walt criticizes the classical theory of structural balance of power for its overemphasis on the concept of power (defined as general capabilities). According to him, states seek allies not to balance power, but to balance threats. The extent

to which a state threatens others is not determined exclusively by its material capabilities (population, economic, industrial, and military resources), as suggested by the power balance approach, but is also influenced by its geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, and perceived intentions.

The debate over alliance formation is also focused on the issue of how states choose sides in a conflict, in short, the dichotomy between balancing and *bandwagoning*. The term "*bandwagoning*" as a description of international alliance behavior first appeared in Kenneth Waltz's (1979) Theory of International Politics (in Piccoli, 1999). In his structural model of the balance of power theory, Waltz uses "*bandwagoning*" to serve as the opposite of balancing: *bandwagoning* refers to joining the stronger coalition, while balancing means allying with the weaker side.

The dichotomy between balancing and bandwagoning, which represents two distinct hypotheses regarding how states choose their alliance partners in the face of an increasing threat, is not only supported but also further developed by Walt (1997). He clarifies that his use of the terms balancing and bandwagoning aligns with Kenneth Waltz's (1979) definitions; however, he redefines bandwagoning as "approaching the source of danger." In his balance of threat theory, Walt argues that the inclination to bandwagon can be driven by defensive motives (to placate the dominant power), offensive motives (to benefit from the dominant power's victory) directly or indirectly, or a combination of both. Walt strongly asserts that, empirically, balancing is the prevalent response to external threats, while bandwagoning is typically observed in weak and isolated states. However, he warns that relying on bandwagoning is perilous, as it involves trust and amplifies the resources available to the threatening power; an ally today could become an adversary tomorrow. Opting for the weaker side (balancing) helps prevent the emergence of hegemony that could jeopardize the independence of all states.

Despite Walt's (1997) "neorealist" orientation, his analysis surprisingly downplays the role of the system structure variable. He overlooks the significance of structural differences by assuming that his generalizations are equally applicable to multipolar and bipolar systems. A compelling argument can be made that bandwagoning is logically more probable in a multipolar system than in a bipolar one. In a multipolar system, the ambiguity of identifying the greatest threat state can impede balancing. The notion of bandwagoning gains traction due to the belief that there are alternative objectives for an aggressor's energies and other potential allies that a state can turn to if its ally-turned-aggressor becomes a threat. Additionally, in multipolarity, effective balancing faces obstacles due to concerns about collective goods and the expectation that someone else will take charge—a phenomenon known as "free-riding." States may choose to stand aside in the hope that another state will confront the aggressor, leading to inefficient balancing and providing the aggressor an opportunity to upset the balance through partial aggression. Another

issue affecting balancing in multipolarity is "chain-ganging." In a multipolar system characterized by an anarchic environment and relative equality among alliance partners, each state perceives its security as intricately linked to that of its allies. Consequently, chain-ganging occurs when nations are drawn into a war to protect vulnerable allies, fearing that the fall of these allies would significantly impact the security of all. States unconditionally aligning with immature allies pose a threat to system stability by risking an unlimited war that jeopardizes the survival of major powers in the system. In contrast, in a bipolar system, bandwagoning is less likely due to the virtual certainty that the superpower's defender will continue to balance the threat, and the threat itself is less ambiguous (in Piccoli, 1999).

Some scholars critique Walt's study space for its limited scope, attributing this constraint to the defensive one-sidedness that characterizes his perspective. Walt views all alliances as responses to "threat," and his scheme lacks consideration for offensive alliances. Schweller (1994) highlights this gap, pointing out that "alliances are responses not only to threats but also to opportunities." Interestingly, despite the common realist distinctions between "imperialist and status-quo power," "satisfied or dissatisfied powers," or "revolutionary and status-quo states," both realism and neorealism exhibit a status-quo bias in interpreting alliance policies.

Randall Schweller (1994) is one of the scholars who base his analysis on the distinction between status-quo powers and revisionist states, arguing that "generally, revisionist powers are the main drivers of alliance behavior; status-quo states are reactors." According to Schweller, the main problem with the criticisms raised about Walt's arguments is the acceptance of his assumptions that:

- Alliances result from a perceived threat, whether internal or external.
- Bandwagoning is commonly viewed as capitulation. However, Schweller contends that bandwagoning should be understood not merely as a response to a threatening state but as an alignment with the stronger one. Furthermore, states may be motivated by the promise of rewards rather than the threat of punishment. Schweller acknowledges that the pursuit of gains is not the sole explanation for bandwagoning behavior, often observed at the conclusion of wars when states join the victorious side to secure a share of the spoils, driven by fear.

Schweller (1994) argues that *"the most important determinant of outreach is the compatibility of political goals, not the balance of power or threat."* Therefore, if a state is satisfied with the status quo, it will join the coalition by protecting the systemic equilibrium, even if it is the strongest. On the other hand, a revisionist state that aims for "profit" and not security will align itself with a rising expansionist state or a coalition seeking to overthrow the status quo. In short, according to Schweller, a

state's alliance behavior is not necessarily determined by the presence of an external threat, but by opportunities for profit and gain.

This theory is able, according to its author, to explain alliance formations both at the state level and at the systemic level. The former refers to "the costs a state is willing to pay to protect its value compared to the costs a state is willing to pay to expand its values." In this way, Schweller (1994) distinguishes between four different types of states:

1. "Lions," status-quo satisfied states that are willing to pay a high price to protect what they own;
2. "Wolves," who consider their situation intolerable and, consequently, are willing to pay a high price to overturn the status quo;
3. "Jackals," dissatisfied free riders willing to follow the "Wolves" or "Lions" who are on the verge of victory;
4. "Lambs," willing to pay low costs for their defense or expansion, which are usually suspected of fear.

At the systemic level, the theory of the balance of interests suggests that the distribution of capabilities, in itself, does not determine the stability of the system. More important are the objectives and means for which those capabilities or influence are used.

Schweller's (1994) systemic conclusions diverge from a key aspect of structural realism, emphasizing that international politics' broad outcomes are more influenced by the state system's structural constraints than by individual behaviors. Unlike Schweller, Waltz (1959) contends that interactions among key actors, determined by the number of poles, shape states' behavior within the system. Waltz asserts that certain international behaviors are rewarded or punished, influencing the foreign policies states adopt. Schweller's focus on state motivations overlooks systemic effects, particularly stability, which Waltz attributes to interactions between units and systemic factors. In summary, Schweller associates bandwagoning with states having more to gain than lose and balancing with the opposite. These behaviors, linked to opposite systemic conditions, are crucial factors in system stability or flux.

In examining Waltz's balance of threat theory and Schweller's balance of interests' theory, a crucial question emerges: how is the causal link guiding state alliance policies articulated? Walt's theory, centered on the concept of threat, explores how a state can form alliances against or with the state posing the threat. The challenge lies in understanding how the same cause can result in such different outcomes. Is state strength and ally availability the sole determinant of alliance choices, as Walt suggests? On the contrary, Schweller asserts that positive sanctions (gains) are the

most effective motivators for bandwagoning, yet he also acknowledges that fear can expedite the decision to align with the stronger party. Thus, the fundamental question remains: what truly drives state alliance policies, gain, or fear?

Alliance with a threatening state can also be motivated by phenomena different from those shown by Walt and Schweller: states may choose to ally with adversaries to contain the threats arising from each other. Patricia Weitsman (2004) labels this dynamic linkage (tethering) and distinguishes it from balancing because:

1. it implies a compromise from a position of strength and not from surrender or appeasement; and
2. it involves reciprocal threats and not asymmetric threats, as is the case with balancing.

In conclusion, it's crucial to highlight that the balancing/bandwagoning distinction, advocated by Walt and to a lesser extent by Schweller, oversimplifies the spectrum of choices in alliance dynamics, hindering a nuanced analysis. Beyond the binary options of allying with or against a threatening state, various alternatives exist. These include declaring formal or informal neutrality, improving relations with other states without forming alliances, seeking isolation, and pursuing reconciliation and compromise with the threatening state without complete capitulation. Schroeder (1976) suggests that these externally oriented conciliatory strategies may coexist with internal balancing efforts such as armament. The complexity of diplomatic history reveals numerous combinations of balancing and conciliation strategies.

Internal Security-Based Alignment

Deborah Larson (2002) proposes shifting the focus from the systemic level to the domestic context to better comprehend when states form alliances, using an institutionalist approach. Analyzing the behavior of small powers in Central and Eastern Europe toward Germany in the 1930s, Larson argues that weak regimes align with potential hegemons to maintain authority and address internal challenges. Her emphasis on the internal structure raises questions about different political regimes in the region during that period. Larson's assertion that band wagoning is linked to weak states aligns with threat balancing theory, predicting that weaker states are more likely to accept threats than balance against them. However, her analysis lacks a clear connection between weak internal positions of elites and the choice to ally with a threatening state, leaving questions about leaders' decision-making processes and why guarantees are sought from an aggressive state (Piccoli, 1999).

Steven David (1991) explores the alignment decisions of elites in Third World countries, focusing on their internal weakness. Leaders in these countries prioritize political and physical survival, particularly against internal threats. David argues that what may seem like *band wagoning* is, in fact, a form of balancing. Leaders adopt a conciliatory stance toward external threats, especially those supporting subversive groups, to preserve forces for immediate use against more pressing internal threats. This aligns with David's theory of "omnibalancing," which expands realism to consider internal threats and emphasizes state leadership as the unit of analysis. Michael Barnett (2009) and Jack Levy (2009) further complement this theory, highlighting the role of state-society relations in shaping security policies. They suggest that states facing external threats may prefer alliance policies to secure resources for internal threats when internal mobilization is challenging.

In this way, the alliance policy pursued is not simply a function of the presence or absence of external threats (a systemic variable) but is also linked to "the internal objectives of state actors and the social, economic, and political constraints that limit the availability of resources in society and the access of governments to those resources at acceptable costs..."

States may opt for external alliances due to several factors (Piccoli, 1999): (1) resource constraints hindering the support for an armament program; (2) the recognition that extracting internal resources may jeopardize long-term economic power and, consequently, state security; (3) the acknowledgment that substantial military expenditures can impact the distribution of resources within government partners, potentially undermining the narrow political support base for ruling elites; and (4) the imperative to address internal threats to political stability, compelling leaders to seek material resources through alliances to quell or suppress disturbances.

The relationship between alliances and armament as two distinct strategies to counter an external threat has been extensively discussed by several authors. On the one hand, there are authors who empirically deny the existence of a link between internal balancing (armament) and external balancing (alliance). On the other hand, others have developed microeconomic interpretive schemes that aim to explain why, in some cases, states choose to undertake an armament program and in other cases decide to form an alliance. According to these models, the choice is made based on the cost-benefit balance of each option; thus, states will decide in favor of the alternative that offers additional security at a lower internal cost.

James Morrow (2014) posits that while systemic factors, such as the magnitude of external threats, play a role, the selection of security strategies is contingent on both internal costs and external benefits. The effectiveness of a policy, according to Morrow, hinges not only on its ability to enhance security but also on the costs associated with overcoming internal resistance. States weigh the internal political

costs and external benefits of options like armament and alliances, selecting a combination that minimizes costs and maximizes benefits. In reality, a state's external options are limited, particularly in alliance formation where finding a willing partner is crucial. Morrow's cautionary note underscores the significance of internal factors in alliance formation, but it does not present an alternative theory that seamlessly integrates domestic and international policy considerations.

Other Resources of Alliances

Liska proposes that alliances fulfill two additional roles: maintaining global stability by restraining an excessively powerful ally ("the function of interconnected control") and legitimizing or fortifying a regime through international recognition. Notably, Liska doesn't differentiate between larger and smaller powers in illustrating these alliance functions. Similarly, Robert Rothstein (1968) categorizes alliances into military alliances (aligned with power aggregation) and political alliances. The latter aims to influence and somewhat constrain a concerned ally, arising from the perception of a situation rather than an unmanageable threat that could be addressed through an alliance.

Paul Schroeder challenges the prevalent view of alliances as "power weapons" and suggests an alternative perspective of alliances as "management tools." Analyzing alliances from 1815 to 1945, Schroeder argues that all alliances function as *pacta de contrahendo*, limiting and controlling ally actions. Despite the cooperative appearance, he emphasizes continuous competition within alliances, aligning with realist principles. While security is often associated with physical survival, it may also involve defending political principles. The alignment of ideologically similar states could be considered "natural," with a shared community of values and principles serving as a rationale for alignment. However, realist and neo-realist studies tend to downplay the role of ideology in alliance choices, a criticism articulated by Walt. In his analysis of alliance formation in the Middle East and Southwest Asia, Walt contends that ideology plays a minor role, with states easily abandoning ideological alignment in the face of significant threats. Only already "secure" states are more likely to pursue ideological preferences in their alliance choices. The influence of ideology becomes more pronounced in a bipolar world, especially when the defensive capabilities of states surpass their offensive potential. However, if defense predominates over attack, the question arises: why should states seek allies? Solely due to ideological solidarity?

Paradoxically, Michael Barnett (1967) employs Walt's theoretical framework and observations of alliance models in the Middle East to argue that state identity provides theoretical leverage on the issues of threat construction and the choice of alliance partner. According to Barnett, in Walt's analysis, "ideology," especially

Arabism, plays a significant role. Arguing that Arabism shapes the identity and policies of Arab leaders, Barnett concludes that it leaves a lasting impact on the dynamics of inter-Arab security and alliance politics. Specifically, he highlights that identity explains and influences alliance dynamics in two distinct ways.

1. it provides theoretical leverage on threat construction (a common identity is likely to generate a common definition of threat);
2. it offers control over who is considered a desirable alliance partner (identity makes some partners more attractive than others). While Barnett's theoretical argument is well-formulated, the historical evidence he presented to support his thesis ironically gives more credit to Walt's conclusions than to the argument that identity provides important insights into the dynamics of security cooperation and alliance politics in the Middle East. The case of the Baghdad Pact, chosen by Barnett as a historical case that confirms his thesis, clearly illustrates how states—Iraq, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and (informally) the United States—with different ideological preferences formed an alliance to protect Western interests against the Soviet threat and allow some of its members (i.e., Iraq and the United Kingdom) to maintain their influence in the region.

Finally, regarding U.S.-Israel relations—the recent historical case examined—Barnett argues that "U.S.-Israeli relations depend on Israel having a unique identity," a claim that oversimplifies the highly strategic cooperation between the two countries. The uniqueness of relations between the United States and Israel is well illustrated by the fact that the two states have never signed a military alliance: due to shared interests, there has never been a question that the U.S. would offer military assistance to Israel in a crisis.

In summary, according to Barnett (1967), his approach does not constitute an alternative perspective for understanding security policy and security cooperation but rather a complementary approach that highlights one of the "distinct" interests of states (i.e., identity), reducing the uncertainty characterizing the process of alliance formation in a multipolar system. As indicated by Snyder, the security dilemma creates a general impetus to form alliances with some states or others, but theoretically, it is impossible to predict who will align with whom. This uncertainty is reduced by the existing model of conflicts and commonalities—resulting from ideological, ethnic, or economic values—among states, influencing the negotiation process and predisposing the system toward certain alliances against others. Earlier, Morgenthau (1948) had suggested a similar argument, stating that *"the ideological factor, when it overrides an actual community of interests, can give strength to an alliance by uniting moral convictions and emotional preferences in its support."*

Challenges of Divergent Interests in NATO: An Academic Overview

The challenge of divergent interests is not a novel issue for NATO. A significant instance of divergent interests occurred between 1959 and 1966 when France withdrew from NATO's military structure, citing perceived disrespect from the United States and NATO's failure to intervene in the Algerian uprising (Lantier, 19 Mar 2009). Divergent interests can lead a nation to perceive another nation's threat differently. For example, the division among allies regarding NATO's policy towards Russia reflects varying perspectives on Russia's potential aggression, access to its natural gas, and considerations of national interest, including the United States viewing dependence on Russian fossil fuels as tantamount to hostage-taking.

In a multipolar world, alliance security is interconnected, and a decision by one ally to engage in conflict triggers the alliance's collective response, known as the chain reaction. If a partner does not fully participate in the conflict, it jeopardizes the security of its ally. Historical examples, such as the alliance between Austria-Hungary and Germany in World War I, illustrate the complex dynamics. The interdependence of alliances creates a cyclical and precarious balance, as the dissolution or defection of a major ally would disrupt the alliance, affecting the balance for each partner.

Leaders understand that entering a war entails unpredictable and uncontrollable events. Even with indications of a swift victory, hesitation arises due to uncertainties. Battlefields often yield unexpected results, and powerful states can suffer from dissatisfaction with war conduct, mobilization challenges, and ideological clashes. The diverse interests within NATO are evident in the current geopolitical landscape. Member states near the Balkans perceive instability in Bosnia and Kosovo as the most significant threat, while the U.S. prioritizes countering Islamic extremist terrorism. Others, amidst a global economic crisis, prioritize economic challenges as their top security concern, surpassing other defense issues.

A glance at the other corners of the Alliance reveals a variety of different interests. Member countries located in or near the Balkans "see the instability in Bosnia and Kosovo as the biggest threat to their security." [2]Those who understand the U.S. perspective on national security know that it prioritizes the threat of Islamic extremist terrorism at the top of its defense priorities. And yet, other countries rank the latest global economic crisis as their number one security challenge, thus surpassing all other defense issues.

Today, perhaps there is no more vivid manifestation of the challenges caused by 'different interests' than the rise of the European Union as a competing alliance of

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[2] Meetings with European Governments leaders, Brussels: 2007-2009.

collective security. This competition exists because the EU (mainly led by France and Germany) wants to end the hegemony of the United States on the European continent for the last 60 years. And while the European Union currently focuses most of its efforts on unifying and building Europe's collective diplomatic and economic powers, it is simultaneously trying to take over the responsibilities of collective security from the U.S.-led NATO alliance. The last three actions of the European Union prove this point.

