Reconstruction of the Balkans Region: A Research Study of Future European Integration of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia

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Abstract: In accordance to the Stability Pact that was launched in 1999 to provide conflict prevention net for South Eastern European nations (hereinafter – Balkans) that fosters regional co-operation and expedite integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures. It is pertinent to research areas of the theoretical arena encompassing the integration of the Balkans region into the European Union (EU). Since in 1981 Greece became a EU member state and recently Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, it is on the frontline issue of integrating Balkan region states into the EU since Croatia is marked to be a full EU member state in late July 2013. The basis of this urge for the Balkan region integrating into EU spans multi-perspectives as bilateralism, institutionalism, nationalism, and the full integration into the European labor market. In this paper I will focus on the research question whether there is a gap between the social and cultural norms, behaviors, and identities and political environments in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia and the EU? Given this gap I will also focus on the question of what are the possibilities of these countries' integration into the EU and if there is a transformation and convergence of values and norms and how can we understand this theoretically? These questions will be looked upon in the lens of a social constructivist model to further explain how EU norms and behaviors are followed within applicant countries drastically to enable their nations to obtain full EU membership.

Keywords: European integration, social constructivism, Balkans, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia

Introduction

Since the fall of communism many Central and East European (CEE) countries began entering the European Union (EU) representing a pivotal political project of the last two decades. For the Balkans region this pivotal notion has been halted by years of war during the 1990s during the fall of the Second Yugoslavia – also known as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). The war ended in 1995 after the signing of the Dayton Peace Treaty in December 1995, which brought a sovereign Bosnia-Herzegovina back into existence (Beer, 2001). Postwar reconstruction efforts under the Dayton Peace Accords (DPA) has been difficult in rebuilding social norms with the high level of ethnic intolerance (Jelisić 2012; Nenadovic, 2012; Whitt, 2012). This issue is only increased by the segmentation of the nation of Bosnia into two parts: Republika Srpska and the Muslim-Croat Federation (Beer, 2001). These postwar conditions are only a fraction of the many issues both Bosnia and Serbia have for chances of EU accession.

Issues in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Prior to the war Bosnia was one of the most ethnically tolerant societies out of the six republics in the federation of the SFRY (Burg, 1989). However, since the war numerous international bodies are working in the area towards implementing the Stabilization Pact and a High Representative was appointed by the international community to oversee civilian aspects of the peace agreement (Bakke et. al, 2009; Beer, 2001; Jelisić 2012; Whitt, 2012). Scholars suggest that by 2003 Bosnia had emerged from the war as an independent multiethnic republic with complex ethnic power sharing arrangements across ethnicity (Whitt, 2012). Many communities were ethnically mixed prior to the war but after the dramatic separation of the three ethnicities (Bosnian Muslim – Bosniak, Croatian, and Serbian) through ethnic cleansing and forced migration has reduced chances of social interaction and simu'89bltaneously increased issues involving postwar reconciliation (Bakke et. al, 2009; O'Laughlin et. al, 2009). Scholars suggest that the issue is extremely based on ethnic lines since during the war each local area adopted its own curricula and schoolbooks based on ethnicity (e.g. Serbian wrote Bosnian Serb curricula and school books) (Beer, 2001). Scholars state the significance of education as the core of creation of political and social norms of a society and in Bosnia-Herzegovina these are known as national subjects where education has caused both constructing identities, but also promoting racial hatred and intolerance amongst society (ibid, 2001). The Dayton agreement devolves majority of political functions, including education, to the local level, despite the presence of a Federal Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (ibid, 2001). The system is compartmentalized further with the creation of ten cantons: five Bosniak majorities, 3 Croat majorities, and two are mixed and these cantons have educational power and do not have to answer to the Ministry thus making the cantons a strong political force, especially educational issues (Beer, 2001; O'Laughlin et. al, 2009). Other issues that scholars suggest are the most important in Bosnia

postwar are institutional failure; entrenchment of ethnic divisions, and the fact Bosnia has no functioning central government (Bakke et. al, 2009; Beer, 2001; Jelisić, 2012; Lazar, 2007; Lazea, 2010; O'Laughlin et. al, 2009). Scholars suggest that the possibilities of the outcome of reemerging norms at violence in postwar Bosnia are varied from polarization, entrenched ethnic division, and potential for cooperation (Bakee et. al, 2009; Beer, 2001; Jelisić, 2012; Lazar, 2007; Lazea, 2010; O'Laughlin et. al, 2009).

