

From Negative to Positive Peace in Western Balkans

A Case for Eclectic Theory

Miroslava Kulkova

This article analyses a qualitative transformation of relations between the Balkan states since the dissolution of the SFR Yugoslavia in the 90's until 2008. It argues that military presence and interventions of external powers were enough to make the belligerents fold weapons and thus spread the negative peace but did not substantially aid the qualitative transformation of their relations. Evolving cooperation, mutual restraint, and resolution of conflicts by non-military means that we have perceived in the Balkans since 2003 are results of liberal strategies. It argues for the usefulness of eclectic explanations.

Keywords: negative peace, positive peace, transformation, Western Balkans.

As Buzan wrote, all regions started as Hobbesian conflict formation, characterized by instability and violent conflicts.¹ Yet some of them evolved into more cooperative territorial units, with relations among states characterized more by mutual restraint, or even by friendliness with no short-term expectation of use of force.

One of the regions that went through such a qualitative change in the relations among its members is the Western Balkans. In 1991 the Western Balkans was torn with the full-scale war, where the main drivers of security interdependence between states were fear and rivalry. Since the Stabilization and Association Process (1999), we can observe:



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a) increase in effective regional initiatives, some even initiated by the Western Balkan states themselves – like Brdo process, the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI) regional forum, or regional commission (RECOM) initiative; b) decrease in the securitization – the declaration of independence was in the case of Croatia in 1991 treated with armed forces, the declaration of independence of Montenegro in 2006 had a peaceful course. Even a controversial unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo in 2008, though causing serious deterioration of relations in the region, did not end in the violent clashes. Instead, Serbia initiated in the UN General Assembly a resolution that requested non-legally binding advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on whether the unilateral declaration breached the international law.² These are indicators that states have made arrangements to reduce insecurities among them, they seek security through cooperative means and work on the resolution of mutual conflicts.

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This evolution in the Western Balkans makes it an ideal case to critically evaluate the reach of an eclectic theory of Norrin Ripsman that combines realist and liberal factors to comprehensively describe a regional transformation in two phases.³ Ripsman claimed that factors stemming from realism are crucial to initially pacify the region; however, liberal mechanisms are more important in the second phase to solidify that peace. This article argues that the mechanism that brought about peaceful change in the Western Balkans was inherently liberal. Presence of NATO and the EU troops, although important in the initial phase, did not contribute to the peaceful transformation as much as the offer of future in the EU. It proves on the case study of the Balkan region what Thies claimed in his quantitative analysis of West Africa – that realist factors are the most important for reaching the negative peace.⁴ However, they do not contribute significantly to the qualitative change in the relations among states that characterizes the positive peace. Contrary to the popular opinion that the EU failed in the Balkans it argues that the liberal mechanisms promoted by the EU in the Balkans were crucial for moving from the negative to the positive peace.

The objective of this article is thus twofold – to apply Ripsman's theory to a new case and by that critically evaluate its reach, and to provide a new reading of peaceful transformation of relations in the Balkans in the last decade. This article is divided into two main

parts. In the first part, a theoretical framework is introduced. Peaceful transition is conceptualized and Ripsman's theory is critically evaluated. In the second part, events of the last three decades in the Balkans are analysed in two phases.

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Theoretical framework

Peaceful transition – negative vs. positive peace

There have been numerous attempts in literature to conceptualize a peaceful change in international relations. Various scholars have noticed that mere absence of violence is qualitatively a very different condition than interstate relations characterised by dependable expectation of peaceful resolution of conflicts. Thinking about peace was significantly revolutionized by Johan Galtung, who coined the term *negative peace* and thus created a concept capable of capturing this important qualitative distinction.⁵

Negative peace is conceived as the absence of systematic, large-scale collective violence between political communities (because of lack of resources to continue, restored balance of power or temporary satisfaction with status quo, etc.).⁶ This type of peace is very delicate, and violence can be resumed at any point.

On the other hand, positive peace is a situation, where peace is maintained on a reciprocal and consensual basis.⁷ Conflicts between actors are not yet resolved; however, actors are in the process of their resolution by peaceful means. It is characterized by increased cooperation on common problems. The term positive peace is favoured over stable peace in this research, because the term positive peace better reflects its nature, characterized by cooperation and endeavours towards a positive change in interstate relations. It is not stable, as it can always deteriorate.