The first involved the EU's effort to serve as an arbitrator between Russia and the Republic of Georgia during their conflict in August 2008. While the negotiations led by the French president (and, at that time, the President of the EU) Nicholas Sarkozy for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of Russian troops were flawed, the EU overshadowed NATO, proving that it could serve a greater role in European collective security.

NATO has the dominance in military capabilities necessary to carry out anti-piracy operations, but the EU prides itself on having the economic, diplomatic, and judicial qualities necessary to capture and prosecute pirates. Even considering these synergistic capabilities, the EU rejected NATO's requests for cooperation, "apparently to strengthen its image as a security organization different from NATO" (Seibert, 30 Mar 2009).

Recently, and most notably, the European Union's Lisbon Treaty of 2008 established the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) which "codifies its roles in collective security and multilateral military alliances." (Whiteman, 2008). However, it is important to note that their treaty does not fully commit to joint defense, as some of its members maintain a status of national neutrality.

Morgenthau wrote that, "A nation will avoid alliances if it believes that it is strong enough to sustain itself without aid or if the burden of commitments resulting from the alliance is likely to outweigh the expected benefits." (p.181-182). His statement underscores that nations will avoid the constraints of alliance consensus a) when their national interests differ from those of the alliance, and b) when they have the capacity to achieve their national agendas without the support of an alliance. This helps explain why the current phenomenon of 'diverse interests' is so erosive to NATO.

Despite these points of divergence, there are still many common interests within the Alliance. NATO's engagements in numerous operations and partnership programs over the last 20 years highlight many new and shared interests in the challenges of the 21st century, although to varying degrees among members. As we have seen, NATO was busier conducting security activities across three continents in the last 20 years than in its first 40 years of existence. While individually these activities were not vital to the overall security of NATO members, collectively they helped curb the spread of tyranny and chaos and the advanced conditions that

promote the rule of law, human rights, and better welfare. Again, it is useful to note that these security activities are primarily the competence of multilateral alliances.

At this point, it is very difficult to determine whether the divergence of national interests within NATO overshadows the converging issues, leaving this reasoning for the future dissolution of the Alliance inconclusive. However, both divergent and convergent interests have grown over the last 20 years, demonstrating the dichotomy in NATO's focus. Its activities show that the Alliance is currently more interested in its ideological goals than others. Recognizing this shift, NATO must be aware of the subtle effects caused by the diverse interests that are today encouraged by the high pace of globalization.

Military Alliances

Military alliances are formal agreements between states that emphasize their military objectives. The formation of these alliances has occurred in various historical periods, as we will mention later. Such alliances are formed among two or more members to confront a common threat. Their goal can be to undertake military action against an aggressor or another alliance posing a real threat or engaging in military actions, as seen in the alliances during the world wars, or they may be created to counter a potential risk or threat, such as the NATO alliance.

Classification and Types of Security Alliances

Alliances, which can have economic, political, ideological, or specific field characteristics, will be focused on security alliances. Studying such alliances reveals several classification methods:

1. *By Power:* Alliances may have two members, which is more common, three to four members, or many members that emerged after the ideological divide post-WWII.
2. *By Duration:* Classic division is between permanent alliances (long-term) and temporary (or occasional) alliances.
3. *Other Classifications:* These include effectiveness, goals toward third states, military integration, geopolitical position, power relations, purpose (defensive and offensive), etc.

Analyzing alliances from their creation shows they may consist of different states regarding their national or military power. According to their power, alliances can be composed of actors with equal or not significantly different power, termed

symmetrical alliances. Responsibilities and "gains" during and after the alliance's existence are balanced in symmetrical alliances. In cases where the alliance consists of actors with differences in their power, the alliance is termed asymmetrical. In this case, engagement and termination of the alliance's actions exhibit a dichotomy compared to symmetrical alliances. The role of the leading state, the one with greater power, is felt throughout the alliance's phases.

Besides these two types of alliances, based on the goal of alliance creation, there can be another variation. Generally, if alliance members share a common interest or perceive their adversary as common to all, it is a homogeneous alliance. When this is not possible due to diverse circumstances, we have a heterogeneous alliance. When various combinations between the above alliances occur, there is a range of alliance combinations with their specifications. Most alliances are, to some extent, asymmetrical. Concerning commitments, one signatory may expect less military commitment from the other. For example, the 1839 Treaty of London, where Britain guaranteed Belgium's neutrality, although not a military alliance, "was necessarily a unilateral commitment by Britain to come to Belgium's aid if she were invaded, a commitment Britain respected in 1914" (Barry, 2022).

Regarding capabilities, alliance members can provide vastly different contributions. Britain's contribution to defeating Napoleon was mainly financial and naval; "aside from Arthur Wellesley's campaign in Spain and the victory at Waterloo, few British troops were involved" (Moore, 2022). It was a classic demonstration of how naval powers achieve their victories. In World War II, despite the intensity of battles on the Eastern Front and the Normandy beaches, "the war in Europe was won by the Anglo-American air and naval power, which crippled Germany's ability to prosecute war" (Payson, 2015). Perhaps the Red Army would not have prevailed over the Wehrmacht, given the combined offensive of British bombers and convoys fighting to deliver American war materials. Despite the bombings and Stalin's demands for a second front, he was perhaps aware of this truth.

Peace and War Alliances

The theorist of alliances, Hans Morgenthau (1948), wrote, "... alliances in peacetime tend to be limited to a part of the interests and total objectives of the signatories..." His comment suggests that when there is no common enemy/threat to encourage mutually beneficial security activities, alliance members will instinctively seek to secure resources only for activities they perceive as nationally beneficial. From this argument, we would expect nations, over time, to choose new allies and partners with more shared interests.

Great powers often form alliances with smaller states referred to as client states. During the Cold War, each superpower covered its allies under its security

umbrella. Similarly, Germany did the same with Austria-Hungary during World War I, or with Italy in World War II, and the United States with Western European countries during the Cold War. The tendency to act based on alliances on a global or regional scale, created for various and specific fields, has been the functional trend. However, in some cases, this alliance does not function, raising questions about the organization's existence. Comprehensive decisions face even greater pressure, especially when it comes to security-related decisions that fundamentally affect the international order's continuity and the future state relations or the concerned state with the organization.

Political sentiments of organization leaders or leaders of major states have led them not to "test" the lack of unanimity but to use other forms. For this reason, they extensively use alliances or coalitions.

The most concentrated expression, where security policy is central, are security alliances, which have shaped the landscape of the international system in many cases. Factors culminating in the formation of alliances for the threat or use of military force are generally obligatory to the international system and allow changing the fundamental context of international relations. The importance of political alliances is well understood in international relations.

The military sphere is an area where institutions have a significant approach but have not matured fully. Consensual action in terms of alliance in the field of military operations is the decision-making process. For example, the decision-making in the politico-military organization NATO is specified as, "if necessary, efforts are made to reconcile the differences (positions of member countries), aiming to support joint actions with the full force of the decisions of all member governments" (OTAV, 1994, p.27). Every multinational operation requires coordination in command and control, mutual interaction in ideas and actions.

Looking back at cases where armed intervention has been evident in the post-WWII situation, studying the involvement curve of other states, armed conflicts in modern times are followed not by a single state but by a significant effort, which can be called multilateral effort. For the resolution of a crisis or a specific conflict, concrete actions can be taken by international or regional organizations, by peace alliances, by coalitions that can be created, or by possible ad hoc coalitions.

Alliances can be of different natures and can be created both in peacetime and wartime. In some cases, a peace alliance is against the development of war, and in some other cases, war is inevitable. Before such a fact, states join in an ad hoc coalition designed to express the intention of combat and to offer and distribute responsibilities for this action. Existing alliances benefit from the existence of decision-making structures and thus facilitate the coordination for the latter. In this way, coalitions benefit from the fact that they are adapted to express the purpose of why they are created.

In terms of the effectiveness of military capabilities to perform humanitarian intervention or the operation, military alliances have the advantage of possibilities for joint planning of military operations (as is the existence of a clear structure of NATO or the EU). These organizations have established the core of command direction, thus having more significant opportunities for the rise of an effective command. They have established decision-making structures as well as determined the appropriate steps for undertaking such actions. Even in the process of carrying out the operation, these organizations have built an information network that permanently distributes information. All these factors can make the coordination of actions during peacetime more straightforward than the coalition created for the development of the operation.

However, because alliances operating in war are usually created in peacetime, the transition is not as easy. This is because the joint decision of decision-making structures that supports and encourages cohesion in peacetime creates procedures that are not easy and not suitable quickly, and the decision is taken during war because not all partners of the alliance will feel threatened in the same way.

Alliances and coalitions in wartime are two substructures of multinational operations that may include other forms of cooperation, such as peacekeeping missions. Coalitions are in the sense of multilateral ad hoc imitations to undertake a specific mission and disperse immediately after fulfilling that mission. They are not entirely analytically distinguishable from alliances in wartime, although the latter may have a more institutionalized level and may have previously specified a specific wartime operation. There is a range of commitments that the alliance can offer, such as: "a promise to maintain neutrality in case of war; a promise to be consulted in case of military conflicts and thus implying appropriate assistance; a promise of military assistance and other assistance in times of war but unilateral and unprepared; an unconditional promise of mutual aid, common force planning, and an unconditional promise of mutual assistance in the event of a possible attack with a prepared plan, command, control, and integration of forces and strategies" (Weitsman, 2004, p.35).

Coalitions formed to combat a specific threat manifest in various forms. Contemporary coalitions, such as those formed by the United States in the First Gulf War, Iraq, and Afghanistan, share commonalities but also exhibit differences. The advantage of creating such coalitions lies in their adaptability to the specific mission requirements they engage in. Some coalitions, like the one in the First Gulf War, are ideologically driven, reflecting the coalition's genuine desire to address the international community's aspirations. In other cases, as in Iraq and the war in Afghanistan, coalitions form because of strategic consensus, serving the objectives and interests of a single nation, even if the coalition ultimately does not serve the interests of a specific state.

Up to now, large-scale coalitions often diminish the effectiveness of combat by introducing additional complexities in decision-making, interaction, and equitable burden-sharing among participants. This is evidenced by cases where the U.S. has shouldered the coalition's burden. The specific characteristic of these coalitions is that they are often established more to legitimize the operation than to distribute its burden. In some cases, they fail to ensure the participants' proper effectiveness. The effectiveness of multinational forces in combat requires a clear chain of command, decision-making, interaction, equitable burden-sharing, technology, human power, and resources. The larger the coalitions, the more challenging it becomes to maintain effectiveness across these dimensions. Additionally, as the number of participating forces (coalition member states) increases, managing differences in engagement rules becomes more challenging. For instance, during the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, 14 Australian pilots defied orders from American commanding officers, independently ceasing 40 bombing missions at the last minute (Walker, 14 Mar 2004). None of the pilots were reprimanded, as they acted in accordance with their country's rules of engagement.

Contemporary coalitions of war differ from their historical counterparts formed after World War II and post-September 11, a period in which the American coalition includes a significant number of its allies. Due to NATO's experience in the former Yugoslavia, revealing that the decision-making structure was incompatible with the immediate need for decisive action during war, the U.S. opted to reconstruct the coalition for the success of the operation with its early allies. The U.S. concluded bilateral agreements to use NATO's previous framework. This strategy has the advantage of fighting with experienced allies, with shared training and extensive interactions, and now flexibility in decision-making arrangements through this coalition. However, this strategy is not without its potential costs, as the alliance may be undermined by a mission failure.

Military alliances are often formed to enhance the security of their countries in various ways. Security can be expanded through guaranteed provisions in the alliance treaty (Article 5 of NATO and Article 42 of the EU), through targeted or implied conclusions to maintain peace among allies or through the perspective of restraining an adversary or anyone else who may threaten a vital interest. During peacetime, alliances are generally created to prevent war, prevent wars among alliance members, or even prevent wars within the alliance itself with external adversaries. Regardless of the above reasons, sometimes war has occurred, and the alliance has not been involved, a situation that has fundamentally changed the alliance's functioning.

In the 19th century, European Great Powers resulted in the existence of a complex network of political and military alliances. These began in 1815, with the Holy Alliance between Prussia, Russia, and Austria. In October 1873, German

Chancellor Bismarck negotiated the Three Emperors' League between Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Germany. This agreement failed, leaving Germany and Austria-Hungary in an alliance formed in 1879, called the Dual Alliance. In 1882, this alliance expanded to include Italy in what became the Triple Alliance. Two years later, the Franco-Russian Alliance was signed to combat the power of the Triple Alliance. In 1904, the United Kingdom signed a series of agreements with France, known as the Entente Cordiale, and in 1907, the United Kingdom and Russia signed the Anglo-Russian Convention.

Peacetime alliances change significantly in the degree to which states coordinate their military strategies, in other words, the extent to which they prepare for joint conflicts. For example, despite the anticipation of the League of Islands and Bridges, "the pre-war joint planning of the Central Powers was minimal. The Entente Powers, on the other hand, had coordinated their military planning much better before the war" (Weitsman, 2003/12, p.79).

Contemporary military strategists have best understood the importance of close consultation and coordination. As a result, NATO has become the most institutionalized alliance in history. For 50 years before its first active mission, NATO countries consulted under a command structure, developing detailed integrated military plans in case of war. Despite this detailed planning, when NATO began its first wartime mission in the former Yugoslavia, its decision-making structure realized that it was more suitable for peacetime than its wartime functioning. "Its decision-making structure was not suitable for quick and necessary action during the war, especially since it was not the same nature of war that NATO had planned for" (Bensahel, 2003, p.16).

Because alliance dynamics are so different in peacetime than in wartime, the benefits of cohesion are just as significant. During peacetime, cohesion would be the result of different threat levels, both within and outside the alliance. During wartime, cohesion is more complicated. Threats during wartime cannot align with those of peacetime, and the most evident case comes from L.II.B with the U.S.-UK-Soviet Union coalition.

After the war, significant issues arise. An acceptable external threat in peacetime cannot last as long in wartime. When states face external threats in peacetime, alliance cohesion is easy to encourage and maintain, while during wartime, the source of the threat is crucial. The table below describes alliance relationships in peacetime and wartime, as well as the threat source.

Moreover, asymmetric possibilities within alliances during peacetime may induce less cohesion than they might during wartime. While the distribution of the burden of effects influences cohesion both in peacetime and wartime, during wartime, this burden is much larger in both the life and financial value aspects.

As emphasized above, due to their long existence, alliances are institutionalized during peacetime, and wartime operations can be problematic. These alliances have generally strong structures but are unsuitable for effective functioning in wartime. Furthermore, the demands of member countries for the integration of forces are high, creating a natural tension between this demand and the member countries' desire to maintain national control of their troops. For this reason, old military alliances will have less cohesion in wartime than ad hoc coalitions.

Also, during wartime, power asymmetries within alliances will become more acute than in coalitions. Since ad hoc coalitions are driven by an immediate threat, this will stimulate cohesion, make internal power inequalities less important than in alliances built earlier, and function with structures built in peacetime. Alliances in peacetime and functioning in wartime will face threats in more diverse and extensive ways than ad hoc coalitions. This will damage their effectiveness in wartime.

Reasons for the Dissolution of Military Alliances

With an understanding of the historical sustainability of the three types of military alliances, the next step is to identify the repeated causes of alliance dissolution and relate these causes to the current path of NATO. For this purpose, history has shown that, in most cases, the realization of one or a combination of components from the following four criteria is necessary to trigger the dissolution of an alliance (Warren, 2010, p.21). These reasons include:

1. Loss of a partner.
2. Change in the interests of partners.
3. Elimination of the threat.
4. Non-compliance with the agreement by partners.

Loss of a Partner

When one of the partners within an alliance is no longer viable or otherwise ceases to exist under its unity conditions, an alliance is often modified or annulled. This reasoning is the primary cause for the dissolution of an alliance. The fall of the Axis Powers in World War II, resulting from Germany's defeat, illustrates this phenomenon. Furthermore, the collapse of the Warsaw Pact in 1991 identifies how the fall of a nation (in this case, the Soviet Union) can signal the end of an alliance, even when no shots are fired (Warren, 2010, p.21).

Change in Interests of Partners

The second most common reason for alliances to dissolve is when the interests of alliance members change to the extent that the activities of one member cannot be tolerated by others. Pakistan's withdrawal from SEATO in 1973 due to its divergent interests with India illustrates this point. Similarly, the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) disbanded in 1977 as Iran, Iraq, and Pakistan deserted due to disagreements over U.S. policies (Warren, 2010, p.22).

Elimination of the Threat

Perhaps the most well-known reason for the termination of a security alliance is when the threat supporting its formation disappears. This form of dissolution is characterized by the defeat of the Axis Powers in World War II, which caused the dissolution of the 'World War II Allies.' (Warren, 2010, p.22).

Non-Compliance with the Agreement by Partners

Finally, when a partner in an alliance fails to respect the principles or spirit of their agreement, partners tend to terminate the alliance. Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 and Russia's attack on Finland in 1939 directly violated the principles of the League of Nations and signaled the League's ultimate downfall.

The table below describes the main reasons for the dissolution of the three types of military alliances (Warren, 2010, p.23):

TABLE 1: Main reasons leading to the dissolution of military alliances in the last 500 years.

Dissolution Reason / Alliance Type	Collective Defense	Collective Security	Multilateral
Possible Partner Loss	17	2	4
Interests Divergence	9	2	6
Lost Threat	12	1	0
Non-Compliance with Treaty Principles	2	2	1
Total	40	7	11

From these data, several trends are observed (Warren, 2010, p.23):

1. Firstly, collective defense alliances primarily dissolve due to their loss or the loss of their enemy. Thus, as mentioned earlier, the existence of a threat is essential for the sustainability of collective defense alliances. Alliance

scholar George Liska supports this observation when suggesting, "alliances are against, and only derivatively for, someone or something."