According to the *Nations in Transit 2012* Freedom House report on 28 December 2011, leaders of six main parties in the two-entity federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) announced the intention of forming a state government, which the Parliamentary Assembly confirmed in February 2012 (Jelisić, 2012). However, the prior 14 months were lived in a political deadlock and reform halt and during the year of 2010-2011 there were no major reforms towards progress on the path to European Union (EU) membership (ibid, 2012, pp. 125-26). Although the promises of a state government the two entities – Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina lack a shared vision for the country and a consensus on the political system established under the Dayton Peace Agreement (ibid, 2012, 126). The lack of trust between the entities ensues problems of stability and integrity of the Bosnian government thus, reliance upon the international actors (e.g. High Representative) continues (ibid, 2012). There are several other reasons preventing Bosnian integration into the EU and they are the Sejdic-Finci case on electoral discrimination ruling by the European Court of Human Rights (ibid, 2012). This issue only furthered the crisis regarding state aid and census laws that were pending within Bosnia and all these issues continued to intensify with the lack of an agreement to form a state government (ibid, 2012). Reports show that police forces within Bosnia are showing an increase in political pressure "to relinquish their relatively new operational autonomy and to submit to ethnic political loyalties," (Azinovic et. al, 2011; Jelisić, 2012). The number of EU Military Force troops was reduced to 1,300 personnel over 2011-2012 that was analyzed as no longer being a credible conflict deterrent (Azinovic et. al, 2011; Jelisić, 2012).

Issues in Serbia

Historical Overview

In the past decade Serbia has changed drastically. Beginning in 1991 Serbia gained control of the Socialist Federation Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) under the leadership of Slobodan Milosevic. Although this resulted after the Croatian and Slovenian multi-party elections that brought a democratic and independence sense amongst its citizens that was the first imbalance of the SFRY under Milosevic's leadership. In efforts to gain back Serbian territory in 1991 a civil war began between Croatian and Serbian militant forces, which eventually led to a UN ceasefire agreement in 1992 (Benson, 2001; Markowitz, 2010). This only resulted in Bosnia-Herzegovina to declare independence from SFRY and began the war in Sarajevo between Bosnian Serbs, Croatians, and Bosnian Muslims in 1992 (Bosniaks) (Benson, 2001; Rohde, 1998). The civilian population was heavily targeted, focusing on ethnic Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks), through acts of genocide, torture, and other acts of political violence committed by Croatian and Serbian armies and paramilitias stationed strategically throughout Bosnia where ethnic Croats and Serbs resided (Benson, 2001; Honig et. al, 1997; Markowitz, 2010). The violent acts committed throughout Bosnia and Croatia by Serbian militants and paramilitias increased the catastrophe, but in 1995 things worsened when the Srebrenica massacre began (Burg et. al, 1999; Honig et. al, 1997; Rohde, 1998). Throughout this massacre an estimated 7,000 Bosniaks were murdered by Bosnian Serb forces (Markowitz, 2010). Overall, between the Yugoslavia War of 1992-1998 the death toll was estimated at over 300,000 with a high likelihood of undocumented deaths due to the fact bodies are still being discovered today (Markowitz, 2010). All of these deaths were supposed of Serbian authority and leadership and has affected the postwar society in many ways (Cvejić, 2005`).

