

The Future Is Back: The EU, Russia and the Kosovo–Serbia Dispute

by Maria Giulia Amadio Viceré

ABSTRACT

Following the end of the Cold War there was a widespread opinion that the demise of the Soviet Union would not be followed by adversarial relations with a territorially and politically diminished Russia. The NATO's bombing campaign against Yugoslavia in the 1999 Kosovo conflict, especially, highlighted the economic and military weaknesses of Russia, which opposed the intervention but could do nothing to prevent it. Following the conflict, the EU became increasingly influential in Kosovo and Serbia (Yugoslavia's main successor state) by offering economic and political integration and, eventually, membership. Recently, however, EU influence in the Western Balkans has decreased as multiple crises have reduced the Union's attractiveness and divisions among member states have called into question the credibility of its enlargement process. By exploiting the EU's difficulties in maintaining momentum behind the association process towards Serbia and Kosovo, Russia has found a way to reinsert itself into the region's geopolitics.

Kosovo | Serbia | Russia | European Union | EU enlargement

keywords

The Future Is Back: The EU, Russia and the Kosovo–Serbia Dispute

by Maria Giulia Amadio Viceré*

Introduction

In 1990 John Mearsheimer, the proponent of “offensive realism”, vocally challenged the common enthusiasm surrounding the demise of the Soviet Union: Russia, albeit weakened, would remain a deal-maker in Europe; eventually, it would return to Eastern Europe and threaten the new status quo.¹ Those who maintained that the European Economic Community – the forerunner of the European Union – would bring prosperity to its eastern neighbourhood were too optimistic. On the contrary, Mearsheimer argued, since democratic institutions had to be built from scratch in Central and Eastern European countries, the task would be challenging and could not be taken for granted. In essence, the future would strike back.

The Kosovo–Serbia dispute provides evidence for assessing the validity of Mearsheimer’s claims. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, the unfolding of events in the Western Balkans seemed to invalidate his predictions. The bombing campaign against Yugoslavia by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in the 1999 Kosovo conflict highlighted the economic and military weaknesses of Russia, which opposed the intervention but could do nothing to prevent it, and cast a shadow over its ambition to be a power broker in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, after the conflict the EU became increasingly influential in Kosovo and Serbia (Yugoslavia’s main successor state) by offering economic and political integration and, eventually, membership. In an initial phase Brussels extensively supported Kosovo’s post-conflict reconstruction and backed Yugoslavia’s transition towards a more pluralist form of government – eventually presiding over its peaceful dissolution into two independent countries, Serbia and Montenegro. In the years

¹ John J. Mearsheimer, “Back to the Future. Instability in Europe after the Cold War”, in *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Summer 1990), p. 5-56.

* Maria Giulia Amadio Viceré is Adjunct Professor and Post-Doctoral Researcher at the Department of Political Science at LUISS Guido Carli University, Rome.

· Paper prepared for the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), September 2019.

after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty (2009), the EU tempered tensions between Pristina and Belgrade within the enlargement process. Yet a series of recent developments in international politics demonstrates that, to some extent, Mearsheimer's predictions have been vindicated by history.

1. The EU, Russia and the Kosovo dispute

1.1 The 1998–9 Kosovo crisis

Like other European powers, Russia has a historical record of meddling in ethnic and territorial disputes in the Western Balkans – thanks in particular to its cultural, linguistic and religious connections with Serbia. In the post-Cold War era Moscow's official position was that Kosovo, where the overwhelming Albanian majority craved for independence, was a Yugoslav-Serbian domestic matter (at the time Serbia was the core nation within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and Kosovo part of Serbia). The Kremlin sought to remain a player in this region by establishing cooperative ties with Western powers. During the 1998–9 Kosovo war, in particular, Russia used its membership of the Contact Group for the Balkans – along with Britain, France, Germany, Italy and the US – and its veto-wielding permanent membership of the UN Security Council (UNSC) to fluctuate from backing Belgrade to acting as a mediator between the Yugoslav Government and Kosovo's Albanian separatists.² In 1998 Moscow imposed sanctions on Serbia within the framework of UNSC Resolutions 1160 and 1199.³ Meanwhile, it negotiated and signed the so-called Moscow Agreement (16 June 1998) with Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević, who agreed to resume talks with the Albanians. As soon as it became clear that the agreement would not hold, however, Russia resumed cooperation with the West.⁴

Thus, in February 1999 Russia supported the Contact Group-initiated peace talks at the Rambouillet Conference. The Kremlin constantly opposed any arrangements giving a security role to NATO. Moscow feared that the involvement of the US-dominated Atlantic Alliance would eventually lead to regime change in Belgrade and potentially to the secession of a pro-American Kosovo, which in turn would set a precedent for Russia's own separatist movements in Chechnya and elsewhere. The Russians also worried about an increase of NATO's power vis-à-vis the UNSC, where it could use its veto.⁵ Nevertheless, the Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo that was eventually concluded in Rambouillet explicitly

² Erik Yesson, "NATO and Russia in Kosovo", in *The RUSI Journal*, Vol. 144, No. 4 (1999), p. 20-26.

³ Enver Bytyçi, *Coercive Diplomacy of NATO in Kosovo*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015.

⁴ "Russia: Moscow: Yugoslav President Milosevic Visit", in *AP Archive*, 16 June 1998, <http://www.aparchive.com/metadata/youtube/3184d675513cff830b6c5b932f09f1c5>.

⁵ Erik Yesson, "NATO and Russia in Kosovo", cit.

envisaged the deployment of a NATO-led force.⁶ Following Milošević's refusal to authorise such a deployment, NATO started a bombing campaign against Serbian forces waging war – and, allegedly, ethnic cleansing – against Albanian separatists. At the time, Moscow had neither the military capabilities to stop NATO's operations nor any other political asset that it could use to prevent the intervention or impose costs on its perpetrators. Consequently, it could only condemn NATO's decision and sponsor a UNSC resolution demanding the cessation of the use of force against Yugoslavia. Needless to say, the resolution went nowhere, with three permanent members – the US, Britain and France – involved in the bombing campaign.⁷

When the resolution failed to gain support, the Kremlin tried to maintain some sort of influence over the unfolding of the war. A Russian pro-Western envoy, Viktor Chernomyrdin, contributed to the peace negotiations with President Milošević together with the EU Special Envoy for Kosovo Wolfgang Petritsch, the Finnish diplomat Martti Ahtisaari and the American diplomat Strobe Talbott. Ultimately, these negotiations led to the signature of the Military Technical Agreement (9 June 1999) between the International Security Force – the NATO-led international coalition – and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.⁸ On the following day UNSC Resolution 1244 turned Kosovo into the first UN protectorate in history, while providing a mandate to a NATO-led peacekeeping force (KFOR). Because of Russia's insistence, however, the country would be administered under the technical sovereignty of Yugoslavia.⁹ Furthermore, after initial tensions concerning the repartition of peacekeeping sectors, Russian forces were granted the possibility of participating in KFOR alongside NATO troops but under a separate command.¹⁰

As these tragic events unfolded, Russia had mostly dealt with a US-led coalition. The EU had largely stood by. Yet by the time the Kosovo war was over, the Union had three good reasons to avoid another crisis in its backyard, and hence to devise a new strategy to prevent that from happening. First, its own poor performance in the bloody dissolution of Yugoslavia despite the institutional innovations introduced by the Maastricht (1993) and Amsterdam (1998) Treaties in the foreign-policy domain warranted more effective action.¹¹ Second, EU member states had considerable economic interests in the Western Balkans.¹² Finally, the US

⁶ Eric Herring, "From Rambouillet to the Kosovo Accords: NATO'S War against Serbia and Its Aftermath", in *The International Journal of Human Rights*, Vol. 4, No. 3-4 (2007), p. 224-245.