2. Secondly, and conversely, the existence of a threat is not crucial for the longevity of collective security or multilateral alliances. Intuitively, this observation assumes further trust, considering that collective security alliances tend to focus internally on the actions of their members, and multilateral alliances, by definition, do not focus on matters of reciprocal defense.

3. Thirdly, collective security alliances are just as sensitive to various dissolution causes.

4. Fourthly, multilateral alliances are more sensitive to dissolution due to challenges arising from the divergence of national interests of their members.

5. Fifthly, military alliances tend to dissolve when their original purpose is no longer valid. This implies that alliances do not continue without a purpose to achieve.

Alliances after the bipolar world

Changes after the Cold War

Two trends characterize the period since the fall of the Soviet Union:

- NATO expansion and the search for a new reason for existence.
- Preference for "coalitions of the willing."

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 triggered a wave of popular uprisings, culminating in the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991. Even before the final collapse, NATO's Eastern counterpart, the Warsaw Pact, had dissolved at a ministerial meeting held in Budapest in February 1991.

Historically, when a threat disappears, a military alliance formed to counter it often loses momentum and dissolves. Instead, and almost instinctively, all NATO member governments believed that the alliance should continue without necessarily, as Sloan puts it, being "entirely sure for the reason" (2003, p.88). Some officials argued that it was more than a military alliance: it was a value community transcending any specific military threat. Others were more specific, suggesting that although the Soviet Union was undergoing its death throes and the emerging Russia seemed to be approaching the West, this could change, and Russia might adopt a threatening stance in the future. Lastly, and more broadly, NATO was a source of stability. The investment made in physical infrastructure and the

accumulation of organizational and collaborative experience was a sound policy against future threats to European security.

However, events in the 1990s disrupted alliance relations. The first event was NATO's Initial Strategic Concept after the Cold War. Released in 1991, it emphasized a broader approach to security. In fact, the alliance now needed to manage not one but two core missions: collective defense and "out-of-area" security tasks, ranging from crisis response to non-military engagement, which together were more militarily complex and politically diverse than its previous sole focus on the Cold War.

Secondly, the expansion of the alliance by admitting former Warsaw Pact powers was an early source of debate. The U.S. was concerned that it "would strengthen nationalist factions in Russia that were already dubious about Western motives" (U.S. Department of State). These concerns would be validated when Russia annexed Crimea and Ukraine in 2014. Additionally, populations in Central and Eastern Europe, having direct experience with communist and Russian rule, vehemently opposed the idea that Russia had the right to absorb them into a sphere of influence just to appease its historical sense of insecurity and the right of great power.

Thirdly, it was the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo that introduced the term "ethnic cleansing" to the world as Croats and especially Serbs used violence to break up ethnically mixed communities to create ethnically homogeneous and contiguous zones. Although both conflicts were precisely the kind NATO's new strategy aimed to mitigate, failures in the alliance's on-the-ground performance—especially its inability to prevent the genocide in Srebrenica in 1995—prompted the U.S. to carry out a bombing campaign that pushed warring factions "to sign the Dayton Agreement by the end of the year" (Sloan, 2003, p.93-97).

Differences between Europeans and Americans, especially regarding the Balkan wars, became so pronounced that Kaplan suggests, "the parties drifted apart as much as they had been during the crises of the 1956 Suez-Hungarian Uprising" (Kaplan, 1999, p.189). The only thing that kept them together was their representation in the Contact Group, a diplomatic tool completely separated from NATO, originally created to give Russia a voice in recognizing its traditional role as an ally of Serbia. These divisions effectively paved the way for the U.S. to adopt the so-called coalitions of volunteers in the early years of the 21st century.

Duality within an Alliance: NATO until the Withdrawal from Afghanistan

Regarding the operational approach of alliances, it is noteworthy to address the almost contradictory stance within NATO's influential members, the United States and Germany. After World War II, the U.S. played a crucial role in establishing West

Germany as a liberal democracy, creating democratic institutions, and a free press. The U.S. further ensured security during the Cold War, allowing West Germany to coexist with communist East Germany. Historian Ruth Hatlapa explains, "The U.S. defeated Germany in World War II and, later as an occupying power, was part of restructuring German society."

There was a pro-Americanism in West German society supporting deeper ties but also dissatisfaction, particularly regarding Germany's security dependence on the U.S., creating a "contradictory relationship." Relations saw their lows during the Vietnam War as Germany rejected American calls for military involvement. Instead, it initiated a humanitarian mission, sending a hospital ship to the war zone in 1966, coordinated and staffed by the German Red Cross.

Another blow to the American image in Germany came in 2003. Despite U.S. President George W. Bush urging the German government to participate in the Iraq War, then-Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer adhered to his legendary phrase: "I am not convinced." Doubts about the justification of the Iraq invasion were based on German intelligence counterfindings. According to August Hanning, former president of the Federal Intelligence Service (BND), "Colin Powell's reasons presented before the UN Security Council were not accurate, contradicted his narrative, and turned out to be false." (Newsweek, 15 Jan 2006). Terrorism and security analyst Rolf Tophoven states that mistakes made by the U.S. still have an effect today: the Sunni-Shiite conflict, the rise of terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda and ISIS and political instability" (NATO, 2 July 2012).

The situation is delicate concerning Afghanistan. The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Taliban taking Kabul, and desperate Afghans flooding the airport to escape raised concerns for outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel: "Developments are bitter, dramatic, and terrifying." (DW, 16 Aug 2021). For Germany, which spent nearly 20 years in Afghanistan, the human and financial cost has been significant. The German military, entering Afghanistan to support the U.S., faced one of the largest and longest military deployments outside the country. German diplomacy speaks of a hit to transatlantic relations. Germans did not expect the U.S., without fully involving allies, to implement Trump's withdrawal order from Afghanistan one by one. Political analyst Stephan Bierling from the University of Regensburg says, "It's a significant loss of trust, especially in America's military competence. After four catastrophic years under Trump, we had a very positive view of Joe Biden. Now, this spiritual state is changing."

NATO with Increased Cohesion after February 2022

After a month of war in Ukraine, on March 24, 2022, European and American leaders decided in Brussels: "Increase forces in the East, more weapons for

Ukraine." (NATO, 24 Mar 2022). In a rare gesture of unity, NATO, G7, and the EU held meetings, showing the world a united Western front for the war in Ukraine.

NATO leaders gathered at the extraordinary summit in Brussels with a clear goal: to discuss the short-term and long-term response of the North Atlantic Alliance to the Russian attack on Ukraine. NATO leaders decided to deploy armed forces in the East on the day marking one month since Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the invasion of the neighboring country. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, after the extraordinary summit, stated that an agreement was reached to assist Ukraine with ammunition and other weapons. This aid has continued and continues uninterrupted into June 2023.

By severing energy ties with Russia, the EU needed to differentiate and strengthen other relations, including those with the U.S. 30 presidents and prime ministers of the alliance agreed in the meeting that more assistance was needed for Ukraine and new troop deployments in Eastern Europe.

The most robust reaction came from the "leading" NATO country, the U.S. President Joe Biden threatened, "We will respond if Russia uses nuclear weapons" (The Guardian, 07 Oct 2022). The U.S. imposed new sanctions on 400 individuals and entities, including 300 members of the Russian Duma, the parliament of Russia, as well as oligarchs and companies allegedly fueling Russia's war machine. He added that Putin miscalculated in his decision to invade Ukraine, and NATO is now more united than ever.

After the NATO leaders' meeting, French President Emmanuel Macron said that Russia is increasingly isolated globally. Macron stated that it is essential to avoid escalation of the conflict, considering it as the reason NATO decided to support Ukraine without declaring war on Russia. In a joint statement, G7 leaders warned Russia against using chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons in the invasion of Ukraine. "We warn against any threat of the use of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons or similar materials," (The Economic Times, 25 Mar 2022) the leaders said in a joint statement. They emphasized that such actions would have severe consequences.

A significant point of discussion was the responsibility of NATO to defend Ukraine, a non-member state. According to NATO, Russia's unprovoked and unjustified attack on Ukraine posed a direct threat to other allies. NATO's decision to support Ukraine militarily marked a significant shift in the alliance's posture, recognizing the broader implications of the conflict on Euro-Atlantic security.

In conclusion, the developments in NATO's stance from the withdrawal from Afghanistan to the response to the war in Ukraine highlight the complexities within the alliance, influenced by historical relationships, strategic considerations, and the evolving geopolitical landscape. The alliance faced challenges in maintaining cohesion and trust, particularly in the aftermath of the Afghanistan withdrawal.

However, the invasion of Ukraine acted as a catalyst for increased unity and a renewed commitment to collective defense among NATO members. The ongoing conflict continues to shape the alliance's role and responses in the face of evolving security threats.

G-7, Strengthening Relations to Address Current Crises

The G7 summit in Hiroshima underscored the heightened unity of the G7 nations, emphasizing solidarity for Ukraine, China, economic security, the development of clean energy economies, nuclear disarmament, and the collective response to global challenges such as the worldwide climate crisis.

The G7 demonstrated unprecedented unity, particularly in support of Ukraine. During the gathering of the world's most powerful nations, the President of Ukraine was invited to speak and received assurances of support against Russian aggression. G7 leaders presented a robust declaration of strength and unity in response to Russia's aggressive war. They communicated a series of specific actions to enhance G7 diplomatic, financial, humanitarian, and security support for Ukraine, to escalate costs for Russia and its backers, and to continue opposing the negative impacts of Russia's war on vulnerable populations worldwide.

G7 leaders announced new measures to economically isolate Russia and weaken its capacity to wage war. They disclosed new efforts to further impede Russia's ability to gather data for its war, close loopholes in evasion, further diminish dependence on Russian energy, limit its future export capabilities, and squeeze Russia's access to the international financial system. G7 leaders also reaffirmed their commitment to freeze Russia's sovereign assets until Russia compensates for the damage it has caused. To implement these commitments, the Departments of the Treasury, State, and Trade issued new sanction packages, including the expansion of broad restrictions, the suspension of over 70 companies from Russia and other countries from receiving exports from the U.S., and the sanctioning of over 300 individuals, entities, vessels, and aircraft globally.

Peace discussions with a diverse range of partners. G7 leaders met with heads of Ukraine, Australia, Brazil, the Cook Islands, Comoros, India, Indonesia, South Korea, and Vietnam to discuss international peace and security. Leaders issued a Food Security Action Plan emphasizing, "Especially in light of its impact on food security and the humanitarian situation worldwide, we support a just and sustainable peace based on the respect for international law, the principles of the UN Charter, and the integrity and territorial sovereignty." (The White House, 20 May 2023).

Conclusions

The global environment has undergone significant changes in the last 20 years, necessitating a serious reassessment of alliance objectives, a task that should not be avoided. Without a harmonized purpose, alliances cannot appropriately define the policies, structures, and capabilities needed to achieve their goals. Large and bureaucratized alliances do not disintegrate; they erode over time as threat assessments change, and political will weakens. This is the risk if NATO continues its current path of "burden-sharing" amid ongoing accusations of American "transactionalism."

NATO stands out as the best example of an alliance that remains relevant in the security environment, adapting over time to new risks and challenges. Preserving NATO is crucial for both Americans and Europeans because the alliance continues to serve as a deterrent to Russia and as a values-based framework through which the West can confront China. NATO provides the best existing format for collective defense and effectively ensures that the North Atlantic remains the internal waterway for Western democracies. Without essential actions, alliances will continue to suffer from a loss of trust among their members.

The lack of defense readiness and the 'will' to reconcile Russia's status and the status of other 21st-century threats, the lack of equal support for current operations, and the lack of confidence that the U.S. will lead the Alliance in operations that matter for the remaining part, constitute the basis for this insecurity. The Alliance and the lack of trust in the Alliance's ability to prevail in Afghanistan form the basis for this insecurity. If this lack of trust among members persists and decisions continue to be postponed, history tells us that NATO will break apart. However, on the other hand, the war in Ukraine is bringing about significant changes in the NATO alliance, not only in cohesion but also in expansion. Russia is accelerating its current expansion. The Nordic countries, Finland and Sweden, have remained unaffiliated with NATO at least since World War II.

Both countries joined NATO's Partnership for Peace program since 1994. They have contributed to NATO-led missions in the Balkans, Afghanistan, or Iraq. As non-member states, Helsinki and Stockholm do not have NATO's guarantee that an attack on an ally would mean an attack on all. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, they have initiated the NATO accession procedures. At the July 2023 meeting, it was announced that a new Strategic Concept would be developed to guide NATO's activities in the coming decade.

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Japan and the Regional Security Complex in the Asia–Pacific region 1931–1945

Jurgen HOXHA, MSc[1]

Abstract

This paper aims to analyse the Regional Security Complex (RSC) in the Asia-Pacific region from 1931-1945, from the perspective of the Empire of Japan. Along with the rise of Germany, the rise of Imperial Japan in the Asia-Pacific region is crucial to international relations. The challenge that Imperial Japan posed to the Status Quo in the region has had lasting effects that molded the current RSC. The RSC of the Asia-Pacific has risen to be critically important to the International System at large. With so many eyes peering in its direction, the importance of examining its past challenges is of utmost importance to orient present and future decision making. Afterall, the past is not dead, it's not even past. The hipothesis of this paper is that internal factors (such as faulty institutions struggling to adapt to new social conditions, militarism, extremist politics and a lack of responsible leadership) were as important to the destabilisaton of the RSC in the Asia-Pacific region as the general disruption to the balance of power. The analyzes stresses out the importance of adopting a regional perspective and focusing not only on states but also on other security actors. Data will be used interpretatively; meaning that the focus will be on understanding events in a comprehensive/holistic way.

Keywords: *Regional Security Complex Theory, balance of power, soft power, international relations, foreign policy.*

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Introduction

The Empire of Japan was the major native revisionist power exerting its influence in the Asia-Pacific region from its rise in prominence during the second half of the 19th century to the first half of the 20th. Changes to the RSC of a region tend to be mostly violent in nature when the different actors in the complex are at loggerheads with each other and when the structure of the complex does not offer mechanisms or institutions to mediate between the different parties with the aim to facilitate a transition to a new balance of power. To understand the grievances that the Empire of Japan had with the existing *Status-Quo*, this paper will examine how the policy makers and the japanese public viewed their role in the existing RSC. The case of Japan is a clear illustration of the importance of internal factors in the process of transition from politics to policy.

The Jupiter of the Asia-Pacific region was Imperial China. It had the largest concentration and raw number of population, an extensive agricultural economy to support it and an extensive artisan and even manufacture base (pre industrial of course). China's influence also extended into the cultural aspect. It acted as a model for all the surrounding states and it exported ideas to them while maintaining nominal overlordship over them. China's influence was more based on trade and soft power. Japan on the other hand is a relatively small island nation that lacks in resources. For centuries it had a "little brother-big brother" relationship with China. Here we also see one crucial aspect of japanese culture and mentality; when faced with another state whose power greatly exceeds its own, Japan would try to learn what made them so successful and try to implement the lessons all the while tinkering with them to adapt them to its society and culture. During the Yamato, Nara and the Heian periods, Japan would not only import goods from China but also ideas. The Imperial institution itself was a remodelling of the chinese one and confucianism gained widespread popularity as a system of ethics.

Medieval Japan was a very militaristic society where local warlords (the daimyo) had their own retinues of warriors that would battle each-other for territorial gain and honor. When the clan controling the institution of the shogun would weaken, there was no lack of potential challengers that would seek to acquire that authority.

The Tokugawa period is important to study because large parts of the culture and tradition of modern Japan was molded and finally took shape in that period. The ultranationalists of the 20th century would look at this period for a lot of the ethics and moral codes that they felt would "restore the country to prosperity". While it is true that the worship of the emperor as the ultimate authority had its roots in the earlier periods, the romanticisation of the samurai class and its

moral code (the bushido) would start during this period. The idea that a warrior class would always put principle before pragmatism does not withstand historical scrutiny. *"The popular belief nowadays is that samurai were men of absolute loyalty. Many undoubtedly were, and sacrificed their life for their lords. However , it was also very common among samurai of the Middle ages to switch sides"* (Henshall , 2004 , p 40).

This period is called the closed country because Japan would close its ports not only to trade but also to any contact with the western world. Trade with China and Korea would continue but it was to be done under government sanction. Many seeming contradictions of contemporary Japan that so puzzle the outside world can be traced to the gap between the formal institutional structure of Tokugawa Japan and what was actually going on. It is also in the Tokugawa period that we can find the roots of a culture that, on the one hand, would carry loyalty and self-abnegation. (Murphy, 2016 , p 43-44)

Japan would emerge forcefully from its self-imposed isolation in the 1860s. The world that it would find was much changed from the one familiar to it, it was a world dominated by what had been largely irrelevant states from Europe. To the far west of Japan, across the Pacific , a new state was starting to exert its influence first in its regional sphere and with time across the ocean , the United States. It is ironic that it was the United States that were responsible for opening up Japan. Like other western powers, the United States had tried diplomatically to engage with Tokugawa Japan to no avail. Like they had done previously to China and many other states in East Asia, the western powers imposed unequal treaties on Japan.

The Renaissance, the declining importance of the church and the separation of powers, the scientific revolution, the french revolution and all the intellectual ideas of the Enlightenmet, Liberalism, Democracy, Socialism, even Marxism were all groundshaking events that caused quite a stir in the social fabric of Europe. Japan could pick and choose so to speak. It could import and integrate the model that it thought would best fit it. It didnt have to invent, it had to tinker and adapt but it had to do so fast before the colonial powers could de facto render it a subservient state.

