

**2010 Moscow Conference on Geopolitics
Connecting Geography to Politics: 21st Century Issues and
Agendas**

**Clash of interests on Balkans between USA, Russia, Turkey and
the EU.**

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Abstract

Balkan has always played significant geo-strategic role as the crossroad between East and West. Therefore throughout the history this territory has attracted regional and global powers to realize their interests and to expand them to other regions. In this paper I analyzed influence of USA, EU, Russia and Turkey on Balkans as the major players in the region. These countries have shaped map of the respective region and will determine future development of Balkans as well. After the end of cold war, USA as the only superpower tried to gain control over the territory of Balkans while EU is pursuing its interest through the integration process and enforcement of EU standards. However, recently Russia and Turkey are re-gaining its position in the region, Russia via energy policy and Turkey via its new foreign policy which is defined in ‘‘strategic depth’’.

Key words: geopolitics, identity, influence, culture, energy.

Introduction

In this paper when I use term Balkan I have in minds all Balkans in its geographical terms. This includes territories from Greece the borders of Hungary and Austria. Balkans has always had significant geo-strategic position that connects East and West, Europe and Asia. Due to this reason, it gained attention from regional and global powers which always played important role in the cultural, political, social and economic development in the Balkan region. Cultural and ethnic diversity of the population and outstanding geostrategic position has made Balkan the most unstable region in Europe. Therefore it attracts a lot of attention from all major regional and global players.

The role and influence of players in Balkans has always been changing according to ideological, economic, cultural and political preferences. They also have been competing with each other. In this paper I will focus on role of United States of America, Russia, Turkey and European Union.

Russian and Turkish presence, beside economic and geopolitical interests, has also cultural background. We should not forget that both countries were involved in war on Balkans and Russia proclaimed itself as the Guardian of Orthodox nations in Ottoman Empire. In last two decades Russia lost majority of its influence but it tends to return it with energy policy, particularly “*Southern Stream*” pipeline. Turkey on the other side, considers Balkans as one of its historical territories because this area belonged to Ottoman Empire and presents itself as “*spiritual leader*” of muslim populations. Therefore, it recently became very active through many different initiatives and with larger economic presence. Turkey with its new shift in Foreign Policy under its Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu tends to become important player in Balkan region. This policy was marked as Neo Otoman because of Otoman rule in the region. Possible refusal of Turkish membership in the EU may turn both into rivals and competitors for influence.

USA and EU have political and economic interest in the region. USA with their military presence expanded their influence because Balkan serves as some kind of basis for their interests in Middle East, EU tries to stabilize the region through integration. Despite Western Balkans countries have not yet became members of the EU they all have clear European

aspirations. However, EU will have to compete with other powers in order not to lose its influence particularly because of its internal frictions. USA with NATO enlargement and its involvement in Bosnia and Kosovo conflict played the major role in new political organization of Balkan states. Kosovo issue and divisions between USA and Russia may also have impact on larger scale as we saw in Georgia. This issue also impacts energy policy and “Southern Stream” and “Nabucco” projects.

Balkan is once again playground for realization of different interests of players. However, these interests will clash with each other and will have enormous impact on the regional political, economic and social developments in the region. Players in order to realize their interests will have to redefine their policies toward the region because any friction may lean states toward their competitors what can have political and economic impacts. All in all Balkan is place where global and regional powers can follow their interests and place from where they can export their interests to other regions.

Geopolitics of Balkan

To speak of the geopolitics of the Balkans, however, one must constantly relate the broader relevance of the idea of Europe to those (in the Balkans) who consider themselves as either “in” or “out” for the broader European context. Even the name Balkans betrays this long-term, somewhat skewed perception of the European “outsider” (Liota 2003). The Balkans have always been the backyard of European political planning, the “periphery of Europe”. Throughout history, their importance has increased, depending on external factors, such as the Ottoman invasion of Europe in the early 1400s, imperial Russia’s obsession with controlling its Slavic dominions in the Ottoman Empire during the 1800s, and the interest of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the control of the land route towards the Greek port of Thessaloniki that sparked the beginning of World War I. (Ristić 2009).

Balkans has extraordinary geographic position, it presents link between Europe and Asia, between Central Europe and Middle East. It is border of Europe since past. Border between Eastern and Western Roman Empire was driven through Balkans, some authors as Todorova (2001, 38) and Neumann (2007) claim that Balkan is border of Europe, especially because of

its Ottoman Legacy which could be seen on political, economic, cultural and social level. Todorova (2001, 39) wrote, Balkan started to give up its Ottoman legacy with independence from the Empire and this moment was beginning of the europeization of Balkan. I will talk about Ottoman legacy later when I will analyze Turkish influence in the region and its new approach which was described in Davutoglu's "*Strategic Depth*".

The Balkans is a mountain range in Bulgaria whose name over years refer to a larger region coincident with the Balkan peninsula, which in turn makes up the majority of Southeast Europe. In political terms the Balkans may also be defined as the territory constituting the states of Albania, Bulgaria and the former Yugoslavia; Romania, Greece and European part of Turkey may also be included (Hall and Danta 1996, 3). Term Balkan refers, beside geographical and political entity, also to the cultural component (Todorova 2001, 75). Certainly, the interplay of environmental factors, human migration and ethnic complexity are essential components which have weighed heavily upon those attempting to characterize, not always unambiguously, the "Balkan peninsula" (Hall and Danta 1996, 5).

