

# The Ambivalent Role of the EU in the Western Balkans.

“Limited Europeanization” –  
between Formal Promises and Practical Constraints.  
The Case of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

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## Abstract

It became a shared opinion among European policy-makers to state that without a serious commitment from the European Union (EU), the Western Balkans (WB) will find itself increasingly isolated from the unfolding developments around it and this may endanger the stability of the entire continent. The scope of this paper is two folded: first, to examine the role of the EU in the WB with a focus on democratic institution-building; second, taking Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) as a case study, the article aims to determine whether there is a need for a new theoretical framework in order to more accurately define the specific process of the Europeanization in the WB. In this regard it proposes the term “limited Europeanization”. The main theoretical aim of the article is to identify some clear-cut criteria of this phenomenon in the last 14-year evolution of BiH in relation with the EU.

**Keywords:** Bosnia and Herzegovina, democratization, Europeanization, institution building, Western Balkans.

## Introduction

It became a shared opinion among European policy-makers to state that without a serious commitment from the European Union (EU), the Western Balkans (WB)<sup>3</sup> will find itself increasingly isolated from the unfolding developments around it and this may endanger the stability of the entire continent. Besides that, it became also clear in the late years that there is a stark contrast between stated goals and their actual implementation coming both from EU and WB countries in particular. The coherence of the EU approach to the WB became therefore one of the most

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<sup>3</sup> By Western Balkans we refer to all the ex-Yugoslav countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo under UNCH 1244), plus Albania, minus Slovenia.

challenging subjects inside European studies<sup>4</sup>. Even though the involvement of EU in democracy building is crucial for the region, studying its overall approach and its results one may observe an ambivalent role: both positive and negative, both helpful and confusing.

In this context, based also on the idea that “Europeanization looks different when seen from Brussels and from the countries at the receiving end”<sup>5</sup>, the article tries to define the emergence of a new concept in order to incorporate the so-called “Balkan Exceptionalism” paradigm into the actual trends of Europeanization. So first the article provides a short literature review of the main definitions and understandings of the intricate political phenomena called Europeanization.

The second part of the article will have a more analytical dimension, first describing the main stages that BiH has been going through in its relations with the EU, and then analyzing whether a “political community” (as a criterion of viable institution-building) emerged in BiH during the first phases of Europeanization (1997-2011). The period will be divided in 4 main chronological stages marked by specific actions towards democracy building in BiH. The analysis will show that all these actions were caught between formal promises and practical constraints, going through stagnation (which shall be defined as “limited Europeanization”) and not towards deepening Europeanization as it was expected by both local and international policy-makers. As long as BiH failed to create ‘citizenship’ homogeneity when ‘ethnic’ or ‘political’ heterogeneity was the case, and as long as a degree of acceptance of differences is still missing, the “Balkan Exceptionalism” paradigm could be further on employed in understanding BiH’s evolution. This particular process would be analyzed in the final part of the article where the main characteristics of this “limited Europeanization” process will be discussed.

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<sup>4</sup> See more in Milada A. Vachudová,, “Strategies for European Integration and Democratization in the Balkans”, in *Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* (Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs), 2003, I: 92 – 106; Christophe Solioz, *Turning Points in Post-War Bosnia. Ownership Process and European Integration*, Baden-Baden, 2005; Joseph Marko, "Post-conflict reconstruction through state- and nation-building: the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina", *European Diversity and Autonomy Papers - EDAP* 10 / 2005, at <http://www.eurac.edu/edap>.

<sup>5</sup> Roberto Belloni, *State Building and International Intervention in Bosnia*, Routledge, London and New York, 2007, p 3.

The main argument put forward in the concluding section is that the region WB as a whole is severely challenging the theories of Europeanization and the “goodness of fit” concept. Dealing with WB requires EU to “rethink” its concept of enlargement and its criteria of evaluation, which cannot simply be a replica of the pattern successfully implemented in Central Europe. It reveals that EU puts a lot of stress on formal criteria of development, losing out of sight the contextual elements which hinder Europeanization in the WB and the specific “limits” embedded in these countries’ late democratization. One of the main conclusions of the article is that after assessing the evolution of BiH in the last 14 years, there is a “subjective Europeanization potential” of each WB country and Europeanization theories must take this aspect seriously into account and refine their concepts and prospects and move beyond ethnic divergences and symbolic violence.

### Theoretical framework –

#### Europeanization as ‘fit’ or ‘misfit’ with EU conditionality

The study of Europeanization became very intense after year 2000, along with the rising Enlargement agenda of the EU. Since then, it represents a widely spread concept, but with no consensus regarding its precise area of applicability. Nowadays, the diversity of its meanings is analyzed not only at the practical level, but also at the theoretical one. Generally speaking, the concept is used in the following contexts: Europeanization of society, Europeanization of the political system (Europeanization of the member states’ domestic policy through Brussels’s influence, Europeanization of the Community policy through an influence coming from the state political or social units, Europeanization and multi-level governance), Europeanization as a phenomenon adjacent to the enlargement process, Europeanization and institutionalization/constitutionalization (as a model of EU political integration) etc. Therefore, Europeanization, as we have already defined it in previous studies, “regardless the orientation of the process (top-down – from the center downwards to the member states, bottom-up or bidirectional)

refers to both formal and informal establishment and dissemination of certain norms, principles, beliefs or attitudes related to the impact of the Community political system”<sup>6</sup>.

The study of EU conditionality in the context of Eastern enlargement has started to frame the analysis in terms of ‘Europeanization of candidate countries’ as a different category than Europeanization of member states. Thus, scholars in this field started to broaden the focus of Europeanization and to establish the “Europeanization of applicant states” as a separate sub-field of this broader research agenda<sup>7</sup>.

The studies that try to clarify the mechanisms of Europeanization have developed what has been called in the academic literature as the misfit model.<sup>8</sup> This model argues that the occurrence of ‘divergence’ or ‘convergence’ of the level of adaptation between different potential candidate countries is explained by the degree of compatibility between the national and European conditions. Incompatibility – ‘misfit’ – between the two levels creates adaptational pressures, which are then transmitted by mediating institutions. “The lower the compatibility (fit) between European institutions and national institutions, the higher the adaptational pressure”<sup>9</sup>. From this perspective, Europeanization deals with how domestic change is processed. The main assumption of this theoretical framework is that the patterns of adaptation can be more complex than simple reactions to ‘Brussels’. And the WB and BiH as its most difficult case provide a challenging example of this “adaptation” dilemma. The other main assumption of this theory is that Europeanization is not an end state. Recent research has embraced the notion

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<sup>6</sup> Iordan Bărbulescu, ed. , „Dictionar explicativ trilingv al Uniunii Europene”, Iași, Polirom, 2009, p 68; See also Paolo Graziano, Maarten P. Vink, (Eds.) *Europeanization: A Handbook for a New Research Agenda*, Houndmills and London, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Tanja Börzel and Thomas Risse, „Europeanization: The Domestic Impact of EU Politics”, in: Jorgensen, Knud Eric/Pollack, Mark A./Rosamund, Ben (Eds.): *Handbook of European Union Politics*, 2007, London, 483-504.

