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BREXIT PHENOMENA AND THE EU CANDIDATES FROM THE WESTERN BALKANS: OPPORTUNITY FOR ACCELERATED INTEGRATION, TYPICAL STATUS QUO OR LONG TERM EXPECTATIONS

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Abstract: Great Britain's influence in the process of European integration of the Western Balkans is very notable, but it is not crucial. Although the Foreign Office of Great Britain is working toward further horizontal integration of the European Union, this country does not have any vital interest in the eventual accelerated integration of Western Balkan candidates. The main point of this article is the role of Great Britain in the process of accession of Western Balkan candidates (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo*² and Serbia)³. The aim of this article is an attempt to analyze the influence of referendum in Great Britain and its potential exit from the EU on the process of Western Balkans integration. Through consideration of the regional and internal challenges among Western Balkans candidates, the goal is to answer whether actual stagnation of mentioned candidates is due to local disputes or because of the causes within the EU. In addition, in this article, the author will put emphasis on the role of other member states of the EU, which are also focused on the process of Western Balkans integration. The results of the referendum in the United Kingdom have been highly rated in the local media and within the circles of political elites from the Balkans, but from the realistic point of view, such results will not have any dominant influence in the process of accelerating or slowing the integration of the Western Balkans within the EU. The essential aim of the article is to prove that structural problems within the EU and referendum in Great Britain

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² The status of Kosovo is regulated under the Resolution 1244, adopted by the Organization of United Nations - Security Council.

³ Republic of Macedonia, Republic of Serbia, Republic of Albania and Republic of Montenegro are in the status of candidates of EU. Kosovo* and Bosnia and Herzegovina are in the status of potential candidates of EU.

should not be an additional barrier on the European path of the Western Balkans. The future of European integration of Western Balkan candidates still depends on the dynamic of reforms and concrete measures on the internal and regional level in accordance with the policy of the EU.

Key words: Western Balkans, European Union, Great Britain, Integration, Migration, Referendum, European institutions.

INTRODUCTION

The process of Europeanization and European integration of the Western Balkans *de facto* exists from the period of disintegration of the former Yugoslav federation. Each former republic, which was part of the Yugoslav federation, after the declaration of its independence, has adopted declarations that represented an affirmation of European and Atlantic integration. Such initiatives and measures were strictly supported, especially within the political elites in Slovenia and Macedonia. Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Kosovo* and Montenegro were also interested in membership in the European Union, but due to civil war conditions their path toward mentioned organization was questionable and conditioned by the processes of establishing peace and stability in the regional context. From the other side, European officials and political elites from the member states of the European Union were also interested in the integration of the Western Balkan region, but they still have not had clear perspective and strategy how to create a framework for the integration of the Western Balkans.

From today's point of view, for European officials of crucial importance was establishing peace in the region and then a discussion about eventual European perspectives. Also, nowadays we can read a numerous articles which are evaluating the role of the European Union in the Western Balkans, during the nineties, as an inadequate and inefficient, but if we examine the mentioned period from the realistic point of view, we can notice that the role of the EU during the mentioned period was in accordance with its objective possibilities and mechanisms. European diplomatic mechanism as a soft power in cooperation with the diplomatic service of the United States of America has played the key role in the process of pacification of the Western Balkans. They were aware that European integration of the Western Balkans was an unreal process if comprehensive peace and stability at the regional level were not adopted. Later, adoption of the Copenhagen criteria was one more clear message from Brussels that the process of European integration is conditioned by the process of regional integration, and the last one should be a logical sequence after establishing sustainable peace and stability. The basic requirement necessary to obtain membership in the EU is to fulfill the conditions defined by Article 49 of the Treaty of European Union (TEU), supplemented later with the Copenhagen criteria (Sadowski & Mus, 2008, p.15).