Positive peace should not be confused with the (pluralistic) security community. Security community is the most peaceful international order states can achieve. There is a dependable expectation of peaceful resolution of any conflicts between members; they share common norms, values, and political institutions; and they are deeply interdependent.⁸ Last decades have seen a creation of a few security communities – namely the European Union, North America and arguably also the Southern Cone of South America.

This is, however, not yet true for positive peace. Contrary to Kacowicz, who blurs the line between positive peace and security com-

munity, this article clearly distinguishes between these two orders. Positive peace does not mean that the states no longer have conflicts. Rather, they decide to resolve them by cooperative means. Increased cooperation is observable in the growing number of regional initiatives and organizations and in the increased socialization of elites. Neither negative nor positive peace are permanent. Relations can always deteriorate – a region can be characterized by positive peace one decade and negative peace the next decade.

This distinction between the levels of peace has direct consequences for the research. If scholars examine the conditions of peaceful transformation – like Volgy et al.,⁹ Merom,¹⁰ or Ripsman – and do not conceptualize peace in their analyses, it is more problematic to assess when their results are valid. For example, Merom assigns a pacifying role to a major power intervening in the region. But is an intervention of a major power enough to force the belligerents to fold weapons or can it also foster cooperation and trust between former belligerents?

In case of the negative peace, to ascertain its birth is much more straightforward. The negative peace is usually born out of a truce, an armistice, an international military intervention or a similar threshold that marks the end of an armed conflict. In case of a positive peace, it is born more out of a zone of transition instead of a narrow threshold. Deutsch spoke about turbulent zones of transition regarding his security communities.¹¹ This article argues that the same logic also applies to a positive peace.

In 1991 the Balkans was torn with the full-scale war, where the main drivers of security interdependence between the states there were fear and rivalry. Since the end of Kosovo War in 1999 it is possible to speak about a negative peace. This article argues that since 1999 the Balkans has transformed into a positive peace. A clear indicator of this transformation was the declaration of independence of Kosovo in 2008. Even though this highly controversial event caused a serious deterioration of relations in the region, it did not end in the violent clashes. Instead, Serbia initiated a resolution in the UN General Assembly that requested a non-legally binding advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on whether the unilateral declaration breached the international law. An increase in the number of regional initiatives is also unprecedented in the Balkans. Since 1999 the Balkan countries have cooperated on regional issues via MARRI, RECOM, Brdo process, Adriatic Charter Process, Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, Sava Commission,

etc. They work on the resolution of their conflicts via bilateral talks, like Brussels dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. Six core Balkan states (minus Croatia, which is already an EU member) meet annually on the Western Balkan Summit, where heads of governments and Foreign Ministers of the six countries are supposed to revitalize multilateral and bilateral ties and work on their accession to the EU. This suggests that between 1999 and 2008, the Balkans transformed into a positive peace.

Ripsman's eclectic explanation of transition to a region of peace

The main IR paradigms all have comparative advantages in explaining certain stages of peaceful transition, yet they are incapable of explaining this complex process in its entirety alone. The main factor in realist theories, power, seems as not an effective tool for pacifying regions.¹² Realists see international order as anarchical with states being generally hostile to each other. Peace is only short-lived. Explanation of a regional change is found in global power politics – like in Mearsheimer,¹³ Merom,¹⁴ and Miller;¹⁵ in the regional balance of power as in Copeland;¹⁶ or in a relative distribution of power as in Taliaferro.¹⁷

Liberal theories seem better equipped to explain a deepening of the cooperation. No wonder, when many such theories were developed on the successful case of a creation of the European Union. The liberal view of regional transition essentially stands on the legs of Kantian tripod – democracy, economic interdependence and institutions.¹⁸ However, each of the legs has already been questioned. Institutions not only create space for states to link issues and solve problems of coordination, but also create rigidities that can become a source of conflict.¹⁹ According to commercial liberal theories, interdependent states are less likely to resort to force to resolve disputes, due to the opportunity costs of force in terms of lost trade and investment. However, an assumption of a pacifying effect of trade is not always found in an empirical world without preconditions. Kupchan's analysis has shown that political reconciliation precedes and clears the way for growing economic interdependence, not vice versa.²⁰ Lastly, democratic peace theory (DPT) has also been questioned numerous times. According to DPT, democratic states are unlikely to wage war against other democracies for institutional and normative reasons.²¹ People perceive democratic states as less threatening than non-democracies and since they bear the costs of war, they are reluctant to use force against them.