<sup>8</sup> Maria Cowles, James Caporaso and Thomas Risse, “Europeanization and Domestic Change: Introduction”, in Cowles, M. G., Caporaso, J. and Risse, T. (eds.), *Transforming Europe: Europeanization and Domestic Change* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 2001, 1-20.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, p 13

of Europeanization as an ongoing process, and this is the way the notion will be understood in this article.

Specialized literature also points out that “effective transfer of EU practices” requires more than governance architectures and institutionalization. It also requires “robust networks of stakeholders that facilitate the adoption of new policies at home, a strong civil society, and administrative political capability to consciously modify, edit, and adapt foreign experience to national circumstances.”<sup>10</sup>

In the WB the essence of Europeanization is a comprehensive process of institution building and the creation of a democratic and stable “political community” as part of the post-war reconstruction. In analyzing the Europeanization potential of BiH as it has developed in the last decade and a half the article will further apply the ‘external incentives model of governance’ type of explanation, which refers to a bargaining strategy of “reinforcement by reward”, under which the EU provides external incentives for a particular target: the government of the potential candidate country to comply with its conditions, the so-called EU conditionality<sup>11</sup>. In this case, the EU capitalizes on its authoritative / asymmetrical position vis-à-vis the WB states, who are eager to become part of or closely affiliated with the Union. In reality, the relationship between these actors aiming at sustainable Europeanization is not that clear and linear as it sounds in theory. Both EU and WB states are often caught between formal promises and practical constraints, which makes the entire process hard to predict and control.

In order to analyze the relations between EU and BiH after the end of the Bosnian War (1992-1995) the paper uses the three step model of Europeanization research as it was defined by James Caporaso<sup>12</sup>. This model starts with the observation that the European integration process delivers a substantial amount of policy output at the European Union level. Especially within the supranational

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<sup>10</sup> Christopher Knill, and D. Lehmkuhl, ‘The National Impact of European Union Regulatory Policy: Three Europeanization Mechanisms’. *European Journal of Political Research*, 2002, Vol. 41, No. 2, pp. 255–80.

<sup>11</sup> Frank Schimmelfennig, Ulrich Sedelmeier, “Candidate Countries and Conditionality”, in Paolo Graziano, Maarten P. Vink, (Eds.) *Europeanization: New Research Agendas*, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills, Basingstoke; New York, 2007, p 663.

<sup>12</sup> James A. Caporaso, ‘The Three Worlds of Regional Integration Theory’. In Paolo Graziano, and M.P. Vink, (eds) *Europeanization: New Research Agendas* (Basingstoke: Palgrave/Macmillan) 2007.

policy areas, EU output generates pressure upon the member/candidate states to respond to European policy initiatives. In a second stage, this theory says that this institutional pressure creates a degree of fit or misfit between the European and the national level. In a third step, several intervening or mediating variables shape the eventual way the domestic level adapts to the European pressure. Conditionality (based on the short-term cost/benefit calculations in which EU aspiring members respond to the material incentives offered by European institutions) and social learning (the long-term redefinition of interests and identities of domestic players) are singled out as the two main pathways of EU influence in Western Balkans<sup>13</sup>. The "goodness of fit" concept will be the theoretical 'red thread' of this analysis because it refers to the degree of compatibility between EU-level structures, norms, practices and their domestic (national and subnational) counterparts and this is exactly what we want to pinpoint in the case of BiH. The greater the differences between the different levels, the more domestic institutions or norms are put under pressure to change in order to live up to the European requirements. In short, misfit or "limited Europeanization", as we have called it, causes "differential adaptation pressure"<sup>14</sup> and 'the lower the compatibility between European and domestic processes, policies and institutions, the higher is the adaptational pressure Europe exerts on the member states'<sup>15</sup>. The longitudinal analysis divided in 4 main periods of reforms and their outcomes will provide a clear view of these premises.

BiH is undoubtedly one of the countries that are mostly burdened by issues derived from the collapse of Yugoslavia and the consequence of that is the continuous delay of development. In order to test our hypothesis we have chosen BiH as a case study because it best illustrates the paradigm of 'Balkan exceptionalism', which can be associated with the "misfit" model of explanation from the Europeanization theory previously described. We shall prove that this

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<sup>13</sup>Ibidem, p 214;

<sup>14</sup>Maria Cowles, James Caporaso and Thomas Risse, "Europeanization and Domestic Change: Introduction", in Cowles, M. G., Caporaso, J. and Risse, T. (eds.), *Transforming Europe: Europeanization and Domestic Change* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 2001, p 18.

<sup>15</sup>Tanja Börzel, Thomas Risse, "Europeanization: The Domestic Impact of EU Politics", in: Knud orgensen, Mark Pollack, Ben Rosamund, (Eds.), *Handbook of European Union Politics*, London, 483.

incompatibility may explain the delay of BiH in reaching candidate status. We shall therefore focus on the main instruments and practices used by these actors to make BiH adapt to EU regulation and democratic conditionality. A chronological perspective of the last 14 years will be employed in this regard.

## **Specific Instruments and Practices of Europeanization in BiH (1997-2011)**

The following part of analysis will focus on a general overview of the role of the EU in the WB with a focus on democratic institution-building in BiH, reviewing the main instruments and practices used by the EU to make a shift from post-war stabilization to an agenda of enlargement. In theory, the prospect of European integration provides a long-term and coherent perspective, encourages domestic ownership and institutional development, supports stability and regional cooperation, and softens nationalist identities. In practice, these changes occurred with visible discontinuities in the case of BiH and with different “symptoms” than the ones prescribed by theory. The challenge is to find out the explanation for these ups and downs of Europeanization inside this particular case study. Acknowledging the fact that we are dealing with a process consisting of complex sequences and time patterns, the main purpose of this section will be to identify the period of time when this “distortion” of Europeanization started in BiH. That is why we believe a longitudinal perspective is imperative, focusing on some of the key dates in BiH's path towards the EU, divided into 4 main stages.