Postwar Overview

Serbia is currently trying to use the social energy that was concentrated during the warfare throughout the 90s for re-building of stable social institutions (Cvejić, 2005). Scholars suggest that Serbia is 'path-dependent' (Cvejić, 2005; Stark, 1992). Path-dependent is constituted on traditions of socialist form of integration in which institutions were weak and huge levels of social energy has been concentrated around authority faced in single leader and nomenclature-like gathering around the leader (Cvejić, 2005, p. 273). After the war Serbia transitioned to authoritarian order from socialist towards a nationalistic populism (ibid, 2005). Serbia throughout the 1990s and early to mid-2000s have been involved in warfare and this has caused an obstacle to strengthen global trust and orientation towards wider integration to be included in supranational institutions like the EU (Cvejić, 2005). Scholars also suggest that education is a tool being utilized to continue the wartime norms and behaviors (Beer,

2001). Serbian curriculum has a Serbian and world perspective and students learn symbols, fights, and sacrifices of the Serbian people with a direct neglect of the context of Bosnia (Beer, 2001). Although the textbooks present a world perspective they do not discuss the local region (ibid, 2001). Republika Srpska is included into topics linked only to Yugoslavia and Montenegro, but not to Bosnia, where it is located (Beer, 2001). The Bosnian and Croat population are completely ignored, student learn music of Serbian patriotism and they teach of the religion of the Orthodox Christianity with focus on the Serbian national saint – Saint Sava (Beer, 2001). Altogether the Serbian curricula refuses to be inclusive to Bosnia-Herzegovina, which hinders learning and knowledge of the history that occurred, to fix and mend the social and behavioral norms during prewar and war times.

According to the *Nations in Transit 2012* Freedom House report on Serbia made progress on its path to European Union integration in 2011 with the arrest of the well-known war criminals – Ratko Mladic and Goran Hadzic (Nenadovic, 2012). The European Union organized a bilateral trade negotiation between Kosovo and Serbia, which failed and resulted in the postponement of a European Commission vote on Serbia's EU membership (ibid, 2012). The dialogue with Kosovo is a prerequisite for EU accession for Serbia and it continues to remain problematic and politically dangerous for Serbian politicians because they continue to refuse to recognize Kosovo's secession, and this is something that all political parties in Serbia agree upon (ibid, 2012). The first-ever EU-backed bilateral talks between Pristina and Belgrade was held in March 2011, but faltered by year's end (ibid, 2012). There continues to be ongoing problems with President Boris Tadic's Democratic Party and the G17 Plus party by challenging the stability of the government in early 2011, which resulted in several Parliament members' resignations (ibid, 2012). G17 Plus party leader, Mladan Dinkic eventually left the government after continued issues with the finance minister and other members of the Democratic Party (ibid, 2012). Parliament approved a reshuffle in March 2011, which reduced the size of the cabinet and kept the G17 Plus party in government (ibid, 2012). Living standards in Serbia plummeted in 2011, which is causing the EU to reconsider economic stability areas concerning accession (ibid, 2012). In September 2012, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) granted Serbia a considerable loan to protect its economy against market instability, which shows Serbian reliance upon international organizations to assist them in their economic stability (ibid, 2012). The new transparency law in the Serbian government received high levels of scrutiny from civil society groups (ibid, 2012). Altogether the economic stability, transparency of government actions and election campaigns, and most importantly the Serbian-Kosovo recognizing secession and also bilateral agreements are standing in the way of Serbia and European Union membership.

Theoretical Overview

European integration of new member states involves the shaping of EU social norms, behaviors and values. Many factors come from this but most importantly the factors that contribute to the EU decision to enlarge is the value-based identity of the Community. The assurance of democracy and human rights – European liberal identity – creates prospect and restrictions for the behavior of both Member States and its internal institutions (Lazea, 2010). The EU can utilize this liberal identity to promote their own interests or because they adhere to it themselves. This is the assumption of how the EU plans to work in the ongoing process of enlargement towards Western Balkan nations. In this paper the liberal intergovernmentalist theory developed by Andrew Moravcsik will be disputed utilizing the social constructivists theory. Moravcsik argued that integration are the result of a series of negotiations and bargaining processes at the domestic level and then inside the European level (Moravcsik, 1998). Moravcsik stated that the choice of international institutions is dependent upon the formation of national preferences inside the states and the distribution of power during bargaining among states (ibid, 1998). From the information provided in Moravcsik's liberal intergovernmentalist perspective it should be able to fully explain EU widening and deepening – both are features of EU integration (Lazea, 2010). The liberal intergovernmentalist approach should explain the enlargement of Central and Eastern European states by focusing on national preferences of the Member States favoring such a decision and the power to negotiate held by the drivers of enlargement leading to a favorable European level decision. In 2001, Schimmelfennig conducted a study on liberal norms and Eastern enlargement and he found that EU decision for enlargement does not fit the rationalist framework previously described that Moravcsik concluded (Lazea, 2010; Schimmelfennig, 2001). He stated "cannot be explained as the result of egoistic cost-benefit calculations and patterns of state preferences and power" (Schimmelfennig, 2001, p. 49). The core of his argument is focusing at the national state level where he seeks to identify the factors explaining the preference of the Member States (factors responsible for the identification of states as drives or brakers of enlargement) (Lazea, 2010; Schimmelfennig, 2001). Schimmelfennig argues that using the social constructivist approach – also known as sociological institutionalism approach, can identify the missing link towards the institutional outcome of enlargement (Schimmelfennig, 2001, p. 49-50). This perspective states that an international institution or