Moreover, citizens of democracies perceive other democracies as legitimate and do not support violence against them.²² A pacifying effect of democratization was famously questioned by Mansfield and Snyder.²³ According to their research, democratization is enhancing peace in the long run, but the transition is chaotic and unstable. Bayer also argued in his quantitative analysis that the thesis of democratic peace does not work for the 'lowest level of peace'.²⁴

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Constructivist theories in general stress the role of intersubjective ideas about peace or conflict that regional elites hold over material/structural conditions or distribution of power. The agency, by way of ideas, norms and practices is given considerable significance in the formation and persistence of a given regional order.²⁵ Some authors value a diplomatic practice – common interests are socially constructed through interaction and the social construction of identities.²⁶ Others stress the role of communication and transactions that enable the creation of a common identity.²⁷ Some see regional cooperation, especially in Southeast Europe, as driven by identity politics.²⁸ Yet, constructivists lack a comprehensive theory of regional transition. Apart from Deutsch and Adler and Barnett, who later developed his theory, there is no significant constructivist theory of peaceful transition.

Efforts to explain a regional, or even dyadic transition from conflict to peace via the lenses of realism, liberalism or constructivism did not enable a researcher to see the whole picture. Some scholars tried to combine the strengths of these paradigms to better explain the phenomenon of peaceful change – like Gerges²⁹; Thies³⁰ or Ripsman. Thies showed in his quantitative analysis that the realist path is the most salient for explaining a negative peace.³¹ Liberal and constructivist paths seem to be more important for higher levels of peace and cooperation.

Norrin Ripsman arrived at a similar conclusion in his theory of a two-phase transformation. He argued that a regional peaceful transformation occurs in two phases – first, a realist one (or a phase where factors stemming from realism are more important) and then a liberal phase (where liberal mechanisms play a greater role).

In the first phase, liberal mechanisms are likely to be ineffective absent a determined great power involvement and power relations that compel regional rivals to cooperate. Thus, realist strategies should be employed in the initial period to make stability possible. At a minimum, this entails the active participation

of great powers both to restrain regional actors and to assure them that their regional rivals will not take advantage of them. In the second phase, the post-transition phase, realist factors are less relevant. Instead, democratization and liberal international institutions should be entrenched to help stability endure. This may be a slow process and will require a concerted effort by all those in the region to commit to liberal institutions. Moreover, great power involvement cannot cease until this entrenchment occurs and instrumental trust develops in the region.³²

Ripsman developed his theory on the case of Western Europe, where according to him the phase of realist pacification lasted from 1945 to 1954 and the phase of liberal endurance continued after 1954. Ripsman's theory is clearly formulated but was only scrutinised by John A. Hall.³³ However, he mostly agreed with Ripsman's conclusions and tested it again on the same case – Western Europe. Ripsman's theory is parsimonious and attempts to explain a regional peaceful transformation in an eclectic and comprehensive way. It is worth testing on other cases to critically evaluate its reach and explanatory power.

Although Ripsman's inductive conclusions are innovative, they are not unproblematic. A problem is not the eclectic approach, combining factors and mechanisms from different paradigms, *per se*. Analytical eclecticism, stemming from epistemology of scientific realism, enables that. As Sil and Katzenstein wrote, an eclectic perspective might help to explain a complex phenomenon and even aid in the creation of a mid-range theory.³⁴ Ripsman's theory suffers mainly from a lack of clarity, case selection and missing conceptualization of peace. Although he stated that the realist factors – active participation of great powers in the region – are more important in the first phase, he is not so explicit about their concrete form. What Thies noticed, Ripsman found it difficult to distinguish between liberal and constructivist factors in his analysis.³⁵ Ripsman stated that in the second phase, liberal and constructivist mechanisms are more important for maintenance of that peace. However, as the only constructivist factor, he mentioned altruistic trust, which he himself concluded was not present in the case of Western Europe in the analysed period. Regarding the case selection, he built his theory on one very special case. The integration process of Western Europe is widely considered unique and not easily replicated anywhere in the world. This makes external validity of his outcomes

limited. Lastly, Ripsman did not conceptualize peace in his theory. Did he mean peace of arms or structural integration? This article argues that his two phases are better understood as transition phases to two different levels of peace – the realist phase as a transition to a negative peace and the liberal phase as a transition to a positive peace.