Geopolitical position of Balkan has been given completely new dimensions in post cold war period. Collapse of Eastern bloc tensions between East and West vanished but there has opened new division in international relations which is North – South (Stojanović 1995). Since then, the fact is that the Balkan is Europe's hotspot is undeniable (Baranovsky 2000, 443). During the Cold War, the Balkans, an issue that had greatly occupied international public opinion in the past, was relegated to the back burner. The reasons are well known: Within the geopolitical framework of a balance of terror that had been imposed on both sides of the Iron Curtain, even a whiff of dispute about borders or territories in this sensitive area could have had terrifying repercussions (Prevelakis 2010).

Indeed, in terms of ethnic, linguistic and religious composition, the Balkan peninsula is one of the world's most complex areas. The contemporary configuration of the human geography of the Balkans is the result of more than 3500 years of complex change involving the interplay of migrating tribes, expanding kingdoms, conquering empires and developing nations (Hall and Danta 1999, 9-16). Many commentators argue that the region has always been wracked by ancient hatreds. Others argue that today's strains are artificial, manufactured by cynical postcommunist demagogues looking to legitimate their rule. Neither school has it right. Today's tensions are the result of the region's absorption into the Ottoman Empire, which led

to the extraordinary dispersion and intermixture of ethnic groups in Balkan and Danubian Europe. Premodern state-formation in the Balkans was short-circuited by the Ottoman Turkish conquest of the region during the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries. As elsewhere in the world -- India and imperial Russia are good examples -- empire went hand in hand with great ethnic-cultural diversity and, at the local level, political autonomy. Under the Ottomans, the subject populations were organized above all by religion (Hagen 1999). Thus, to speak of the geopolitical fate of the Balkans, it seems clear that what does—or does not—happen with the “fate” of the nation-states of the former Yugoslavia will be the main critical uncertainty in the future security equation. Though analytically and conceptually wrong to separate the former Yugoslavia from the rest of the Balkans, the point is that what happens there will most affect not only the Balkan region, but the future Europe as well (Liotta 2003). Bloody breakup of Yugoslavia, NATO and enlargement, inter-ethnic frictions but also its outstanding geographic position brought attention of global and regional powers. Every power has different influence in certain country but they all strive to play key role in decision making in Balkans. Therefore their interests and actions may clash with each other.

By eliminating the terror of a nuclear confrontation, the end of the Cold War also dispensed with its by-products, that is to say, the balance of power and the stability thus created. So the Balkans was destabilized again, with the result that came back into the limelight and remained there from 1989 to 1999, a full decade. After the Kosovo war, in the aftermath of the Dayton agreements, the general view was that the main problems had for the most part been resolved and that it only remained to iron out a few details for the Balkans to become properly “Europeanized”. However, the dramatic developments after 9/11 have pushed the Balkans once more far out of the international limelight (Prevelakis 2010). However, Balkan is still important territory for players on the global political stage to pursue their economic, military and political interests. In next paragraphs I will analyze influence and involvement of USA, European Union, Russia and Turkey into Balkan geopolitics.

American interests in Balkans.

For the United States of America, the chief geopolitical prize is Eurasia. For half a millennium, world affairs were dominated by Eurasian powers and peoples who fought with one another for regional domination and reached out for global power. Eurasia is the globe's largest continent and is geopolitically axial. A power that dominates Eurasia would control two of the world's three most advanced and economically productive regions. (Brzezinski 1997). Balkan is part of these plans because of its geographical position of link between Europe and Middle East. Brzezinski (1997) says that the emergence of a truly united Europe--especially if that should occur with constructive American support--will require significant changes in the structure and processes of the NATO alliance, the principal link between America and Europe. NATO provides not only the main mechanism for the exercise of US influence regarding European matters but the basis for the politically critical American military presence in Western Europe. Balkans fits on the map of united Europe under the control of USA that it can follow its interest in central Asia.

The goal of the United States and the international community is to stabilize the Balkans in a way that is self-sustaining and does not require direct intervention by NATO-led forces and international civilian officials. The United States has reduced the costs of its commitments to the region, in part due to competing U.S. and international priorities, such as the war on terrorism, and efforts to stabilize Iraq and Afghanistan, which have placed strains on U.S. resources (Woehrel 2002, 2). Before starting operations in Afghanistan and Iraq United States undertook first unilateral actions in Balkan at first. When I say unilateral I mean they without permission of UN Security Council. Such case happened in Kosovo when the USA with NATO pursued three months long air campaign on Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. They called it "humanitarian intervention" because human rights violations. The Kosovo case came to a head when Chinese and Russian opposition prevented UN Security Council action and the United States and NATO decided on their own to intervene. Kosovo also led to an unusual distinction when an independent international commission called the US-NATO intervention illegal in the sense of not having followed the letter of the UN Charter but legitimate in being consistent with the norms and principles that the charter embodies (Jentleson 2010, 502). I wish to remind that war in 1999 was first war fought by NATO. Beside Kosovo issue USA played main role in war in former Yugoslavia in first half of 90s.

Even before the Bosnia war started in 1992, the breakup of Yugoslavia had led to a war in Croatia. These conflicts were largely seen as a European probe, and the Europeans should take the lead along the UN (Jentleson 2010, 503). However, in mid 1995 United States got involved with NATO airstrikes on Bosnian Serbs positions with offering support to Croatia to launch its main offensive against Serbs in Croatia in August 1995. War ended with Dayton peace conference in 1995 where the United States played main role and had greatest influence on all sides involved in conflict. During the war in Bosnia, United States sided with Bosnian Muslims, while Russia sided with Serbs. The differences were bridged with previously mentioned Dayton accord, which ended war in Bosnia. Still, almost fifteen years later, tensions remained high and stability uncertain. Moreover, case of Yugoslavia was example of Huntingtonian (1996) clash of civilizations.