### **1. 1997- 2000 – Post-war stabilization and reconstruction**

In 1997, only two years after the end of the war and the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the EU establishes political and economic conditionality for the development of bilateral relations for the entire WB region called the “Regional Approach”. This was considered as a driving force for the region’s reconstruction. In 1998 the EU-BiH Consultative Task Force is established for peace building and



protecting civil population. Next, in 1999 the EU proposes the Stability and Association Pact (SAP) for five countries of South-Eastern Europe, including BiH, following the same “Regatta principle” as in the case of the Central European countries, which meant taking all neighboring countries in the same “boat” for a future integration. In June 2000 the Feira European Council officially decided that all the SAP countries are "potential candidates" for EU membership. Moreover, in November 2000 the Zagreb Summit launches the SAP for five countries of South-Eastern Europe, including BiH, which is the most important event that re-assures the road of the country to EU. All these symbolical gestures towards helping BiH which was mostly affected by the war, along with other SEE countries, get more closer to the EU where also backed by consistent financial aid. In 2000 aid to the region was streamlined through a new programme called CARDS (Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation). The programme’s wider objective was to support the participation of the countries of the WB in the SAP<sup>16</sup>. The clear purpose of all these measures taken by the EU was stabilization.

## 2. 2001-2004 - The Thessaloniki Agenda and the Enlargement perspective

The first two years of this period (2001/2002) are marked by BiH’s efforts to adapt to the SAP framework. But the crucial year is 2003 when the European Commission produces a feasibility study assessing BiH's capacity to implement a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) which would be the next level of pre-Europeanization. In June 2003 at the Thessaloniki European Council the SAP is confirmed as the EU policy for the WB. This confirms the EU perspective for the countries. According to the so-called “Thessaloniki Agenda”, the entire WB region was moving towards European integration, therefore Community programs were opened to SAP countries along the lines established for the participation of

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<sup>16</sup> adopted with the Council Regulation (EC) No 2666/2000 of 5 December 2000, [www.ec.europa.eu](http://www.ec.europa.eu)

candidate countries, and SAP countries were allowed to participate in Community agencies, in ways similar to those established for candidate countries<sup>17</sup>.

The endorsed Thessaloniki Agenda represented a crucial political signal from the EU implicitly to BiH by inviting all the countries in the region to start the “adaptation” process in line with other potential candidate countries. In the same year, another major instrument of Europeanization is implemented: the European Union Police Mission (EUPM) is launched as the first European Security and Defense Police (ESDP) mission. EUPM is part of the broader rule of law approach in BiH and in the region. It was established to replace the UN’s International Police Task Force (IPTF). EUPM aimed to establish a sustainable, professional and multiethnic police service in BiH, operating in accordance with best European and international standards<sup>18</sup>. This is achieved through mentoring, monitoring, and inspecting in particular with regard to the fight against organized crime and police reform.

In 2004 the EU decides also on the first European Partnership for BiH, another important step towards Europeanization. At the same time, EUFOR (“Althea” operation) replaces NATO’s SFOR mission. EUFOR deployed a robust military force at the same force levels as SFOR - 7,000 troops – to ensure continued compliance with the Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement (DPA) and to contribute to a safe and secure environment in BiH. Key supporting tasks are to provide support to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and relevant authorities, including the detention of ICTY indictees, and provide the security environment in which the police can act against organized crime<sup>19</sup>. This moment visibly marks the leading role of EU in the entire reconstruction process of BiH.

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<sup>17</sup> European Commission, DG Enlargement, Potential candidate countries - [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/potential-candidates/bosnia\\_and\\_herzegovina/relation/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/potential-candidates/bosnia_and_herzegovina/relation/index_en.htm)

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem

### 3. 2005-2008 – Pre-Europeanization, with ups and downs

The major event that marks this stage is that in November 2005 the SAA negotiations are officially opened in Sarajevo. Next, in 2006 the first Reform Process Monitoring (RPM) meeting is held replacing the Consultative Task Force, making a new step towards local ownership of the stabilization process. Also, the 2006 general elections raised hopes with regard to a new impetus for the reform process. At the same time, the election campaigns holding political elites and public occupied, stalled the possibility of compromise. Finally, the outcome of the 2006 elections returned old ethnic principles to the political stage in the form of the renaissance of two politicians so the hope that focusing on EU conditionality will soften nationalistic outbursts had proven unrealistic. In the same year, a decision of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) added fuel to the fire. In its judgment on a case filed by BiH vs. Serbia and Montenegro in 1992, the court decided that genocide had been committed in Srebrenica in 1995 with the involvement of the armed forces and police units of the Republika Srpska. The judgment was used by the political opponents to support their arguments and block a compromise with regard to the restructuring of the police in the country<sup>20</sup>. This overshadowed the hopes put in the recent development towards EU. The year 2007 was again important because the international High Representative (OHR) in Bosnia started to cover also the task of EU Special Representative (EUSR). The first 'double-hatted' OHR was Miroslav Lajcak. The same year, Visa facilitation and readmission agreements with the European Community were signed. Moreover, in late 2007 Bosnian authorities accepted a reform package as a result of the EU's decision to authorize an SAA. In this regard, police reform in late 2007 faced its most profound political crisis since the signing of the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement. The crisis was triggered by the Bosnian Serbs' refusal to accept procedural rules limiting ethnic vetoes and a plan to create a single police force in the country. Bosnian Serbs feared that the first proposal would marginalize them in state institutions, while the second one would

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<sup>20</sup> Roberto Belloni, *State Building and .....*, Routledge: London and New York, 2007, p 16.

lead to a loss of autonomy for their self-governing Republika Srpska (RS)<sup>21</sup>. The crisis was solved when the EU agreed to initial an SAA in exchange for the acceptance of procedural changes and of an action plan phasing in the implementation of police reform. This marked a huge backdrop in reform.