The process of European integration in the region of the Western Balkans has officially started with the establishment of the mechanism for stabilization and association (SAA). Mentioned process was established as an instrument, which will accelerate the process of integration of the Western Balkan states (minus Slovenia, plus Albania). The Republic of Slovenia was already in the deeper stage of integration in comparison to the other states, which were included in the stabilization and association process. At the beginning of the XXI century, in the region of Western Balkans exists strong belief that the process of European integration will be difficult and with many barriers, but also that its end is visible in the next ten years. Postwar political elites were convinced that they are able to close all open internal and regional issues, thus it will allow them to lead their countries to European membership in the visible future. During the first years of XXI century, the process of European integration of the Western Balkans was accelerated from both sides. Political leaders from the Western Balkans were intensively working on accomplishing policies in accordance with European recommendations and from the other side, European leaders were preparing concrete agenda of the process of integration of the region. The concrete example about it represents the Thessaloniki agenda, which was adopted during the Summit of European Union in Greece from 2003. Mentioned agenda clearly states that European member-states are dedicated to the further integration of the Western Balkans within the Union, but also emphasizes that European integration does not mean only fulfilling the political criteria, but also accomplishing standards and levels that are in accordance with the Copenhagen criteria and with member-states. The Thessaloniki agenda represents a typical credit for the Western Balkan states. This agenda shows the interest by the officials in Brussels for integration of mentioned region, but that does not mean guaranteed membership.

The policy of conditionality continues to be a major mechanism for new candidates on their road to the door of Europe. Continuity of such trend was not for a long term. Regional issues within the Western Balkans, lack of cooperation on the regional level, mistrust between local political elites and adoption of European measures only on the legislative level without implementation in practice became internal barriers on the European path. Extremely bad economic performances of the Western Balkan states and lack of a comprehensive strategy that will allow alternatives for recovery were also a point of contention in the process of European integration. Such circumstances on the regional level also create new discourses within European countries. According to public opinion within the European Union, the number of citizens who are interested in further horizontal integration is lower than those who are against it.⁴ After the referendum

⁴ The EU maintains that the enlargement door remains open to any European country that fulfills the EU's political and economic criteria for membership. Nevertheless, some European

in France, European citizens have become more and more unfavorable to the process of accession of new members. Even if the accession track remains open to the remaining countries in the Balkans, the process is often derailed not just by outstanding challenges pertaining to the region, but also by hurdles which develop within the Union – more specifically within the member states (Balfour & Stratulat, 2015, p. 1) The question which still stays open is will the European Union succeed in reforming one of the most complex regions in Europe, or will it fail and lose the credibility it needs to become a great power (Perco, 2011, p. 1)?

THE ROLE OF GREAT BRITAIN IN THE PROCESS OF WESTERN BALKAN INTEGRATION

Great Britain in the case of Western Balkans integration has a huge influence, but their foreign strategic interests are not strictly directed toward mentioned region. British Foreign Office continuously points out the importance of further integration of the European Union, but in the case of the Western Balkans, they lead a strict policy. From the beginning of the nineties, Great Britain was interested in conflict prevention and possible alternatives for stabilization. London's leaders were aware that the region of Western Balkans does not represent backyard of Britain's security sphere, but they also have had in mind the fact that further destabilization of the region could lead to instability on the borders of the European Union. In such circumstances, the official policy of Great Britain was interested in finding rapid solutions for conflict prevention. From the election of Toni Blair as a Prime Minister, in 1997, the United Kingdom adopted a more clearly interventionist approach toward the Balkans (Balfour & Stratulat, 2015, p. 55). Great Britain was interested in the further integration of the European Union but only as an opposite side of the policies of Germany and France, which were interested in the process of deeper (vertical) integration. According to Britain's policy within the European Union, horizontal widening of the Union represents a natural process, while the process of deeper integration is the only logical sequence and under the influence of given opportunities. During the nineties, the influence of Great Britain in the Western Balkans region, we can concretely notice in the processes of solving the question of Bosnia and Hercegovina and the armed conflict in Kosovo*. Contemporary example of the Britain's role in Bosnia and Hecegovina was from November 2014, when Britain and Germany joined forces to unveil a 'New

leaders and many EU citizens are cautious about additional EU expansion, especially to Turkey or countries farther east, such as Georgia or Ukraine, in the longer term. Worries about continued EU enlargement range from fears of unwanted migrant labor to the implications of an everexpanding Union on the EU's institutions, finances, and overall identity. (Archick, 2016, p. 7)