In Kosovo war, the United States were victorious, but with mixed lessons. One of the points critics raise is that Operation Allied Forces could have prevailed more quickly, more overwhelming and with less ethnic killing. Another point is, that during the operation happened political frictions among allies. Different NATO members had different particular interests at stake. NATO decision-making rules required unanimity, or at least no dissenting votes. Kosovo crisis finished in June 1999 with peace agreement between NATO and Serbian forces (Jentleson 2010, 504). However, NATO did not prevent the revenges of ethnic Albanians over ethnic Serbs, displacement of Serbs and destruction of their monuments and property Lazanski (2003, 154-178). Despite peace treaty, situation on Kosovo remains tenuous.

Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in February 2008 and is recognised by the United States and all but five members of the EU but remained main destabilizing factor with unresolved territorial issues in the former Yugoslavia. If and when it comes to pass, the independence of Kosovo will open the proverbial Pandora's box, since it will be construed as a reward for the forceful pursuance of the minority's claims and it will weaken the position of the moderate elements within the Albanian minority — and even within others (Prevelakis 2010). Kosovo is important not only because it will serve as example for other break away regions but because it has great energy resources. Moreover, the energy sector development potential is based on Kosovo's enviable reserves of lignite, which are estimated at around 12 billion tonnes. The lignite reserves can be exploited in surface mines, thus providing a very

cheap source of energy for thermo-electric power plants. Lignite is currently mined at two locations in the vicinity of the power plants (Mirash and Bardh mines). These two mines have largely been exploited and new mines will have to be opened to provide adequate coal supply for the existing as well as the possible new power plants. With adequate investments, lignite mining will again become a large and profitable business in Kosovo and the Balkan Investigative Report Network assumes bright prospects for Kosovo's energy future, when and if the reconstruction of the existing power units takes place (Michaletos 2007). Kosovo has coal, lead and people, but it is stuck in a corner of Europe few tourists wander through. Wegwood (2008, 14) that Kosovo's proclamation of independence would destabilize the Balkans. Bosnia will face a new attempt by the self-styled "Serbian republic" to leave the Dayton structure. Macedonia's restive ethnic Albanian minority may again ask why it is stuck in a state with Orthodox Slavs. The effect in Central Europe would also not be benign. Hungary, Romania, Ukraine and Greece are home to irredentist minorities whose radical elements dream of redrawing maps. Nicosia faces a self-proclaimed "independent" Turkish republic of northern Cyprus. Kosovo model was already used in case of Abkhazia and Southern Osetia when both regions with intensive help of Russia, declared independence from Georgia.

Since the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, the war on terrorism has been the United States' main foreign policy priority, including in the Balkans. Before September 11, Al Qaeda supporters operated from Bosnia and Albania. Due to war on terror the Bush administration paid less attention to Balkan and moved most of its interest to the Gulf. Gordon (2000) warns that getting U.S. troops out of the Balkans is a desirable objective, but unilateral withdrawal is a bad idea based on a faulty premise. It could undermine American leadership in Europe, damage NATO's cohesion, and threaten the huge investment made in Balkan peace by the United States and its European allies over the past decade. However, in case of Kosovo when the USA offered all necessary support for its self-proclaimed independence.

USA empowered its presence in Balkan region with integration of former Soviet influenced states Bulgaria and Romania in NATO. These countries may host future anti-missile shield which is oriented anti-Russia. On the other side Russia tries to compromise US interests with energy policies. However, United States despite Kosovo issue tries to attract biggest Russian ally in Balkan Serbia with lobbying for its EU candidacy and with mobilisation of Serbian elites for NATO integration.

The strategic aim of the United States is to retain – at least – its influence in the Eurasia and the Balkans are an integral strategic field for this. The importance of the region is vast in comparison to its population, due to its use as a hub for the energy needs of the West as well as Russian ambitions. Moreover, the proximity of the Balkans to the Middle East and North Africa reserves a truly unique placement for the Balkans in the strategic considerations of the global power-architecture cores in London, Washington, Moscow, Paris, Berlin and Beijing increasingly (Michaletos 2007). There is feeling that Obama's administration will pay more attention to Balkans as the previous Bush's administration did. Nevertheless USA will stay active in Balkan also in the future but some authors warn its power, particularly after intervention in Iraq has declined and USA is not anymore unipolar hegemon. The same opinion is shared by American Analyst Gregory Copley (VOA, 2010). He claims that USA will stay active on Balkans but indirectly via European Union. He also assumes that role of Russia will rise in the region because of energy policies. Energy may cause improvement of relations between EU and Russia despite opposition from United States because Russia will stay European most important energy supplier and Balkan will be route for "Southern Stream" Project.

Russia's come back

Previous chapter I finished with energy and this will be main issue in analyzing Russian influence in Balkan. Many scholars agree that main reason for Russian engagement on Balkan is energy because Balkan is route for new pipelines, particularly "Southern Stream«. Before I focus on energy I will briefly present history of Russian engagement in Balkan peninsula.

