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Rethinking security: Western Balkans as a security provider

By Donika Emini and Donika Marku

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IMPRESSUM

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INTRODUCTION

Launched in 2014, the Berlin Process has landed in a web of roughly 80 regional initiatives in the Western Balkans mostly driven and operating with the support of the European Union (EU) or particular member state(s) (Hackaj and Hackaj 2018, 14-15). The goals and the nature of these initiatives are broad and multi-dimensional starting from the areas such as the economy, rule of law, security, internal affairs, energy, youth, and other targeted issues by the EU.(Levitin and Sanfey 2018) The Berlin Process provided a hybrid approach placing under one roof regional cooperation and connectivity in the Western Balkans, while complementing the enlargement process.

The Berlin process was built and initiated on the verge of the migration crisis from the Middle East aiming to reach the EU – mostly through the Western Balkan route (Lilyanova 2016). The sudden increase in the migration flows into the EU, more precisely via the Aegean Sea further continuing in Macedonia and Serbia, turned the Western Balkans into the security focus and brought unexpected prominence to the region. Western Balkan borders became EU borders, and that placed the region high on the agenda, underlining the importance of the region strategically and security-wise. Four years after, with the Berlin Process finalization looming over the horizon, the forthcoming summit in London is expected to expand the focus in security-related topics and reconciliation. Besides putting the emphasis on security, the London Summit provides a unique opportunity for the United Kingdom (UK) to show that there is something specific to offer to the region and cooperate with the EU even beyond Brexit. The UK presidency with the Berlin Process can shed new light and explore new venues of security cooperation with third countries.

Taking place after the EU-Western Balkans Summit in Sofia were the six flagship initiatives for the region were introduced, including the Initiative to Reinforce Engagement on Security and Migration (European Commission 2018), the London Summit provides a solid basis to pose the question: where does the Western Balkans fit into the overall EU security architecture? Within this context, the paper aims at analyzing and exploring ways of cooperation between Western Balkan (WB) countries and the EU in the security sector. Moreover, it aims at analyzing the capacities of Western Balkan countries to work conjointly with the EU in successfully tackling security challenges in the region and seeks ways to transform the region from a security consumer to a security provider.

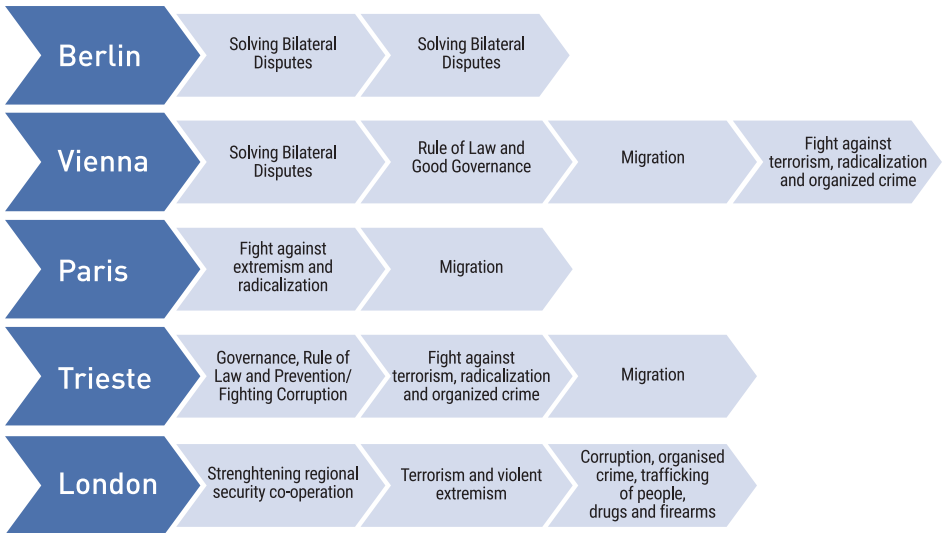


Figure 1 Evolution of security-related topics in the Berlin Process (2014-2018)

WESTERN BALKANS CAPACITY TO OFFER SECURITY CONJOINTLY WITH THE EU

Current cross-border security threats have pushed the EU to cooperate with partner countries beyond CSDP missions. Such current threats have led to increased cooperation between the EU and the WB in the field of countering-terrorism; respond to hybrid threats, migration crisis, counter-terrorism, cyber security and resilience building (Council of the European Union 2016). Parallel to this, countering violent extremism, migration, cybersecurity, hybrid threats, border management, security sector reform and non-proliferation (Tardy 2018) have been also identified as key challenges in the EU flagship initiatives, corresponding to one of the key objectives of the London Summit. These priority areas outside EU CSDP missions are also mentioned in the EU Global Strategy (EUGS), while 2015 European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) has broadened its concept of security including ‘conflict prevention, crisis management and security sector reform’ as a new area of focus (EEAS 2016). Bearing in mind that the WB faces the same and/or similar challenges, it should be noted that the WB could bring their experience and resources and contribute to tackling these security threats that go beyond EU borders.