Strategic Approach’ to reinvigorate the Bosnia’s EU accession process (Balfour & Stratulat, 2015, p. 56) In the case of Kosovo*, the role of Great Britain was even more noticeable. The United Kingdom led the call for NATO air strikes against Serbia (Balfour & Stratulat, 2015, p. 56) during the war in 1999. Thereafter, in 2006, as the UN talks to decide Kosovo’s* future status began, Britain was the first major state involved in the process as a part of the six- nation Contact Group – comprising Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, and the United States – to openly assert that it believed that there was no alternative to independence (Balfour & Stratulat, 2015, p. 56). Except for the Britain’s direct influence in the cases of Kosovo* and Bosnia and Herzegovina, official London did not take over any concrete action toward other EU candidates from the Western Balkans (Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro) in their processes of European integration. As an example, in the case of the Republic of Macedonia, while the UK led the way in calling for it to be given candidate status during its presidency in 2005, it has not emerged as a particular advocate for its EU membership since then. In particular, it has not done anything to try and break the deadlock between Skopje and Athens over the name issue (Balfour & Stratulat, 2015, p. 57). Although Great Britain was firmly dedicated to further European integration with new member states, after the admission of new member states from 2004, the citizens of Great Britain, but also citizens of other member countries of the EU have become skeptical about the next steps in the process of integration.

The real problem between European society and within the governments of member-states have become the policy of migration. The principle of free movement and transparent trade competitiveness was made under question after the accession of Romania and Bulgaria. Unstable economic performances in Romania and Bulgaria and extremely high rate of unemployment have led to dangerous processes of immigration. The people from mentioned countries have started to move toward developed European member-states. In that period, Great Britain was also on the map for the people who were seeking for better life conditions. In a speech before British business leaders, in November 2012, Ed Miliband, the former leader of the Labour Party, nevertheless stated that (Balfour & Stratulat, 2015, p. 59), “while enlarging the EU was good for Britain’s strategic interest, frankly, the way that we handled immigration without transitional controls increased scepticism here in Britain” (Balfour & Stratulat, 2015, p. 59). In the case of the Western Balkans, the situation is also questionable if we take into account political and economic performances. But the administration in London should be less concerned about eventual migration consequences from eventual European membership of Western Balkan candidates. Britain actually tends to be relatively low in the list of preferred destinations for the Balkan countries (Balfour & Stratulat, 2015, p. 59). While the rest of the European Union has introduced visa

liberalisation for almost all of the Balkans (Kosovo* is the exception), the United Kingdom has kept strict limits in place (Balfour & Stratulat, 2015, p. 59).

REFERENDUM IN GREAT BRITAIN AND THE ACCESSION OF THE WESTERN BALKANS

According to the chief of the team for accession negotiations of the Republic of Serbia in the EU, Tanja Miscevic, there are opinions that new energy for new member-states will be released as a consequence of Britain's leaving the Union. (Miscevic, 2016, Pressing/Video). Local media were very interested about the referendum in Great Britain. They have noted that after the huge economic crisis within European countries, eventual leaving the Union by the United Kingdom will influence negatively on the process of the Western Balkans integration. Experts and those well-versed in the matter warn that Great Britain's decision to leave the EU will have a negative impact on the accession of Serbia and other Western Balkan countries: they agree it will slow the accession down, but not stop it completely (EurActiv.rs, 2016, p. 1) From the other side, as we specified in the previous section, Great Britain has not had comprehensive and clear approach in the case of the Western Balkans integration. London has interest about Kosovo* question and the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but its administration did not show any special commitment toward another candidate-states. To be more clear, leaving the European Union by the Great Britain will not influence directly the Western Balkans integration. From the institutional point of view, such process will contribute to essential internal turbulences within the European Union and it could change the focus of European institutions, in the case of the Western Balkans it will mean less dedication from Brussels toward acceleration of the integration process.