⁷ UN Security Council, *Security Council Rejects Demand for Cessation of Use of Force Against Federal Republic of Yugoslavia*, 26 March 1999, <https://www.un.org/press/en/1999/19990326.sc6659.html>.

⁸ "Why Milosevic Blinked First", in *The Guardian*, 6 June 1999, <https://gu.com/p/md3d>.

⁹ "Kosovan Independence", in *The Economist*, 1 June 2007.

¹⁰ Sharyl Cross, "Russia and NATO Toward the Twenty-first Century: Conflicts and Peacekeeping in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo", in *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2002), p. 1-58.

¹¹ Alistair J. K. Shepherd, "A Milestone in the History of the EU: Kosovo and the EU's International Role", in *International Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 3 (May 2009), p. 513-530.

¹² Milada Anna Vachudova, "EU Leverage and National Interests in the Balkans: The Puzzles of Enlargement Ten Years On", in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (January 2014), p. 122-138.

made clear to Brussels that it would no longer be willing to play a leading role in this area. EU policy-makers determined that the Union would do whatever it could to stabilise Kosovo. As the 1998–9 war between Serbs and Albanians had caused 10,000 casualties and over 800,000 refugees (out of a population of 1.7 million),¹³ the Kosovar economy was in tatters. Therefore, EU member states and institutions supported Kosovo's nation-building efforts, both within the scope of the Stabilisation and Association Process for the Balkans (launched in June 1999) and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).¹⁴

Over the following years, the EU turned the accession process into the core of its policy towards the Western Balkans, including Kosovo and Serbia. In June 2003 member states stressed their "privileged relationship" with the region,¹⁵ and in December 2006 they declared that the future of the Balkans lay in the EU.¹⁶ The Union hoped that it would be able to "create a 'ring of friends' and prevent [the] emergence of new dividing lines"¹⁷ in its immediate environs at the time. In the words of then Commissioner for Enlargement Olli Rehn, the EU-backed reforms in Central and Eastern Europe in preparation for the fifth wave of enlargement (2004–7) had suggested that offering the Western Balkans an effective accession process would be cheaper and more efficient than maintaining international protectorates.¹⁸ As EU membership appeared to represent these countries' political future, Brussels emerged as Moscow's main competitor in the region.

1.2 Kosovo's declaration of independence

After NATO's intervention, Russia progressively adopted a confrontational attitude in the Kosovo–Serbia dispute. Although Moscow, as a Contact Group member, provided "guiding principles" for the negotiation between Belgrade and Pristina led by UN Special Envoy Ahtisaari, in 2007 Russia used its veto power at the UNSC to block the Ahtisaari Plan, as this called for independence for Kosovo (and the integration of both Kosovo and Serbia into the EU).¹⁹ Not long afterwards, when

¹³ Human Rights Watch (HRW), *Kosovo/Albania: Investigate Postwar Abductions, Transfers to Albania*, 4 May 2008, <https://www.hrw.org/node/233911>.

¹⁴ Michael Karnitschnig, "The United Nations and the European Union in Kosovo: The Challenges of Joint Nation-Building", in Jan Wouters, Frank Hoffmeister and Tom Ruys (eds), *The United Nations and the European Union: An Ever Stronger Partnership*, The Hague, T.M.C. Asser Press, 2006, p. 323–351.

¹⁵ European Council, *EU Western Balkan Summit*, Thessaloniki, 21 June 2003, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_PRES-03-163_en.htm.

¹⁶ European Council, *Presidency Conclusions*, Brussels, 14–15 December 2006, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-16879-2006-REV-1/en/pdf>.

¹⁷ European Commission, *On the Commission Proposals for Action Plans Under the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) (2004/COM/795)*, 9 December 2004, p. 2, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52004DC0795>.

¹⁸ Olli Rehn, *Europe's Next Frontiers*, Luncheon lecture at the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Brussels, 10 October 2006, https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-06-580_en.htm.

¹⁹ Albert Rohan, "Kosovo's Path to Independence", in *ECFR Commentaries*, 2 February 2018, https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_kosovos_path_to_independence.

Kosovo unilaterally declared independence on 17 February 2008, Moscow joined Serbia's vocal protest. In addition to fears concerning possible repercussions on its own separatist movements, Russia saw Kosovo's independence as an American-supported attempt to further diminish the strength of an already weakened Serbia, its traditional ally in the region.²⁰ Not only was Kosovo's statehood in conflict with the pan-Orthodox and Slavic ambitions of Russian President Vladimir Putin but the Kremlin also needed to respond to Russian public opinion, which traditionally supported Serbian nationalists and feared ethnic cleansing against Serbs.²¹

In the meantime, divisions between national governments complicated the EU's approach. Five member states feared that Kosovo's secession would set a precedent that their own separatist movements could point to, and refused to give it formal recognition. Specifically, Romania and Slovakia worried about ethnic Hungarians, Spain was concerned about separatism flaring up again in the Basque Country and emerging as a powerful force in Catalonia, and Greece and the Republic of Cyprus would give no recognition to anything that the Turkish-inhabited Northern Cyprus could consider a situation comparable with its own. The EU managed to get around this obstacle by adopting a status-neutral approach in its response to Pristina's declaration of independence.²² Such an approach allowed the Union to foster more stable relations between Serbia and Kosovo. The deployment of EULEX Kosovo – a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) civilian mission set up to supervise the country's autonomy – epitomised EU member states' commitment to addressing the Kosovo dossier irrespective of its status.²³ In this context, from March 2011 to April 2013 the then High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR) Catherine Ashton and her team brokered several rounds of talks between Serbia and Kosovo. Ashton's approach was based on tying the prospects for EU membership of both entities to the normalisation of their bilateral relations. The negotiation was far from a smooth process. As the EU was preoccupied with other, more pressing issues (ranging from the eurozone crisis to the refugee emergency of 2015), Russia saw an opportunity and strengthened its ties with Belgrade.²⁴ Indeed, as Serbia plunged into socio-economic hardship following the 2008–9 Great Recession, Moscow did not miss the chance to counterbalance the EU's accession perspective. For instance, a few days after the EU-brokered talks started, President Putin visited Serbia to reiterate the Kremlin's willingness to

²⁰ Ted Galen Carpenter, "How Kosovo Poisoned America's Relationship with Russia", in *The National Interest*, 19 May 2017, <https://nationalinterest.org/node/12585>.