The year 2008 is important because the Visa liberalization dialogue was launched. This is another reward aimed at Europeanization, this time with effects on ordinary citizens in the region. European Commission clearly presented the roadmap setting out benchmarks for visa liberalization. In February 2008 Stability Pact's competences and activities were transferred to the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), a new institution under regional ownership, which gives a new incentive in the entire region for coordinated reform. Another crucial event takes place this year, in February when BiH and the EC sign the financing agreement for the instrument for pre-accession assistance (IPA) 2007 National Program and a new European partnership is adopted by the Council. IPA replaces the former pre-accession instruments: PHARE, ISPA, SAPARD and CARDS. The major objective when designing the IPA was to simplify all pre-accession assistance into a single framework for both candidate and potential candidate countries, thus facilitating the transfer from one status to another<sup>22</sup>. This is followed by the signing of the Interim Agreement on trade and trade-related issues which enters the same year into force. The purpose of support under the IPA program is to help candidate and potential candidate countries and territories to progress towards fully meeting the Copenhagen political and economic criteria as well as adopting and implementing the EU *acquis*. From this moment on, as an official "potential candidate country", Bosnia is allowed to finance projects under the first two IPA components - Transition Assistance and Institution Building and Cross-Border Cooperation. The eligibility for the three advanced IPA components will be conditional on Bosnia's acquisition of EU candidacy status and its implementation of a Decentralized

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<sup>21</sup> Vedran Dzihic "Prospects for the Europeanisation of State-Building Efforts in Kosovo and Bosnia", *Foreign Policy in Dialogue* Volume 8, Issue 23, Trier, November 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Delegation of the European Union to BiH, EU Financial Assistance in BiH - <http://www.delbih.ec.europa.eu/>

Implementation System, streamlining administrative capacities in order to autonomously manage projects and disburse funds with only ex post Commission controls. The priorities for IPA action for Bosnia are set in the 2008 European Partnership. So we are dealing here with an essential mechanism of Europeanization that embodies the mechanism of “reinforcement by reward”.

Component	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
■ Transition Assistance and Institution Building	58,1	69,8	83,8	100,6	102,6	104,7
■ Cross-border Co-operation	3,9	4,9	5,2	5,3	5,4	5,5
TOTAL	62,1	74,8	89,1	106,0	108,1	110,2

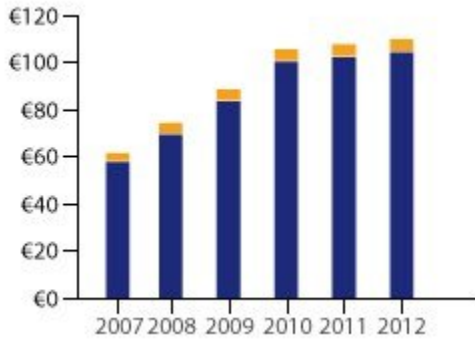


Table 1 - EU Financial Assistance in BiH 2007-2012, European

Commission<sup>23</sup>

#### 4. 2009-2011 – Big hopes, drawbacks and crises towards future Enlargement

The year 2009 unfortunately showed once again that BiH was not able to achieve substantial progress for the future viability of the state. Unsuccessful negotiations over constitutional reform, the so-called Butmir process, are a paradigmatic example of reactive and insufficiently coordinated between the national and the international approach to addressing key problems in Bosnia. The Butmir negotiations have from the very beginning led into a cul-de-sac: proposals of a minimal constitutional change and - according to ideas put forward by Carl Bildt - a rapid transformation of the OHR into the EUSR, failed<sup>24</sup>. Political elites were given the possibility of media propaganda and ethno-national promotion through the temporal break in the negotiations process.<sup>25</sup> In March 2009 Valentin Inzko becomes the new High Representative/EU Special Representative, bringing a new impetus in BiH's reform. In May 2010 the European Commission adopted a proposal enabling citizens of Albania and BiH to travel to Schengen countries without needing a short term visa. This was considered as an important success, but it was shadowed

<sup>23</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/potential-candidates/bosnia\\_and\\_herzegovina/financial-assistance/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/potential-candidates/bosnia_and_herzegovina/financial-assistance/index_en.htm)

<sup>24</sup> Vedran Dzihic, "Europeanization and new constitutional solutions - a way out of the vicious crisis cycle of crises in Bosnia and Herzegovina", in The Political Science Research Center, available at [http://www.cpi.hr/en-10665\\_bosnia\\_and\\_herzegovina\\_how\\_to\\_come\\_to\\_a\\_sustainable\\_solution.htm](http://www.cpi.hr/en-10665_bosnia_and_herzegovina_how_to_come_to_a_sustainable_solution.htm)

<sup>25</sup> ibidem

by another backdrop, showing lack of coordination and coherent adaptation to EU conditionality. In September 2010, the Republika Srpska National Assembly unilaterally adopted its own state property law, which further undermines prospects for a sustainable agreement on state property. In the same month, the House of Peoples failed to adopt the Law on the population and household census, a bureaucratic measure with important political effects. This failure affects very much the country's evolution towards EU because policy planning in BiH as a whole is impeded by the lack of an up-to-date population and household census.

Another important event after this was that on 3 October 2010, general elections were held for the Presidency and the lower chamber of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH (the 'House of Representatives'). Voters in the Federation elected 98 deputies in the Entity's House of Representatives, ten cantonal assemblies and two representatives (one Bosniak, one Croat) to the tripartite state Presidency. Voters from Republika Srpska elected 83 deputies to the Entity's National Assembly and one representative to the tripartite state Presidency, one Entity President and two vice-presidents. On one hand, the elections were assessed by the OSCE/ODIHR as being generally in line with international standards for democratic elections and as representing further progress for BiH<sup>26</sup>. On the other hand the prospect of elections and media attention reinforced the tendency of political parties and government officials on all sides to engage in nationalistic rhetoric. During the pre-election period, politicians from Republika Srpska frequently challenged the territorial integrity of the country. Meanwhile, some political leaders from the Federation linked the establishment of Republika Srpska to war-time massacres. Leaders in Republika Srpska frequently criticized State institutions, competences and laws. They remained opposed to strengthening State-level competences, including in the context of the Interim Agreement (IA), in particular by delaying the establishment of a State aid authority. This showed once again that there is a low level of the domestic endorsement of reform towards a future EU integration and that building a strong and stable democratic "political community" is still an

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<sup>26</sup> [www.oscebih.org](http://www.oscebih.org)

unachievable goal for BiH political parties. In June 2010 the EU –WB Summit in Sarajevo was another diplomatic failure because there were few officials attending the event (from both sides) and there were no political commitments, showing the disappointment of all sides regarding the evolution of the region towards EU integration.

The first half of year 2011 was primarily dominated by the failure of Bosnia to meet the conditions for closure of the OHR, including addressing state and military property ownership issues and implementing constitutional reforms, which has prevented BiH from submitting an application for membership to date<sup>27</sup>. EU had early stated that Bosnia could not submit an application for membership until the OHR, which is charged with implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement, has been closed. Although ratified by all member states, the entry into force of Bosnia's SAA, the most significant step in Europeanization, has been delayed due to the fact that Bosnia has yet to make the required constitutional amendments.