After the decision of the British electorate which has voted for the Britain's leaving the European Union, political leaders from the Western Balkans have commented such decision from two perspectives. First, they have agreed that Western Balkans candidates are going to lose strong supporter for European integration of the mentioned region. Second, they are almost convinced that Britain's results of the referendum will be an opportunity for Western Balkans candidates from the point that the EU institutions in the future will direct its focus toward accelerated integration of new member-states. "Despite the Brexit, Western Balkans candidates are closer to the EU" is the title of an article in the newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Britain's leaving the European Union could accelerate rather than slow down the Serbia's entry into the EU. This was an unexpected result of the conference on the Western Balkans recently held in Paris (Economy.rs, 2016, p. 1). The biggest fear is that Brexit will lead to a growth of Eurosceptic, populist, right-wing or extremist party politics and sentiment across the region, in line with what has happened in Central Europe (Butler, 2016, p. 1).

University professor and former minister of foreign affairs of the Republic of Macedonia, Denko Maleski, says that Brexit represents a sad day for Europe and it will disturb the balance of power between the big member-states of the Union. Maleski considers that the leaving of the Great Britain means nothing good for the Balkans because, according to him, the British government was a leader in the process of accession of new member states, unlike the Germans and French which were insisting on internal integration (Kuka, 2016, p. 1).

From the other side, Brexit will not worsen the chances of the Western Balkans on their way to becoming full members of the European Union. "Their perspectives are not changed," confirmed at the conference in Paris, German Chancellor Angela Merkel. All the promises given to those countries before the recent referendum should be met despite the British "no" (Matić, 2016, p. 1). Also, French president Fransoa Oland confirmed that the European Union will keep its promises given to Western Balkan candidates. "We are continuing to work on stability and security in the Balkans and we are saying to the countries of the region that the process of accession continues", said French president at the Summit on Western Balkans, held in Paris (Sandić-Hadžihasanović & Martinović, 2016, p. 1). "The EU remains committed to the process of accession new member-states and there is no doubt. We will continue the work that we have started, taking into account the fact that mentioned work is not close to completion," said Johannes Han, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement Negotiations (Mondo/Agencije, 2016, p. 1). From today's point of view Brexit will not have any direct influence on the processes of European accession of the Western Balkan candidates, respectively Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Kosovo*. As we have noted, it will contribute to the process of slowing down the Western Balkans accession within the EU, but it will happen only because the European construction will have one of the most challenging tasks in its existence, how to secure stable and economically sustainable exit of Great Britain, without consequences that can lead to domino effect.

WESTERN BALKAN CANDIDATES AND THEIR INTERNAL CHALLENGES

In this article when we are talking about Western Balkan candidates, we are focusing on the states which are in the process of European integration from that region. Albania, Kosovo* Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia are countries which are still far enough from the full EU membership, but it does not mean that their perspectives are bleak. Those countries are facing similar problems and issues on the internal and regional level. Similar questions and challenges which exist in mentioned countries are influencing the European institutions to create similar and comprehensive strategies and measures toward the

Western Balkans, which will help in the process of overcoming them. From a regional point of view, the major problem affecting relations between the countries remains the public discourse on wars, which is still segregated according to partisan perspectives (Alujević, Vesnić, 2012, p. 17)

Political, economic and institutional problems are key barriers on the road of Western Balkans toward the European membership. Within mentioned countries exist a continuous political instability, low economic performances and high levels of unprofessionalism and corruption within public administration and institutions. The struggle against these troubles started at the beginning of XXI century, but today, after sixteen years, the states of the Western Balkans, which have the EU candidate status, are dealing with the same problems without concrete plans for the final solution. Even in the annual reports prepared by the European Commission, which evaluates harmonization of candidate policies with the European policy, there are noted numerous remarks in the fields of democracy, human rights, good governance, rule of law, market competition, regional cooperation and reconciliation.