²¹ Oksana Antonenko, "Russia and the Deadlock over Kosovo", in *Russie.Nei.Visions*, No. 21 (July 2007), <https://www.ifri.org/en/node/3464>.

²² Council of the European Union, *2851st Council meeting General Affairs and External Relations*, Brussels, 18 February 2008, p. 7, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6496-2008-INIT/en/pdf>.

²³ Giovanni Grevi, "EULEX Kosovo", in Giovanni Grevi, Damien Helly and Daniel Keohane (eds), *European Security and Defence Policy: The First 10 Years (1999-2009)*, Paris, EU Institute for Security Studies, 2009, p. 353-368, <https://www.iss.europa.eu/node/611>.

²⁴ "Serbia's Push for EU Entry Snagged by Lithuania, Romania", in *EUbusiness*, 27 February 2012, <https://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/serbia-kosovo.fev>.

support Belgrade in the energy and financial sectors, and confirm his backing over Kosovo.²⁵ This did not stop the talks, however, with the parties eventually striking the so-called Brussels Agreement in April 2013. This deal envisaged that the Serbian communities living in the northern part of the former Serbian province would be integrated into Kosovo yet granted a wide range of autonomy in the fields of policing, healthcare, town planning and justice.²⁶

2. The future strikes back

Initially, the Brussels Agreement's implementation proceeded effectively, raising hopes for the easing of tensions between Kosovo and Serbia.²⁷ In June 2013, as a reward for the deal, EU member states made a conditional decision to open membership talks with Serbia by January 2014 and authorised the beginning of negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Kosovo.²⁸ Belgrade and Pristina each agreed not to hinder the other side's progress towards EU membership. In September 2013 they reached agreements on energy and telecommunications. Furthermore, Serbia also closed down Serbian parallel structures in Northern Kosovo, including police stations and criminal courts.²⁹ For the first time since Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence, Serbs from Northern Kosovo cast their vote in local elections in November 2013. Notwithstanding some instances of disorder during the initial round of voting, the deal reached in April 2013 seemed to have passed its first test when during the second round of elections, in December 2013, no violence was reported.³⁰ Eventually, EU member states decided to begin accession negotiations with Serbia on 21 January 2014.³¹

Meanwhile, however, EU–Russia relations were hitting a post-Cold War low with the outbreak of the Maidan protests in Ukraine in late 2013, the eventual flight of Ukraine's pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich and the ensuing annexation of Crimea by Russia in early 2014. In addition, the halt of the enlargement process – announced by the newly appointed President of the European Commission,

²⁵ Branislav Radeljić, "Russia and Serbia: Between Brotherhood and Self-Serving Agendas", in *Russian Analytical Digest*, No. 226 (6 December 2018), p. 6–8, <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-b-000301365>.

²⁶ Piotr Smolar, "Serbia and Kosovo Sign Historic Agreement", in *The Guardian*, 30 April 2013, <https://gu.com/p/3fdzb>.

²⁷ Justin Vaisse and Dennison Susi, *European Foreign Policy Scorecard 2013*, London, European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), January 2013, https://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR73_SCORECARD_2013_AW.pdf.

²⁸ European Council, *Conclusions*, Brussels, 27–28 June 2013, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-104-2013-REV-2/en/pdf>.

²⁹ European Commission, *Kosovo 2013 Progress Report* (SWD/2013/0416), 16 October 2013, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52013SC0416>.

³⁰ Rosa Balfour and Alice Pappas, "Kosovo's Local Elections and the Way Ahead", in *EUISS Alerts*, No. 41 (December 2013), p. 1, <https://www.iss.europa.eu/node/894>.

³¹ Council of the European Union, *First Accession Conference with Serbia*, Brussels, 21 January 2014, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5486-2014-INIT/en/pdf>.

Jean-Claude Juncker, in a speech before the European Parliament not long after the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis (14 July 2014)³² – led Belgrade and Pristina to reconsider their commitments to Brussels. German Chancellor Angela Merkel prevented the Kosovo–Serbia talks from derailing by launching a new initiative of cooperation centred on connectivity, the so-called Berlin Process, in the summer of 2014.³³ Established soon after Juncker’s declaration on the suspension of EU enlargement, the Berlin Process involved a restricted number of member states (Austria, Croatia, France, Germany, Italy, Slovenia and the UK), the Western Balkans countries interested in joining the EU (including Kosovo and Serbia) and EU representatives. Its main objective was to complement and provide new impetus to the European integration of the Western Balkans. Several initiatives were launched within this framework to address the lack of development in the region’s transport infrastructure, foster integration of the region’s electric markets, improve neighbourly relations and regional cooperation, and bolster the growth of civil society and people-to-people connectivity. Indeed, this initiative demonstrated that the EU, thanks to Germany’s initiative, remained a relevant actor in the region.³⁴ Later, the new HR, Federica Mogherini, also personally committed herself to the negotiations between the two countries, which resulted in the stipulation of four additional agreements in August 2015.³⁵ Still, the negative implications of Brussels’ choice to take the incentive of enlargement off the table were accentuated by the eurozone and migration crises that the EU was undergoing and the resultant decrease of its attractiveness for the Western Balkans.

All of which created a series of entry points for Russia, which became increasingly active in pursuing three main objectives: first, preventing further enlargement of both the EU and NATO in the Western Balkan region; second, diverting attention from the Kremlin’s military moves in the Sea of Azov and Eastern Ukraine, as well from its activities in Georgia’s breakaway provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (which Russia recognises as independent countries) and its meddling in Armenian politics;³⁶ and third, amplifying the popularity of Putin’s leadership in Russia in the light of the March 2018 presidential elections by devising a muscular, although more expensive and riskier, foreign policy. Notably, this approach also reflects a qualifying characteristic of Putin’s regime – namely, the attempt to obtain popular legitimacy through foreign-policy achievements rather than via

³² “Juncker to Halt Enlargement as EU Commission Head”, in *EUbusiness*, 15 July 2014, <https://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/politics-juncker.x29>.

³³ “Merkel to Organise Western Balkans Conference in August”, in *EURACTIV*, 13 June 2014, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/merkel-to-organise-western-balkans-conference-in-august>.

³⁴ Florent Marciacq, *The EU and the Western Balkans after the Berlin Process. Reflecting on the EU Enlargement in Times of Uncertainty*, Sarajevo, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Dialogue Southeast Europe, 2017, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/sarajevo/13948.pdf>.