The strategic discourse focused on the Eastern Question. The way Russia's wars influenced the European representations of it maybe gauged from an example concerning the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-1829 (Neumann 2007, 87). Russian rivalry with Turkey was considered a question of pivotal interest for the balance of Europe. The tension inside the strategic discourse of the nineteenth century between representations of Russia as being on the way to world hegemony versus having a legitimate right to play the role of a great power in and out of Europe may at first glance bring to mind the configuration of the strategic discourse of the Cold War. One instance of Russian supremacy over Ottoman Empire was the Treaty of Kucuk Kaynarca (1774), which codified Russia's decisive territorial gains on the Crimea and gave it

extensive commercial rights on the Black Sea as well as the right to establish its own consuls, an independent church in Constantinople, and a special relationship with the Orthodox Christian minorities (Anderson 1966). Moreover, Russia's expansionism was disguised by its self-appointed defense of all Orthodox Christians subjugated by Turkey, liberation of the Balkan peoples from the Turkish yoke, and prevention of Turkish and Crimean Tatar raids and pillaging in Southern Ukraine and Russia. Turkey sought to protect and retain its possessions and considered Russia the aggressor. From the second half of the 18th century the Russo-Turkish wars were linked to the gradual disintegration of the Ottoman Empire (Zhukovsky 2003). In the Russian view, the Russo-Turkish war was a humanitarian war foisted upon Russia by unprovoked 'butchering' of innocent Orthodox Balkan Slavs at the hands of 'Turkish punishers' (Fedosov, 1975: 154–5). However, Mendellof (2008) does not differentiate Russia with other imperial powers which sought only to implement their interests.

Russia's past involvement in the Balkans, ostensibly on behalf of the Serbs and other Orthodox Slavs, drew Russia into numerous costly wars, including the disastrous defeats in the Crimean War and World War I, which not only saw staggering numbers of Russian deaths, but also led directly to the collapse and dismemberment of the Russian empire, the Bolshevik revolution and the bloody Russian Civil War (Mendellof 2008, 33). Russian involvement in Balkans is based on cultural component, moreover, Russians claimed to be the historical benefactor of the Orthodox people. Thus idea of "Slavic and Orthodox brotherhood" stayed "alive" till nowadays, especially when it comes to relations between Russia and Serbia. However, Troude (2007, 137-139) confirms sympathies of Russian nation toward Serbs but at the same time he points out situations when Russia did not fully protect Serbian interests. This was the case in early 90s when Russia due to Soviet collapse sought to re-engage in international political arena.

During Cold War and bipolar division of the world Soviet Union increased its influence especially in Romania, Bulgaria and Albania. This influence was not extended to Yugoslavia which was the only Communist state in Europe which did not belong to Warsaw pact. However, all mentioned states, apart Yugoslavia, which got disintegrated, became members of NATO. Bulgaria and Romania became members of European Union as well. However, Russia is coming back to Balkan with its greater involvement in Kosovo issue and particularly with energy policy. Russia from its point of view continues to pursue its goal of becoming

Europe's energy supply powerhouse and the Balkans seems to be the perfect terrain for laying down the basis for this. Of course, energy is only one aspect of Moscow's desire to ultimately regain as much as possible the geopolitical space that it has abandoned since 1991 (Michaletos 2007).

"Southern Stream" is a planned natural gas pipeline bypassing Ukraine, running under the Black Sea to Bulgaria, with one branch going to Greece and Italy, and another one to Romania, Serbia, Hungary, Slovenia and Austria. Russia recently announced that it would more than double its planned capacity from 31 billion cubic metres per year (bcm/y) to 63 bcm/y (Euractiv 2010). In its offshore section, the South Stream will cross the Black Sea from the Russian coast of Beregovaya to the Bulgarian coast at Varna, with a 900-kilometre pipeline reaching a maximum depth of more than 2,000 metres underwater. This will enable Russia to avoid using Ukrainian gas pipelines. For the onshore section two different routes from Bulgaria are being studied: towards northwest and towards southwest. It is envisaged that one arm will run southwestward via Greece to Italy. The northwestern route would run through Romania, Hungary, and Slovenia to northern Italy with a branch to Austria. An alternative route for this northern branch is being contemplated; this would involve Serbia and Croatia. The main line to Bulgaria is projected to carry 30 billion cubic metres of Russian-delivered gas annually (Smith 2008, 2).

Europe is already dependent on imported gas from Russian pipelines – a dependence that is set to increase. On Europe's gas consumption, 60 per cent is imported, nearly half of that from Russia. Over next twenty years, at least according to some projections, the imported share will rise to 80 per cent, as Europe's own gas production falls demand rises (Lucas 2008, 212). Gas is important political tool and Balkan is only the route for pipelines which Russia wants to dominate Europe with. Even more, gas is not only a political tool but weapon as well. As Vyacheslav Sheremet said:

"Gas is a weapon. It burns and explodes and it can strangle the people"
(Panyushkin and Zigar 2009).

"Southern Stream" is in competition with "Nabucco" pipeline which should link Europe with gas from Iraq, Iran, Azerbaijan and Central Asia. However, "Southern Stream" is more feasible project due to political implications. For start, Turkey, is increasingly estranged from both America and EU, and snuggling closely up to Russia, with which it built the 3,7 billion USD "Blue Stream" pipeline across the Black Sea. Even worse is that none of the

potential sources of gas for “Nabucco” is easily available. Relations with Iran are in the deep freeze, Caspian countries as Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are very unreliable for cooperation and they do not want to take risk of snubbing Moscow (Lucas 2008, 228-229). Another point is that in September 2008, Uzbekistan and Russia agreed to build a new pipeline with a capacity of 26 to 30 billion cubic meters (bcm) annually to pump Uzbek and Turkmen gas to Europe. Such a pipeline will again undermine the US efforts to pump trans-Caspian energy routes bypassing Russia.