According to the progress report from 2015 prepared by the European Commission, the Republic of Macedonia has serious internal political and security problems which have an influence on the Macedonian path to the EU. Concerns about politicisation have been reinforced by the content of the wiretaps, and merit-based recruitment continues to be undermined (European Commission, 2015, p. 5). From the other side, the inter-ethnic situation remains fragile. Following a major police operation in an ethnic Albanian neighbourhood of Kumanovo that claimed 18 lives, all political leaders in the country called for the restoration of calm and underlined that this incident should not be seen as inter-ethnic. Events at Kumanovo still need to be fully investigated (European Commission, 2015, p. 4).

The Republic of Serbia, although it has started the accession negotiations with the EU, is facing institutional problems on the internal level. Taking into account the last election process in Serbia, the European Commission has noted that this country has not yet addressed all of the recommendations of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), in particular, those on ensuring that campaign financing and the electoral process are transparent (European Commission, 2015, p. 6). In the area of the judicial system, the European Commission considers that further steps are needed to tackle political influence (European Commission, 2015, p. 4). Threats and violence against journalists remain of concern. Some criminal charges have been filed, but final convictions are still rare (European Commission, 2015, p. 18). According to the last progress report prepared by the European Commission, regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations form an essential part of Serbia's process of moving towards the EU (European Commission, 2015, p. 20).

The Republic of Montenegro is facing also serious internal political problems, according to the annual report prepared by the European Commission for 2015. Some opposition parties embarked on a boycott of parliament in September. A series of protests were also organised outside parliament. This eventually led to the confrontation between the police and protesters, resulting in injuries and damage to property. It is expected that all incidents of violence and allegations of excessive use of force during these events will be duly investigated (European Commission, 2015, p. 4). Also, there is not enough progress in ensuring merit-based recruitment and tackling politicisation (European Commission, 2015, p. 4). The problem of comprehensive politicisation remains part of the institutional system of Montenegro.

The political situation in Albania does not look very different in comparison to the other EU membership candidates from the Western Balkans. Taking into account local elections from 2015, concerns about the impartiality and professionalism of the electoral authorities and the overall politicisation of the electoral process have yet to be addressed (European Commission, 2015, p. 4). Also, efforts are needed to achieve the objective of a professional and depoliticised public administration (European Commission, 2015, p. 4).

Implementation and respect of the Dayton agreement represent one of the crucial conditions on the European path of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Continuous abusing of the Dayton agreement by the local political elite creates unstable political and security perspectives in this country. According to the EU Commission, the country's Constitution established a complex institutional architecture that remains inefficient and is subject to different interpretations (European Commission, 2015, p. 4). High level of politicisation and poor service delivery are also noted as the main problems in the report for 2015. Bosnia and Herzegovina faces many challenges regarding human rights and the protection of minorities (European Commission, 2015, p. 5). Political and economic problems within Bosnia and Herzegovina represent a real challenge for local political elites on the European path of this country due to lack of trust and intolerance, which are still at a high level as a consequence of the civil war from the nineties.

Kosovo's* accession to the European union, from today's point of view, will be a complex and challenging process for European institutions. Relations between Belgrade and Pristina are continuing to be a focal point for both sides on their path towards the European Union membership. European officials are sending a clear message to political elites in Belgrade and Pristina, that normalization of relations between Kosovo* and Serbia represents condition fulfillment of which will additionally facilitate and accelerate their European perspectives. Regarding internal circumstances increased polarisation between government and opposition is discernable. Many independent institutions and regulatory authorities are currently not operational or are negatively affected by delayed appointments of board members (European Commission, 2015, p. 4). Also, the judiciary remains prone

to political interference (European Commission, 2015, p. 5). The future status of Kosovo* and its internal stabilization represent a real test for European institutions and their role in the Western Balkans region as a soft power.