³⁵ Maria Giulia Amadio Viceré, *The High Representative and EU Foreign Policy Integration. A Comparative Study of Kosovo and Ukraine*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

³⁶ Paul Stronski and Anni Himes, “Russia’s Game in the Balkans”, in *Carnegie Papers*, 6 February 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/publications/78235>.

domestic economic and political accomplishments.³⁷ Over time, Russia pursued such objectives by fuelling political and social tensions both between and within Kosovo and Serbia. In practice, Moscow exploited Belgrade's need for gas imports, vocally backed its non-recognition of Kosovo³⁸ and supported pro-Russian propaganda in the Serbian media.³⁹ Serbia soon began to lurch between the EU and Russia, as attested by its refusal to follow EU sanctions against Russia in 2014 after the annexation of Crimea and its purchases of Russian military aircraft in 2017.⁴⁰ In addition, Serbia initiated talks over a free-trade agreement with the Moscow-led Eurasian Economic Union. The status of EU candidate country does not prevent Serbia from signing free-trade agreements, as they will become invalid once it joins the EU.⁴¹ Nonetheless, Belgrade's decision to increase trade with Moscow soon after refusing to impose sanctions against it alongside EU member states and other candidate countries raises questions about the genuineness of Serbia's desire to pursue EU membership. Certainly, Russia's opposition to Kosovo's statehood severely limited its influence on Pristina. However, Kosovo's increasing disillusionment with the EU's enlargement policy, its political instability and its difficulties in exerting control in the Serb-inhabited northern region made Russia's attempts to foster political polarisation in the country, especially through information warfare,⁴² increasingly effective.⁴³

Meanwhile, the June 2016 EU Global Strategy (EUGS), which stressed the relevance of the Western Balkans for Europe's security and called for an improvement in the region's resilience,⁴⁴ put forth a series of initiatives aimed at reacting to Russia's activities. A unit tasked with countering Russian propaganda in the Western Balkans, the StratCom Western-Balkans Task Force, was created in 2017 by the European External Action Service within the European Strategic Communication Task Force. By working in close cooperation with StratCom East, the unit established in 2015 to counter Russian disinformation activities in the Union's eastern neighbourhood after the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis, the Western Balkans task force monitors

³⁷ Stanislav Secieru, "The Real and Hidden Costs of Russia's Foreign Policy", in *EUISS Briefs*, No. 2/2018 (February 2018), <https://www.iss.europa.eu/node/2208>.

³⁸ European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), *European Foreign Policy Scorecard 2015*, London, ECFR, January 2015, <https://www.ecfr.eu/scorecard/2015>.

³⁹ Martin Russell, "Russia in the Western Balkans", in *EPRS At a Glance*, July 2017, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_ATA\(2017\)608627](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_ATA(2017)608627).

⁴⁰ Dusan Stojanovic, "Russia Starts Delivery of MiG-29 Fighter Jets to Serbia", in *AP News*, 2 October 2017, <https://www.apnews.com/c5dc67500bc44b509f8524afbc944704>.

⁴¹ Julija Simić, "Serbia and Eurasian Union Remove Last Obstacle to Free Trade Deal", in *EURACTIV*, 14 March 2019, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/serbia-and-eurasian-union-remove-last-obstacle-to-free-trade-deal>.

⁴² Faith Bailey, "Russian Fake News about Kosovo on the Rise, Report States", in *Prishtina Insight*, 3 November 2017, <https://prishtinainsight.com/?p=9594>.

⁴³ Donika Emini and Isidora Stakić, "Belgrade and Pristina: Lost in Normalisation?", in *EUISS Briefs*, No. 5/2018 (April 2018), <https://www.iss.europa.eu/node/2237>.

⁴⁴ European External Action Service (EEAS), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, June 2016, <https://europa.eu/!Tr66qx>.

disinformation cases originating from pro-Kremlin media and misperceptions about EU values and its commitments in the region. Through the diffusion of fact-based narratives and rapid rebuttals of fake news via traditional and social media, it counters pro-Kremlin information campaigns in the Western Balkans. Furthermore, it seeks to increase general public awareness about the Kremlin's disinformation activities in this region by publishing analytical articles and by recommending reliable studies and reports on pro-Russian disinformation on a dedicated website.⁴⁵ Along the same lines, the European Commission launched new projects aimed at fostering media literacy and professional reporting on the EU in Serbia, as well as training and support activities for independent, investigative and impartial media in Kosovo.⁴⁶ By exporting the EU *acquis* and through existing financing instruments, Brussels also invested in the development of Kosovo and Serbia's energy sectors to enhance their resilience vis-à-vis Russia.⁴⁷ However, the amount of resources that the EU devoted to countering Russian disinformation in South-eastern Europe was limited compared with Moscow's investments,⁴⁸ and the Kremlin continued to maintain its grip on the Serbian energy sector.⁴⁹ In addition, the EU's "enlargement fatigue" hindered the post-EUGS approach to Kosovo and Serbia. Coupled with Russia's support for Serbia, the inevitable decrease of EU conditionality in the region provided fertile ground for an increase of Moscow's influence in Serbian politics and for renewed assertiveness in Belgrade's policies towards Kosovo.⁵⁰

In principle, the relaunch of the process of enlargement towards the Western Balkans could be a game-changer for the EU-facilitated dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo, and hence diminish Russia's strength in the region. The Commission's Strategy for the Balkans, launched in February 2018, expressly defined EU enlargement policy as "an investment in the EU's security, economic growth and influence".⁵¹ In particular, the Commission declared that Serbia could potentially be ready for admission by 2025, provided that by that date Belgrade has solved disputes with its neighbours. Kosovo, in turn, could progress towards joining the

⁴⁵ See EUvsDisinfo, "Old Disinformation Finds Fresh Ground in Serbia, Targets the EU", in *News and Analysis*, 8 August 2018, <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/?p=87301>.

⁴⁶ European Commission, *Third EU-Western Balkans Media Days: EU Reaffirms Comprehensive Support to Media Freedom in the Region*, 13 September 2018, https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-19-5564_en.htm.

⁴⁷ Zoran Nechev and Aleksandrs Svilans, "Western Balkans: More Resilience for the Energy Sector", in *EUISS Briefs*, No. 19/2017 (June 2017), <https://www.iss.europa.eu/node/1802>.

⁴⁸ Marina Maksimovic, "EU Officials Warn of 'Underestimating' Russian Propaganda in Balkans", in *Deutsche Welle*, 14 November 2017, <https://p.dw.com/p/2naUW>.

⁴⁹ Michael Birnbaum, "Russia's Low-Cost Influence Strategy Finds Success in Serbia", in *The Washington Post*, 3 October 2018, <https://wapo.st/2RoslQD>.