## The Limits of EU's Integration Strategy in BiH– Formal promises and practical constraints

After going through this chronological overview of the main events that marked EU and BiH relations towards Europeanization, the main question that needs to be addressed in this analytical part of the article is the following: after all these efforts and investments, why stability was not reached and Europeanization was not consolidated in BiH? We believe that the empirical facts mentioned above are validating the theoretical approach that refers to the “Balkan Exceptionalism” paradigm in regard to democratization and state building. It basically refers to the fact the WB evolution in recent history always made exceptions in comparison with the overall evolution of the neighboring regions. There are plenty of historical reasons for this, but our perspective is that EU itself is partially responsible for the

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<sup>27</sup> <http://daily.tportal.hr/124423/Press-Bosnia-EU-relations-put-on-hold.html>



discontinuity in BiH's reform, going back and forth between 'fit' and 'misfit' approaches in implementing Europeanization. We identified 3 major factors that characterized these stages of development in EU and BiH's relations and we shall argue in the next section that these may be the main characteristics of the "limited Europeanization" process.

## 1. Governance without a state

"An integral element of this transition strategy has been constitutional reform to overcome the friction that has characterized the complicated Bosnian institutional structure under Dayton, whereby a representative of each of the three ethnic groups has veto power over any proposed legislation. However, both efforts have continually stalled and do not show much promise of future success."

Roberto Belloni

During the last 14 years in focus we observed that BiH was and continues to be subject to a perpetual crisis of governance. More than fifteen years after Dayton it is a country with a constitution that segregates its ethnic communities to ensure peace but prevents the emergence of an integrated polity. Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement was drawn up as part of the internationally agreed peace treaty in 1995 that ended the war and has been the main source of legitimacy for BiH reforms. Functioning as the country's Constitution, Dayton Agreement is often considered by specialists in the field as the origin of all internal problems of BiH<sup>28</sup>. It establishes a complex political structure that provides for governments at State, Entity, District and Cantonal levels. The State-level is comprised of a tripartite rotating Presidency, a Council of Ministers (executive branch) and a bicameral Parliamentary Assembly consisting of a House of Representatives (lower chamber) and a House of Peoples (upper chamber). The judicial branch established by Dayton consists of a

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<sup>28</sup> Bart M.J. Szewczyk, "The EU in Bosnia and Herzegovina: powers, decisions and legitimacy", The Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), Occasional Paper, March 2010.

Constitutional Court, with a High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council being established later. The Chair of the tripartite Presidency rotates every eight months and consensus-building between the three members is weak, which restricts effective policy formulation and implementation. The institutionalisation of such division in post-Dayton BiH, as an outcome of the war, contributed to a continuance of the ethnic principles as well as the political elites promoting them used rather for further division than for cooperation<sup>29</sup>. Furthermore, it created a “monstrous and expensive” administrative structure as Belloni names it, consuming two thirds of the national budget, blocking investments and progress in other social and economic sectors<sup>30</sup>.

This institutional arrangement creates the so-called Daytonism, as the term coined by Vedran Dzihic, which can be defined as “a political and social phenomenon that consists of an arbitrary reference to the Dayton Agreement (or summoning the Dayton Agreement), as well as criticism of its principles, all based on short-term strategic and particular interests of political representatives constituent peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina”<sup>31</sup>. Thus, in the framework of the “Daytonist complex”, a major transformation of political elites is possible, so that leaders of the Republic of Srpska have moved from “fierce opponents of Dayton” to “patrons of the Dayton constitutional and legal order.”<sup>32</sup>

The point of this argument is to show that BiH faces various internal constraints not strictly related to the EU accession conditionality. As Dzihic and Wiesser write, “in the Bosnian case democracy rather tends to become part of the problem than part of the solution. This is primarily the case because democracy addresses and empowers the rights, interests, and aims of the dominant ethnic

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<sup>29</sup> Miruna Troncotă, “Bosnia Herzegovina – the political space of in-betweenness”, paper presented at the /th DRC Summer School on Regional Cooperation, Pecs, Hungary, and published in 2011 in the proceedings volume of the conference, Publikon Publishing House, Pecs.

<sup>30</sup> Roberto Belloni, *State Building and International Intervention in Bosnia*, Routledge: London and New York, 2007, p 97.

<sup>31</sup> Vedran Dzihic, Angela Wieser, “The Crisis of Expectations – Europeanisation as “*acquis démocratique*” and its limits. The case of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia” *L’Europe en formation* no 349-350 automne-hiver 2008, p 240.

<sup>32</sup> Vedran Dzihic, “Europeanization and new constitutional solutions - a way out of the vicious crisis cycle of crises in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, in *The Political Science Research Center*, available at [http://www.cpi.hr/en-10665\\_bosnia\\_and\\_herzegovina\\_how\\_to\\_come\\_to\\_a\\_sustainable\\_solution.htm](http://www.cpi.hr/en-10665_bosnia_and_herzegovina_how_to_come_to_a_sustainable_solution.htm)

group and makes it much more difficult for the ethnic and other minorities to realize their rights<sup>33</sup>.

Our main observation regarding this model of “governance without a state” in BiH is that as long as Dayton continues to be the reference point for democratization and Europeanization of the country by prioritizing the rights of dominant ethnic group, rather than of the individual citizens, it will be impossible to move beyond the present situation and towards the EU. Without building a solid political community EU policies can not be adopted to strengthen reform in BiH. Therefore we identified this type of “weak governance” as a vital factor of delayed Europeanization. Because of it, BiH is still profoundly marked by an unfinished nation-state building and remaining ethno-nationalist patterns (which shall be identified as the other factor of limited Europeanization and which works as an argument for the “misfit” theory in obeying EU conditionality).

An integral institution to the Dayton order in Bosnia has been the Office of High Representative (OHR), which under the so-called “Bonn Powers” has made nearly 900 decisions over thirteen years, e.g. enacting laws and removing elected officials<sup>34</sup>. According to some, these decisions constitute the glue that holds Bosnia together, while according to others, they are a “cancer” on the Bosnian body politic. The legitimacy of these powers has been repeatedly challenged on the grounds that they are undemocratic and dictatorial, compelling the international community and the EU to reconsider their use<sup>35</sup>.

This factor also shows the responsibility of EU in perpetuating this lack of governance because it has de facto control over the international governance in Bosnia, as discussed below. Even though EU has aimed since 2006 to close the OHR and terminate the Bonn Powers, but maintain the presence of an EU Special Representative (EUSR) to guide Bosnia towards EU accession, this process failed. As Roberto Belloni puts it, “top-down international imposition created domestic

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<sup>33</sup> Vedran Džihic, Angela Wieser, “The Crisis of Expectations – Europeanisation as “*acquis démocratique*” and its limits. The case of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia” *L’Europe en formation* no 349-350 automne-hiver 2008, p 238.