MEMBER STATES OF EU AND THEIR POLICY TOWARD THE WESTERN BALKANS

There is a consensus among the European Union member states regarding the EU's enlargement policy understood as the most important factor stabilizing the situation in the Western Balkans (Sadowski and Mus, 2008, p. 17). Interest for further enlargement of the EU is still present within the society of member states, but the actual problems, which the EU is facing, affect mentioned interest to decrease significantly. Even if the accession track remains open to the remaining countries in the Balkans, the process is often derailed not just by outstanding challenges pertaining to the region, but also by hurdles which develop within the Union – more specifically within the member states (Balfour and Stratulat, 2015, p. 1).

Nowadays, Germany, as the leading country among European member states, shows the biggest interest towards integration of the Western Balkans. The successful accession of a Balkan state conducted 'under auspices' of Germany would certainly bring prestige to one of these countries and hence directly influence the situation inside the European Union (Sadowski and Mus, 2008, p. 18).

Austria has even deeper interest for the European integration of the Western Balkans. Austria regards the Western Balkans as a key region for its foreign policy due to: first, historical links and geographic proximity; second, regional stability and security concerns; third, economic interdependence; and at the end, deepening/widening debate on European integration, which is ongoing in Austrian politics (Balfour and Stratulat, 2015, p. 6).

Integration of the Western Balkans for France has a huge importance because of the position of this region. Taking into account the fact that this region is surrounded by the EU member states, its integration will contribute to further stabilization of the European continent and geographically, it will create a unified space of the EU. France tends to align itself on enlargement with the positions of Germany – its key European partner – but adopts a less vocal and more passive stance than Berlin (Balfour and Stratulat, 2015, p. 5).

The accession of the Western Balkans into the European Union is of vital interest for the Italian Republic. Italian politicians recognize this region as an opportunity for further economic integration and strengthening the national economy through spreading economic ties with potential member states. Italian Republic considers Serbia and Albania as the most important countries for its national agenda, particularly for economic, commercial and energy reasons, and

is strongly concerned about the situation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Balfour and Stratulat, 2015, p. 5).

Similar position toward integration of the Western Balkans have other member states of the EU, which are in the immediate neighborhood with candidates from mentioned region. Slovenia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece due to their geographical location and economic bonds with neighboring countries, aim at the rapid integration of the said region into the European Union (Sadowski and Mus, 2008, p. 15).

The Visegrad group continuously gives strong support to the European integration of the Western Balkans. Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic are trying to provide assistance to Western Balkan candidates on their path to European Union membership. Those countries emphasize their sub-regional experience of integration as a step which has facilitated their path to the European family. According to the Visegrad group, Western Balkan candidates should use the experience of the Visegrad group and their informal sub-regional integration as a positive example on the European path. The V4 countries decided to use their collective leverage, as successful new members of the EU, to help the Western Balkans become a true region in political, economic and security terms (Bushati and Zaoralek, 2016, p. 1). Away from “empty regionalism”, the Visegrad Group can successfully act as a role model for democratic state-building and economic rule of law in the Western Balkans (Bushati and Zaoralek, 2016, p. 1).

For the Republic of Croatia, European integration of Western Balkan candidates, or more precisely integration of their neighbours within European structures, is also one of the priorities in its foreign policy agenda. Despite the open questions on the regional level, political representatives from Zagreb are providing full support for the comprehensive integration of the region. Croatia shares with many other member states concerns about the growing influence of Russia in the region (Balfour and Stratulat, 2015, p. 6). From the other point, actual political turbulences show that Croatia could use instruments which cannot contribute to the accelerated integration of the region. Although Croatia has repeatedly rejected the possibility that it may resort to obstructions against Western Balkan candidates, the recent conservative/nationalistic tendencies in Croatian society and the political arena pose a risk of less cooperative policies moving to the fore in the future (Balfour and Stratulat, 2015, p. 7)