Considering Balkan, energy policies and “Southern Stream” is the most convenient way for Russia to re-gain influence in the area where it lost it after the collapse of Soviet Union. Russia is also back in business in ex-Yugoslavia, a region that is prime candidate for integration into the rest of Europe, and where Western influence has long been predominant. It was American arms, air power and diplomatic pressure that allowed Croatia to break away successfully from Yugoslavia. Bosnia owes its precarious unity and independence to the intense and energetic involvement of both EU and United States. Yet, the mere sniff of Russian money seems to have turned the geopolitics of ex Yugoslavia upside down (Lucas 2008, 231).

The South Stream agreement also gives Russia the opportunity to enhance its interests in Serbia. Russia is engaged in negotiations with Serbia about extending the South Stream pipeline through Serb territory. Gazprom is pressing the state-owned company, Serbian Gas, to form a joint venture to build the pipeline and to grant Russia a 30-year supply and transit monopoly. Gazprom, which would hold a majority stake in the joint venture, is also demanding that it take over the transmission network of Serbian Gas. (Smith 2008, 3). Serbia is undoubtedly the region’s strongest supporter of Russian economic and political interests. It strives to maintain a strategic partnership with Russia. This is primarily for historical and cultural reasons. The two countries ties go back to when Russia supported Serbia’s drive for independence from the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century. Pan-Slavic ideals thus form part of the Serbian national consciousness, even if Serbia’s relationship with Russia has not always been trouble-free (Kreko and Szabatos 2009).

However, Kosovo issue brought Serbia and Russia on intensive cooperation again. Russia and the West disagree over the future of Kosovo. While the EU and USA grant Kosovo *de jure* sovereignty under the Ahtisaari plan, Russia insists that no decision can be taken without

Serbia's consent. Moreover, Russia insists that the Kosovo issue will set a precedent with long-term consequences for Eurasia and the world. These differences have exposed old divisions between Russia and the West, particularly acute during NATO bombing of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999. However, today it is more difficult for the West to reach a compromise with an increasingly assertive and self-confident Russia which does not hesitate to oppose Western policies (Antonenko 2007, 4). Aside from the ambiguities rising from the hostilities in Georgia, Russia's assertive language surrounding recent debates regarding Serbia's possible NATO membership reveals another potential sticking point regarding Russia's continued support of Serbia's territorial integrity. Russia's "defense" of Kosovo bought critical time for Serbia to mount a diplomatic offensive which has contributed to the current impasse over the province's future status while avoiding head-on confrontation with major Western actors. Although the reality of trade and investment relations with Russia fall short of more optimistic popular accounts, Serbia also benefits from Russia's involvement in its energy sector and the prospect of future earnings related to the proposed "Southern Stream" pipeline (Konitzer 2010, 24). Serbia is planning to become the first European country to begin constructing an onshore section of the South Stream gas pipeline, designed to transport Russian gas to western Europe, by the end of 2012, the head of the country's state-run "Srbijagas" company said. Furthermore, Republic of Srpska will join this project as well, Milorad Dodik, prime minister of Bosnia's Serb Republic, said that the republic was planning to join the South Stream project, which and consume about one billion cubic meters of gas annually. The Serb Republic wants to build a 480-kilometer pipeline in northern Bosnia with capacity of up to 1.5 billion cubic meters and link it to the South Stream pipeline, he said (Ria Novosti 2010).

This will inevitably involve Russia into the Bosnian issue where Serbs demand referendum on secession and Croats higher autonomy within Croat-Bosniak Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. With "Southern Stream" Russia will re-gain its influence on Balkan. Beside energy which is key factor for Russian come back to Balkan, it will use Slavic and Orthodox "brotherhood" to empower its positions.

Turkish Neo-Ottoman Approach: Geoculture and Identity in Geopolitics

Perhaps every country between Greece and Japan has at some point been described as a meeting place of East and West. Turkey, however, with its unique inter-continental geography has an especially close relationship with this cliché. Furthermore, in Turkey's case, the rhetoric of East and West has been matched by the rhetoric of Islam and democracy. As a

result, the geographic coincidence of being in both Europe and Asia has become fused with the historical circumstance of being both Muslim and democratic or, alternatively, both Muslim and secular (Constantides 1996). These joint identities have come to dominate discussions of Turkey's domestic and foreign politics, both within Turkey and among the international scholarly community. With the rise of the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) and the ongoing debate over the nature of its religious roots, these labels have become particularly confused in recent years (Danforth 2009).

During the cold war era Turkey was key Western ally and it was first muslim country that joined NATO, furthermore, it is also the longest waiting candidate for full EU membership. Demise of Soviet Union opened new space for Turkish engagement, particularly in Caucasus, Central Asia and Balkans. These are along with Middle East new entities where Turkey should develop relations and become player in this regions (Konstantinides 1996). This is precisely described in Ahmet Davutoglu's "*Strategic Depth*" (Stratejik Derinlik) where he asserted that Turkey has become a key country, emerging from its position of serving as a forward base for NATO during the Cold War. By using its geopolitical and geostrategic position, Turkey can become a regional as well as a global actor. As part of this vision, the government has pursued a policy of ending its long-term hostilities with its neighbours, mainly in the Middle East, which the Ottoman Turks had once ruled (Sariibrahimoglu 2009).