Asserting itself in the International System

The Asia-Pacific normally is analysed in smaller chunks that we call subcomplexes. It is particular of this time period that it is necessary to analyse it mostly as a whole because of the weakness of its native actors and the prepoderance of strengh and influence wielded by external actors. China, the former Jupiter of East-Asia was now in shambles. The Qing dynasty wasnt capable of protecting its territory and its

sovereignty from the incursion of the european powers. The Opium Wars were a real wake up call for the chinese about how much had the world changed. During these wars, the advanced fleets of Britain were able to control not only the chinese coast but also its navigable rivers. The technological advantage was insurmountable at that time but it has to be stressed that it wasnt only a technological challenge that the native powers of the Asia-Pacific faced when engaging the armies and navies of the western powers. The failing Ottoman Empire was proof that even when one could buy the technology, one needed to know how to use it and to produce it on their own.

> Remarkably, western models were also used to portray the frustrations and failures of those Japanese unable to cope with the bustling dynamism of the westernisation process itself. The Russian literary concept of the 'superfluous man' appealed particularly to those Japanese who felt bewildered and left behind by all the changes. The superfluous man in Japan was a loser in a tough world of winners and losers, a world where people were suddenly left largely on their own to succeed or fail on their own strengths. The rigidly prescribed orthodoxy of the Tokugawa era had at least meant that people had a fixed place, and were told how to think and act. That security had now gone. Freedom proved a two-edged sword (Henshall, 2004 , p 81).

The Reins of Power

While on the surface the restoration of the Emperor to his place as the supreme authority and the head of state was a fait accompli, the reality was that the internal power structure of Japan was much more complicated and chaotic than it may seem at first glance. The models that Japan could chose to copy as a blueprint for societal sctructuring were varied. It could go the british way and create a Constitutional Monarchy but that was not to the taste of the more royalist elements. Furthermore, it has to be remembered, the imperial household as an institution was supposed to act as a medium between the "old traditional" Japan and the "new" Japan thus granting legitimacy to the new system. The American model and the French model were also not feasible for these very same reasons. Japan had not experience with democracy, parliaments and political parties and as a consequence they were sceptical about them. It must be remembered that the nobility would play a crucial role in the governing of Japan therefore it was in their interest to preserve their access to power and influence.

Germany or more precisely Prussia was found to be a fitting model for Japan. Prussia constitutionalism was seen as a fitting model to expose an outer form of democratic rule while in reality the inner substance was much more oligarchic.

The First Sino-Japanese War 1894

Between 1871-73 , Japan would send some of its leading statesmen and scholar on a tour of the the great powers of the world at that time. The Iwakura mission is a fascinating window into the way of thinking of some of the decisionmakers of the Meiji period since some of the genro/oligarchs were part of it. The way the members of the mission would react to what they saw in the capitals of the western powers illustrates the "clash of civilisations" as Huntington would call it. The ideas and values that the delegation members had clashed with what they saw. What is even more fascinating is that the participants would themselves write about their experiences and thoughts during this mission. The most remarkable encounter that the mission had was (in my opinion) that with prince Bismarck. Ever the orator and the realpolitiker, Bismarck would "cut to the chase" and in one of his famous dialogues would explain the way he saw the international system. What at the time was the future course of japanese foreign policy would conform largely to his way of thinking but applied to a different region.

> Nations these days all appear to conduct relations with amity and courtesy, but this is entirely superficial, for behind this fac¸ade lurks mutual contempt and a struggle for supremacy. ... However, small nations like ours would assiduously stick to the letter of the law and abide by universal principles, not daring to transgress these (Kunitake et al, 2009, p 306).

One of the aims of the mission was to begin preliminary renegotiations for the unequal treaties imposed on it hence what Bismarck said about the international law conformed to what Japan was learning. At that time and I would argue even today, international law is not applied universally to all states. The power of a state influenced how and when it would in essence submit to international law meaning that it was really the balance of power that would dictate and constrain the behavior of states and not international law.

Both China and Japan had undergone extensive military reforms and most foreign observers expected the chinese to win the war with Japan, afterall they had more manpower and resources at their disposal. The problem with the military evaluations of the time was that they had not taken into account the impact that extensive corruption had taken on the Qing army (something that foreign observers also did earlier this year with their evaluation of the offensive potential of the russian army during the invasion of Ukraine) and the system of banners that they had adopted was inferior to the division based organisation of the japanese army. On the seas, the japanese navy would maul the chinese navy so badly that

China would not build another relevant naval contingent up until the Cold War. On land, the japanese army would likewise inflict several defeats on the chinese forces and push them deep into Manchuria. They would conquer the Liandong peninsula (where the key port city of Port Arthur would be located) and would prepare for a push deeper into chinese territory. Seeing the writing on the wall, Qing China sued for peace terms. The treaty of Shimonoseki was a decisive and historical win for Japan. Articles 1-5 of the treaty would stipulate:

1) China recognises definitively the full and complete independence and autonomy of Korea, and, in consequence, the payment of tribute and the performance of ceremonies and formalities by Korea to China, in derogation of such independence and autonomy, shall wholly cease for the future.
2) China cedes to Japan in perpetuity and full sovereignty the following territories, together with all fortifications, arsenals, and public property thereon:
    a) The island of Formosa, together with all islands appertaining or belonging to the said island of Formosa.
    b) The Pescadores Group, that is to say, all islands lying between the 119th and 120th degrees of longitude east of Greenwich and the 23rd and 24th degrees of north latitude. (the Penghu islands that are still a source of friction today between China and Japan).
3) China agrees to pay to Japan as a war indemnity the sum of 200,000,000 Kuping [Gubing] taels; the said sum to be paid in eight instalments. (at the time this was roughly 4 times the annual japanese government budget)
4) All Treaties between Japan and China having come to an end as a consequence of war, China engages, immediately upon the exchange of the ratifications of this Act, to appoint Plenipotentiaries to conclude with the Japanese Plenipotentiaries, a Treaty of Commerce and Navigation and a Convention to regulate Frontier Intercourse and Trade. The Treaties, Conventions, and Regulations now subsisting between China and the European Powers shall serve as a basis for the said Treaty and Convention between Japan and China. From the date of the exchange of ratifications of this Act until the said Treaty and Convention are brought into actual operation, the Japanese Governments, its officials, commerce, navigation, frontier intercourse and trade, industries, ships, and subjects, shall in every respect be accorded by China most favoured nation treatment. (USC US-China Institute , https://china.usc.edu/treaty-shimonoseki-1895)

While it was victorious, Japan had learned that it also needed to play the diplomatic game with the Great Powers if it wanted to keep what the sword had

conquered. Surprisingly, this victory over the once hegemon of East-Asia , China, had come at a very low cost in lives (around 1500 casualties in all). This would create the false sense that wars in the region would not cost too much blood and treasure for a modernised Japan. Japan now also had its first colonies (Korea would be officially anexed in 1910) in Taiwan and Korea. For the other Great Powers , newly acquired colonies would not contribute that much to their overall economic strength but that would not be the case for Japan. In 1934, its colonies which by that time included also Manchuria, would account for 25% of its overall trade (23.1% of imports and 22% of exports) *(Morgenthau et al., 2005, p 118).*

> As for entrepreneurialism, this could clearly not be left to foreigners. It should be Japanese people themselves who established and kept ownership of at least the major modern industries. In general the merchant houses from the Tokugawa period were not especially willing to take up the challenge of establishing modern industries, which they saw as too risky. Mitsui and Sumitomo were in fact the only major houses to do so. Rather, in most cases entrepreneurial initiative was taken either by the government itself or by the same 'class' of lower-ranking samurai – often with peasant associations – who formed the government (Henshall. 2004 , p 97).

The main problem was that this injection of cash also increase the apetite of the government for war. Historically speaking, empires have found it much easier to keep their internal stability when they can finance themselves through war and plundering (the Roman and the Ottoman Empire are perfect examples of this trend). When the costs of war rise beyond the benefits or when the ability of the state to wage war is limited, its internal organisational and social defects can no longer be ignored and need to be adressed if the state wants to maintain a healthy economy. So it was that when the Roman and the Ottoman Empires could not count on huge profits from conquest that they began the painful process of reorganising their economical and social structure to a more effective equilibrium. Japan would suffer the same dilemma as those empires when it would rely on the profits of conquest to compensate for its internal incapabilities to keep the economy going and finding markets for its products. This would become apparent by 1905 during the Russo-Japanese war.

The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905

Immediately after the end of the first Sino-Japanese war, the intervention by Russia in particular would increase tensions between it and Japan. In 1900, an anti-foreign Boxer Rebellion broke out in northern China which would be quelled only after 8 nations would send troops in to protect their interests in China. After the quelling of the rebellion, Russia would refuse to withdraw its troops from China and would

engage in extensive rail track building in order to gain the ability to move troops and extend its influence in the area. Conflict between Japan and Russia now seemed inescapeable although as with the war against China, to western observers it seemed like a very lopsided rivalry. Although Japan had made a lot of progress politically, diplomatically and economically, we must remember that this was the late Victorian Era with its views on race and ethnicity. Japan was seen as a rising asiatic nation but by no means a contender against a western nation or in the case of Russia simply a "white" nation (because Russia couldnt be deemed a western nation the argument fell back on good old racial prejudices).

The tripple intervention taught Japan the need to have allies so in 1902 it signed an alliance treaty with Britain. The aim of this alliance was to curtail the expansion of Russia in China and Korea. From the British perspective, this alliance proved useful in finding another state that could help contain Russia and remove some of the burden from Britain who was already engaged in containing Russia in the Balkans, in the Caucasus, Iran, and Afghanistan. From the perspective of Japan, according to Henshall (2004), *"the alliance did not recognise Japan's control of Korea, though it did recognise its 'special interests' in that country. Nor did it mean that Britain would fight alongside Japan if and when it went to war with Russia. But it did give Japan the confidence that other western powers would be unlikely to act against it in such a war" (p 94).*

In order to finance this war, the japanese government borrowed heavily from their british allies and from the United States. The battles of the this war became sources of great national pride for the japanese armed forces. Nonetheless, the army especially, had to learn some hard lessons from this conflict and unfortunately for Japan it was not prepared to assimilate the knowledge that was gained at such a high cost in blood and treasure. The most famous Meiji novelist, Natsume Soseki would write in his Sore Kara (And Then) in 1909, when Japan was arguably at the peak of its international prestige:

> "Look at Japan .… She tries to force her way into the company of world class powers .… She is like a frog trying to grow as big as a cow. Of course, she will soon burst. This struggle affects you and me, and everybody else. Because of the pressure of the competition with the West, the Japanese have no time to relax .… No wonder they are all neurotics .… They think of nothing except themselves and their immediate needs. Look all over Japan, and you won't find one square inch that is bright with hope. It is dark everywhere." (Henshall, 2004, p 101)

Japan was now at a crossroads , it could sense it but it would take the coming decades for it to realise the extent of the precarious position that it was in , be that internally and externally.

The Taisho Period, World War One, Attempts at Democracy and Government by Assassination

1912 would be a fateful year for East Asia; in China the Qing Dynasty would be overthrown and on the 1st of January , a Republic was formally established with Yuan Shikai as the first president. The japanese system of governance relied on the image of a strong and healthy Emperor to act as the centrepiece of the national polity (the Kokutai) even if in practice his powers were more limited than they seemed. The Emperor was the commander in chief of the armed forces and he would recommend a successor prime minister when the instable cabinets would fall from power. Yoshihito was not up to the task to discharge his duties.

> Less than one month after Yoshihito's accession to the throne, at the start of the new Taisho era (1912–26), the press reported the appointment of extra doctors to the court. In December 1912 Adm. Yamamoto Gonbei told genro Matsukata Masayoshi that when it came to recommending a successor prime minister, Emperor Yoshihito "is not [of the same caliber] as the previous emperor. In my view it is loyal not to obey the [Taisho] emperor's word if we deem it to be disadvantageous to the state (Bix, 2016 , p 40)

While most of the Great Powers were focused on Europe, during the WW1, the Republic of China would collapse again into a state where different warlords would control different provinces in the country. The president Yuan Shikai tried to have himself declared emperor to the displeasure of the Kuomintang and the revolutionaries that had overthrown the Qing in 1912. While his attempt at centralising power failed, different governors and commanders of military forces gained de facto control of the provinces which they ruled as their personal fiefs. The Kuomintang of Sun Yat Sen would retreat south where they would consolidate their forces and wait for an opportunity to reunify and stabilise China. Japan had in fact supported the cause of the chinese revolutionaries for a time. Their view was that the western powers we not well disposed towards Japan therefore closer ties to a revived China could prove useful. The hopes of the liberals for an anti-colonial alliance between China and Japan were dashed mainly because the japanese government was not willing to sacrifice its gains in Manchuria for an alliance with China. It was in this context that Japan issued it "21 demands" on the chinese government.

The United States were very interested in the recent developments in China partly because the viewed as *"the product of American missionary and education*

work" (Jansen, 2002 , p 517). The US secretary of state at the time (William Bryan) would issue a statement that would warn Japan that the United States would not recognise any actions that would violate chinese sovereignty. Japan would back down, this time.This formula would once again be adopted by the US in 1933 when Japan created its puppet state of Manchukuo. In 1916 Yuan Shikai would die leaving behind a China that was truly destabilised , where local warlords weilded true power thua opening it up to interference from without , namely from Japan.

World War One would lead to the eventual breakdown of the british-japanese alliance since in the new balance of power, Britain needed the support of the United States to secure its vital interests in Europe itself. The more Japan pushed in China, the worse its relations got with the USA and by effect also with all the other powers that were eager not to antagonise the USA. The war also unleashed a swath of ideas into the world and it tore down the old regimes, mainly the monarchies. It is understandeable that Japan was really worried about the future of the imperial system. Monarchies seemed to be going the way of the dodo by the end of the war. The historian Herbert P. Bix further elaborates that: *"Extremist thought" may be read here as a metaphor for ideas of democracy, antimilitarism, socialism, and communist revolution that had swept over Japan and the world following World War I." (Bix, 2016 , p 91).*

The restrictions involved only capital ships and in fact there was some leeway that the naval powers could play with with regard to the decomissioning of old ships and building up their replacements. An important detail to note is that the Washington Treaty banned the signatories from building fortifications beyond what existed at the time. This meant that besides Singapore, Hawai and the japanese home islands, no new fortifications were build in the region up to the outbreak of World War Two. Not everyone in Japan agreed that a foreign policy bent on internationalism and arms limitation treaties was conducive to the interests of the state. In 1921, as a result of the reaction caused by the Washington Treaty, prime minister Hara was assassinated in his office by ultranationalists belonging to the "fleet faction". This would innaugurate a period that historians refer to as government by assassination.

> The assassination of the three prime ministers in office was in each case related to problems of foreign policy. Hara fell victim to a rightist who objected to the way the prime minister had forced compliance with the naval limitations being worked out at the Washington Conference, Hamaguchi too had overruled navy opposition to reductions worked out at the London Naval Conference, and Inukai was murdered by young naval officers newly returned from the violence at Shanghai that the government had managed to stop. The flash point of violence was particularly low whenever civilian interference with military prerogatives was involved (Jansen, 2002, p 504).

Tensions and instability at home made the job of the government extremely difficult to carry out. Not only did it have to deal with the remaining genro, the zaibatsu, the army and the navy , the political parties and the unrest that would blow up as a result of the post war constriction of the economy, the 1927 bank collapse and the Great Depression. Now, fanatical youth were also liable to shoot a prime minister if they didnt agree with the decisions. One of the political mavericks of the time made some interesting observations:

> Ozaki Yukio, who had his own brushes with violence without having become prime minister, later reflected on this in his memoirs. Military men, he remarked, liked to be thought of as men who put their lives in danger for the sake of the nation, and derided civilian leaders and politicians as power hungry, selfish, and often corrupt. But in fact, he thought, the cases were quite opposite. In the military, the higher one's rank the less the likelihood of personal danger, for top commanders were usually kept at a prudent distance from the violence of the battlefield. It was quite the reverse with civil leaders; the higher the post, the greater the individual's personal danger. The office of prime minister was perhaps the most dangerous of all *(Jansen, 2002 , p 503).*

The violence would reach a boiling point the 15th of May 1932 when a group of young naval officers would shoot the prime minister to death, hurl grenades at several police offices, at the Bank of Japan and at the headquarters of the Seiyukai party. Tokyo would look like a warzone that day. The assassins published a manifesto: "Look straight at the present state of your fatherland, Japan! Where, we dare ask, can you find the genuine manifestation of the godliness of the Imperial Country of Japan? Political parties are blind in their pursuit of power and egoistic gains. Large enterprises are firmly in collusion with politicians as they suck the sweat and blood of the common people. Bureaucrats and police are busy defending the corrupt politico-industrial complex. Diplomacy is weak-kneed. Education is rotten to the core. Now is the time to carry out drastic, revolutionary change. Rise, and take action now!" (McClain, 2002, p 416)

In a situation such as this how can a government carry out its proper function? How can a society go about its daily business? The rise of tensions in Europe, asociated with the rise of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy could provide an opportunity. With time, the navy too started to think in terms of expansion but to them the southern route of expansion was preferable. This would involve conquering the Philipines, Indonesia, Indochina and Burma. This resource rich are would provide (according to the navy) the resource base that Japan lacked. It would also be a surefire way to precipitate a conflict with Britain and the US.