This article looks at the two phases of peaceful transformation observable in the Western Balkans. From 1991-1999, great powers intervened militarily in the Balkans twice and NATO stationed troops in the region. This external intervention suppressed the armed conflict and led to a negative peace in the region, characterized by absence of large-scale political violence. Regional organizations established in the 90's were mostly ineffective in conflict prevention. After 1999 an increase in effective regional organizations and resolution of conflicts by cooperative means is observable. If Ripsman's theory is correct, we should observe realist mechanisms – external intervention by global powers, security guarantees to the Western Balkan states – as having a pacifying effect. Regional institutions, if present, should not have a major impact on the member states. The Western Balkan states should either not be democratic, or their liberal democratic regime should not have a major impact on their trustworthiness for other Western Balkan states. Economic interdependence should not be present. From 1999 to 2008, in the second phase, liberal and constructivist mechanisms should play a greater, more influential role. Democratization, economic interdependence, liberal institutions and trust generated by common identity should transform relations between the Western Balkan states. It doesn't mean the realist factors – like external presence (UNMIK in Kosovo) – are not present. However, these factors should be less relevant, or not having the transformative power. The Western Balkan states are, as demarcated by the EU – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYROM, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia.

First phase: Making of negative peace in the Balkan Region (1991-1999)

Realist explanation

There were three major powers with interest in the Balkan region that intervened in its affairs since 1991 – Russia, the EU, and the USA. However, these powers differ substantially in the extent of their involvement. Although there have been some elements of concerted great power di-

plomacy vis-à-vis the conflict in former Yugoslavia since 1991, the dominant strategy of the great powers, until summer 1995, was disengagement (or, at most, a relatively low level of involvement which included sending some limited peacekeeping forces, especially from Europe, imposing U.N. economic sanctions on Serbia, the U.N.-declared 'no-fly zone' over Bosnia, and an arms embargo on former Yugoslavia).³⁶ As a result, the conflict continued uninterrupted. European powers seem to have had a high interest in ending the war in Bosnia, at the very least because of their proximity to the conflict, however, it seemed that they still needed the U.S. leadership for carrying out a major military or diplomatic engagement. Yet, the U.S. did not have an intrinsic geopolitical or economic interest in the Balkans. The decisive shift in the pattern of great power involvement in the Bosnian conflict took place in the late August-September 1995, with the U.S. assuming an active dominant role regarding the conflict, mainly because of the growing fear of destabilization at the borders of America's biggest ally and the spreading of vivid images of escalating casualties broadcasted on TVs around the globe.³⁷ Russia at that time was dealing with its own weakness after the breakup of the Soviet Union and Gorbachev's influence over his 'fellow Slavs in Serbia and Bosnia' was strictly limited.³⁸ Nevertheless, Moscow deserves some credit for the diplomacy in Belgrade, which encouraged the transformation of Slobodan Milosevic from warmonger to peacemaker. The USA, Russia, and the EU unified their attitude and ended the Bosnian war with the Dayton Agreement in 1995, thus creating a fragile federal republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Presence of the NATO forces was established with the Security Council Resolution 1088 in 1996, when SFOR mission was deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was replaced by EUFOR Althea mission in 2004 and multinational troops (mostly from the EU countries) are still present in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Kosovo War in 1998-1999 proved that patterns of great power dynamics hinted in the Bosnian War were becoming even more pronounced. The EU once again needed an active American role to intervene although the EU in the 90's carried much of the load regarding a military and economic contribution to the Balkans.³⁹ The USA was reluctant to deploy ground forces and settled for the bombardment of Serbia. NATO bombarded the country without a UN resolution and even outside the framework of consultation with Russia that had been established since 1997. The United Nations Security Council Resolu-

tion 1244 that gave a mandate to NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) and created a United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) was adopted on 10 June 1999, on the day the bombardment of Serbia had ended. UNMIK still exists today, but its day-to-day functions are relatively minor since Kosovo declared independence in 2008 and adopted a new constitution.

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The U.S. gradually diminished its involvement in the Balkans, save the humanitarian and economic aid. Regarding the EU, its attitude towards the Balkans until 1999 was irresolute. However, after the conflicts over Kosovo at the end of 1990s, the European Union policies regarding the Western Balkans changed – with the new Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) that introduced an aim of eventual EU membership for the Western Balkan countries, however ambiguous. After the lukewarm American interest in the region generally supporting the EU position and Russian position in Balkans had weakened, the EU took a more decisive stance and became a major influencer in the region.