⁵⁰ Una Hajdari and Michael Colborne, "There's One Country in Europe Where Putin Is a Rock Star", in *Foreign Policy*, 25 January 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/01/25/theres-one-country-in-europe-where-putin-is-a-rock-star-russia-serbia-vucic-belgrade-kosovo>.

⁵¹ European Commission, *A Credible Enlargement Perspective for and Enhanced EU Engagement with the Western Balkans* (COM/2018/65), 6 February 2018, p. 1, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0065>.

EU “once objective circumstances” allowed. In this context, the Commission linked a plausible enlargement perspective for the Western Balkan countries to “credible efforts and reforms” in strengthening the rule-of-law sector, in bolstering the region’s economies and in solving bilateral issues. Furthermore, in what appeared to be an effort to contain the potential diffusion of pro-Russian sentiments among the region’s political elites, the Commission highlighted the fact that there should be no “ambiguity by leaders about where the Western Balkans belong and the direction in which they are heading”.⁵² Indeed, EU member states publicly committed to supporting the Western Balkans’ integration into the Union at the May 2018 Sofia Summit.⁵³ Nevertheless, a series of factors continues to hamper the credibility of the EU enlargement policy, and thus of the promises made to Serbia and Kosovo.

Although Serbia was included among the countries that might gain access to the EU in the near future, accession will be impossible until it normalises relations with Kosovo. A Serbian proposal – supported by the US – for ethnic-based land swaps raised expectations that a breakthrough was in sight in mid-2018. Yet the plan was criticised by Austria, Germany, Luxembourg and the UK, who feared that this could lead to similar requests for ethnic-based border changes in Bosnia, North Macedonia and Montenegro.⁵⁴ The land-swap proposal also faced opposition within Kosovo – spearheaded by the Self-Determination Party, which refused to contemplate any bargaining of Kosovo’s territory.⁵⁵ Given Serbia’s unwillingness to give up its special relationship with Russia,⁵⁶ the Baltic states, Poland and Sweden, which feel exposed to Russian ambition to assert control in the Baltic area, are likely to oppose Serbia’s accession to the EU. The refusal of Spain and others to recognise the independence of Kosovo has been recently reinvigorated by the need for Madrid to contain tensions with separatist movements in Catalonia. Furthermore, the rather non-collaborative approach of the Visegrad Group countries – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia – in a series of EU policy dossiers, especially migration, raises the question of whether the benefits of further enlarging the EU would effectively outweigh the risks. Finally, as Greece, Italy and – to some extent – Portugal still struggle to recover from the economic crisis, they might veto Kosovo’s and Serbia’s entry into the EU for domestic reasons. It is worth noting that Eurosceptic, anti-mainstream parties such as Alternative for Germany have begun to point to the Western Balkans’ poor socio-economic

⁵² Ibid, p. 3.

⁵³ European Council, *Sofia Declaration of the EU-Western Balkans Summit*, 17 May 2018, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/34776/sofia-declaration_en.pdf.

⁵⁴ Philipp Jenne and Lorne Cook, “Germany, Some EU Partners Oppose Serbia-Kosovo Land Swap”, in *AP News*, 31 August 2018, <https://www.apnews.com/31f016959d0543fa8a43dbe17dbd0850>.

⁵⁵ “Thousands Protest in Kosovo over Possible Serbia Land Swap”, in *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 29 September 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/protest-in-kosovo-over-possible-land-swap-with-serbia/29516478.html>.

⁵⁶ Gordana Filipovic and Misha Savic, “EU Membership Won’t Change Serbian-Russian Ties, Vucic Says”, in *Bloomberg*, 21 February 2018.

conditions as reason to block a new wave of enlargement.⁵⁷

Against this backdrop, Moscow's strategies of increasing its influence in Serbia and Kosovo have developed along three main lines. First, fact-checking reports show that, through various media channels, Russia supports a narrative in the Western Balkans that presents Moscow as a closer ally than the EU and the US,⁵⁸ while portraying the dispute between Belgrade and Pristina as a religious war between Orthodox Christians and Muslims.⁵⁹ Sputnik Serbia, in particular, is the main source of pro-Kremlin disinformation campaigns among Serbian-language foreign media in the region, including in Kosovo. While the Kremlin uses news portals and social media, its penetration among local broadcasters and popular radio stations is also extremely high.⁶⁰ In particular, Moscow's main narrative revolves around President Putin's strong support for Serbia.⁶¹ Second, ever since the 2008 global financial crisis Russia has used its economic leverage – mostly consisting of its energy companies and business elites' investments – to entrench its presence in Serbia.⁶² Russia currently exerts strategic control in key sectors of the Serbian economy, such as energy and banking.⁶³ Furthermore, the construction of a TurkStream pipeline section in Serbia for the transit of Russian natural gas to Europe is likely to increase the Kremlin's influence in Belgrade's energy sector, and in the Western Balkan region at large.⁶⁴ Clearly, Moscow is seeking to bring multipolarity back in the Western Balkans,⁶⁵ in clear opposition to the multilateral order pursued by the EU. In essence, the Kremlin is trying to turn itself into a veto player in the region's stability, particularly in the Kosovo–Serbia dispute,⁶⁶ to score points against the West.⁶⁷ Putin's meeting with the President of Kosovo, Hashim

⁵⁷ "AfD Demands a Referendum Before Further EU Enlargement", in *European Western Balkans*, 11 October 2018, <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/?p=28258>.

⁵⁸ EUvsDisinfo, "Disinformation Analysis on the Western Balkans: Lack of Sources Indicates Potential Disinformation", in *News and Analysis*, 3 August 2018, <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/?p=87279>.

⁵⁹ Ebi Spahiu, "Russia Expands Its Subversive Involvement in Western Balkans", in *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 14, No. 5 (23 January 2017), <https://jamestown.org/?p=75866>.

⁶⁰ Margarita Assenova, "Russia's International Broadcasters: Turning the Serbian Media into a Disinformation Hub", in *Polygraph.info*, 4 May 2019, <https://www.polygraph.info/a/russia-s-international-media-serbian-disinformation-hub/29919939.html>.

⁶¹ EUvsDisinfo, "700 False News Stories in Serbian Tabloids in 2018", in *News and Analysis*, 18 January 2019, <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/?p=89589>.

⁶² Dimitar Bechev, *Rival Power: Russia's influence in Southeast Europe*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2017.

⁶³ Martin Vladimirov et al., *Russian Economic Footprint in the Western Balkans. Corruption and State Capture Risks*, Sofia, Center for the Study of Democracy, 2018, <https://csd.bg/publications/publication/russian-economic-footprint-in-the-western-balkans-corruption-and-state-capture-risks>.

⁶⁴ Dimitar Bechev, "Russia's Pipe Dreams Are Europe's Nightmare", in *Foreign Policy*, 12 March 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/03/12/russia-turkstream-oil-pipeline>.

⁶⁵ Stanislav Secrieru, "Russia in the Western Balkans", in *EUISS Briefs*, No. 8/2019 (July 2019), <https://www.iss.europa.eu/node/2348>.