<sup>34</sup> Mathew Parish, “The Demise of the Dayton protectorate”, *Journal of Intervention and State Building* 1:1,2007, p 11-23.

<sup>35</sup> Bart M.J. Szewczyk, ..., p 35

dependency”<sup>36</sup>. With his own arguments, since 1998 Bosnia has been run as a semiprotectorate. Because of that, local politicians have regularly maintained an intransigent attitude, avoided inter-ethnic cooperation and accommodation, and then blamed international organizations for their own failure to make good on their electoral promises.<sup>37</sup> Underlying the transition policy since 2006 has been the assumption that “the soft power of EU accession” will be attractive enough to pull together the various Bosnian political actors, maintain stability and facilitate progress. Pursuing the same strategy of transition, the ‘EU member states of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) Steering Board reiterated that: “an EU membership application by BiH cannot be considered as long as the OHR exists”<sup>38</sup>. This premise has been disproven by the facts.

## 2. Local ownership overshadowed by ethno-nationalist discourses

“Bosnia is now lost in a trap of self-perpetuating nationalism on all sides of its three ethnic communities. The once well functioning conditionality bargain is failing under present circumstances. The population is penalized for the failing policies of its political elite, since Europe’s response to the missing reforms does not allow Bosnia further progress towards Brussels”.<sup>39</sup>  
Vedran Džihic

As a direct consequence of Daytonism previously discussed, local elites representative of the three main constituent peoples (Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs) portray in their discourses all these reform measures as a sort of “dictate of the EU”. We know from the theoretical background that Europeanization is impossible without local input. If Europeanization is seen as a “dictate” than no true transformation can be made, because it lacks legitimacy. In the intricate case of BiH

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<sup>36</sup> Roberto Belloni, *State Building and International Intervention in Bosnia*, Routledge, London and New York, 2007, p 201.

<sup>37</sup>Ibidem, p 7

<sup>38</sup> Communiqué of the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council, 19 November 2009. Available at: [http://www.ohr.int/pic/default.asp?content\\_id=44119](http://www.ohr.int/pic/default.asp?content_id=44119)

<sup>39</sup> “New Impetus Matters for the Western Balkans EU Accession” Policy Brief — 4 (2011) 1, [www.ceis-eu.org](http://www.ceis-eu.org)

local ownership of reform has been for too long delayed and local ownership has proven nothing but an empty concept. In replace, local corrupt politicians have fostered violent ethno-nationalist propaganda, with aid from BiH neighbors' Serbia and Croatia. This again points to the regional context which European integration efforts have to consider when tackling challenges to democratization in these countries. We may for sure observe that divergent ethnic interests adversely affected governance within the Federation. As Belloni also states, "top-down international intervention prevented meaningful partnerships with local actors"<sup>40</sup>. This points again to the ambivalent role of the EU in BiH. For example, the government of Republika Srpska has established an EU Integration Unit in each of its ministry, which directly affects functionality and efficiency of the State-level government structures. This way, a unique phenomenon can be identified in BiH, different than any other model of a potential candidate country – because of this lack of cooperation regarding common reforms and policy making, parallel processes of Europeanization resulted in competing with each other. The goal of all these opposing forces in reaching the same result is completely opposite than the one intended. The more rhetorical and abusive use of "Europe" as an arbitrary discursive matter is being utilized by political elites for narrow and particular political purposes, the more EU conditionality implementation is being delayed. As Dzihic argues, "the course of European integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina has so far clearly shown that the ethno-national elites consider the protection of national interests (and therefore their power structures) more important than - at least so far - diffuse and insufficiently specific promises of the EU."<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, we would like to add that this is an important factor of "limited Europeanization" because symbolic discourses also challenge the potential of the EU to promote democratic consolidation through economic cooperation and prosperity. The talks on the police reform stand as a good example for that, because they were

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<sup>40</sup> Judy Batt, "Bosnia and Herzegovina: The International Mission at a Turning Point", *Policy Brief*, Frida, No. 5 February 2009.

<sup>41</sup> Vedran Dzihic, "Europeanization and new constitutional solutions - a way out of the vicious crisis cycle of crises in Bosnia and Herzegovina", in *The Political Science Research Center*, available at [http://www.cpi.hr/en-10665\\_bosnia\\_and\\_herzegovina\\_how\\_to\\_come\\_to\\_a\\_sustainable\\_solution.htm](http://www.cpi.hr/en-10665_bosnia_and_herzegovina_how_to_come_to_a_sustainable_solution.htm)

used as an opportunity for the rise of ethno-nationalist discourses of all the 3 entities' political elites. The Republika Srpska and its police were continuously described by the leading politicians from the Federation as perpetrators and product of genocide, utterly denying the legality of the existence to the Republika Srpska<sup>42</sup>. At the same time, Banja Luka repeatedly emphasized its attempt to hold a referendum on the secession of the Republika Srpska, denying the legitimacy of the Bosnian state itself<sup>43</sup>. To sum up, in BiH the institutional and political crisis of the last three years (2009-2011) has been initiated by the discussions and bargaining concerning the reform of the constitutional settings in the country. The Serb representatives were not ready to accept radical changes to the Constitution that would bring into question the existence of Republika Srpska, the Serb entity within BiH, for the sake of the country's integration into the EU<sup>44</sup> which explains the limits of deepening Europeanization and reasons for its blockage. This shows a very low commitment towards local ownership of Europeanization.

### 3. Mutual "crisis of expectations"

"Instead of moving towards the opening of our EU membership talks,  
the gap is getting deeper."

Sven Alkalaj, Bosnian Foreign Minister

April 2011<sup>45</sup>

This factor of "limited Europeanization refers to the fact that both EU and BiH are mutually disappointed by the last year evolution of EU integration. Only few months ago, Bosnian Foreign Minister Sven Alkalaj has confirmed that Bosnia's current path to the EU of his country was "stopped in its tracks". France was the last country to ratify Bosnia's SAA in late 2010. After that, the SAA, as one of the main

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<sup>42</sup> Vedran Dzihic, 'Prospects for the Europeanisation of State-Building Efforts in Kosovo and Bosnia', *Foreign Policy in Dialogue* Volume 8, Issue 23, Trier, November 2007 p. 25.