Ripsman claimed that the Soviet threat and extended American security guarantees to France were both nearly necessary conditions for the pacification of Western Europe. The Balkans did not face such a highly salient external threat that would catalyse regional cooperation to balance against it. The Balkan nations always feared mainly each other. However, external interventions clearly stopped violent conflicts. Unrelenting western engagement in the region had an undeniable pacifying effect. The NATO and EU security guarantees enabled former enemies to fold weapons and start to cooperate. A European Police Mission EUPOL Proxima in FYROM is a good example of how important the great power's presence was. When EUFOR Concordia mandate was coming to an end in 2003, it was replaced by EUPOL Proxima upon the special request of ethnic Albanian minority in FYROM, that wanted a visible security presence.⁴⁰

Liberal explanation

As Stanev et al. claimed researching the railway development and integration of the Balkans since the 19th century, the economic integration of the Balkans improved most during the periods of strong external influence but stagnated, or even declined, during the periods when the Balkan states enjoyed more autonomy.⁴¹ This suggests that cooperation between Balkan states was not extensive before a new millennium. Looking at the trade figures it is absolutely clear there

was no economic interdependence among the Balkan states in the 90's. There were bilateral connections between geographically adjacent countries – Greece with Albania and Bulgaria, FYROM with FR of Yugoslavia, etc.⁴² However, it was never very significant – by the end of the decade, trade among the then seven Balkan post-communist states accounted for as little as 13-14 percent of their total turnover.⁴³ An economic link with neighbours was relatively more important for post-Yugoslav republics that continued trading with other parts of the former federation; however, trade with the EU was by far more important for every single Balkan country.⁴⁴ Mechanisms of commercial liberalisms were thus not present.

Liberal international institutions were hardly present in the 90's in the Balkans. There were a few exceptions; however, they were not very effective. South East European Cooperation Process (SEEC) was established in 1996 as the only regional organization initiated by the Balkan states themselves. Its impact on the regional affairs was, nevertheless, minimal in the 90's. It hosted only two summits – in November 1997 in Crete and in October 1998 in Antalya. The organization's main document – Charter on Good Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in the South East Europe – was adopted four years later after the establishment of organization, in 2000. This implies that during the Kosovo War (1998-1999) this regional organization was dormant and did not serve as a platform for dialogue and regional cooperation. Another important institution established in the 90's – South East European Cooperation Initiative (SECI) – was also founded in 1996 from the initiative of the USA. Its aim was to help provide regional peace and stability among the countries of Southeastern Europe through cooperative activities, and to help the countries integrate into the rest of Europe. Clearly, it did not have any major impact on the pacification of the regional in the 90's, given that it did not prevent the Kosovo war. Only with the launch of Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) in 1999 the EU created an organization with influence over regional affairs.

In Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia, the disintegration of the Yugoslav federation in combination with the demobilization of liberal-minded public through ethnic violence and other factors created highly authoritarian regimes.⁴⁵ Only after the Croatian president Franjo Tudman died in 1999 did Croatian transition to democracy begin. EU rewarded Croatia for formation of pro-democratic and pro-western government

with an opening of negotiations over Stabilization and Association Agreement in 2000. Dayton Peace Agreement, signed in 1995, ended a bloody conflict, but also froze Bosnia's ethnic divisions in place. The accords also bequeathed an extremely complex system of government, which made governance extremely difficult. Parliamentary elections in 2000 were quite important, as support shifted in Bosniak areas from the ruling nationalist Party of Democratic Action (SDA) to Haris Silajdzic's Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina (SBiH) and Zlatko Lagumdžija's moderate Social Democratic Party (SDP). Even though the 2000's Bosnia's elections were freer and fairer than any previous ones and moderate politicians started to receive an increased number of votes, it is premature to speak about functional liberal democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For example, an indicted Bosnian Serb war criminal Radovan Karadžić's Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) was still strong in 2000. Milošević's policies and ethnic cleansing in the first half of the 90's created atmosphere of fear and terror for non-Serbs. His government policies on civil and political rights when serving as Serbian President and later Yugoslav president were controversial. Upon the creation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Milošević's government engaged in the reforms to the Serbian Penal Code regarding restrictions on free speech, which were seen by critics as highly authoritarian. Milošević resigned the Yugoslav presidency amid demonstrations, following the disputed presidential election of 24 September 2000 and was later arrested and extradited to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) to face the charges of war crimes. Only after Milošević was replaced by Vojislav Koštunica the EU lifted sanctions against Serbia and FRY was readmitted to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The Republic of Montenegro was a constituent republic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from 1992 until 2003, together with Serbia. Both countries officially abandoned communism and endorsed democratic institutions. Yet the differences between the republics were clear. Montenegrins demonstrated against the deployment of the Yugoslav army reinforcements in the area in 1999 and Montenegrin government promised to arrest any indicted war criminals who might enter Montenegro, including Milošević.⁴⁶