In Davutoglu's view, Turkey is a Middle Eastern, Balkan, Caucasian, Central Asian, Caspian, Mediterranean, Gulf and Black Sea country, can simultaneously exercise influence in all these regions and thus claim a global strategic role. In view of these, he rejects the perception of Turkey as a bridge between Islam and the West, as this would relegate Turkey to an instrument for the promotion of the strategic interests of other countries. Davutoglu asserts unique geographic position of Turkey as »Heart of Eurasia« (Tanasković 2010, 37). Instead of letting other countries use Turkey to promote their regional and global strategic role, Turkey should develop a proactive policy commensurate to its historic and geographic depth, which is amplified by its Ottoman legacy. To achieve that aim, Turkey should capitalise on its soft power potential. This is based on its historic and cultural links with all the regions which it belongs to. (Grigoriadis 2010, 5).

In the »*Strategic Depth*« Davutoglu turns away from Kemalist principles in foreign policy and suggests balanced approach toward all important global players. These are United States,

Russia, European Union and China. He outlines Turkey's foreign policy principles based on a self-confidence that will enable Turkey to play a more active role in the region. The six operative principles include: the balance between security and freedom; "zero problems with the neighbors;" proactive diplomacy in the country's surrounding regions; compatible global relations; active participation in all global and international issues; and active involvement in international organizations (Harvard University 2010).

New Turkish foreign policy approach is based on identity issues. Davutoglu wrote in the "*Strategic Depth*":

Turkey enjoys multiple regional identities and thus has the capability as well as the responsibility to follow an integrated and multidimensional foreign policy. The unique combination of our history and geography brings with it a sense of responsibility. To contribute actively towards conflict resolution and international peace and security in all these areas is a call of duty arising from the depths of a multidimensional history for Turkey. (Grigoriadis 2010, 5).

Davutoglu thinks that due to its multiple identities Turkey should be actively involved in regions with predominant muslim populations. Even more, Turkey as multicultural state with population of different origin should defend their interest with active involvement in their states of origin. This includes Bosnia, FYR Macedonia, Caucasus and Albania. He claims:

There are more Chechens in Turkey than in Chechenia and more Abkhaz than in Abkhazia. In Turkey live more Bosniaks and Albanians than in Bosnia and Albania. Turkey is their safe shelter and their home... We will reintegrate Balkan, we will reintegrate Middle East and we will reintegrate Caucasus on the principles of regional and world peace, not only for us but on behalf of all humankind (Tanasković 2010, 45).

This is Neo-Ottoman concept but Davutoglu denies it. However, interference in Caucasus, Middle East and Balkan may bring Turkey into direct confrontation with two other major powers, Russia and United States but also with European Union.

I mentioned before that Balkan is beside Middle East and Caucasus third regional priority in the coordinates of new Neo-Ottoman approach in Turkish foreign policy. Turkey's actions in the Balkans are linked with identity foreign policy, where Ankara is working to increase its influence by capitalizing on its Ottoman roots in the region (Schleifer 2010). Historically Turkey has had a strong interest in the Balkans. From the 14th century until the end of the

19th century, the Ottoman Empire dominated the Balkan peninsula.²⁴ Gradually, the Ottomans were driven out of the Balkans. Greece was liberated from Ottoman rule in 1832. Romania and Bulgaria became independent states in 1878. In addition, Bosnia-Herzegovina was put under Austro-Hungarian administration in 1878 and formally annexed by Austria-Hungary in 1908. Albania and Macedonia were ceded in 1912 as a result of the First Balkan War (Larrabe 2010).

Establishment of Turkish republic moved Turkey from Balkan politics until 1989 when it started to show greater interest for the region. Demise of Soviet Union and Eastern bloc and collapse of bipolar world gave Turkey opportunity to play more important role in the Balkans. Turkish involvement in the Balkan is based on the Ottoman legacy. Todorova (2001, 38-40) wrote that it is impossible to mark Ottoman rule in Balkan as colonial. Moreover, she claims that Balkans, despite its heterogenic ethnic and cultural composition, has never been more united as in the times of the Ottoman rule and that nowadays Balkan is legacy of the Ottoman Empire. This argument was clearly pointed out by Davutoglu in his "*Strategic Depth*". However, Todorova wrote as well that Balkan new europeanization was started after the collapse of Ottoman Empire. Same argument is used by Iver Neumann (2007) when he describes "Turkish other" and clearly points that Balkan under the Ottoman rule was European "other".

Davutoglu dedicated special role to the Balkan region in the "*Strategic Depth*", particularly to the regions with numerous muslim population. Therefore over the past two years, Turkey has launched a massive political, social, and economic offensive across the Balkans, focusing primarily on Bosnia-Herzegovina (Schleifer 2010). For him the basic principles of international law have been defeated in Bosnia by a wanton pragmatism and by the medieval prejudices of Europe. For him this was the landmark of the defeat of New World Order in the sense of an establishment of a comprehensive civilisational dialogue as a basis for creating a globally legitimate international political order. Consequently, the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina would become a limitus test for the new power centres of the international system in the post-Cold War Era. In this sense, the Western policy in Bosnia could only be regarded as the proof of the degradation of the Islamic World to a second class status in world affairs and, indeed, this was how it was perceived by many Turk and not only Davutoglu (Kramer 2010, 26). But Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo have great attention as well. Turkey is "mother land" of Balkan muslim populations and this is linked with identity and Ottoman

legacy, which I discussed above. Balkan is not only important for Turkey because once it was part of the Empire but because Balkan is confirmation of Turkish Europeaness and war in Bosnia was according to Turkish historian Kilicbay a way how to remove Turkey from Europe. He adds that Ottoman Empire was primarily Balkanic state (Tanasković 2010, 88-89).