Revolution in Military Affairs and the Asia-Pacific Theater of Operations

War is the continuation of politics with different means. It is important to differentiate between politics and policy although they are linked. *"Politics refers to the distribution of power through dynamic interaction, both cooperative and competitive, while policy refers to the conscious objectives established within the political process" (Corps,1997, p 23)*. In relation to war, it is paramount that warfare and by extension warfare theory must serve policy and not the other way around. One of the failings of Imperial Japan during the interwar period and World War Two was that the armed forces would impose what they thought was a reasonable set of policies on the political structure that was supposed to generate policy. The whole process was backwards owing not only to the power and influence that the army and navy had but also to the weakness and disarray of the political structure.

When evaluating the impact that technology and new weapon systems have on warfare, we must not fall on the trap of considering only the "hard factors" but also the "soft factors" and the intangibles (which by definition are the hardest to estimate). Let us take a tank as an example. When one thinks of a tank the first things that come to mind are armor, cannon plus machine guns and its ability to move across difficult terrain. While undobtedly these are important factors to consider, other factors such as ergonomics have to also be taken into account. Does the internal structure of the tank allow the crew to operate comfortaby? Do the sights allow for good vision in combat? How much maintenance work does the tank require? Logistics and procurement have to also be factored into the equation. For the United States and Japan to wage war outside of their national borders, all of their equipment and troops have to be transported by sea therefore, when designing said equipment, transport and maintenance have to be taken into account. The fighting in the Pacific during World War Two between the US and Japan took place mainly on islands. This meant that the equipment destined to these warzones had to be maintained at or near the site of combat thus imposing an aditional design requirement on the equipment and the troops that had to fight and maintain it.

Access to resources is another important factor that impacts weapon system design thus in turn impacting force organisation. Not all oil is extracted or refined equally! High power engines require fuel that is energy dense therefore, access to high octane fuel can determine the engine design that a state can resonably afford for its armed forces. This in turn has a dramatic impact on aircraft design thus resulting in very different designs by different countries for weapon systems that

in combat fulfill the same role. To put it in simpler terms, since Japan and also Germany had problems in general with fuel access and specifically with access to high octane aviation fuel, the design of the aircraft reflected this constaint. Thus when evaluating the combat performance of the famed japanese Zero fighters and the german Messerschmidt vs their conterparts, the american Corsairs and Wildcats, we have to keep in mind the resource access of the nation that designed said aircraft. As we can see, an objective evaluation is very difficult thus to this day there are debates about the effectiveness of this or that weapon system used in World War Two.

During World War One, the western front was characterised by trench warfare which denied the opponents the main way that , according to the doctrine of the combatants , was required to gain the upper hand on the enemy; namely turning his flank. Tanks, in this context, were seen as weapons which could ease a breakthrough of the enemies lines. During the interwar period, the role of the tank would change drastically. The tank would become the weapon system that would "find the flank", exploit it and wreak havoc in the enemies rear forcing either a collapse or a disorderly retreat. Advancements in technology and weapon systems often make "old" doctrines applicable again but with some updating to adapt said doctrine to the new conditions of war. Thus, the mass employment of tanks together with other arms such as artillery, motorised infantry, air support etc in a combined arms doctrine was not a revolution in the traditional sense. It didnt change the "what" was to be achieved , it updated the "how" it was to be achieved. The concept of mobile warfare was not something new to the germans but the way in which they could apply it with modern arms was novel. With regards to the activity of the japanese army during World War Two, in the China theater of operations, they would employ armor in a way that facilitated mobile warfare but owing to the logistical difficulties and the terrain, it would not play a massive role. In the campaign in Malaya though, the japanese would defeat the british garrison numbering more than twice their number mainly by applying the same principles of mobile warfare that had come to define the early engagements in western Europe. By using their armor (which the british lacked in this theater of operations) and fast moving troops they were able to force a breakthrough or find an open flank whenever the british forces tried to form a defensive line thus leading to the capture of Singapore in 1942.

The weapon system that really revolutionised warfare in the sense that it changed what was possible , was the airplane. I would go so far as to say that the defining weapon system of the Asia-Pacific theater of operations was the airplane. When we think of World War Two in the Pacific, the first image that comes to mind is the island fighting that characterised this conflict. A lot of blood was shed by the japanese and the allies in order to either conquer or defend small island or

coral atolls that would seem totally irrelevant to the traditional thinking of the pre interwar period. These battles were fought because these islands were big enough to host an airbase that would allow either the allies or the japanese to project their air power into the surrounding areas. By building up a network of air bases on these islands it became possible to for an interconnected web that would prevent the enemy from using their naval forces without them incurring the risk of heavy air attack. The airplane coupled with torpedos (torpedo bombers) or bombs dropped on a target while the plane is on a dive (dive bombers) had become the greatest threat and asset in naval combat. As a result, the aircraft carriers would displace the battleships as the queens of the seas.

Even after the surrender in 1945 , there were still units actively resisting the allies. During the late 40s to early 50s , whole companies and even some batallions would still emerge from the jungle with their heavy weapons to finally surrender. In the Philippines, soldiers in small groups like Hiro Onoda and his squad would resists till the early 70s. Finally , in 1974 , Onoda would surrender only after the japanese government had found his old commanding officer and flown him to the Philippines to order the by now old soldier to lay down his arms. In a book recounting his experience he would say:

> "The search party left behind newspapers and magazines. Most of them were recent, and a lot of them contained articles about the crown prince's marriage. The newspapers, which covered a period of about four months, made a stack nearly two feet high. We thought they were reprints of real Japanese newspapers doctored up by the American secret service in such a way as to eliminate any news the Americans did not want us to see. This was all we could think so long as we believed that the Greater East Asia War was still going on. And in a way the newspapers confirmed that the war was still going on, because they told a lot about life in Japan. If Japan had really lost the war, there should not be any life in Japan. Everybody should be dead" (Onoda, 1999, p 99)

The cultural and moral carrots and sticks had combined to create in Imperial Japan a "death cult" as some historians term it. The total unwillingness to surrender come what may bordered on suicidal. Onoda continues :"When I arrived in the Philippines in 1944, the war was going badly for Japan, and in the homeland the phrase ichioku gyokusai ("one hundred million souls dying for honor") was on everybody's lips. This phrase meant literally that the population of Japan would die to a man before surrendering. I took this at face value, as I am sure many other young Japanese men my age did. I sincerely believed that Japan would not surrender so long as one Japanese remained alive. Conversely, if one Japanese were left alive, Japan could not have surrendered. After all, this is what we Japanese had all vowed to each other.

We had sworn the we would resist the American and English devils until the last single one of us was dead. If necessary, the women and children would resist with bamboo sticks, trying to kill as many enemy troops as they could before being killed themselves. The wartime newspapers all played this idea up in the strongest possible language. "Struggle to the End!" "The Empire Must Be Protected at Any Cost!" "One Hundred Million Dying for the Cause." I was virtually brought up on this kind of talk" (Onoda, 1999 , p 100-101)

Expecting no mercy for themselves, it was customary during the war for the japanese armed forces to not extend mercy to the enemy and their captives either. The warcrimes that the IJA and the IJN inflicted on prisoners of war and civilians are well know and a stain on the record of the nation. In terms of naval power also, Japan would lag far behind the US in production output.

1945 saw the introduction of an era defining weapon and so far, fingers crossed, it was only used twice. Atomic weapons are a gamechanger in the system. Having access to them and the delivery systems that can project their destructive power is a a defining feature of any security complex since 1945. As has often happened in the history of civilisation, technological advancement creates new conditions that societies and states have to adapt to.

Conclusions

Similar to the rise of Germany, the rise of Japan changed the dynamics of the security complex in the region. The old security complex gave way to a new arrengement in the post 1905 years when Japan was the most influential and powerful actor in the region. Owing to the internal structure of the body polity of Imperial Japan and the culture of the japanese people at the time, the challenges they and the region faced resulted in an evaluation process that was very much influenced by internal considerations, inability to agree on politics and formulate policy that could result in a well thought out long term grand strategy. Imbalances in the security complex precipitated more and more military escalation which in turn tended to paralyze political decisionmaking in favor of military decisionmaking. After 1945, Japan and the RSC of the Asia-Pacific would resemble the RSC of pre Meiji restoration. The main actors would be foreign state actors with the ability to "roam" (as Mearsheimer likes to put it) and project their power into the region.

The class between the Western and Eastern blocs led by the two superpowers (the US and the Soviet Union) would cause a widespread competition for influence in the region. The Korean war, the Vietnam war, the multitude of wars that resulted from the retreat of the colonial powers and the clash for power within the newly freed colonies; all these would result in an instable RSC. The rise of Japan from the

ashes of World War Two during the post war period allowed it to exert a limited amount of influence in the region mainly through soft power and economic interactions. The new constitution imposed by the US on post war Japan makes it clear that Japan would renounce war as an acceptable means of solving disputes in the international system. In essence, Japan was not allowed to rebuild its hard power capabilities such as its army and navy. For decades this was in the interest of Japan also since it focused exclusively on its economy. The recent disturbances in the security complex caused by the rise of a much more assertive China could change that. The rearming of Japan , like the rearming of Germany would be an important moment and a real test for the international system. Have the former "troublesome new arrivals" learned not to overrely on their military might? Can they balance their foreign policy by being assertive but not overbearing? These are the questions that will get an answer in the decades to come.

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European Union's security policies in the Western Balkans after the 1990s. Case study: Kosovo

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the European Union as a security actor in the Western Balkans region after 1990—a period in which many imbalances in the security architecture challenged the capabilities of the European Union. The Kosovo case would be a perfect example in which the European Union demonstrated significant progress, transitioning from a passive actor in the 1990s to an essential actor with the will to improve its security presence in Kosovo and the Western Balkans region.

The European Union's security actorness in the Western Balkans after 1990 will be analyzed under two aspects: vertical and horizontal. The first aspect is the "Vertical Aspect," which considers the European Union as a security actor in the Western Balkan region and the Western Balkans countries as security consumers. Meanwhile, the second aspect is the "Horizontal Aspect," which involves examining the bilateral relations between the European Union and Western Balkans countries as partners and security providers,with a double-sided interaction.

Keywords: security policies, stability Western Balkans, regional stability, European Union.

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Introduction

The European continent, throughout history, has faced different challenges. However, the 20th century became the most difficult and crucial period when regional and international balances changed dramatically, with consequences that are still present today. Humanity experienced the bloodiest and most disastrous war, which brought radical changes to domestic and foreign policymaking, creating space for new non-traditional international actors. The European Union represents a particular example of such a non-traditional actor (Bretherton, C. 1999), created from a community of states with the central ideology of establishing a peaceful European community, where national interests are firmly connected with political and economic interoperability. This endeavor has had a positive impact on relations in various sectors and has contributed to peacemaking (Blackmans, S. 2013). This statecraft resulted from changing the representation method using different mechanisms and institutions within the European Union.

Developing relations between the European Union and other partner countries and organizations serves as a diplomatic network, facilitating meetings and talks among nations while minimizing debates and conflictual situations in cases of disagreements. The European Union has played an essential role as a civilian and normative power by promoting values such as democracy and human rights (Manners, 2002:239; Manners, 2008). These values make Europe an actor that employs soft power through political interaction and peaceful methods. While these methods have been successful, they remain incomplete due to Europe's passivity in security and defense policies. Europe's inertia was reflected during the 1990s through wars and conflicts in the Western Balkans, highlighting its incapability to prevent regional security issues and resolve them alone.

This general analysis related to the European Union's security actorness in the Western Balkans after 1990 will be analyzed under two aspects: vertical and horizontal. The first aspect is the "Vertical Aspect," which considers the European Union as a security actor in the Western Balkan region and the Western Balkans countries as security consumers. Meanwhile, the second aspect is the "Horizontal Aspect," which involves examining the bilateral relations between the European Union and Western Balkans countries as partners and security providers, with a double-sided interaction (Michael et. Al. 2007).

In the first aspect, where the European Union is in the security actor position, we will describe the period after the Cold War, especially the 1990s. This period is crucial because the dissolution of Yugoslavia started at the end of the Cold War, leading to ethnic wars in countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo (River, 2018; Rogel, 2004).

Another crisis, albeit not at the level of war, can be seen in the internal instabilities in Albania and North Macedonia. In the horizontal aspect, we observe the relationship between the European Union and the Western Balkans, focusing on cooperation in the security field since the 20th century. European Union security policies are among the most important political, economic, cultural, and judicial procedures that the Western Balkans must adopt to become member countries of the Union. Compared to other approaches, mirroring the European Union's security policies and cooperation among the countries has been relatively easy to adopt within each domestic institution.

After the post-conflictual period of the 1990s, the European Union has made significant effortsto assist the Western Balkans countries in achieving membership in regional and international security organizations. At the same time, there is a strong willingness from the Western Balkans countries to be part of global platforms, standing alongside allies and making their modest contributions to security policies and initiatives. Notable organizations in this context include the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Common Security and Defense Policies (CSDP), European Battle groups, European Defense Agency (EDA), and NATO (The EU and the Western Balkans: towards a common future: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-and-western-balkans-towards-common-future_en)

The 1990s were a period during which the European Union recognized that the Western Balkans were a permanent part of Europe and should be considered a region with political and economic potential, playing an essential role in regional stability. This viewpoint marked a turning point for the Western Balkans countries, making them the primary focus for implementing European standards and reforms in their political and administrative systems. This initiative by the European Union emerged as part of a new vision for Europe's future.

The interactions among the Western Balkans countries can be observed in various aspects and different fields, but our focus will be on the security field. The security field is crucial because without stability and security, there can be no development or adherence to norms and rules, which are criteria for being considered a democratic and European state.

Vertical Dimension

In the Vertical Dimension, we will analyze the European Union as a security actor (Larsen, 2019; Renard, 2014) and the Western Balkans countries as security consumers. The status of security actorness entails many complex challenges, particularly for the European Union. These difficulties arise as consequences of

the unique and non-traditional nature of theEuropean Union, where multiple member countries interact with each other. However, incorporating the interests of member states into a standardized policy-making framework, especially in matters of foreign policy, makes it more challenging to react swiftly andeffectively during crises and conflicts.

Bosnia and Herzegovina War

The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was the first major event after the Cold War that disruptedthe security and regional security balance in the Western Balkans. This war effectively showcased the defense mechanisms created by organizations such as the United Nations and NATO to address such situations. It not only demonstrated the capabilities developed by theseorganizations but also highlighted the effectiveness of many European countries and the European Union as a security actor. This approach provides a clearer understanding of the shortcomings in security policies and reforms that the Union should have implemented as soonas possible, expanding beyond its soft power scope.

In 1992, the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina began as an ethnic conflict but later took on a religious dimension due to the involvement of supporting actors. This war left a negative markon the history of the United Nations, as peacekeeping forces failed to react effectively. Simultaneously, Serbian troops conducted one of the most horrific ethnic cleansings in the Western Balkans region and in Europe's history. During the ethnic cleansing, 8,000 Bosnian men and children were murdered in July 1995 (source: https://www.dw.com)

The failure of the United Nations mission compelled NATO to carry out intensive military air operations, particularly following the Srebrenica massacre. These air attacks played a crucial role in pressuring both parties to engage in diplomatic talks in Dayton. The resulting Dayton Accords may not have been ideal, but they were the only way to bring an end to the war that had escalated to its worst scenario.

In 2004, the European Union undertook a significant mission called "Operation Althea," whichaimed to monitor the progress of obligations and conditions outlined in the Dayton Agreement. This operation, conducted under the scope of the European Union Force (EUFOR), replaced all previous military missions of NATO. (source: http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1101) The transfer of authority from NATO to the European Union coincided with the establishmentof the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) initiative. The establishment of CSDP served as a crucial starting point not only for member countries but also for other regional countries considered strategic actors with the future goal of joining the European Union. The strategic actor status was a positive outcome for the Western Balkan

countries at the Thessaloniki Summit between the European Union and the non-member Western Balkan countries.

1997 riots in Albania

Regarding Albania, in the vertical dimension, we can mention the 1997 riots that placed the country in a security consumer status (Pettifer, Vickers, 2006). These riots stemmed from numerous social and economic issues that necessitated the intervention of partner countries to restore stability and ensure democratic elections. The European Union and OSCE considered intervening in Albania to stabilize the situation. This policy was finalized with the Italian initiative to undertake Operation "ALBA," based on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1101 (source: http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1101), with the objective of restoring stability in Albania, which would have an impact on the regional security balance. Once given the green light, an Italian-led multinational security force consisting of 7,000 troops entered Albania (Marchio, 2012). After the situation stabilized, the international forces withdrew from Albanian territory.

Armed conflict in North Macedonia

The conflict between the North Macedonian armed forces and Albanian rebels brought about another destabilizing situation in North Macedonia (Marusic, 2021) It began in 2001 and concluded in the same year with the signing of the Ohrid Agreement. In this case, we can observe NATO's involvement as the primary security actor that assisted in the rebel disarmament process and safeguarded North Macedonia's stability between 2001 and 2003. It was a crucial period for the European Union's missions in the Western Balkans.

After 2003, the first European Union missions were launched under the framework of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), later renamed as the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) with the Lisbon Treaty. The initial mission was EUFOR CONCORDIA in North Macedonia, which replaced a previous NATO mission. This mission aimed to monitor the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement and ensure peace and stability in North Macedonia (source: https://eeas.europa.eu)

Serbia in the 1990s

Compared with other regional countries, Serbia is the only country that has been a security consumer by being the main culprit for the crises in the Balkans region in the 1990s. This situation resulted from the Bosnia and Herzegovina War and

Kosovo War when Yugoslavia dissolved, and its nationalistic Serbian politics was declared the main factor that escalated thesituation.