⁶⁶ Dimitar Bechev, "The Kosovo Quandary Is a Win for Russia", in *Al Jazeera*, 18 November 2018, <http://aje.io/yfgmw>.

⁶⁷ Andrey Makarychev, *Russia and the EU in a Multipolar World. Discourses, Identities, Norms*,

Thaçi, in November 2018, notwithstanding Moscow's persistent refusal to recognise the country's statehood, reflects Russia's plan to gain influence with all parties.⁶⁸ Against this background, the suspicion that the Serbian–Russian Humanitarian Centre in Niš might be performing intelligence activities in the country on behalf of the Kremlin – also fuelled by Moscow's (failed) attempts to obtain diplomatic status for the Russian staff working there – is a source of tension between Belgrade and Brussels.⁶⁹

Certainly, Russia has neither replaced the EU's influence in the Western Balkans nor taken on the Union's mediating role in the Kosovo–Serbia dispute. EU membership is still associated with economic prosperity and freedom of movement in the Western Balkans. Support for the Union has grown steadily between 2016 and 2019, although Serbia is the country most concerned about the potential implications of EU accession over its national sovereignty.⁷⁰ EU institutions have increased initiatives and resources allocated to counter Russia's disinformation,⁷¹ and have recently reaffirmed support for media freedom in the Western Balkans.⁷² In addition, Kosovo and Serbia still trade mostly with EU member states.⁷³ While the EU has continued to increase its influence in the Western Balkans' energy sector through financing instruments, it has also launched initiatives aimed at creating a single energy market – and hence, at indirectly undermining activities by Russian state-run companies in these countries.⁷⁴

Still, the aforementioned enlargement fatigue demonstrates that the Union's general approach to the Western Balkans is hardly sustainable. The current state of the EU-facilitated dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo, especially, suggests that the EU lacks a long-term political strategy for this region.⁷⁵ As a matter of fact, this specific policy dossier raises questions about whether these countries should obtain a privileged relationship with the Union short of membership. One reasonable solution to address EU inconsistencies and stalemates could be the

Stuttgart, ibidem-Verlag, 2014.

⁶⁸ Ivan Krastev, "Putin's Next Playground or the E.U.'s Last Moral Stand?", in *The New York Times*, 28 January 2019, <https://nyti.ms/2HxrrAl>.

⁶⁹ Vanja Dolapčev, "The Bear Never Sleeps: The Position of the Serbian-Russian Humanitarian Centre in Niš", in *European Western Balkans*, 24 December 2018, <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/?p=29094>.

⁷⁰ Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), *Balkan Barometer 2019. Public Opinion Analytical Report*, Sarajevo, RCC, 2019, <https://www.rcc.int/pubs/89/balkan-barometer-2019-public-opinion-survey>.

⁷¹ European Commission, Action Plan Against Disinformation. Report on Progress, June 2019, <https://doi.org/10.2775/18729>.

⁷² EEAS, *Third EU-Western Balkans Media Days: EU Reaffirms Comprehensive Support to Media Freedom in the Region*, Tirana, 13 September 2019, <https://europa.eu/!MP99Rq>.

⁷³ Marek Dabrowski and Yana Myachenkova, "The (Economic) Ties That Bind: The Western Balkans and the EU", in *Bruegel Blog*, 14 March 2018, <https://bruegel.org/2018/03/the-economic-ties-that-bind-the-western-balkans-and-the-eu>.

⁷⁴ Zoran Nechev and Aleksandrs Svilans, "Western Balkans: More Resilience for the Energy Sector", cit.

⁷⁵ Judy Dempsey, "Europe Puts the Western Balkans on Hold", in *Strategic Europe*, 2 May 2019, <https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/79043>.

launch of a new policy framework modelled around the European Neighbourhood policy's functioning. To avoid any ambiguity, this new policy framework should exclude any possibility of EU admission for the countries involved in it. In this way, the Union could consolidate and establish new arrangements for its policy coordination with the Western Balkans while avoiding the enlargement trap that is hindering its current approach. In particular, such arrangements should be directed at countering the economic and social weakness of Serbia and Kosovo, which are making them vulnerable to the Kremlin's activities. After all, devising a more strategic approach to overcome stalemates is not unprecedented in EU foreign policy. Suffice it to say that the differentiation between the Union's enlargement policy and the neighbourhood policy itself has derived from the EU's adoption of differentiated arrangements in relation to its immediate environs according to functional, historical and geographical criteria.

Conclusion

Following the end of the Cold War, there was a widespread opinion that the demise of the Soviet Union signalled the conclusion of East–West competition in international politics. The 1998–9 Kosovo crisis tested this new order between the West and Russia. Initially, Russia tried to maintain some influence over the unfolding of this conflict while adopting a pragmatic, cooperative approach with the West. This was to no avail, as eventually NATO determined that a military intervention against Serbia/Yugoslavia – which Russia vehemently opposed – was the only viable solution to the crisis. Economically and militarily weak, Russia could only sit by as NATO's bombing campaign forced Serbian forces out of Kosovo and gave the province de facto autonomy within Yugoslavia. In the post-conflict period, the EU took on the role of main player in the region based on its political and economic support and promise that all Western Balkan countries would one day join the Union. In the post-Lisbon Treaty era, EU-brokered negotiations also seemed to have finally soothed tensions between Pristina and Belgrade. Yet, in recent years multiple crises have diminished the Union's attractiveness, and divisions between member states have brought into question the credibility of the enlargement process. All this was grist to the mill of Russia, which put forth a series of initiatives aimed at exploiting the weaknesses of the EU's approach to the Kosovo–Serbia dispute – especially following the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis.

At first sight, therefore, Mearsheimer's predictions appear to have been vindicated. Nevertheless, as reflected by the initiatives put forth in the framework of the implementation of the EU Global Strategy – such as the establishment of the StratCom Western Balkans Task Force – Russia's moves have not gone unchallenged in Brussels. While the EU has devoted relatively limited resources to counter Russian activities in the region in the past, new initiatives are being launched and more funds are being allocated to temper Moscow's disinformation activities and its grip on the region's energy sector. Furthermore, despite the multiple crises faced by the EU over the past few years and the temporary halt to the enlargement

process, Western Balkans' citizens still largely support EU membership. A lack of credibility in the Union's enlargement process remains, however, the Achille's heels of the EU's foreign policy towards the region. At a time when the Union is still slowly recovering from the implications of its responses – or lack thereof – to the security predicaments occurring both within and outside its borders, Brexit is still unfolding and nationalist forces are still relatively strong across Europe, reinventing its approach to its eastern neighbourhood is no easy task for the EU. Yet, as the future is striking back it is essential for the Union to adapt to it.