Turkey legitimizes its presence in Balkan via geopolitics of identity and via geoculture. Davutoglu warns that in Bulgaria and Greece, most of Ottoman legacy has been destroyed, therefore it is crucial for Turkey to lean on Bosnian Muslims and Albanians. In his view Turkish foreign policy in the region very much depends on two mentioned ethnic groups, therefore Turkey is obliged to assure them safe and clear future. This is apriori against other interests, particularly against Serbian and Croat in Bosnia and against Serbian in Kosovo. With establishing strong Bosnia and Albania to which Kosovo may connect, Turkey can ballance German and Russian influence (Tanasković 2010, 93). Davutoglu puts special attention also to Macedonia because of its large Albanian (muslim) population and Bulgaria and Greece which have large Turkish minorities. However, geocultural concept is likely to clash with interests of other powers, primarily with USA, Russia and European Union. Giving political support to muslim populations in neighbourhood Turkey may clash with its neighbours such as Greece and Bulgaria. At last we should not forget Turkish multinational character. Supporting secessionism in Kosovo and muslim minorities in their neighbourhood while at the same time denying same rights to Kurdish population in Turkey is very contradictory.

Turkey with its new shift in Foreign Policy is becoming important player on regional but also on global level. It is not possible to expect their goals will be realized as it is described in "*Strategic Depth*" because their interests will sooner or later clash with the interests of other powers. However, it will be necessary to include Turkey as well in the future affairs in the Balkan.

European Union and the membership conditionality

Since the integration of Bulgaria and Romania in the European Union, on the map of Europe appeared gap in the shape of Western Balkans. It is likely to expect that next wave of enlargement will include respective region but before this happens, European Union will have to overcome its own disunity over this particular issue. After enlargement on Bulgaria and Romania some which were not ready for full membership, some started talking about absorption capacity. In other words, some argue EU is not ready for next enlargement at least until it does not consolidate itself. On the other hand, leaving Western Balkan outside of European borders can cause more problematic situation in an already politically instable region. We should not forget European incapability to deal with issues in Balkan in early 90s after the European Community turned into European Union with Maastricht Treaty.

European Union is recognized actor in the international relations but its power mostly lies in its economy. Due to lack of capabilities with military intervention it is »soft power« but it is long-term—shaping the tenor of domestic politics by offering the prospect of EU membership. The prospect of EU membership may be more diffuse, but it is ultimately more powerful (Vachudova 2008). In case of Western Balkans, membership is the most powerful tool for implementation of EU influence in the region. Membership conditionality gives the EU significant leverage in transferring to the applicant countries its principles, norms, and rules, as well as in shaping their institutional and administrative structures (Grabbe 2002: 93). Yet in spite of their efforts, the Western Balkans face a difficult period. Problems stem not just from domestic concerns, complex and challenging though these are, but as a result of confusion over Europe's future within Europe's capitals and corridors of power (House of Commons 2007). Some authors offer term "europeanisation" to define institutional changes in the states that seek membership. Radaelli defines it:

Europeization consists of processes of (a) construction (b) diffusion and (c) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, »ways of doing things« and shared benefits and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic (national and subnational) discourse, identities, political structures and public policies. (2003, 30)

Such considerations notwithstanding, the concept of Europeanisation remains important as it offers a framework for measuring both "soft" and "hard" impact. Whilst the measurement of

progress and the focus of conditionality tend to initially at least be the enactment and implementation of policy and the harmonisation of laws (Fagan 2010, 21).

However, last EU enlargement happened also because of stability and higher democratization of the societies from new member states. The same assumption lies with Balkan, the point is, if all states have guaranteed future in the European Union, this may empower rule of law, fight against organized crime, democratization and it can contribute to better cooperation among states that have been recently in armed conflict. Reform and reconciliation have yet to become well-established in most Balkan countries, and their drives on state-building and better governance are far from over (Schilly 2009). In the past, waves of enlargement arose as a result of a combination of push and pull factors. "Push" came in the form of a Union keen to extend its borders, trading potential and security. "Pull" factors derived from the strong wish of non-member countries seeking membership and all the benefits that access to a market place of nearly half a billion people brings. However, in the past year the balance of 'push and pull' has given way to disequilibrium (House of Commons 2007). The main reason behind enlargement—has to do with concerns over security. The image of the European Union as an island of calm amidst a sea of trouble noted above carried with it the notion that the European Union would either manage to export stability to its near abroad or have to face the challenges of importing the instability prevalent beyond its borders. The fact that the CEE—particularly the Western Balkan countries—as a zone of conflict is very close to the zone of peace ensured the attention of extraregional actors as the search for stability proceeded (Turkes and Gokgoz 2006, 667).

However, enlargement on Western Balkan seems to be more difficult than the Eastern one. The credibility of EU conditionality represents a major difference between the Eastern enlargement and the enlargement strategy used for the Western Balkans. The current candidates are less certain when or even if they will receive the ultimate reward of EU accession. In view of a European public opinion increasingly opposed to further enlargement, European political actors are unwilling to specify a possible accession date for the Western Balkan countries (Trauner 2008, 4). The European Commission's strategy is neither total exclusion nor rapid integration. The Commission's aim is to restructure the Western Balkans in line with neoliberalism to prepare the region for the "preincorporation stage". The Commission's major initiatives show that this neoliberal restructuring need not end in full membership but remains an open-ended process (Turkes and Gokgoz 2006, 659).