Horizontal Dimension

Unlike the vertical dimension, in this one, we can observe the Western Balkans countries as security providers and the influence of the European Union on this process. As mentioned before, in relation to security actorness, in addition to its role in crisis management, conflict prevention, and intervention, the European Union should serve as an example and model for the candidate countries, increasing the level of cooperation and leading them towards Europeansecurity structures and institutions. The European Union has embraced a new vision that includes non-member countries in its institutions and policies. The partner country's status has allowed them to participate in numerous humanitarian operations. Through the integration process, the European Union has been able to standardize the political strategies and domesticinstitutions of these countries, ensuring long-lasting peace and stability. This new security reality has transformed the Western Balkans into a crucial region for Europe's future.

It is worth mentioning that the Western Balkans have a history of destabilization due to authoritarian and hybrid regimes, and their struggling economy has not facilitated their journey towards becoming security actors. The transition from being security consumers to security providers has been the result of progress in the relations between the European Union and the Western Balkans countries. In 1999, the European Union adopted a new political process calledthe Stabilization and Association Process, which aimed to facilitate the implementation of Union criteria for these countries to be considered candidates. Over the following decade, these countries fulfilled the requirements of the process. This initiative continued with the Thessaloniki Summit, held in 2003 between the European Union and the Western Balkans countries. The Thessaloniki Summit marked a milestone in the cooperation between both parties in various fields. One of these fields was the Common Foreign and Security Policies (CFSP), which served as the starting point for the regional countries to transition from being security consumers to security providers. It is worth mentioning the "spillover" effect, which is defined in the framework of international relations as the impact between two countries or non-traditional actors, such as organizations, cooperating in economic, energy, transportation,and other sectors, creating opportunities for additional agreements or changes in other fields as a result of the cooperation.

Based on our analysis, we can conclude that the European Union's agreements with the WesternBalkans countries to achieve higher standards in economic and

legislative aspects have had a spillover effect on the security field. This is because an open market and stable democracy cannot be achieved when a country is unable to ensure stability for itself and the region. For example, Western Balkans countries cooperate with other Union member countries in political and economic aspects due to their strength and participation in European defense mechanisms as partner countries.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The war between 1992 – 1995 brought consequences for Bosnia and Herzegovina. The "Fragile Peace" reached by a standard agreement between both parties wouldn't be the perfect peace because of the political structures of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We can easily understand that Bosnia and Herzegovina are still far from becoming a security provider. Compared with other regional countries, it is still a security consumer, hosting international missions of NATO and the European Union. The EUFOR mission aims to support Bosnia and Herzegovina in military aspects to become a security provider and not to continue as a security consumer (Zeherovic, 2022).

Montenegro

Compared to other regional countries, Montenegro is the only country that has not hosted an international intervention to prevent, resolve, or end any domestic crisis. This positioning maybe a result of the fact that Montenegro was part of an agreement with Serbia until 2006 when it gained independence. Undoubtedly, the European Union did not intervene militarily but has had a significant impact as a civilian and normative actor, leading to the opening of negotiations with Montenegro in 2012 (http://www.eeas.europa.eu/montenegro).

Concerning its status as a security provider, Montenegro has experienced ups and downs due to foreign factors that influence its domestic politics. What matters most is its accession as a member country to NATO, which demonstrates its willingness to be part of Western organizations. As for the European Union, we can confirm the same points that position the Union as an actor that serves as an important example for Montenegro to follow in order to become a member. Montenegro is also part of different defense mechanisms like the OSCE and European Union international missions such as EUNAVFOR Atalanta in Somalia, aimed at preventing armed pirate attacks on commercial ships (https://eunavfor.eu/mission).

North Macedonia

Another Western Balkans country is North Macedonia. Surely that North Macedonia is still having a long and challenging journey toward European institutions and other organizations. The path to becoming a security provider passes from international organizations like NATO and the European Union. North Macedonia became part of the military alliance NATO in 2020 and formally opened the negotiation with the European Union in 2022. As mentioned before, North Macedonia has had its struggle, most of the time diplomatic issues. The main problemshave been with Greece and Bulgaria. Greece has used its Veto right at every opportunity to put under political pressure North Macedonia to reach its diplomatic objectives, like the name change from Macedonia to North Macedonia. Regarding North Macedonia's contribution to the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), it has participated in EUFOR ALTHEA inBosnia and Herzegovina.

Serbia

As mentioned before, Serbia is among those countries that serve as security providers based onits relations with other European security mechanisms. We can observe a significant change compared to the period when Serbia used to be a security consumer, causing instability in the region. When comparing Serbia to other regional countries, we can note that the European institutions have imposed limitations on Serbia, while other countries have managed to join NATO. Serbia's potential NATO membership depends on various historical and currentfactors.

If we analyze the historical aspects, we must consider the Bosnia and Herzegovina War and the Kosovo War, both of which concluded with international political pressure and NATO military intervention. The military intervention involved air operations led by the United Statesagainst Serbian army bases, forcing Serbia to come to the negotiation table. The strained past relations with NATO would not positively influence Serbian policies regarding NATO membership.

Another crucial factor is the partnership between Serbia and Russia. This factor can be categorized as both historical and current. The historical roots have fostered close collaboration between Serbia and Russia, which has grown stronger in recent decades. This partnership stemsfrom the shifting political and economic balances in the region. The primary source of this partnership lies in the shared interests of both countries in the Western Balkans region. Serbiaseeks a strong ally like Russia, which holds decision-making power in the United Nations Security Council and can influence the security and political balances of the region.

Serbia contributes to European Union mechanisms through its engagement in Europeanmembership chapters that it needs to fulfill to become a member country of the Union. As stated on the official website of the Serbian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Serbia participatesin European Union missions such as EUTM Somalia, Operation Atalanta, and EUTM RCA (https://www.mfa.gov.rs). Additionally, Serbia is a part of the European Defense Agency, which aims to enhance the standards of member countries' armies and includes partner countries as part of European Battle Groups. This affects Serbia's security cooperation with other regional allies.

Albania

Albania's status as a security provider is a positive outcome of fruitful cooperation with the European Union and its member countries in security organizations such as NATO, the United Nations, and European institutions. A historical overview reveals Albania's significant contribution alongside its allies in various military missions. This assistance has been provided in countries like Iraq and Afghanistan in the Middle East, as well as in African countries like Mali, Chad, and South Sudan. Additionally, Albania's contribution to countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Latvia in the European region is of great importance (https://www.mod.gov.al). These contributions have resulted in positive outcomes, including expertise, modernization, and increased standards, positioning Albania at a considerable levelto be part of NATO.

In 2009, Albania became a member of NATO, becoming the first Western Balkans country to join the organization, followed by North Macedonia and Montenegro. NATO membership has had an impact on the increase in defense investments and Albania's participation in military missions and European security mechanisms. One of Albania's notable achievements in the security field is its leadership position in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. This role has provided new opportunitiesfor a small country like Albania to have a meaningful impact on the continuity of policies aimedat ensuring stability on the European continent. Another achievement of Albania's status as a security actor is its temporary membership in theUnited Nations Security Council for 2022-2023 (https://punetejashtme.gov.al). While the temporary membership status in the Security Council differs from the five permanent membership statuses, Albania can vote on any drafted resolution. However, it does not possessthe privilege of veto, which can be used to oppose decisions against its national interest or contradictory to international values and norms. Albania can play a crucial role in a voting mechanism where no veto is used.

A significant development is the start of membership negotiations between the European Union and Albania. In addition to Albania's positive journey as a security provider, membership negotiations bring new possibilities for this strategic Western Balkans country to become part of European security and defense institutions. Up until now, Albania has participated in European Union missions abroad, but the membership status will further integrate Albania into security institutions by improving its defense and security policies.

Kosovo Case

As mentioned before, this writing focuses on the role of the European Union as a security actor in Kosovo. In the 1990s, Kosovo, Bosnia, and Herzegovina experienced the worst war consequences, followed by humanitarian actions. Compared to Bosnia and Herzegovina, which had an easier journey with recognition from European Union countries and other international organizations like NATO and the United Nations, Kosovo is a contested country in the eyes of many other influential actors in international politics. Within the European Union, there are Greece, Spain, Slovakia, Romania, and Cyprus, all of which are member countries of NATO except for Cyprus. Furthermore, some significant global actors, such as China and Russia, who are part of the United Nations Security Council with the veto right, do not recognize Kosovo as an independent country. This creates complexities for Kosovo's international position and makes it a perfect example for analyzing the European Union's security actorness.

The dissolution of Yugoslavia triggered an independence wave for member countries, while Kosovo was an autonomous territory. The nationalist politics that led to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina also caused conflict in Kosovo. These politics resulted in a new conflict in the Western Balkans, which required the involvement of international actors, including the United Nations, NATO, and the European Union, supported by individual initiatives from certain countries. The Kosovo War took place between 1998 and 1999. Like the previous war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbian troops committed genocide by attacking the civilian population, leading to a second humanitarian crisis in the Western Balkans. This war ultimately ended due to the United States-led NATO air operation, which set aside critics and focused on finding an efficient solution to manage and end the war.

Vertical Dimension

The Kosovo War became the second challenge for the European Union, testing its capacities and efficiency as a security actor on the continent. The period between

the two wars was three years, which was a short time to create the necessary conditions for the European Union to implement different security policies. Once again, NATO, led by the United States of America, intervened in this war through air operations, hoping to bring an end to the conflict. This further demonstrated the limitations of the European Union and the need for significant steps toward improving security policies. This approach is reflected in new initiatives that represent a new vision of foreign policies with a focus on security issues. It is worth mentioning the European Union's role after 2008 when Kosovo declared its independence and became a free country in the Western Balkans.

Prior to the European Union taking its largest civilian mission under the scope of the Common Security and Defense Policies, Kosovo was under the presence of UNMIK. UNMIK is a United Nations mission established in 1999, with political and legislative authority over Kosovo's territory and people. This mission exercised its power until the declaration of independence. Following independence, its competencies and authority were limited since Kosovo had become an independent state. After independence, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) was established as the largest civilian mission, representing the backbone of the European Union's efforts to become a state-building actor. The mission aimed to provide necessary support to the political and legislative structures of Kosovo.

In addition, the European Union has undertaken the role of mediator in the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue. This process aims to normalize relations between the two countries, facilitating mutual recognition and addressing any potential conflicts in the future. While the European Union has not achieved all these objectives; it has taken positive steps in the mediation process. The Union's reputation as a normative actor lends credibility to its rational and unbiased actions. In this dimension of the European Union as a security actor and Kosovo as a security consumer, we can conclude that the policies implemented under the state-building framework have directly influenced the Union's potential as a security actor. Despite criticism and contestations regarding the European Union's security role in Kosovo, we can affirm that the EULEX mission has successfully fulfilled its objectives by establishing political and legislative structures that enhance stability. As a civilian mission, EULEX has facilitated the Kosovo-Serbia political dialogue, contributing to peace and stability in the Western Balkans region and serving as an example of how a civilian mission can strengthen the European Union's position as a security actor. The European Union's commitment to peaceful mediation underscores the understanding that both Kosovo and Serbia, geographically and politically, are part of Europe and potentially future member countries of the European Union. Any political actions that distance Serbia from the European path would lead to a political crisis, which is not welcomed by countries and actors who support stability in the European region.

Horizontal Dimension

We only have a few points to address regarding Kosovo in the horizontal dimension. The main reason is that Kosovo still requires international recognition, particularly from certain European Union member countries. As a security actor, Kosovo's status should entail regional security and participation in security organizations such as the United Nations, NATO, and other European security mechanisms. The European Union has played a crucial role in Kosovo's pursuit of stability and state consolidation, but it has not reached the level of becoming a security actor. Within the United Nations, acceptance as a candidate country relies on approval from the Security Council, where countries like Russia and China possess veto power. These countries maintain close relations with Serbia and therefore do not vote in favor of recognizing Kosovo as an independent nation. Recognition from both Russia and China would facilitate Kosovo's path to the United Nations and broader international recognition.

NATO membership entails a long diplomatic process fraught with barriers, and we can identify three main obstacles. The first is the status of being a non-member country within the United Nations. The second barrier lies in the non-recognition by four NATO member countries: Greece, Spain, Slovakia, and Romania. The final barrier pertains to the status of the Kosovo Security Force, which is still in its early stages of transformation into an Armed Forces and being categorized alongside other national armies.

Regarding the European Union, Kosovo requires recognition from Greece, Cyprus, Slovakia, Spain, and Romania. The decision to accept a candidate country into organizations like the European Union and NATO is subject to unanimity voting, where all member countries must agree to admit a new member. It is worth noting the efforts made by European institutions to persuade member countries that have yet to recognize Kosovo to do so. Additionally, domestic

factors within those countries hinder the recognition of Kosovo. These countries' policies are sensitive when it comes to recognizing an independent nation that was previously an ethnic group within another country. Spain's situation with Catalonia, Slovakia and Romania's ethnic groups, and Greece and Cyprus' concerns and limitations regarding the "de facto" Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which lacks international recognition, all contribute to these countries' hesitations. These examples further complicate Kosovo's integration process into regional and global institutions.

Potential and Limits of European Union: Kosovo Case

Same as in other conflicts and post-conflict situations, the European Union in Kosovo has exhibited both potential and limitations. The first example that highlights a factor positively impacting the European Union's mediator role is the Principle of Conditionality. Following the Kosovo war, the situation between Kosovo and Serbia evolved into a frozen conflict. In response, the European Union employed the Principle of Conditionality against Serbia, making recognition of Kosovo a condition for Serbia's inclusion in the Union. This fact was also mentioned in the speeches of various European leaders, such as German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. This standpoint aimed to prevent a repeat of the scenario in Cyprus, where Greek Cyprus remains in a frozen conflict with the Turkish Cypriot part. Disagreements among countries should not be considered inconsequential as they pose a significant risk to the European Union's credibility, which can impact its future. Through this principle, the European Union has ensured progress in the Kosovo case, as exemplified by the signing of the Brussels Agreement in 2013 between Kosovo and Serbia, which aims to normalize relations between the neighboring countries. This agreement serves as a milestone in the negotiation process between the two countries and has paved the way for new initiatives such as recently agreed- upon free movement between them.

The second factor influencing the progress of the European Union's aims and objectives in Kosovo is the example set by European institutions. The European Union's role as a civilian and normative actor over the years has established reliability in resolving issues related to domestic policies by showcasing the expertise gained through experience. Regarding the European Union's limitations in the Kosovo case, three factors can be identified. The first is the geographical factor. The precise geographical position in relation to other Union member countries made intervention and engagement more challenging during the war years. In comparison to the United States of America, the European Union was cautious in selecting intervention methods and engagement approaches during the war to shape the future of the Western Balkans. Geographical factors influenced the European Union's approach, as it aimed to foster a strong and positive relationship with these countries in the post-war period. Meanwhile, for the United States, military intervention was a key component of its doctrines and policies to achieve peace and stability. Another factor is the presence of other superpowers on the continent, which makes the Kosovo-Serbia diplomatic dialogue challenging for all countries and organizations involved. While the United States emphasizes finding a solution, there is Russia, whose actions raise concerns for Serbia, reflecting the political dynamics of the West. Additionally, the Kosovo case can be used to justify

Russia's actions in the Crimean Peninsula, drawing parallels between these two situations. The last factor is the lack of recognition of Kosovo as an independent country by five European Union members. Overcoming this situation would enhance Kosovo's position at the negotiation table with Serbiaand pave the way for its candidate country status within the European Union.

Future Scenarios: Kosovo Case

After providing an overview and analysis of the Kosovo case, it is necessary to analyze potential scenarios that could significantly impact Kosovo's future (RIDEA & BPRG, 2018). The first scenario, which is the least desirable for regional security, involves Kosovo remainingin the Status Quo. This frozen conflict poses risks to the security balance in the Western Balkans and Europe. The failure of reciprocal recognition between Serbia and Kosovo would have long-term consequences, as it would keep Kosovo in a contested state. The Russia- Ukraine war serves as an example of how a conflict in the region can raise tensions and insecurity about the future of the Western Balkans, with the fear of a possible escalation of war in the Balkans. This perception is based on the reality of the influence of actors like Russia, China, and Turkey, who have the potential to significantly impact the regional security balance.In this case, the European Union needs to exert political pressure on the governments of Serbiaand Kosovo to achieve significant progress toward a peaceful solution.

The second scenario, which is also undesirable, involves the reemergence of armed conflict between Kosovo and Serbia. This conflict could arise from the historical conflicts between the two states, with the north side of Kosovo, where Serbian ethnic groups reside, becoming a focalpoint. Serbia may intervene, citing the "right to intervene" to protect Serbs living in Kosovo. In the event of such a military intervention, the European Union must make urgent decisions vital for its continuity as a security actor in the Western Balkans.

The last scenario, which is more favorable compared to the other two mentioned above, entailsthe reciprocal recognition of Kosovo's independence by Serbia and Kosovo. Mutual recognition is highly desired by Western countries, as regional stability depends on resolving the conflict with consensus from both sides. The European Union plays a crucial role as the primary mediator between the two countries in this lengthy and complex process. Reciprocal recognition would yield positive outcomes for Serbia, advancing its European path, while also offering Kosovo the possibility of becoming part of the United Nations, NATO, and potentiallythe European Union in the future.

Conclusion

The non-traditional nature of an actor can pose many challenges, which is why the European Union faces criticism regarding its security actorness. However, this position does not render its efforts useless in shaping and maintaining security and stability in the Western Balkans.

After analyzing the European Union's security actorness in two dimensions, we can conclude that despite the limitations in the last two decades, there has been a significant commitment at higher levels to enhance security standards in the Western Balkans region. These facts are easily proven by examining the current situation, where stability is an outcome of intense meetings, agreements, international pressure, and the European Union's role as a consolidatedactor with new security initiatives. The European Union has had a profound impact on how a civilian mission like EULEX directly affects the regional security balance, adding value and significance to the Union's security actorness.