To date, CSDP operations and missions have been a bridge connecting the EU and non-EU partner countries. Since 2004, the relationship with third-party states has been established through Framework Partnership Agreements (FPA). The FPA laid the legal framework of these countries’ contributions through addressing issues of personnel, information exchange, and involvement in decision-making procedures as well as the financial aspect of operations. About 45 non-EU states have participated in CSDP operations, including countries which have joined the EU since 2004 (Tardy 2014). In fact, the signing of FPAs with the EU and participating in CSDP missions has become a practice for EU candidate countries. Parallel to this, all other Western Balkan countries (except Kosovo) have signed

FPA and have contributed to CSDP operations. The London Summit provides a platform to raise debates over the cooperation between EU and WB countries in jointly tackling the security challenges by sharing expertise and increasing capacities, thus creating resilience in the region and consequently, in the EU.

In addition to the conventional ways of cooperation between the EU and third countries, in this case the Western Balkans, cooperation outside CSDP missions is essential. Cooperation through non-CSDP operations gives an opportunity for the EU to keep close and collaborate with the Western Balkan countries that are important to EU's security arrangement. For example, EU hosts political dialogues on counter-terrorism, challenges related to migration, border management, and cyber security (Tardy 2018). Correspondingly, it is highly important to understand and explore new ways of enhancing this cooperation using different security cooperation platforms using the key EU agencies such as Frontex and Europol.

Table 1 EU cooperation with third states (focus WB) Source: EUISS

CSDP OPERATIONS	NON-CSDP OPERATIONS
Third states as host states of operations/missions	Counter-terrorism (CT) and countering violent extremism (CVE) (including through the posting of security officers)
Third states' participation in CSDP operations/missions (within or outside a Framework Participation Agreement (FPA))	Migration
Third states' participation in exercises/training Capacity-building in support of Security and Development (CBSD)	Cybersecurity
Third states as host states of operations/missions	Border management

COOPERATION THROUGH CSDP MISSIONS AND BEYOND

The emerging global security threats with serious implications in the region in recent years have called for an increased involvement of Western Balkan countries in international peacekeeping missions. This has opened a window of opportunity to gradually change their security status from security recipients to security providers. Parallel to this, EU cooperation with partner states relies on the pooling of resources and sharing the burden of security, while creating an atmosphere of a balanced cooperation. (Tardy 2018). In the case of the Western Balkans, all countries with the exception of Kosovo, have signed Framework Partnership Agreements (FPA) with the EU. So far, such agreements are signed with Albania, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Intrinsically, the Western Balkans has not only been a key reason for the establishment of CSDP, but has also hosted peacekeeping missions/troops, which have equipped it with an understanding of such missions. Therefore, these countries bring a variety of resources both to EU CSDP's military and civilian missions and operations. However, regardless of its vast experience and understanding of peacekeeping missions, some countries in the Western Balkans such as Kosovo still do not participate in CSDP missions. Kosovo provided home to the most ambitious civilian mission, the first integrated mission¹ that EU had taken on. In addition, for over a decade Kosovo has been an international protectorate and many of its institutions have been shaped by the presence of and the joint work of the UN mission in Kosovo and the NATO-led peacekeeping force, KFOR. Not only has it gained awareness of the strengths, but it has also expanded its knowledge of inaccuracies and areas which need improvement in such missions.

¹ Eulex has been the first integrated mission with staff for police, rule of law, custom and border patrol. Read Chivvis chapter on Eulex Kosovo. Christopher Chivvis, *EU Civilian Crisis Management: The Record So Far*, (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2010): 31-42, Available from Ebscohost

The enhanced level of cooperation has created unique opportunity for the Western Balkan countries to start presenting their capacities as security providers in the overall EU's security infrastructure. For instance, since 2004 Albania and Macedonia have actively contributed to EU's military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR ALTHEA) – which is a concrete example of a Western Balkan countries participating in EU mission hosted in the region. Albania has contributed in the EU Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali) and in EUFOR Tchad/RCA. Montenegro has contributed to EU's counter-piracy military operation in the Horn of Africa (EU NAVFOR Somalia) and the EU Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali). Serbia has participated in EU's military operation in the Central African Republic (EUFOR RCA) since 2014, the EU Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali) and EUNAVFOR Atalanta in Somalia (Tardy 2014). Bosnia and Herzegovina has not yet participated in any EU peacekeeping missions; yet, the country's armed forces have participated in various UN and NATO peacekeeping missions (Minard 2016). However, as contemporary security issues have no borders, it is important to see how Western Balkan countries could provide security through non-CSDP operations and missions.