Updated 10 October 2019

References

Maria Giulia Amadio Viceré, *The High Representative and EU Foreign Policy Integration. A Comparative Study of Kosovo and Ukraine*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018

Oksana Antonenko, "Russia and the Deadlock over Kosovo", in *Russie.Nei.Visions*, No. 21 (July 2007), <https://www.ifri.org/en/node/3464>

Margarita Assenova, "Russia's International Broadcasters: Turning the Serbian Media into a Disinformation Hub", in *Polygraph.info*, 4 May 2019, <https://www.polygraph.info/a/russia-s-international-media-serbian-disinformation-hub/29919939.html>

Faith Bailey, "Russian Fake News about Kosovo on the Rise, Report States", in *Prishtina Insight*, 3 November 2017, <https://prishtinainsight.com/?p=9594>

Rosa Balfour and Alice Pappas, "Kosovo's Local Elections and the Way Ahead", in *EUISS Alerts*, No. 41 (December 2013), <https://www.iss.europa.eu/node/894>

Dimitar Bechev, "The Kosovo Quandary Is a Win for Russia", in *Al Jazeera*, 18 November 2018, <http://aje.io/yfgmw>

Dimitar Bechev, *Rival Power: Russia's influence in Southeast Europe*, New Heaven, Yale University Press, 2017

Dimitar Bechev, "Russia's Pipe Dreams Are Europe's Nightmare", in *Foreign Policy*, 12 March 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/03/12/russia-turkstream-oil-pipeline>

Michael Birnbaum, "Russia's Low-Cost Influence Strategy Finds Success in Serbia", in *The Washington Post*, 3 October 2018, <https://wapo.st/2RoslQD>

Enver Bytyçi, *Coercive Diplomacy of NATO in Kosovo*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015

Ted Galen Carpenter, "How Kosovo Poisoned America's Relationship with Russia", in *The National Interest*, 19 May 2017, <https://nationalinterest.org/node/12585>

Council of the European Union, *2851st Council meeting General Affairs and External Relations External Relations*, Brussels, 18 February 2008, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6496-2008-INIT/en/pdf>

Council of the European Union, *First Accession Conference with Serbia*, Brussels, 21 January 2014, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5486-2014-INIT/en/pdf>

Sharyl Cross, "Russia and NATO Toward the Twenty-first Century: Conflicts and Peacekeeping in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo", in *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2002), p. 1-58

Marek Dabrowski and Yana Myachenkova, "The (Economic) Ties That Bind: The Western Balkans and the EU", in *Bruegel Blog*, 14 March 2018, <https://bruegel.org/2018/03/the-economic-ties-that-bind-the-western-balkans-and-the-eu>

Judy Dempsey, "Europe Puts the Western Balkans on Hold", in *Strategic Europe*, 2 May 2019, <https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/79043>

Vanja Dolapčev, "The Bear Never Sleeps: The Position of the Serbian-Russian Humanitarian Centre in Niš", in *European Western Balkans*, 24 December 2018, <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/?p=29094>

Donika Emini and Isidora Stakić, "Belgrade and Pristina: Lost in Normalisation?", in *EUISS Briefs*, No. 5/2018 (April 2018), <https://www.iss.europa.eu/node/2237>

European Commission, *Action Plan Against Disinformation. Report on Progress*, June 2019, <https://doi.org/10.2775/18729>

European Commission, *A Credible Enlargement Perspective for and Enhanced EU Engagement with the Western Balkans* (COM/2018/65), 6 February 2018, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0065>

European Commission, *Kosovo 2013 Progress Report* (SWD/2013/0416), 16 October 2013, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52013SC0416>

European Commission, *On the Commission Proposals for Action Plans Under the European Neighbourhood Policy* (ENP) (2004/COM/795), 9 December 2004, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52004DC0795>

European Commission, *Third EU-Western Balkans Media Days: EU Reaffirms Comprehensive Support to Media Freedom in the Region*, 13 September 2018, https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-19-5564_en.htm

European Council, *Conclusions*, Brussels, 27-28 June 2013, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-104-2013-REV-2/en/pdf>

European Council, *EU Western Balkan Summit*, Thessaloniki, 21 June 2003, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_PRES-03-163_en.htm

European Council, *Presidency Conclusions*, Brussels, 14-15 December 2006, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-16879-2006-REV-1/en/pdf>

European Council, *Sofia Declaration of the EU-Western Balkans Summit*, 17 May 2018, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/34776/sofia-declaration_en.pdf

European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), *European Foreign Policy Scorecard 2015*, London, ECFR, January 2015, <https://www.ecfr.eu/scorecard/2015>

European External Action Service (EEAS), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, June 2016, <https://europa.eu/!Tr66qx>

European External Action Service (EEAS), *Third EU-Western Balkans Media Days: EU Reaffirms Comprehensive Support to Media Freedom in the Region*, Tirana, 13 September 2019, <https://europa.eu/!MP99Rq>

EUvsDisinfo, "700 False News Stories in Serbian Tabloids in 2018", in *News and Analysis*, 18 January 2019, <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/?p=89589>

EUvsDisinfo, "Disinformation Analysis on the Western Balkans: Lack of Sources Indicates Potential Disinformation", in *News and Analysis*, 3 August 2018, <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/?p=87279>

EUvsDisinfo, "Old Disinformation Finds Fresh Ground in Serbia, Targets the EU", in *News and Analysis*, 8 August 2018, <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/?p=87301>

Gordana Filipovic and Misha Savic, "EU Membership Won't Change Serbian-Russian Ties, Vucic Says", in *Bloomberg*, 21 February 2018

Giovanni Grevi, "EULEX Kosovo", in Giovanni Grevi, Damien Helly and Daniel Keohane (eds), *European Security and Defence Policy: The First 10 Years (1999-2009)*, Paris, EU Institute for Security Studies, 2009, p. 353-368, <https://www.iss.europa.eu/node/611>

Una Hajdari and Michael Colborne, "There's One Country in Europe Where Putin Is a Rock Star", in *Foreign Policy*, 25 January 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/01/25/theres-one-country-in-europe-where-putin-is-a-rock-star-russia-serbia-vucic-belgrade-kosovo>

Eric Herring, "From Rambouillet to the Kosovo Accords: NATO'S War against Serbia and Its Aftermath", in *The International Journal of Human Rights*, Vol. 4, No. 3-4 (2007), p. 224-245

Human Rights Watch (HRW), *Kosovo/Albania: Investigate Postwar Abductions, Transfers to Albania*, 4 May 2008, <https://www.hrw.org/node/233911>

Philipp Jenne and Lorne Cook, "Germany, Some EU Partners Oppose Serbia-Kosovo Land Swap", in *AP News*, 31 August 2018, <https://www.apnews.com/31f016959d0543fa8a43dbe17dbd0850>

Michael Karnitschnig, "The United Nations and the European Union in Kosovo: The Challenges of Joint Nation-Building", in Jan Wouters, Frank Hoffmeister and Tom Ruys (eds), *The United Nations and the European Union: An Ever Stronger Partnership*, The Hague, T.M.C. Asser Press, 2006, p. 323-351