Compared to the 1990s, developing security capacities and protecting regional stability in the Western Balkans countries would bring considerable benefits. One of the most important benefits is the positive image and perception of the central Western Balkans countries as security providers rather than security consumers, as it was at the end of the 20th century. The integration mechanism has helped the European Union become an actor that enables candidate countries to develop their defense capacities and alleviate the Union's burden in threat prevention by involving those countries in the regional security equation. Being a security actor entails engaging in a country's development reforms, policies, and initiatives, especially whena country has experienced destabilization, crisis, and wars. In our case, European Union countries should pave the way for the Western Balkans countries to have a better political, economic, and secure future, which also affects the Union itself.

Indeed, this security journey does not end here. Continuous threats, such as the Russia-Ukraine war in the European continent, have triggered a series of actions where countries have begun reorganizing their defense and security policies by aligning with European Union initiatives and standards. No regional or international actor can address these threats alone, and the European Union has the ideal opportunity to implement new policies. Improvements such as increasing military personnel, defense investments, establishing new security platforms, and undertaking defense projects would be essential for an actor like the European Union to enhance its regional security.

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Energy security in Albania – towards energy self–sufficiency 2030

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Abstract

The war between Russia and Ukraine has started to have its biggest effects on the most used products by people around the world. The rise in energy prices has been the main headline of this war. In addition to the conventional regional and global security threats due to Russian aggression against Ukraine, the world is facing the unconventional threat of energy security. The energy produced in Russia is used as the main supplier for the economies of many bordering or non-bordering states, turning this product into a lever used by Russia to fuel its war and into a source of conflict among European allies and beyond. In this context, Albania cannot be immune to the skyrocketing energy prices. On the other hand, seeing Albania's favorable situation in diversifying the necessary energy for the daily activities of families and businesses in our country, the government has undertaken the initiative to turn Albania into a net energy exporter until 2030. This means that Albania will no longer be so energy-dependent on fluctuations in prices on global stock exchanges, or dependent on the use of temporary regional initiatives such as "Open Balkans" to secure supply from other countries in the region but will become a country that achieves energy self-sufficiency in the coming decade. This work aims to highlight the threat to national security from the energy crisis and to use quantitative and qualitative data to understand whether this initiative is achievable in the years to come.

Keywords: energy security, sustainable development, green renewable energy, Western Balkans.

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Introduction

Energy security is not a new topic in the world. In 1974, the International Energy Agency (IEA) was created. This agency has evolved in its mission since its inception, now including other issues such as energy security, climate change, air pollution, and energy access. Today, IEA represents almost 75% of the global energy market, up from 40% in 2015.

In terms of climate change and its impact, the objective set by the Paris Agreement and sought for implementation by the European Commission, achieving Net Zero by 2050, requires massive investments in renewable energy. By 2030, these global investments are estimated to reach up to $4 trillion, almost three times more than what is currently being invested. The main new investments that are seen as opportunities to diversify the portfolio of renewable energy production are based on solar and wind energy. In the European Commission's plan, by 2050, 88% of energy will be renewable, up from 29% today, and 70% of this figure will come from solar panels and wind turbines. This will also be achieved through the use of electric cars, with an 18-fold increase in sales from 2020 to 2030, from 3 million to 54 million.

In this context, Albania cannot exempt itself from its obligation to reduce harmful gas emissions into the environment. Therefore, the aim of the study is to answer the question of whether Albania can achieve energy self-sufficiency by 2030, thus becoming an Energy Exporter. In his speech at the 2021 announcement ceremony of wind park auctions, the country's Prime Minister, among other things, said: *"Albania will have one more alternative for energy production by using another source, such as wind. This is an important step towards the horizon of "Albania 2030" and in fulfilling our ambition to make Albania a net exporter of electricity and at the same time an exporter of green renewable energy. The energy sector, our country's return to a net exporter of clean energy in the region, makes "Albania 2030" not only an achievable horizon but also a new perspective horizon for all our children and our children's children."*

But is it possible for Albania to become a net exporter of electricity? This question will be elaborated in this paper, considering several aspects. First, I will address whether energy is a threat to national security in Albania. Secondly, I will address the different types of energy used by our country and the Western Balkans region and the possibility of achieving self-sufficiency in energy.

Theoretical Model and Methodology

When talking about energy, the first things that come to mind are geopolitics and interdependence among states, which determine the well-being of producer or consumer countries. The theories used are realism, neoliberalism, and constructivism, and the study data come from the world's most prestigious agencies such as the International Energy Agency (IEA), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), as well as from local institutions such as the Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) or the Energy Regulatory Entity (ERE).

Literature review

Liberal theories are based on the belief that strengthening global economic interactions minimizes the opportunities for conflict (Nye 1998). According to them, states are more concerned with absolute gains than relative gains. They analyze their benefits not in relation to other states, but in their total benefit, which promotes cooperation (Nye 1998). Keohane and Nye (1998, p. 83) introduced the concept of "complex interdependence," a world where security and power are less important, and countries are linked by multiple social and political relationships. The three conditions that favor complex interdependence among states are:

- Increasing communication channels between societies.
- Governments do not intend to use military force; and
- Security is no longer the main issue in international relations.

Liberals argue that the international order is oriented towards the opening of the economy, and the cost-benefit ratio results in the higher cost of wars and leads countries towards economic cooperation, which is clearly more beneficial (Rosecrance 1999, p. 155). However, statistics show the opposite; the number of conflicts has increased since the end of the bipolar system. Neoliberals acknowledge the anarchy in the international system and argue that international institutions will serve to promote cooperation through common rules and norms, thereby minimizing the effects of anarchy (Keohane, 1984).

Neoliberals consider institutions as actors other than states and serve to mitigate the effects of anarchy. Nye (2005, p. 10) claims that "institutions can enhance the soft power of countries," as they promote the values and political ideas of member countries and those outside these institutions. For example, the EU and the US use institutions such as the European Investment Bank, the International Monetary

Fund, and the World Trade Organization to promote their liberal and democratic values. The belief that "liberal democracies reinforce peace because they do not go to war with each other" has been at the core of neoliberal thinking. Democratic peace is based on three pillars: peaceful conflict resolution among democratic states, a common moral foundation, and cooperation among democracies (Doyle 1983).

According to **realism**, the absence of an international government makes the international system anarchic. States are the central actors in world politics; they are rational actors (Morgenthau, 1973: 10, Waltz, 1979: 95) and the structure of the international system is what guides the behavior of states (Morgenthau 1978; Waltz, 1979). According to realists, power is the key factor in understanding the international system, and the more powerful countries try to maintain the status quo, while weaker ones fight to change it (Carr 1964). According to Morgenthau, one of the elements of state power is the economy and natural resources. The security dilemma (Hobbes) creates an atmosphere of suspicion and potential conflict as a result. States often fail to cooperate, but when they do, this cooperation is dependent on and in function of their interests, and there are no permanent alliances (Morgenthau 1973, p.512). In the anarchic system, states are guided only by their national interests, foreign policy is based on power and security.

Another theoretical perspective is **constructivism**, which has internal politics and cultural identity as its key elements. According to Stoessinger, one of the reasons for escalation or de-escalation is nationalism, which is used by internal politics when they have internal problems or are in electoral campaigns. Often, foreign policy attitudes are based on the personal agendas of leaders. Clausewitz's definition that "War is the continuation of politics by other means, to impose our will on the enemy" clearly shows the connection between internal politics and the attitudes of states in foreign policy. According to Stoessinger, "Misperception" is the most important factor in the onset of war, which can manifest itself in four different ways: in the leader's perception of himself; in the leader's opinion of the character of his opponent; in the leader's opinion of the intentions of his opponent; and finally, in the leader's opinion of the ability and strength of his opponent (Stoessinger p.348). Conflicts are most influenced by leaders who, through their internal politics and their struggle for power, direct political, military, and economic alliances with the world, which for certain reasons at a certain moment lose balance and become the subject of a healthy or unhealthy decision-making by a leader.

According to the social constructivism theorists, the study of political actions requires more analysis than abstract theorizing and advocates for focusing security studies on a series of events that lead to the degradation of the quality of citizens' lives. In this way, social constructivism extends attention beyond armed conflicts,

which are the focus of realism. The expansion and deepening of security issues followed the 90s, and social constructivism contributed to the expansion of the range of threats, not only wars but also issues such as poverty, natural phenomena, and so on, closely related to energy security. This gave the first impetus to the concept of securitization.

Energy security and Securitization

Energy security exists when there are sufficient energy resources to meet the needs of a political community (energy demand), which includes all economic, military, and social activities. These resources must enable the provision of this amount of energy in a safe and stable manner, for a predictable future. When these criteria are not met, there is a problem with (in)security of energy (Raphael, Stokes, 2010, pg. 307). The theories of international relations base the behavior of states on a very interesting element, fear. It is precisely fear that leads to the security dilemma. In this case, the fear of the depletion of potential natural resources is what drives states to constantly search for secure resources. Many states today fail to guarantee their energy security, whether rich or poor in natural resources for energy. According to Raphael and Stokes, energy security converges with other issues of national security, of which economic and environmental security are among the most important.

Buzan has argued that "security" is related to at least five different fields: military, political, economic, social, and environmental. Threats and weaknesses can appear in various fields, military or not, but to be considered security issues, they must meet very clear criteria that distinguish them from mere political developments. They must be threats that endanger the existence of a referent object, by an actor and require emergency regulatory measures beyond normal rules.

Neo-functionalism and Intergovernmentalism

Neo-functionalism (Haas, 1958; Lindberg, 1963) predicts a functional "spillover" between different sectors in all fields, following the logic that integration in a certain policy necessarily leads to the integration of another policy close to it. As a result of this basic paradigm, each country achieves the maximization of its policy at the supranational level. The fundamental idea of neo-functionalism is that integration has an automatic character and is the inevitable result, rather than an intended one of decisions taken to centralize common governance. The main premise of neo-functionalism is the creation of supranational authorities with some independent competences from the member states.

Since the 1960s, intergovernmentalism has represented one of the main general theories that offer a powerful conceptual content of the process of European integration. Theoretically based on realism, and essentially challenging neo-functionalism, classical intergovernmental approach is focused on the vision that states are the main actors in integration in the EU. State sovereignty remains decisive and intergovernmental cooperation should result in sharing, dividing, and delegating, but not fully transferring sovereignty at the supranational level.

Methodology

The paper aims to deepen knowledge on energy security and possibilities of cooperation among countries in the Western Balkans region. A qualitative method has been used, consisting of two components: (1) description and interpretation of the historical geopolitical context of energy in the world and in the Western Balkans region; (2) logical analysis of the elements that shape energy as a national security issue and the real possibilities offered by Albania in the framework of energy towards its aim to become a net exporter by 2030.

Case Study- Western Balkans in relation to the European Union and other actors

This study analyzes the Western Balkan countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Albania, also referring to their membership in the Energy Community. The Balkans, despite being composed of small countries, is a complex region with multiculturalism and is influenced by the European Union, NATO, the United States, Russia, and Turkey. It seems that the Western Balkans have included the interests and influence of all major players in the "Great Energy Game" of the 21st century.

The Western Balkans today is a product of the fall of the Iron Curtain after the collapse of communism in Soviet Union and the other countries of the communist bloc. However, the fall of the Iron Curtain and the creation of a new unipolar order were followed by wars and one of the events that shook and permanently changed international expectations for a more peaceful world was the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, followed by interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Even the Balkans were involved in severe ethnic conflicts following the breakup of Yugoslavia due to extreme nationalism accompanied by massacres and genocide. The breakup of the Soviet Union was also accompanied by severe conflicts during the Orange Revolution, and the conflict with Ukraine continues today. The world was shaken when terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism were accompanied by

the creation of ISIS and Boko Haram, spreading to Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, Somalia, Iraq, and the Philippines, and attacking the heart of Europe, Paris. Today's situation does not seem different. The conflict in Ukraine continues to be inflamed.

China's rapprochement with the West, but mostly its economic stagnation, has raised questions about its future positions towards Russia and its demand for oil and gas in general. All these conflicts affect and are affected by energy. Energy is the heart of the economic development of any country. Energy is the source of prosperity and competition, the basis of political controversy and technological innovation, and the cornerstone of an epochal challenge to our global environment (Pascual C, Elkind J. 2013). The global economy is totally dependent on continuous energy, and therefore makes energy an indispensable and influential element of foreign policy of states. Many characteristic elements of energy are immutable due to natural limitations. The variable elements are domestic or geopolitical policies and the ability of humans to maximize the use of natural resources to produce the necessary energy. The level of this correlation is different for different states depending on their power, influence on the world order, etc. Political events have a direct impact on energy security and the geopolitics it produces.

The war in Ukraine has set the US against Russia, while Europe is caught in the chaos created by the fluctuations in the oil and gas markets, rising prices, and the emergent security reactions of EU countries to find alternative sources of fuel. Meanwhile, under the influence of energy, Russia has turned to Asia for new markets and signed an agreement with China.

The global geopolitical situation affects the challenges and opportunities for energy in the region. The recent crisis in Ukraine and the EU's obligation to impose an embargo on Russia alerted EU leaders to the need to diversify gas and oil sources. This increased attention to alternative projects such as the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) with a source from Azerbaijan, which also includes Albania, giving Albania a valuable opportunity in this regard. Not only has the TAP gas pipeline started operations, but the revitalization of the Vlora thermal power plant by American companies like EXXON and the Skavica hydroelectric project also have added value in efforts to cope with energy supply in the coming months.

The most important actor for BP is the European Union. The influence of the EU is more evident not only because of its geographical location but also because all Balkan countries are at different stages in the integration process. Energy policy has been at the heart of European integration since the beginning, with the Paris Treaty of 1951 creating the European Coal and Steel Community and the 1957 Rome Treaty establishing Euratom. In 1980, energy policy was seen from the perspective of liberalizing the European common market. Since then, liberalizing the internal energy market has been presented as the main solution

to ensure energy security, including supply security. The gas crisis between Russia and Ukraine showed Europe that the traditional economic approach to market liberalization was insufficient to address the energy issue.

The 2005 Energy Community Treaty aims to create an internal market for electricity, oil, and natural gas by bringing Balkan countries together with EU member states. The objectives of the EU's energy security policy consist of creating an internal energy market, improving, and expanding interconnection networks for gas and electricity, investing in new sources/suppliers, and improving the network between member and non-member states of the EU to increase efficiency through technology improvements and protect the environment.

In the past three years, the European Union has approved a series of documents that strengthen Europe's presence in international energy policies, including the EU Energy 2020, the *Towards a Clean Growth Future 2030 Strategy*, a communication on climate diplomacy, and an *Energy Roadmap 2050* outlining scenarios for the coming decades. In January 2014, the European Commission proposed guidelines for the energy sector until 2030. The latest update on energy security is the "European Strategy for Energy Security," which specifically addresses the EU's response to Russia's actions in Ukraine.

This influence on levels of cooperation has been enriched with particular attention that BP took from the 'Berlin Process', initiated by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, which will also be the form through which the integration pace of the Western Balkans will be maintained. Germany has taken a special interest in the region, as the Western Balkans are a crucial element in the EU's energy security dilemma, given their location as a special intersection between the Caucasus and Europe, bordering the Middle East and North Africa.

Additionally, the Western Balkans have three NATO member states and have been under the continuous influence of the United States, both as a NATO member and as a global hegemony, overseeing stability and ethnic conflict resolution in the region after the fall of communism. When discussing energy, it is impossible to avoid Russia's involvement, especially in relation to BP, due to the old geopolitical, economic, religious, and ideological links with former Yugoslavia and Albania. While Albania took a clear path towards Euro-Atlantic integration after communism's fall, Serbia focused on maintaining its supremacy in the region and a strong affiliation with Russia. Serbia has strong ties with Russia, the largest gas supplier to Europe, with specific agreements on interconnection networks and complete gas supply from Russia. However, Serbia's attention has recently turned more towards the EU, perhaps due to economic difficulties and Russia's decreased attention to Serbia with concrete projects, including the cancellation of the South Stream. Nonetheless, their relationship remains strong. Gazprom and Lukoil are also present in the gas industry of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and

Macedonia. The United States seems concerned about Russia's increasing presence in BP, especially in the new conflictual situation created between NATO member countries and Russia.

In the context of constructivist approach, in his millennium speech Putin said: "Russia is and will remain a great power. It is predetermined by the inextricable characteristics of its geopolitical, economic, and cultural existence." This Russian identity has been and remains the main reason for Russia's behavior in the international arena (Sukhov, 2008).

On the other hand, Turkey is the economic power of the region that is interested in stability and cooperation with the EU, even in the conditions of a conflict with Russia and clashes of interests in the Middle East. Turkey is also a key factor for the energy security of the EU due to its geographic location but also as a NATO member. Precisely through the TAP project, the Balkans will access Caspian gas and create new opportunities to connect with the largest oil and gas sources in the Middle East, a necessary guarantee for the EU and BP to reduce dependence on Russian gas and oil. In the political context, both Turkey and Russia have their affiliations in the Balkans, mainly with Muslim-majority countries, but very little is concretized in specific projects.

The collapse of the bipolar system put an end to Yugoslavia and communism in Europe and placed the Balkans in a new political situation with visible social, ethnic, cultural, and economic differences that led to a situation of instability in the region. The energy system, as seen below, has differences and commonalities, but the wars in the region that followed caused damage to the system. The entire region still faces challenges of economic development, fragile democracies, high levels of unemployment, and corruption, despite the progress and new undeniable realities such as Kosovo's independence. Ethnic tensions are still present and constitute a security issue for which the Balkan countries and the EU must truly engage to prevent it from degrading into conflicts.