According to the EUGS (EEAS 2016), the EU sees its involvement and partnership with WB countries as important in fostering resilience² in this region. Furthermore, it has grasped the situation in the Western Balkans as important to EU's security and its global role.

The Council's conclusions on implementing the EUGS in the Area of Security and Defence (Council of the European Union 2016) restated its commitment to develop a more strategic

² The EUGS explains resilience as a comprehensive concept that refers to a state's adaptability to different difficult situations as a means to sustain national development goals, state's potential to enhance and preserve its key functions and to manage opportunities. Also, EU perceives EU conditionality regarding enlargement as crucial to enhance resilience in Western Balkan countries. Moreover, EU does not take for granted the resilience of these countries and it continuously tries to promote rule of law, good neighbourly relations, political reform and economic convergence. For more information on how EU frames this concept read : https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/join_2017_21_f1_communication_from_commission_to_inst_en_v7_p1_916039.pdf

approach of CSDP cooperation with partner countries parallel to the three EUGS strategic priorities of ‘responding to external conflicts and crises’, ‘capacity building of partners’ and ‘protecting the Union and its citizens’ (Council of the European Union 2016). Such priorities present the EU as strengthening its CSDP missions and operations abroad, while helping partner states raise their capacities in order to be resilient and stable, which would largely contribute to the priority of protecting the Union and its citizens from inner and outsider security threats. Such a parallel can be drawn with EU’s partnership with WB states where the WB would benefit by contributing to CSDP’s peacekeeping efforts while increasing their capacities. This approach could also be used as an effective tool of foreign policy and of establishing relations with international organizations on a different level – as an equal partner in providing security.

The Council of the EU also called for a broader cooperation and development of CSDP cooperation with third countries beyond its cooperation in CSDP operations and missions. In times when EU re-defines its cooperation with third countries in providing security globally, the security component of the London Summit can provide a good venue to increase and streamline security cooperation between the EU and the WB. While sharing EU values, WB states have shown their genuine interest and willingness to be a part of EU’s global security architecture also as security providers.

EXPLORING WAYS TO ENHANCE COOPERATION THROUGH FRONTEX AND EUROPOL

During the 2018 EU-Western Balkans summit in Sofia, WB partners and the EU set forth a number of actions in order to strengthen cooperation regarding security in this region. In order for these actions to be fully accomplished, the EU has dedicated one of its six flagship initiatives to reinforcing engagement on security and migration.

The EU and the Western Balkans encounter the same existing security challenges. At this Summit, the EU and the WB agreed to step up common work on key security priorities such as “countering terrorism and its financing, violent extremism and the return of foreign fighters, preventing radical extremism, enhanced cooperation in the fight against serious and organized crime, in particular on illicit firearms and drugs trafficking, smuggling of goods and persons, as well as cyber and hybrid threats” (European Commission, 2018). Furthermore, with the support of the Commission, other EU agencies - such as Europol and FRONTEX, the EU will further engage in the Western Balkans for effectively linking internal and external actions against all forms of cross-border crime. The upcoming London Summit can further develop the security component of the EU-WB Summit in Sofia, providing an inclusive approach to the EU efforts in the security sector, also the inputs gathered during the preparatory meetings in the region, and the existing regional security initiatives.

In addition, it is highly important to note that WB countries are preparing to sign agreements with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX)³ and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (EUROPOL). Furthermore, there is room for

³ Albania and Macedonia are far advanced in this process, the text of the agreement has been agreed on, yet it is still not finalized and signed. The rest of the Western Balkan countries are undergoing this process.

cooperation between WB countries in EU's security infrastructure through static presence (EUROPOL) or temporary presence at the borders (FRONTEX). EUROPOL continuously stresses the need and importance of improving information exchange. Such exchange of information is crucial to EUROPOL's work; however, the process of information exchange is more complex when it comes to countries which are not part of EUROPOL. Even though the Western Balkan countries are not member states of EUROPOL, they all have a partnership with EUROPOL. The partnership of WB countries such as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia is framed under an operational agreement. On 13 December 2017, Europol put also Kosovo on the list of priority partners for strategic cooperation.

The WB could stand as a security provider by sharing information regarding violent extremism individuals and suspects, cybersecurity, hybrid threats and all other current security threats that concern the WB and the EU, while also helping these countries prevent and fight crime. Since WB leaders and the EU agreed to cooperate in the fight against cross-border crimes, it is essential to review how this cooperation could take place also through FRONTEX.