Ivan Krastev, "Putin's Next Playground or the E.U.'s Last Moral Stand?", in *The New York Times*, 28 January 2019, <https://nyti.ms/2HxrrAl>

Andrey Makarychev, *Russia and the EU in a Multipolar World. Discourses, Identities, Norms*, Stuttgart, ibidem-Verlag, 2014

Marina Maksimovic, "EU Officials Warn of 'Underestimating' Russian Propaganda in Balkans", in *Deutsche Welle*, 14 November 2017, <https://p.dw.com/p/2naUW>

Florent Marciacq, *The EU and the Western Balkans after the Berlin Process. Reflecting on the EU Enlargement in Times of Uncertainty*, Sarajevo, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Dialogue Southeast Europe, 2017, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/sarajevo/13948.pdf>

John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future. Instability in Europe after the Cold War", in *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Summer 1990), p. 5-56

Zoran Nechev and Aleksandrs Svilans, "Western Balkans: More Resilience for the Energy Sector", *EUISS Briefs*, No. 19/2017 (June 2017), <https://www.iss.europa.eu/node/1802>

Branislav Radeljić, "Russia and Serbia: Between Brotherhood and Self-Serving Agendas", in *Russian Analytical Digest*, No. 226 (6 December 2018), p. 6-8, <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-b-000301365>

Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), *Balkan Barometer 2019. Public Opinion Analytical Report*, Sarajevo, RCC, 2019, <https://www.rcc.int/pubs/89/balkan-barometer-2019-public-opinion-survey>

Olli Rehn, *Europe's Next Frontiers*, Luncheon lecture at the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Brussels, 10 October 2006, https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-06-580_en.htm

Albert Rohan, "Kosovo's Path to Independence", in *ECFR Commentaries*, 2 February 2018, https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_kosovos_path_to_independence

Martin Russell, "Russia in the Western Balkans", in *EPRS At a Glance*, July 2017, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_ATA\(2017\)608627](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_ATA(2017)608627)

Stanislav Secieru, "The Real and Hidden Costs of Russia's Foreign Policy", in *EUISS Briefs*, No. 2/2018 (February 2018), <https://www.iss.europa.eu/node/2208>

Stanislav Secieru, "Russia in the Western Balkans", in *EUISS Briefs*, No. 8/2019 (July 2019), <https://www.iss.europa.eu/node/2348>

Alistair J. K. Shepherd, "'A Milestone in the History of the EU': Kosovo and the EU's International Role", in *International Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 3 (May 2009), p. 513-530

Julija Simić, "Serbia and Eurasian Union Remove Last Obstacle to Free Trade Deal", in *EURACTIV*, 14 March 2019, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/serbia-and-eurasian-union-remove-last-obstacle-to-free-trade-deal>

Piotr Smolar, "Serbia and Kosovo Sign Historic Agreement", in *The Guardian*, 30 April 2013, <https://gu.com/p/3fdzb>

Ebi Spahiu, "Russia Expands Its Subversive Involvement in Western Balkans", in *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 14, No. 5 (23 January 2017), <https://jamestown.org/?p=75866>

Dusan Stojanovic, "Russia Starts Delivery of MiG-29 Fighter Jets to Serbia", in *AP News*, 2 October 2017, <https://www.apnews.com/c5dc67500bc44b509f8524afbc944704>

Paul Stronski and Anni Himes, "Russia's Game in the Balkans", in *Carnegie Papers*, 6 February 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/publications/78235>

UN Security Council, *Security Council Rejects Demand for Cessation of Use of Force Against Federal Republic of Yugoslavia*, 26 March 1999, <https://www.un.org/press/en/1999/19990326.sc6659.html>

Milada Anna Vachudova, "EU Leverage and National Interests in the Balkans: The Puzzles of Enlargement Ten Years On", in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (January 2014), p. 122-138

Justin Vaïsse and Dennison Susi, *European Foreign Policy Scorecard 2013*, London, European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), January 2013, https://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR73_SCORECARD_2013_AW.pdf

Martin Vladimirov et al., *Russian Economic Footprint in the Western Balkans. Corruption and State Capture Risks*, Sofia, Center for the Study of Democracy, 2018, <https://csd.bg/publications/publication/russian-economic-footprint-in-the-western-balkans-corruption-and-state-capture-risks>

Erik Yesson, "NATO and Russia in Kosovo", in *The RUSI Journal*, Vol. 144, No. 4 (1999), p. 20-26

Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)

The Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) is a private, independent non-profit think tank, founded in 1965 on the initiative of Altiero Spinelli. IAI seeks to promote awareness of international politics and to contribute to the advancement of European integration and multilateral cooperation. Its focus embraces topics of strategic relevance such as European integration, security and defence, international economics and global governance, energy, climate and Italian foreign policy; as well as the dynamics of cooperation and conflict in key geographical regions such as the Mediterranean and Middle East, Asia, Eurasia, Africa and the Americas. IAI publishes an English-language quarterly (*The International Spectator*), an online webzine (*Affarinternazionali*), three book series (*Global Politics and Security*, *Quaderni IAI* and *IAI Research Studies*) and some papers' series related to IAI research projects (*Documenti IAI*, *IAI Papers*, etc.).

Via Angelo Brunetti, 9 - I-00186 Rome, Italy

T +39 06 3224360

F + 39 06 3224363

iai@iai.it

www.iai.it

Latest IAI PAPERS

Director: Riccardo Alcaro (r.alcaro@iai.it)

- 19 | 19 Maria Giulia Amadio Viceré, *The Future Is Back: The EU, Russia and the Kosovo–Serbia Dispute*
- 19 | 18 Claire Darmé, *Pros and Cons of Proactive Political Leadership: A Review of the Legacy of the “Last Chance” Commission*
- 19 | 17 Jason Pack, *It’s the Economy Stupid: How Libya’s Civil War Is Rooted in Its Economic Structures*
- 19 | 16 Lorenzo Mariani with Micol Bertolini, *The US–China 5G Contest: Options for Europe*
- 19 | 15 Aysel Küçüküksu, *The Budgetary Future of Migration and Development Policy in the European Union*
- 19 | 14 Riccardo Alcaro and Andrea Dessì, *A Last Line of Defence: A Strategy for Europe to Preserve the Iran Nuclear Deal*
- 19 | 13 Nicola Bilotta and Simone Romano, *Tech Giants in Banking: The Implications of a New Market Power*
- 19 | 12 Alberto Tagliapietra, *The European Migration Crisis: A Pendulum between the Internal and External Dimensions*
- 19 | 11 Luciano Zaccara, *Iran and the Intra-GCC Crisis: Risks and Opportunities*
- 19 | 10 Ferdinando Nelli Feroci, *The “Yellow-Green” Government’s Foreign Policy*