Analysis

Energy sources, production, and consumption

The markets of the BP region are diverse in terms of size, level of economic development, and financial potential. The total population is 18 million inhabitants (3.5% of the EU population), and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the entire region is $131 billion, about 1% of the EU's GDP. The economic situation in the region reflects the global crisis, which has led to a decrease in the GDP growth rate, averaging 1.3%, accompanied by characteristics of informality, high unemployment levels, and trade deficits.

The energy market is characterized by small national markets, with common but also unique characteristics, with limited potential to attract significant investments. According to an integrated IEA study on the Western Balkan countries, the region's energy system has a common infrastructure built around the 1960s and 1970s, outdated technology, which requires considerable maintenance, especially after damages suffered during wars and the transition. This applies to the thermal power plants of the former Yugoslavia countries as well as to the hydroelectric power plants of Albania. The situation has improved with new investments in transmission networks and dispatch centers. Another common element is low efficiency, which is mainly caused by losses in the transmission network, and especially in the distribution network due to theft, depreciation, and non-payment of energy. The entire region has a high dependency on imported hydrocarbons. There are elements of interdependence between the BP countries, especially during peak periods, such as the import of energy from the dispatch center of Serbia to Albania or the supply of Serbia's oil refineries from Croatia's pipeline network.

Energy sources are the crucial element in the difference between the region's countries, which can be considered an opportunity if the BP market can integrate and collaborate as one, strengthening one of the energy security indicators, energy mix. However, despite this, the entire region has high dependence on imports. According to IEA data, Serbia appears to have a balanced portfolio of energy sources, while other countries are mainly dominated by two types of resources (coal and hydroenergy).

Albania's most important source of electricity production comes from hydropower, which is insufficient during peak periods, resulting in the country importing almost half of its electricity needs, or around 2538 GWh. Although coal is the main supplier of energy production, accounting for 69%, it decreases significantly when it comes to consumption, with only 8%. The dependency on gas imports is evident in the low domestic consumption rate of 7%, given the lack of gasification and the low regional production rate of only 2%. In 2021, according to the latest report from ERE, public hydropower plants produced 5.344 GWh of energy compared to 3.090 GWh in 2020, marking a 72.9% increase in production. Private and concessionary hydropower plants produced 3.578 GWh compared to 2.191 GWh the previous year, representing a 63.3% increase in production. The exchange of electricity (the difference between gross exports and imports of energy) in 2021 reached a positive value of 548 GWh, compared to a negative value of 2.276 GWh in 2020. Therefore, it can be said that domestic electricity production reached a value of 8.963 GWh, up from 5.313 GWh in 2020, marking a total production increase of 68.7%. The electricity production mix for 2021 was 59.6% from public hydropower plants, 39.9% from private ones, and 0.5% from solar panels.

Other countries in the region, such as North Macedonia and Kosovo, face a similar energy mix shortage. The main source for the region is coal, with thermal power plants mainly located in all former Yugoslavian countries, accounting for about 70% of the resources used for energy production. Meanwhile, in terms of the energy mix used, electricity and oil by-products are the main components, mainly used for transportation. One noticeable aspect when analyzing energy use is that households or families are the largest users of energy, mainly electrical energy. On the other hand, hydrocarbons that consist of the use of oil by-products are primarily used by transportation. The low level of industrialization in the region is also shown in the percentage of energy consumption by industry, as well as the level of usage by commerce and services, which is almost 30% of energy expenditure for industry.

Serbia, which has the largest installed capacity for energy generation (7.1 GW), mainly relies on coal-fired power plants (TPP). The efficiency of these plants is low and constitutes an important environmental impact issue. For all former Yugoslavian countries, thermal power plants are the main installed capacity, except for Serbia, which also has a refinery, cogeneration plant, and central heating systems. Kosovo is also entirely dependent on the thermal power plants – built in the time of former Yugoslavia - for its energy needs.

The production of oil and gas is limited and mainly produced in Serbia, as well as crude oil and a very small amount of gas in Albania. Serbia is connected to the gas network supplied by Russia, which is owned by the Serbian state and Gazprom. Meanwhile, Albania, along with Montenegro and Kosovo, are the only countries in the EU that are not gasified. Domestic production is minimal and mainly used by the industry itself. In addition to crude oil production in the country, Albania has built two LPG ports, in Vlora and Porto Romano, which are the main suppliers from the sea for the region. Montenegro appears to have some potential for offshore gas and oil extraction. B&H, Macedonia are part of the gasification system of former Yugoslavia and their demands are fully met by imports. Even for fuels, these 4 countries are almost entirely dependent on imports (except for B&H) for oil and gasoline used mainly in transport. A particular feature of the region is the use of wood for heating. In non-gasified countries, heating, besides wood, is mainly done with electricity.

Electricity Market and Transmission in Albania

The beginning of the 1990s, following major political changes in the region, placed the countries in a great challenge, with increasing demand for energy and opening up of the market. Albania was the only country that did not have even one interconnection line linking it to the transmission system of EU countries. While Yugoslavia, until 1992, was connected to the European Union through the UCTE - Union for Co-ordination of Transmission of Electricity (Union for the

Coordination of Transmission of Electricity), the network of Western Europe. The electric power infrastructure in Serbia, Kosovo, and B&H, was relatively outdated and was further damaged during the wars in the 1990s, and in 1992 the network was divided. In the west, Croatia and B&H (southwestern part) remained connected to the UCTE Zone 1. Republika Srpska (northeastern part), Serbia, and Macedonia, along with Bulgaria, Romania, and Greece, created the second line of the UCTE Zone 2, Southeastern Europe.

Albania was the only country not connected to the EU until it received special attention for the construction of several 400 kV interconnection lines. The great interest of the Energy Community and the financial support of banks such as the KfW Development Bank and EBRD (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development), have improved the transmission network in the region and finally connected Albania to the EU network through 400 kV lines.

Diversification of transmission means is the second element of energy security after mixed energy sources. In Albania, OST is responsible for this type of security, which performs the functions of Transmission System Operator, Dispatch System Operator, and Market Operator. OST guarantees the necessary transmission capacities for: (i) uninterrupted supply of electricity to distribution system substations and consumers directly connected to the transmission network, (ii) transmission of electricity generated from domestic sources, (iii) as well as for transit and necessary exchanges with neighboring countries. (ERE Report 2020) The above lines also include interconnection lines with neighboring countries.

The most important projects for Albania, which will give a new impetus to the transmission system mainly supported by KfW, are: Rehabilitation and modernization of the control, protection and monitoring system, as well as replacement of primary equipment of substations in V. Deja, Fierza, and Koman. The interconnection line will strengthen and connect these two systems with the regional network, help balance the energy market of the two countries, and reduce hydrological risk in Albania. Also, the electricity market between the two countries and the region can develop without limitations from the transmission network.

Albania's dependence on Serbia for electricity mainly consists of the regional transmission and dispatch network. Albania mostly imports from Bulgaria, and so far has applied for energy imports through the dispatch center located in Serbia, which often allows import permission during peak periods for Albania through tenfold transmission tax rates. In this context, with the help of the Energy Community, work began on November 27, 2014 - the regional interconnector capacity aggregation center located in Podgorica, the SEE-CAO Regional Coordination Center for Auctions - where all transmission capacities are auctioned to harmonize the common market being discussed. It is worth noting that the shareholders of this company are the Transmission Operators of Turkey, Croatia, Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, Greece, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

From this context, we understand that not only the transmission infrastructure but also market regulation remains a challenge for its unification and the real possibility of cooperation among the countries of the region. The construction of an open and competitive regional energy market based on the principles of non-discrimination is an objective for the entire region. Since the start of the Athens process, the objective has been to reform the market regulation aspect and create appropriate policies in support of the acquis coming from the Energy Community.

Part of the distribution system is also OSHEE, which is the energy distribution system. The reported total losses by the Company for 2020 amounted to 12.8%. The new law on electricity, which entered into force in April 2015, contains the provisions of Directive 2009/72/EC and addresses the liberalization of the electricity market. ERE - Energy Regulatory Entity is responsible for regulating the electricity industry, setting electricity tariffs and prices. According to the report of the EC, the electricity market in Albania is still over-regulated. The wholesale market is dominated by state-owned companies such as KESH. KESH is obliged, based on the contract with OST, to provide as much energy as needed by the population, either through direct generation or import, and of course in cases of overproduction, it can also export. Meanwhile, the retail and distribution sales are operated by two other licenses held by OSHE. OSHE offers energy of all kinds to customers at prices regulated by ERE.

Oil and Gas

When it comes to energy security, gas and oil come to mind for their characteristics. First, both of these energy sources are unpredictable and closely tied to geopolitics due to the concentration of non-renewable resources. 80% of the world's oil is concentrated in nine countries (5% of the population), and 80% of gas is in thirteen countries. According to the latest IEA report, the largest source of energy worldwide for 2020 came from hydrocarbons, with 81.7% coming from oil, gas, and coal. The BP region has a strategic position between natural resource-rich areas such as the Caspian, the Middle East, and the largest consumers, the developed countries of Central and Western Europe. This puts the Balkans on the map of energy geopolitics, a quality that has not been sufficiently exploited until now. The recent crisis in Ukraine has emphasized even more the importance of the BP region and particularly Albania in diversifying energy sources for Europe.

Despite changes in consumption and resources, developed countries and mainly Europe still have a very high dependence on imported oil and gas, of which 27% comes from Russia, or a bill of $1 billion per day that goes directly to the aggressor in the conflict, Russia. In the short term, it is impossible to replace Russia's gas with other sources. The distribution network carries a significant security importance, as demonstrated once again by the conflict in Ukraine. It should be noted that

not only Europe is seeking to diversify its sources, but Russia is also seeking new markets, turning to Asia with the already signed agreement with China.

Currently, Europe is diversifying its sources through several new supply corridors for gas and oil. One of the most important corridors that affects Albania, and the region is the Southeastern Corridor of gas supply - which in the medium term will play an important role not only in supplying gas from the Caspian region but also a new itinerary for gas from the Middle East. Part of this corridor is also the TAP - Trans Adriatic Pipeline which will be discussed below. Another new approach in Europe are the opportunities for new LNG ports and respective facilities.

The price of natural gas is specific and linked to the source of supply and specific end-user usage. Traditionally, gas has been traded through long-term contracts, unlike oil products which are traded in a competitive international market. This is due to the structure of the gas supply network, as transportation methods are limited to fixed pipelines, which require significant investment. The oil supply network includes exploration and production, transportation through pipelines, railways, or ships. Refining of oil products, storage, and distribution of products in oil pipelines, railways, road transport, or ships. The oil market is considered an open market where products move easily, despite some technical, logistical, and sometimes legal constraints that can be overcome. The oil sector differs from other energy sectors in terms of storage/depositing, transmission, and distribution, as oil and its by-products can be transmitted more easily and cheaply than gas and electricity. Due to the different transportation possibilities in relation to the gas market, the oil market is not regulated by any specific law in the EU, regarding access by third parties for transport and distribution.

Regarding BP, primary energy sources are limited. Albania and Serbia produce small amounts of oil which are insufficient to meet demand, and gas production is negligible. The whole region is characterized by a very high dependence on imports for oil and gas, up to 90%. The demand for oil is always increasing in BP countries and despite production and efforts to find resources locally, crude oil is mainly exported and oil by-products for use are imported. The maritime borders of Albania and Montenegro also represent an advantage for the region, as they allow for diversification of supply networks through the construction of LPG ports. Meanwhile, Albania and Montenegro have three port terminals for oil supply: Petrolifera in Vlore, Porto Romano, and the port of Bar in Montenegro.

As for the crude oil network, there are several oil pipeline projects that BP traverses, such as SEE Southeast Europe, which are built to bring crude oil from Russia or the Caspian region. The existing oil pipelines are only two, Adria which starts on the coast of Croatia to supply further Serbia, B&H, and other countries in Southeast Europe. Supply to the port of Croatia is done through tankers from mainly African and Middle Eastern sources, with a capacity of 20 Mt/Y. The second

is the Thessaloniki-Skopje oil pipeline, which connects the port of Thessaloniki to the Skopje refinery. Albania is the largest exporter of crude oil in the Energy Community (EC). Bankers Petroleum is the largest investor in Albania, which has achieved a new level of production of 2050 tons per day for 2020. Royal Dutch Shell continues exploration in five blocks with potential reserves in the Shpiragut area. The state-owned company Albpetrol is active and operates in the production and trade of crude oil. One of Albania's challenges in the oil sector is to create a stockholding system (storage) related to the quantity specified by the legislation in force for emergency situations. Another major challenge for Albania is to exploit the potential of gas through the TAP project to extend gas pipelines throughout Albania and not only.

The most important projects involving the region regarding gas are the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC), planned infrastructure projects aimed at improving energy supply security and diversity for the EU by transporting gas from the Caspian region to Europe. The Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) project is part of the gas transmission system produced by the Shah Deniz 2 (SD 2) settlement in Azerbaijan towards the European gas market. Transportation through Azerbaijan and Georgia will be carried out through the South Caucasian Pipeline, while transportation through Turkey will be carried out through the TANAP pipeline to the Turkish-Greek border. Further transportation will be carried out through the Trans Adriatic Pipeline.

Albania is also involved in regional gas system connection projects, which have received a concrete assessment from the Energy Community Treaty structures, as well as from Brussels, such as the Gas Ring Project of the Energy Community, which is expected to connect almost all Western Balkan countries. Also, Albania is part of the Ionian-Adriatic Gas Pipeline project (IAP), a project that will connect the countries of the region such as Croatia, Montenegro, and Albania. Another project for regional gas pipeline connections is the project to build a Liquefied Natural Gas Terminal on the coast of the Fier region and connect it to the Italian gas network (and the European network) with a subsea pipeline in Albania – Italy.

Opportunities and Challenges of the Common Energy Market

The Treaty establishing the Energy Community (EC) was signed in October 2005 in Athens and entered into force on July 1, 2006. The Western Balkan countries were offered the following opportunities:

a) integration of their outdated and poorly managed system with the common market of the European Union.

b) standardization of the energy market, creating a regulatory framework and helping the market attract investment for a sustainable and continuous supply of energy.

c) sustainable and continuous energy supply.

d) unification and cooperation, leading to an improvement in customer service, promoting research and development for new energy alternatives.

e) increased influence in line with the national interests of the EU countries.

f) environmental improvement.

g) closer relations between the Western Balkans and the European Union.

h) benefitting from European investments to diversify energy resources.

For political and technical reasons, the challenges and issues faced by the Western Balkans relate to: increasing and diversifying energy sources, integrating the energy network with the European transmission network, high levels of gas and oil imports, high levels of losses in the network, theft and non-payment in the distribution system, inefficient technology, dependence on unpredictable resources such as coal, use of electricity for heating, the environment and climate change, lack of transparency and corruption.

The Energy Community Treaty is not a challenge, on the contrary, the criteria and directives of the Energy Community are more binding and advanced. What is noticeable is the non-signing of this treaty by Serbia and Montenegro in line with Russia's foreign policy, which brings attention to a challenge that the Balkans still face. Although the idea of the South Stream is no longer valid, it continues to show Russia's attention and interests in the Balkans, Serbia, and the region in general.

Conclusions

The Balkans of the 1990s was characterized by continuous ethnic wars in former Yugoslavia, extremist nationalism, ruined economies, and newly born vulnerable democracies. Today, it seems that the years have faded this conflict situation, and states rush to defend their interests, with domestic policies mostly dominating decision-making. Serbia de jure has still not recognized the independence of Kosovo, even though de facto, through common acts under the assistance of the EU, it has accepted the final separation of Kosovo from Serbia and its independence. The tense situations in the Balkans are still present and escalate from time to time, and likewise, Europe and the world seem on the verge of a new cold war. An existential crisis has threatened Europe after the conflict in Ukraine, and dynamics in the Middle East have brought back to attention the old conflicts between the US and Russia. At the center of the discussion, the cost of oil is being played as a tool or a cause.

European integration is the point that unites the Western Balkan countries. To achieve this goal, these countries face major challenges in implementing a series of institutional, political, economic, and legal reforms. One of them is the creation of a common energy market. The conflict in the conditions of energy interdependence, due to its characteristics and impact on modern society, minimizes the chances of a possible new conflict in the Balkans.

In response to the research question about achieving self-sufficiency in Albania's electricity supply until 2030, we can say that if all the announced energy projects such as the Skavica hydropower plant (210 MW), the Karavasta photovoltaic park (140 MW), the Spitalla photovoltaic park (70 MW), the two US ships that will anchor in Vlora's Triport (114 MW), wind parks that start operating in 2023 (100-150 MW), and many other renewable energy projects of smaller capacities spread throughout Albania are realized, it is possible for Albania to be self-sufficient in electricity until 2030. To achieve energy security in a technical context, Balkan countries need to cooperate. They are democratic countries with Euro-Atlantic aspirations and are interacting to create sectoral cooperation that can lead to further value and coexistence cooperation according to the spillover theory.

Despite the diversity in the foreign policy agenda, all governments are striving for the creation of a common market, as they have realized that this is the way for each state to increase its specific value in the international energy market, through the opportunities to connect to the EU electricity network and the major TAP project for gas, thus maximizing the competitive advantage of the geographic position and minimizing the disadvantage of being small markets and lack of investment, etc. Similarly, the opportunity to create a free market leads to increased competition and competition produces development, which gives a new impetus to countries in this challenging system. However, the market cannot be the only regulator for a good like energy, due to its characteristics and the effect that policy has on it, whether geopolitics or domestic policy.

Balkan leaders need to understand that economic development and energy security can only be achieved through political willingness to cooperate. Energy is often an essential commodity for the existence of a state that directs policy, but leaders need to direct the vision for sustainable development, for which energy security is a crucial element. Opportunities exist, and human thought and will are needed.

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