<sup>43</sup> <http://daily.tportal.hr/105384/Dodik-Serbs-are-not-willing-to-sacrifice-RS-for-EU.html>

<sup>44</sup> *ibidem*

<sup>45</sup> *ibidem*

milestones towards deepening Europeanization, should have gone into effect within 40 days, but this did not happen because Bosnia failed to adopt the necessary amendments to its Constitution. Both actors felt that their expectations were not fulfilled. Once more we observe that without coordinated efforts and mutual trust policies can not be adapted from EU to the country that wants to be “europeanized”. The enforcement of the SAA would require Bosnia to adopt laws on state assistance and a population census and make progress in the implementation of the ruling handed down by the European Court for Human Rights which said that the Constitution of BiH and its election legislation were breaching the rights of national minorities while preventing them from running for positions within the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and seats in the House of Peoples. Bosnia has not yet adopted a law on state assistance as the authorities in the Bosnian Serb entity are against it. The Republika Srpska insists that the issue be regulated exclusively on the level of entities. There is also no agreement on census because authorities cannot agree whether religion and nationality should be part of the census questionnaire. This way a deep crisis of expectations occurred in BiH. High expectancies are diminished by local nationalisms.

As a proof of that, we shall use in this part not only the view of local politicians but also the view of European Commission and local opinion polls that show the disappointment of the ordinary citizens – the ones that should be the main recipients of Europeanization reforms. As we mentioned in the theoretical part, Europeanization consists of complex adaptation patterns and an interactive logic of actions involving local institutions. These aspects were measured and analyzed regularly by the European Commission in order to assess the democratic development of BiH. Since March 2002, the Commission has reported regularly to the Council and Parliament on progress made by the countries of the Western Balkans region. The yearly Progress report issued by the EU briefly describes relations between BiH and the Union; analyses the situation in BiH in terms of the political and economic criteria for membership; reviews BiH’s capacity to implement European standards, i.e. to gradually approximate its legislation and policies with the *acquis*, in line with the SAA and the European Partnership

priorities<sup>46</sup>. Progress is measured on the basis of decisions taken, legislation adopted and measures implemented. In order to confirm our observations presented in the chronological perspective above, we have chosen the main conclusions of the latest Progress report issued by the Commission in October 2010:

- “The country has made very little progress towards meeting the requirements for the closure of the OHR”. (p 3)
- “There is little domestic consensus on the main EU related reform priorities, such as the harmonization of the Constitution with the European Convention on human rights and on establishing a single economic space. A shared vision of the direction to be taken by the country remains necessary for smoothly operating institutions, for creating more functional and efficient State structures and for speaking with one voice on EU and international matters”.
- “The process for constitutional reform, which followed two high-level meetings in Butmir in October 2009, produced no tangible results”.( p 7)
- “Little progress has been made by the country's authorities towards establishing the necessary structure for decentralized management of EU funds.” (p 7)
- “There has been little progress on addressing the European Partnership priority, which requires measures to achieve more functional and sustainable institutional structures and better respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including by adopting changes to the Constitution.”(p8)
- “No proper mechanism exists in the legislative process for coordination between the State parliament and the Entity parliaments”(p10) <sup>47</sup>.

Frequently used expressions such as “very little progress”, “no tangible results”, “no proper mechanism”, “little progress” or “little domestic consensus” show us the stagnant phase of BiH’s evolution towards proper implementation of Europeanization policies, and confirms our “limited Europeanization” hypothesis in

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<sup>46</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/potential-candidates/bosnia\\_and\\_herzegovina/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/potential-candidates/bosnia_and_herzegovina/index_en.htm)

<sup>47</sup> Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2010-2011 (COM (2010) 660 of 09.11.2010)



the eyes of the EU policy makers.

The other important actor of Europeanization is the population of the country, the one that legitimizes reforms and the change towards better life conditions. Regarding people's expectations and opinion towards EU integration we see in the results offered by the Directorate for European Integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina that 88,2% of the respondents support the European Union membership of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is overall a very high score showing that disappointments are backed by hopes. In the Federation of BiH (FBiH) and in the Brčko District (BD), 9 out of the 10 respondents feel this way, while in the Republic of Srpska (the entity which blocks some of the mechanisms for deepening Europeanization) only 8 out of 10 respondents are of this opinion. Almost all of the Bosniaks respondents (97,1%) support EU membership of BiH, while (85,3%) of the Croats and (77,7%) of Serbs are of this opinion. 85,7% of the respondents have a positive opinion about the European Union (30,5% very positive and 55,2% somewhat positive). The visible higher percentage of those who think that EU is "somewhat positive" (with a 20% higher than the ones who see it purely positive) is a meaningful argument for stating that ordinary citizens themselves realize the ambivalent role of the EU, partially responsible for both positive and negative results in BiH's reform. Moreover, 69,8% of the respondents are not satisfied with the speed with which Bosnia is meeting the required conditions. This overwhelming majority is another strong argument for the validation of our hypothesis. There are only 6,9% satisfied respondents, 17,8% somewhat satisfied, and 3,7% of the respondents are not at all familiar with the required conditions. We should also outline the fact that there is a 20% difference between FBiH, RS and District Brčko and RS regarding this issue, another proof that the "crisis of expectations" is much higher in RS (which refuses to take part actively in respecting EU conditionality) than in the other two entities. The last interesting aspect that can be underlined here is the evolution of people's knowledge and information about BiH's integration in the EU, which shows their active participation and preoccupation for this matter. It is mostly interesting to see the way this interest has

increased and decreased over the last 4 years, a period full of successes and failures for BiH. According to the numbers in Table 2 2008 was the year with highest scores of people evaluating their knowledge about BiH's evolution to EU as very well and fairly well (together formed more than 50% of the population). As we have described in the previous chapter, 2008 was the year when Visa liberalization talks started and BiH's population perceived this as a great impetus towards a better future in the EU. Contrary to that, in 2010 the number of people that considered their knowledge about EU and BiH's relations as being very well and fairly well reduced with more than a half percentage, and the number of people who considered themselves as insufficiently informed has considerably increased (from 6,8% to 40,4%). In 2 years' time people revised their opinions and felt the concrete consequences of EU integration delay on their day-by-day experience.

To sum up, both EU Progress Reports and Opinion polls show a mutual crisis of expectations as a main characteristic for "limited Europeanization" in BiH.

Do you believe that you are well informed about the BiH integration into the EU?