Nevertheless, EU promised Balkan states integration into the Union so we assume Western Balkan will become part of the EU (Reuters 2010). Some authors assume that EU cannot afford to fail to integrate Western Balkan because of its own security. EU must show that it has the power to transform weak states and divided societies. This is imperative for the Balkans, but no less so for the EU. Unless the EU adopts a bold accession strategy which integrates all Balkan countries into the Union within the next decade, it will remain mired as a reluctant colonial power at enormous cost in places like Kosovo, Bosnia and even Macedonia. The real referendum on the EU's future will take place in the Balkans (House of Commons 2007). In geopolitical terms, the EU's security will obviously be all the greater once the western Balkans are an integral part of the Union. And organised crime and corruption clearly pose much more of a threat to European Union member states if the Balkan countries remain outside the EU. The international community has already invested enormous sums of money, goodwill and human resources in the region, but unless these investments are accompanied by credible EU prospect they risk being wasted. So far, the EU's successive enlargements have made it stronger, and there is every reason to believe that further enlargements will also do so (Schilly 2009).

Europe, however, does not have the advantage the US does of being far away from the Balkans. While the Americans have the option of withdrawing to their continent, relegating to the native populations the solving of the problems they themselves have left behind, the Europeans possess no such safe haven. Sooner or later they will have to apply themselves in earnest to the Balkan question. The sooner they realize this need, the lower the cost of the necessary interventions will be and so much more human misery will be avoided (Prevelakis 2010). Brzezinski (2001, 184-185) adds, that enlarged Europe and NATO can serve to short term and long term American interests. Enlarged Europe can enlarge the sphere of American influence and at this point Europe will not be integrated at this level to be capable to endanger these interests. Inclusion of new states in EU means more US-friendly states in Europe. Brzezinski points out that politically defined Europe is crucial for the progressive assimilation of Russia in the system of global cooperation. Considering Brzezinski, we can assume that USA is the supporter of integration of Balkan into the EU. At the same time we can notice that before Eastern enlargement happened, all candidates entered NATO. Even in the case of Balkan we mostly hear Euro-Atlantic integrations and not only European integrations.

Therefore we can assume that USA will heavily support integration of Western Balkan in the EU and NATO as well.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to show how do interests of four powers overlap and it is likely that they clash in future. Balkan has been important geostrategically since Roman Empire till nowadays. Every global or regional power had its interest in the region but the common thing is that Balkan is not the "final destination" of the ultimate interests of powers but rather a step or route toward the implementation of these interests. I analyzed influence of United States, Russia, Turkey and the European Union because all four have been recognised as players in the international arena. United States and Russia are global powers, while Turkey and EU are very influential regional players.

American strategy on Balkan is only part of its wider geopolitical activity. Priority for USA is to control energy sources in Middle East and Central Asia but Balkan serves as a link to the mentioned regions. USA as the only superpower in unipolar system in the 90s played the most significant role in drawing map of Balkan as we know it nowadays. Since the beginning of war on terror main attention was dedicated to Asia but this does not mean United States have no interest in Balkans anymore but the opposite. United States still play the most important role in the region via European Union and NATO. Euroatlantic integrations are great tool for maintaining the control over Balkan which is important for American short and long term goals and interests.

Russia after collapse of Soviet Union lost its influence in Balkan but it shows interest for regaining its previous influence. Balkan is important for Russia primarily because of its energy policy and it is main route of "Southern Stream" pipeline which tends to increase European dependency on Russian gas what will increase Russian political influence on Europe. On the other hand, Russian involvement is lead by geocultural characteristics, pan-slavism and Orthodoxy. Russia is presented as defender of Slavic and Orthodox nations and its prime ally in Serbia and Bosnian Serbs. However, both characteristics are tool for implementation of Russian energy interests which have wider geopolitical aims.

Turkish involvement is based on new approach which is geoculture and geopolitics of identity, the difference from Russia is that Turkey is presented as leading country and defender of muslim populations in Balkan. New Turkish foreign policy is lead by Neo-Ottomanist ideology which assumes that Balkan is legacy of the Ottoman Empire and this ethnically and culturally fragmented region was united only during the Ottoman Era. Therefore duty of Turkey is to re-unite Balkan again. However, Neo-Ottomanist approach determines particular care of Turkey toward the muslim populations, especially in Bosnia, Albania, FYR Macedonia and Kosovo. Strengthening muslims on Balkan can empower Turkish position and balance Russian and German influence. Such goals are imminently in conflict with other non muslim populations and with other players in Balkan, particularly Russia and USA but also European Union which could come to a situation when a candidate state becomes its rival.

European Union mostly follows American policies in Balkan, its position is different because without firm American support it is unable to implement its influence. However, EU has great tool for expanding its control and this is candidacy for membership. After Romanian and Bulgarian accession it is likely to expect that next wave of enlargement will include Western Balkan. The candidacy "game" is very efficient because at first, all states from Western Balkan tend to join the EU and second, they all need to implement series of institutional, economic and social reforms. They can be pushed by the status of candidate because progress of candidacy depends on reforms. Problem for EU presents that it did not provide any timeline for new enlargement and if Western Balkan states will wait too long they may seek for alternative solutions what may slow down reforms.

Balkan has always been "playground" for powers and it has always been a route toward their final goals. Situation has not changed till nowadays, its mixed ethnic and cultural composition was reason for many conflicts which were used by powers to gain and expand their influence. All four powers that I presented have their interests, however, they are likely to clash with each other because each of powers tends to have most important role in the region. Let's just hope this will not turn Balkan into new explosion of conflicts that we already witnessed.

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