organization is more than a corporation of interests, since it has its own goals and procedures; that the interests and preferences of actors are not given and fixed, but subjects of change during the socialization process the organization provides for (ibid, 2001). In the social constructivists – sociological institutionalism theory institutions shape actors strategies, preferences, and identities and they derive from a normative dimension where formal and informal norms are not fixed but change over time as a socializing process is conducted. Schimmelfennig discusses the fact that the EU is a community of values, namely an organization whose identity is based mainly on the commitment to democracy and human rights (Lazea, 2010; Schimmelfennig, 2001). Every European state has the right to apply for membership into the EU by Art. 237, EEC Treaty (Lazea, 2010). Once the Balkans states have proved to respect the rule of law and human rights, upon many other EU requirements, they will to be entitled to request membership, in which all Balkan states have applied for membership into the EU with Croatia being the 2nd since Slovenia to be assessed in July 2013 (Lazea, 2010). Supporters of enlargement legitimized a position resorting to liberal norms of the EU Community aforementioned (ibid, 2010). Schimmelfennig defines this as *rhetorical action* – "the strategic use of norm-based arguments in one's self interest," this proves that they succeeded in getting their agenda of enlargement on the EU level (Schimmelfennig, 2001, p.63). Scholars may argue against the social constructivist approach in the context of EU enlargement, especially to Central and Eastern European states – more specifically the Balkan states – in many ways. First, they could question why actors may utilize liberal norms as a resource among others in confrontation initiated by the interests and forces highlighted by intergovernmentalist (Lazea, 2010). However, social constructivists would argue, "there are certain limits of manipulating social values and norms, because actors do care about their consistency and cannot act chaotically," (Lazea, 2010, p. 5). This means that a state that encourages value-based arguments in an instrumental manner will find it very difficult not to have the same position in another situation in which the identical values are used by other states for their own interests (Lazea, 2010). In the 1990s enlargement of the EU was a similar case to the aforementioned scenario. Lazea states that, "the discourse based on this rhetoric started to function as a force on its own and the EU as a whole has been increasingly shaped by its logic," (Lazea, 2010, p. 5). The following section will apply this social constructivist – social institutionalism theory towards the cases of possible EU integration for the Balkan states of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia.

Application of Theory

Overview

The EU community derived the core liberal norms characterizing the EU identity from the very beginning with minor changes: democracy and the rule of law (human rights and rights of minorities were the minor additions). After 1989 the promise of reuniting Europe under the same ideals of freedom and democracy had to be fulfilled once the Central and Eastern European states embraced the same EU liberal norms and values. This is the self-entrapping aspect of the EU that actually requires potential applicant countries to abide by the set EU norms and values during enlargement processes. A great example of the application of this is during the European Community-Greece Association in response to the 1967 coup d'état and the beginning of the accession negotiations after the restoration of democracy in Greece (Lazea, 2010). The starting of this for the Balkans was during the 2003 EU-Western Balkans Summit of Thessaloniki where the summary of the summit was that set guidelines for the Western Balkans were the strategy for the region is based from the commitment to the liberal values of democracy, rule of law, respect for human and minority rights and the recognition of the European perspective of the countries in the region (i.e. Kosovo – although not all European countries recognize Kosovo within the EU) all a derivative of the Stabilization and Association Process (Lazea, 2010; EU-Western Balkans Summit, 2003). The monitoring system of the Western Balkans is derived within the Progress Reports that the European Commission issued each year for each country (Lazea, 2010). These included set criterion for the Western Balkan nations. For example, under the political criteria the progress of democracy and the rule of law and of human and minority rights, and they are identical to the structure of the reports already used by the EU when monitoring Central and Eastern European states (ibid, 2010, p.7). The newest criteria section is the 'Regional issues and international obligations' section, which is specific to Western Balkans due to the 1990s wars and ethnic conflict past (ibid, 2010). The process of democratization of the countries within the Western Balkans is consistently documented on the EU level and other international actors. Currently, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia are potential candidates of the EU, an important status qualifying a nation for EU perspective. All Western Balkan nations have submitted their interim agreement with the EU and since some Balkan nations have instilled EU-like criteria in their systems, such as Serbia's new visa