FRONTEX has recently extended powers beyond its involvement directly at the cross-borders. It also works through information sharing, research and drafts risk analyses which stand as a core tool of FRONTEX⁴. For example, the agreement between FRONTEX and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kosovo is framed in such a way that calls on cooperation and interoperability while recognizing the importance of Kosovo beyond direct border management activities in information sharing and joint risk analysis. In line with this, the WB could provide security through presence at the borders, but also through

⁴ For more information regarding FRONTEX: its mission and responsibilities read https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/agencies/frontex_en

information exchange and expertise regarding fight against terrorism, organized crime, firearms and hybrid threats. Such exchange of information would result in risk analysis and early warnings. The Commission is set to establish the EU Justice and Home Affairs (EU JHA) inter-agency Task Force regarding engagement on security. It is left to be seen if such initiative to reinforce engagement on security and migration is going to prove to be effective; still, it revives the symmetric situation that EU is seeking: one where WB states are resilient and stable while the EU gains the most through this partnership and enhances its contribution to global peace and stability without having to sacrifice its values.

ONE SOLUTION: TWO WINNERS

The WB could contribute to EU's security and move away from the status of security recipient closer to security provider. This setting would be beneficial both to the WB and to the EU. After a long history of wars and conflicts, peace is a guiding principle in the WB's domestic and foreign relations. Therefore, Western Balkan's participation in peacekeeping missions/operations would contribute to its obligation of bearing its share of responsibility to maintain and safeguard international peace and security. Furthermore, such participation raises WB's international profile and recognition through a crisis management role where national interests are not an issue. Also, Western Balkan countries contribute to EU CSDP missions as part of their aspirations for EU accession (Milosevic and Karlsrud 2015). Furthermore, such participation and cooperation in preventing and fighting current security threats is a crucial foreign policy tool to further WB's European aspirations. With the geopolitical and geo-economic competition from China, Russia, or Turkey, it is highly important for WB states to constantly pursue their European aspirations.

From an EU perspective, working with WB countries contains two primary dimensions: one is capacity-related and the second one is more political in nature. Concerning capacity, partnerships contribute to EU peacekeeping missions by bringing personnel, assets, and expertise that the EU may be lacking (Pierre Minard 2016). Similar to this, WB experience and information sharing is also highly necessary in cooperation beyond CSDP missions. The WB has a long history of peacekeeping missions which has equipped it with the proper understanding of such missions; in addition, WB states face the same contemporary security challenges that EU does where its input can be of high significance.

The participation of WB countries in the CSDP enhances the role of the EU as a crisis manager while also contributing to a peaceful and secure Europe. Partners' involvement in CSDP missions can be seen as a source of strengthening the validity of EU's international security role. Such partnership with WB states would offer the EU the chance to move this cooperation from a technical and strategic dimension to a political one. Also, EU's CSDP's added value is also that it brings together non-EU states while creating an atmosphere of cooperation and respect (Tardy 2014), which is highly necessary for this region. In addition, partnership with WB countries as security providers would frame the EU as a serious international actor which also deals with countries of high complexity and tensions such as the WBs. The WB's participation in EU's led security mechanisms proves that the EU is just to all states that hold peace and stability as their core international value and want to provide security.

The security challenges in the Western Balkans have been listed by the EU, once again stressing the need to enhance the security capacity of the region to effectively respond to the potential crisis. Bringing the Western Balkans on board as EU third country partners in providing security is yet another approach that shall be taken into consideration. Western Balkan countries have developed expertise in dealing with specific security challenges; hence in parallel with the capacity building efforts, the EU shall enhance the role of the region as a security provider. This will turn the region into a serious EU partner in security, while it will provide extra sources for the EU to successfully deal with a potential security-related crisis.

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INFORMATION ABOUT SEE THINK NET

The SEE Think Net Network was established in mid-march 2018 with the generous support of the European Fund for the Balkans as the first regional network composed of civil society organisations that aim to monitor the topics related to the Berlin Process. The Network encompasses think tanks, civil society organisations and individuals from the 6 Western Balkan countries plus Croatia and Slovenia. Besides the Institute for Democracy “Societas Civilis” (IDSCS) which will coordinate the Network, the SEE Think Net Network includes the Network of the European Movement in Serbia (NEMinS), Open Society Foundation for Albania and its affiliate, the EU Policy Hub, Adnan Ćerimagić, Politikon Network from Montenegro, Kosovar Centre for Security Studies, the Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO) from Croatia and the Centre for European Perspective (CEP) from Slovenia. The goal of the SEE Think Net Network is to produce significant policy inputs and provide policy recommendations on topics that derive from the Berlin Process. As such, its activities are devised in order to closely monitor the Berlin process and the policy areas the process encompasses.

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE EUROPEAN FUND FOR THE BALKANS

The European Fund for the Balkans is designed to create and support initiatives aimed at strengthening democracy and fostering European integration by enabling inclusive policy making, supporting capacity development and creating a platform for exchange and co-operation in the Western Balkans. The Fund was launched in 2007 by four European private foundations (King Baudouin Foundation, Erste Foundation, Robert Bosch Stiftung and the Compagnia di san Paolo), within the framework of the Network of European Foundations.

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SEE Think Net