CONCLUSION

Western Balkan candidates (Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo* and Albania) are facing similar, even the same, challenges on the European path to the full membership. Although the strategic documents

and declarations of the mentioned countries state their full dedication to the process of European integration, internal and regional problems show that nothing substantial is done to overcome the above-mentioned questions and disputes. In the last twenty-five years, these countries have been dealing with the same questions. On the regional level, we can notice the lack of cooperation and the existence of distrust on the high political level. Local political elites are using vulnerable questions as instruments in their political conflicts. Minority questions and questions regarding history and national heritage are still on the top of the priority list during the election cycle in the Western Balkans region. Economic problems and structural questions within societies are continuously being marginalized as a consequence of the lack of solutions among local political elites. From this point of view, we cannot observe the British referendum as a potential barrier on the European path of the Western Balkans. As we noted at the beginning of this article, Britain's exit from the European Union can complicate the integration of Western Balkan candidates, but it should not influence crucially on their potential membership. In the next years, European institutions will be occupied with internal challenges and its re-integration, but that does not mean that they will completely change their guidelines toward the Western Balkans. The referendum in Great Britain represents an additional example of how local political elites use other justifications because of their failures in the process of accelerating European integration. Annual reports of progress clearly emphasize that the process of European integration of the Western Balkan region depends on resolving internal and regional issues in the region. All other questions within the European Union are also important, but they cannot be crossroads which are able to change strategic directions of the European Union toward the Western Balkans.

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Mitko ARNAUDOV

**FENOMEN BREXIT-A I ZEMLJE KANDIDATI
SA ZAPADNOG BALKANA: PRILIKA ZA UBRZANU INTEGRACIJU,
TIPIČNI STATUS QUO ILI DUGOROČNO ODLAGANJE**

Apstrakt: Uticaj Velike Britanije na proces evrointegracije zapadnog Balkana je veoma značajan, no ne i krucijalan. Iako Ministarstvo spoljnih poslova Velike Britanije deluje u smeru horizontalne integracije Evropske unije, ova država nema vitalan interes za potencijalnu ubrzanu integraciju država sa kandidatskim statusom iz regiona zapadnog Balkana. Glavni cilj u ovom radu je da se opiše uloga Velike Britanije u procesima pristupanja zapadno-balkanskih država sa kandidatskim statusom (Makedonija, Srbija, Albanija i Crna Gora), kao i država sa potencijalnim kandidatskim statusom (Kosovo* i Bosna i Hercegovina). U ovom radu će biti analiziran referendum u Velikoj Britaniji i njegov uticaj na integraciju zapadnog Balkana u Evropskoj uniji. Kroz razmatranje regionalnih i unutrašnjih izazova između zapadno-balkanskih država-kandidata (Makedonija, Srbija, Albanija i Crna Gora) i potencijalnih kandidata (Kosovo* i Bosna i Hercegovina), cilj u ovom radu je da se odgovori na pitanje da li je aktuelna stagnacija na putu ka Evropskoj uniji posledica lokalnih pitanja, ili se radi o problemima unutar Unije. Takođe, autor u ovom radu će staviti naglasak na ulogu drugih zemalja-članica Evropske unije koje su takođe zainteresovane za proces integracije zapadnog Balkana. Rezultati referenduma u Velikoj Britaniji bili su visoko pozicionirani u lokalnim medijima i u okvirima političkih elita sa prostora zapadnog Balkana, ali sa realističke tačke gledišta, takvi rezultati ne bi trebalo da imaju nikakav dominantan uticaj na proces ubrzanja ili usporavanja integracije zapadnog Balkana u Evropskoj uniji. Osnovni cilj u ovom članku je da se ukaže na to da strukturni problemi unutar Evropske unije i referendum u Velikoj Britaniji ne bi trebalo da predstavljaju dodatnu barijeru na evropskom putu zapadnog Balkana. Budućnost evropskih integracija zapadnog Balkana i dalje zavisi od dinamike procesa reforme i konkretnih mera na unutrašnjem i regionalnom nivou u skladu sa politikom Evropske unije.

Ključne reči: Zapadni Balkan, Evropska unija, Velika Britanija, integracija, migracija, referendum, Evropske institucije.

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