liberalization program, which allows visa-free travel to and from EU Member States (Lazea, 2010). The current state of Bosnia and Serbia are the fueling Stabilization and Association Agreements (SAA) (Lazea, 2010).

Application of Theory- Bosnia-Herzegovina Case

In the case of Bosnia the stabilization of the multiethnic government standstills have to be fixed and the tensions between ethnic groups must be calmed in some way. These are the key issues harming the chances of EU integration for Bosnia. All EU liberal values of democracy, rule of law, rights of humans and minorities are all being broken in the nation at this point and the socially constructed liberal values must be consumed and followed throughout the candidate state to be assessed within the EU. The prospects of the Bosnian government to be able to agree on decisions and matters to provide a democratic, fair, and equal government and society would take the mending of the wounds created during the Yugoslavian War of 1992-1995 in Bosnia. The Bosnian Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks must come to an agreement to settle the wounds created during those times to further themselves to a better nation and society that would include prospective of a greater chance of EU accession. The EU (specifically the European Commission) is attempting to press these matters onto the Bosnian government, and until they act upon it their chances of accession will stay the same. These liberal values and norms set by the EU would have to be consumed and followed by the Bosnian government and society through a socialization process that has been attempted in the past couple years by the EU to allow for better potential of EU accession for Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Application of Theory – Serbia

Serbia has numerous issues standing in its way to EU accession beginning with the cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), which the surrender of Ratko Mladic was a stride closer towards assisting with the proper adjudication of Serbian war criminals involved in the 1990s Yugoslavian War. The other key issue is the EU-Serbian relations involving Kosovo. The Kosovo issue is difficult to understand because the EU does not have a common position on the status of the province after the declaration of its independence. The EU has specifically declared that "no country who does not recognize another country will be allowed to join the EU," due to the Cyprus precedent (Lazea, 2010). The EU-backed talks between Serbia and Kosovo was an unsuccessful attempt, thus chances of solving this issue is foreseen not occur in the near future. For Serbia to have greater chances of accession they need to begin cultivating a socialization process within government and society of the issues aforementioned towards the EU social norms they require. Without this socialization process to occur and cultivate the EU social norms and behaviors then Serbia have slim chances. However, the Serbian government has shown in the past that social constructivism (socialization of norms and behaviors) when Serbia adopted the visa liberalization process to allow visa-free travel to and from EU nations. This is seen as hope of a possible shift in governmental opinion towards the previously mentioned pertinent issues.

Conclusion

EU enlargement in the Western Balkans is a difficult process, which includes a multitude of actors in the political and non-political realm and above the level of individual countries. It is a very intricate phenomenon in which unimaginable factors may or may not occur. The current paper focused on how the current social norms and behaviors in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia positively and negatively affects the potentiality of EU accession for each nation respectively by comparing it to the social constructivist argument of the EU liberal identity of norms and behaviors required of candidate countries prior to accession. The analysis of the current situation ongoing in the Western Balkans serve to contribute to this picture by invoking importance towards the EU liberal identity and EU candidate nations prerequisite to adhere to EU's socially constructed norms to impose upon candidate countries. These values and identity is pertinent to the process of EU enlargement towards the Western Balkans.

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