The Albanian state of the early 1990s, which no longer had the centrally controlled order of communism and which had all the weak state features of a post-communist society, descended into a disillusioned transition process that was certain to collapse – and so it did in 1997 as

a result of the breakdown of fraudulent financial pyramid schemes.⁴⁷ Levitsky and Way defined the regime in Albania in the early 1990's as competitive authoritarian, where formal democratic institutions were widely viewed as the principal means of obtaining and exercising political authority and where, however, incumbents violated those rules so often and to such an extent that the regime failed to meet conventional minimum standards for democracy.⁴⁸

For FYROM, in 1990 the form of government peacefully changed from the socialist state to parliamentary democracy. On 8 September 1991, the Republic of Macedonia held a referendum where 95.26% voted for independence from Yugoslavia. It created a state with two major challenges. The first is that between 21 and 40 percent of the population consists of ethnic Albanians who do not share the language with Macedonians and were not particularly devoted to a newly established Macedonian state.⁴⁹ Two main ethnic groups lived quite separated and the ethnic Albanian minority was discriminated – the only official language was Macedonian, ethnic Albanians were often underrepresented in the positions of power and local Albanians often faced police brutality.⁵⁰ Second, only one of four FYROM's immediate neighbours allowed its citizens to call themselves Macedonians. Greece was the most fervent opposer and held trade embargo against FYROM from 1992 to 1995. FYROM managed to evade the wars of Yugoslavia's succession, but the Albanian refugees from Kosovo in 1999 put strain on the fragile new ethnic cooperation and more than 6,000 NATO troops were deployed to Macedonia to prevent severe eruptions of interethnic conflict.⁵¹ A political transition toward liberal democracy began in FYROM but was stalled by not accepting the notion that rights should be universal and equal.

It is, therefore, clear that liberal theories do not explain pacification of the region at the end of the 90's. Until the mid-90's, some Western Balkan states were authoritarian regimes. Even if they formally stepped on the path toward democracy, they often created conditions of illiberal democracy – where formal elections did take place, but political liberties of citizen or limits of one's power were often not respected. Regional or international organizations had little effect over the Balkan affairs, as their fora were not used to conflict-resolution. Economic interdependence also did not exist among the Balkan states. What led to the establishment of negative peace at the end of the 90's were external intervention and security guarantees by major powers.

Second phase: Towards positive peace (1999-2008)

Realist explanation

According to Ripsman's theory, realist factors should be less relevant in the second phase. Instead, democratization and liberal international institutions should be entrenched to help stability endure. Moreover, a great power involvement cannot cease until this entrenchment occurs and instrumental trust develops in the region.

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EUFOR Althea mission in BiH and KFOR mission are still present in the region. However, the Western Balkans saw no major eruption of violence since the Kosovo war (with the exception of the unrest in FYROM at the beginning of the 2000's, which should be considered as an aftermath of the Kosovo war). The EU's initial involvement based on financial aid for reconstruction and negative conditionality (like sanctions against Serbia) did not bring much fruit. Bilateral relations barely progressed in the post-1997 period. Only with the newly launched Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) in 1999 that offered eventual membership in the EU (albeit ambiguous), a situation in the Balkans slowly started to change.

Military presence and interventions of external powers were enough to make the belligerents fold the weapons, suppress occasional outburst of violence and thus spread the negative peace. However, until the EU changed its approach to the region and offered a detailed plan of democratization and building of regional cooperation in exchange for eventual membership in the EU, the Balkan relations did not progress. A regional cooperation between six western Balkan states barely existed. Security guarantees and external presence thus cannot be accounted *per se* for spreading a positive peace.