	Very well	Fairly well	Somewhat insufficient	Insufficient	DK/Refused
2010	5,8%	28,3%	23,3%	40,4%	2,3%
2009	9,8%	40,4%	40,4%	9,2%	0,2%
2008	14,5%	46,6%	31,2%	6,8%	1,0%
2007	4,4%	30,5%	42,6%	18,8%	3,7%

Table 2 Public Opinion poll – "The Views of Citizens towards EU Membership and the European Integration process of BiH"<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> "A Comparative review of the results of the public Opinion Poll 2010./2009./2008./2007" issued by BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA COUNCIL OF MINISTERS DIRECTORATE FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION December 2010 – January 2011, available at <http://www.dei.gov.ba/>

## Concluding remarks

### Is BiH "doomed" to continuous "limited Europeanization"?

The overall scope of the article was to investigate the ambivalent role of the EU in Bosnia-Herzegovina and to validate the hypothesis that a shift from a pre-accession agenda to an enlargement/Europeanization agenda, overcoming the prevailing logic of ethnic exclusion, has failed. In this regard, we argued that the credibility of EU conditionality in BiH necessitates an active presence and careful distribution of rewards. As the experience with the accession of CEE states and mostly Romania and Bulgaria into the EU confirms, the introduction of "intermediary rewards," such as substantial economic aid, greater access to EU markets, and visa-free travel is important but not sufficient to strengthen the push for reforms and the viability of pro-EU parties.

We also showed that there is no linear relation assumed between the European and the national level in policy transfer, so the level of 'misfit' is higher than the one of 'fit'. Based on this argument we tried to highlight the ambivalent role of EU in the process of democratization and state-building in WB. The discontinuity of this period (1997-2011) when BiH partially failed in changing its strategies from post-war stabilization to concrete Enlargement agenda is graphically comprised in Table 2. A lot of ups and downs create a lack of continuity and lack of efficiency in applying democratic norms to create stability. The international influence in the entire WB region had the same symptoms: a lot of ups and downs and frequent change of norms and principles. As a follow up, the implementation of these discontinuous reforms replicated EU's ambivalence.

The source of EU's positive and negative incentives towards BiH can be identified in its internal divisions (both among member states and within European institutions), and its approach which, despite the rhetoric of partnership, is still visibly top-down. As our analysis stressed out, the last 14 years were marked by a proliferation of EU initiatives in the WB region, which partially undermined the clarity and unity of EU policies and the entire Europeanization process.

We therefore underlined the fact that, despite the revival of EU's emphasis on partnership (in 2010), the process of European integration shows some of the limits of earlier top-down policies. As long as such a process is structured around the idea of the increasing involvement of the EU in WB with the intent of including this region into European institutions and socializing it by means of European norms, it reflects the same approach to regional development grounded on external initiative that characterized international intervention for the best part of the last decade. So the "new" approach is in fact "the old" one. This approach makes Bosnia, Macedonia, Kosovo and the other countries of the WB once again recipients of strategies developed elsewhere and not home grown, based on weak governance structures and lacking democratic legitimacy. In this regard, we argued that accession-oriented instruments as the SAP or SAA might not be entirely appropriate for tackling the region's specific problems. From our point of view, EU thus needs to think about alternative scenarios for a full-scale membership in the medium term for BiH because the "Turkey syndrome" of delayed and postponed integration might undermine all the efforts and investments already directed to the country.

The article also tried to define the emergence of a new concept in order to incorporate the so-called "Balkan Exceptionalism" paradigm into the actual trends of Europeanization by identifying three main characteristics of the "misfit" between BiH and EU incorporated in the notion of "limited Europeanization: governance without a state, local ownership overshadowed by ethno-nationalists discourses and mutual crisis of expectations.

Another explanation that we tried to offer in this article for the BiH's "exceptionalism" and its vicious crisis cycle of crises is that the dysfunctional "entity voting" is a means of ethno-national blockade of state institutions, which must be

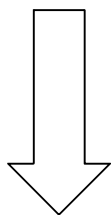
reformed and different democratic mechanisms for the protection of national interests must be found, which will not endanger the functionality of the state. The Europeanization process in BiH is still perceived as strict and unquestionable adoption of criteria and requirements set by the EU. As a general conclusion we would argue that BiH needs a different view, a different logic in its symbolic and institutional interactions with EU: the process of Europeanization must be recognized as a “genuine necessity” of BiH (within all its entities) and its citizens, and not to be perceived as a “dictate” or something internationally imposed.

The federal arrangement entailed by Dayton in BiH was rather imposed or promoted by an external actor and not home-grown. This “lack of social ownership” over the problem solving capacity of the main democratic institutions had detrimental effects on the acceptance by the local population, and thus on the functioning of the state. A main obstacle for the present political system in BiH is the lack of identification with the state and the poor performance of state and local institutions. Absence of elementary institutional stability, erosion of their credibility, loss of confidence in the state, the law, institutions and procedures are only some of the indicators of the depth of the constitutional and institutional crisis. We also showed that the Federation’s Constitution entails complex and expensive governance structures with overlapping competences between the Federation, the Cantons and the municipalities.

Consequently, as a result of the political crisis in 2011, BiH is losing pace in the process of European integration, and social and economic situation of the population is worsening. From the theoretical perspective, the “degree of misfit” in BiH, defined as the adaptation pressure and the way domestic politics responds to EU policies, is very high and impedes the process of “political community” building through EU conditionality. This is the main definition of what we identified as “limited Europeanization” a process marked by a lot of formal promises from the EU which faced numerous backdrops and practical constraints. EU had to defer once again its plans to close the OHR and could only ‘urge’ the leaders of BiH to refrain from divisive rhetoric and behavior that further polarizes the political atmosphere in BiH. But the situation in this regard got completely out of control and BiH still did

not apply for membership and SAA implementation. This is a solid proof that for the moment BiH is stuck in a vicious circle of “limited Europeanization” which needs to be overcome by both actors, EU and BiH, through coordinated strategies. One of the main conclusions of the article is that there is a “subjective Europeanization potential” of each WB country and Europeanization theories must take this aspect seriously into account and refine their theoretical concepts.

Nr	Period of time	Name of the stage	Main events
1.	1997-2000	Post-war Stabilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch of Regional Approach</li> <li>• Zagreb Summit</li> <li>• CARDS</li> </ul>
2.	2001-2004	Thessaloniki agenda and Enlargement perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thessaloniki Agenda for Enlargement</li> <li>• European Union Police Mission (EUPM) is launched</li> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> European Partnership is signed</li> </ul>
3.	2005-2008	Pre- Europeanization with ups and downs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• instrument for pre-accession assistance (IPA) is launched</li> <li>• “double hated” OHR and EUSR</li> <li>• benchmarks for visa liberalisation</li> </ul>
4.	2009-2011	Big hopes, drawbacks and crises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failure of household census</li> <li>• Nationalistic outbursts during 2010 general elections</li> <li>• Visa liberalisation</li> <li>• Delay in membership application</li> </ul>



## **LIMITED EUROPEANIZATION**

1. Governance without a state
2. Local ownership overshadowed by ethno-nationalist discourses
3. Mutual “crisis of expectations”

Table 3 - Stages of BiH’s “limited Europeanization” (Edited by the authors)

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