Liberal explanation

The Western Balkan states have made many reforms regarding democratization and establishment of the rule of law since the launching of the SAP. These changes are studied as a manifestation of Europeanization because they were part of the long list of requirements each potential candidate received in their individual Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA). There are many definitions of Europeanization; this article understands it in the notion of Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier's definition – a process in which states adopt the EU rules.⁵² Vachudova saw two ways in which the EU influences policies of

its potential member states – active (conditionality or carrot and stick) and passive (magnetism or attraction of the EU).⁵³ There are numerous critics of the EU institution-building in the Western Balkans – notably David Chandler or Dušan Reljić.⁵⁴ For the sake of this article it is, however, important that the Europeanization brought entrenchment of liberal institutions and democratization to some extent.

To name just a few reforms, Albania has reformed its justice and the voting system, developed the rule of law and shown a considerable effort in the fight against corruption.⁵⁵ Serbia has significantly improved its fiscal system, liberalized and deregulated prices and foreign trade, and adopted a major Public Administration Reform Strategy in 2004.⁵⁶ FYROM has reformed its police, implemented very strict anti-corruption laws, adopted significant reforms on public prosecutor's office and advanced in the judicial and public administration reform.⁵⁷ Croatia has reformed the justice system and has made progress in the reform of the public administration, has consolidated the rule of law and improved legal framework to combat corruption.⁵⁸ BiH only signed its SAA in 2008 and its complicated political system (a result of Dayton Agreements) put it in the political deadlock in 2008. However, during the 2000's it managed to strengthen the judiciary, implement State Law on Indirect Taxation, successful defence reform or several advancements in the gradual transfer of authority from international to local authorities.⁵⁹

The Western Balkan states also substantively progressed with regional cooperation – one of the requirements of the SAP. Since 1999, we can also see an increase in the establishment of various regional initiatives – Adriatic Charter Process, Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, Sarajevo Declaration, RECOM, MARRI regional forum, Brdo Process, Istanbul Declaration just to mention a few. These were usually initiated by the EU or its member states, or by the United States. With their annually organized conferences they offered a forum for socialization among elites and for problem-solving of common issues. SEECP merged with the EU's Stability Pact and evolved into a Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) in 2008 that has a permanent seat in Sarajevo with mixed staff from all the Western Balkan countries. It works on security cooperation and market development and helps countries to progress in their EU and NATO integration. Even in the controversial case of Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence, Serbia chose to limit securitization of this act and turned to the UN General Assembly and

later to the EU to solve this problem. The so-called Brussels dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo, sponsored by the EU, evolved from the technical dialogue since 2011 to the political dialogue at the highest level in 2012.

The potential accession to the EU and NATO is a strong motivator for these changes. For example, according to the former Prime Minister of Albania, Sali Berisha, accession to NATO and the EU is the 'biggest project of the Albanian nation this century'.⁶⁰ FYROM and Croatia considered accession to the EU and NATO as priorities of their foreign policy.⁶¹ There is a direct relation between the undertaken reforms and accession to these organization – for example, FYROM's Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski stated in 2006 that to 'intensify Macedonia's integration in NATO, [Macedonia] will continue to strengthen [its] democracy and develop [its] civil society'.⁶² The liberal institutions clearly play a substantial role now in the Balkans. It can be even argued that a regional cooperation the EU and NATO accession initiated, started to have a value of its own. For example, Albania, FYROM and Croatia actually increased interaction and cross-governmental cooperation via Adriatic Charter during summer 2005, when NATO temporarily halted membership aspirations.⁶³

Regarding democracy – an important leg of the Kantian tripod and a vital part of the EU conditionality – it is not as entrenched as Ripsman would expect in this phase. According to Freedom House's comprehensive assessment, the level of democracy in seven Western Balkan countries has not significantly changed since 2001 (except for Kosovo). Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, and FYROM are semi-consolidated democracies; Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina belong to transitional governments and hybrid regimes. As part of the EU conditionality, the Western Balkan countries are engaged in the transition to democratic regime and development of democratic institutions; however, democracy is not consolidated. In Table 1 we can see that their overall level of democracy oscillates around the middle values (1=most democratic; 7=least democratic). A problem is usually not the electoral process, but high corruption and low independence of judicial framework. Local governance is usually more democratic than national.

Bertelsmann Transformation Index for 2010 indicated that only Croatia and Serbia qualify as democracies, whereas all the other Balkan states may be collectively described as defective democracies: they

hold relatively free elections but fall short of adequately ensuring political and civil rights or the effective separation of state powers.⁶⁴

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Table 1

Country	Democracy Score 2003	Democracy Score 2005	Democracy Score 2008
Albania	4.17	4.04	3.82
BiH	4.54	4.18	4.11
Croatia	3.79	3.75	3.64
FYROM	4.29	3.89	3.86
Montenegro	N/A	3.79	3.79
Serbia	N/A	3.75	3.79

Source: Freedom House, Nations in Transit Annual Reports, <https://freedomhouse.org/>.

As for the economic interdependence, the institutional base is available – CEFTA, but the real integration is below its potential. Croatia joined this originally Central European Free Trade Agreement in 2003, FYROM followed in 2006 and the rest of the Western Balkan countries joined in 2007. The data are not available for the first years of cooperation, but Moraliyska counted a regional trade index for each CEFTA member for 2012 and the results were a little disappointing. Montenegro trades most with neighbouring countries (index of 0.48), followed by Serbia (0.32) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (0.27).⁶⁵ Albania and Bulgaria have an index below the average level – 0.10 and 0.04, respectively, which means that they have only slightly integrated their trade into the regional trade. The reason can be that the Western Balkans economies are quite small and similar in terms of production, which makes trading complicated.

Liberal factors did play a more significant, transformative role in the second phase. Commercial liberalism theses are not salient in case of the Western Balkans. Democratic peace theory also does not apply to the Balkans perfectly, given the fact that most of the Western Balkan democracies were deficient in 2008. However, it is important that all the actors aimed for democracy because dissimilar regimes do not develop higher levels of trust and cooperation easily.⁶⁶ The experience of

setting up similar democratic domestic institutions (through the socialization by the external actors) made the Balkan states inclined to consider each other as 'not-threatening', and hence as sceptically trustful potential partners.⁶⁷ However, membership in the liberal international institutions – both the regional ones and aspiration to join the EU and NATO – proved to have crucial impact on the Balkan states. Magnetic lure of the western structures made the Western Balkan states willing to reform domestic institutions and cooperate. Moreover, constant socialization of the Balkan elites through the EU and regional initiatives helped to establish a positive path-dependency – political elites 'got used' to solving problems by cooperative means.

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Conclusion

This article has argued that although great powers significantly accounted for the end of the wars that devastated the Balkan region in the 90's, the realist strategies alone did not change the quality of relations between the Balkan states. Using an eclectic theory of Norrin Ripsman (2005) it has tried to prove that the actual mechanism that transformed the character of relations in the Western Balkans was liberal. The allure of the EU membership strongly motivated the states to democratize their domestic institutions and work on regional cooperation. An increased socialization enabled political elites to perceive each other as non-threatening and develop a short-term expectation of non-use of force.

Ripsman's theory proved correct in general. In the first phase, liberal mechanisms are likely to be ineffective without a determined great power's involvement that compels regional rivals to cooperate. They are important to restrain regional actors and to assure them that their regional rivals will not take advantage of them. However, the security guarantees alone do not have the transformative power. Democratization, but even more importantly liberal international institutions, proved crucial in the second phase.

However, Ripsman's theory should be improved in one important aspect. Ripsman measures entrenchment of peace by trust that has spread among the nations. This article based on the Western Balkan case study argues that mutual trust among peoples is not a necessary condition for the spreading of positive peace. Liberal institutions, democratization and political reconciliation are necessary. States can work on a common goal without their citizens altruistically trusting

each other. However, this article suggests there is a third phase, characterized as a Deutschian security community, where states no longer expect to use violence against each other. To reach that phase, the socialization and trust must spread not just among elites, but among the citizens as well.

It would be interesting to test Ripsman's theory on a region, where great powers did not intervene or where they were not as active as in the case of Western Europe and the Balkans. The Balkan case study suggests that liberal mechanisms play a more important role in the transformation towards a positive peace and they would arguably be even more crucial in the regions where the peaceful transformation began from the initiative of the regional states themselves.

This article also argues for the usefulness of analytical eclecticism in the explanation of conflict transformation and evolution of cooperation. Previous efforts to explain regional, or even dyadic transition from conflict to peace via the lenses of realism, liberalism or constructivism did not enable a researcher to see the whole picture. Eclectic explanations might enrich our understanding of these complex processes much more deeply and comprehensively.



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