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1993-2018 TWENTY FIVE YEARS OF POLICY FORMULATION AND ANALYSIS

“FROM ANKARA WITH LOVE”



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Many remember the 1964 Cold War thriller “From Russia With Love”. On June 24, another tale of power and intrigue played out in Turkey with the “elections” that crowned Erdogan as Turkey’s unquestioned Islamic leader.

Erdogan’s remarkable rise to power requires careful study because of the methods he used and the implications of his successful quest for absolute power. At first he presented his “reformist” credentials as Mayor of Istanbul. He then entered national politics having overcome obstacles raised by the military establishment. Following appropriate electoral and constitutional changes, he assumed Turkey’s presidency, an office crafted according to his specifications.

In 2002, the West celebrated the “reformist”, “democratic”, “Europeanist” Erdogan who defused threats from the military with help from the EU and the US. His opening to the Kurds enhanced his reformist credentials. Curbing the military was welcomed by the Turkish public after years of direct and indirect military rule. In turn, the Bush and the Obama administrations promoted Turkey as a paradigm of a “democratic Islamic state.” For a time, this thoughtless slogan served America’s objectives in the war against Islamic terror. Strong economic and security ties with Israel strengthened Turkey’s quest for American support.

Erdogan’s Islamic/authoritarian objectives became evident after 2007. The 2010 flotilla incident reflected his quest for leadership in the Arab world. Ankara’s failure to meet the terms agreed upon for the accession talks with the EU; growing evidence of corruption; the 2013 Gezi protests, and the systematic purging of state institutions from suspected Erdogan opponents and critics, especially in the aftermath of the failed 2016 coup, raised serious doubts about Turkey’s democratic and secular credentials.

By the fall of 2016, Erdogan’s transition from a reformist politician to a dictatorial, Islamic, neo-Ottoman ruler was complete. Over fourteen years Erdogan managed to deceive not only Turkey’s secular and military establishment but also Western Europe, the US and Israel. Even though the

signs of the “real” Erdogan were there, most observers chose to ignore them for political, strategic and economic reasons. The “real” Erdogan should alarm not only Cyprus, Greece and Israel but also Turkey’s neighbors, the EU and the US.

Turkey, throughout the Cold War, masquerading behind Ataturk’s “independent” foreign policy and the country’s strategic location managed to extract massive aid from both superpowers. Erdogan built on that tradition. In the post-Cold War period, he saw new opportunities to restore Turkey’s role in the Balkans, the Middle East and even in parts of Africa. Ahmet Davutoglu provided the theoretical foundation for Erdogan’s neo-Ottomanist revisionist agenda. Erdogan’s predecessors and mentors included people like Turgut Ozal, Ismail Cem and Erbakan. Davutoglu provided a coherent framework for many of the ideas and policies that guided Erdogan’s predecessors. He promoted the idea that Turkish policy is guided by morality and historical determinism. Turkey, as the legal heir of the Ottoman Empire, needed to leverage its strategic depth in the region. Turkey, was not imperialist. It promoted a “zero problem” agenda with its neighbors. It had a rich cultural and historical heritage. Through such lofty ideals Turkey justified its actions in Cyprus and the Aegean since the early 1970’s and advocated the need for a security zone beyond the country’s current borders to protect it from external interference. This had reminders of Germany’s lebensraum theories of the 1930’s. Davutoglu and Erdogan advocated Turkey’s right to intervene on behalf of Muslims in Cyprus, the Balkans, in Palestine, as well as in Bosnia, Croatia, Albania, the FYROM, Serbia and Kosovo. They offered Turkey’s mediation services in regional disputes. These lofty aims were undermined by Erdogan’s slogans, including the now famous “Kosovo is Turkey and Turkey is Kosovo”; aggressive actions in Syria; toleration of Islamic militants moving through and sheltering in Turkey prior to joining ISIS; and support extended to Islamic movements in Egypt and the Arab Middle East following the Arab Spring revolts. In an attempt to deflect Western criticism of Turkey’s political and social backsliding, Erdogan started flirting with the BRICS and the Shanghai 5; criticized and opposed international sanctions on Iran and, along with Brazil (another nuclear aspirant) signed a nuclear fuel swap agreement with Iran in 2010.

In assessing the implications of Erdogan’s and Davutoglu’s theories and policies one also needs to keep in mind the continuity and consistency of Turkish policy objectives regardless of who is in power and the nature of the country’s political system. Countries such as Israel, Greece and Cyprus must carefully assess Turkey’s traditional negotiating behavior and goals. Recent aggressive actions in the Cypriot EEZ, the violent suppression of the Kurds in and around Turkey; the planned acquisition of the sophisticated Russian S-400 air defense system and SU57 aircraft, even though Turkey is a NATO member, raise serious questions about the regional balance of power and Turkey’s continuing blackmail of friends and allies.

Given Erdogan's ambitions and actions, Turkey's allies and neighbors must also carefully monitor Turkey's nuclear ambitions. Turkey cannot attain the dominant regional role it is seeking without nuclear weapons. Two of its main rivals, Iran and Israel, either possess that capability or are close to attaining it. Turkey's nuclear quest is not new. In the late 90's I was involved in the successful effort that stopped the sale of a Canadian nuclear reactor to Turkey for its proposed Akuyu nuclear plant. A similar reactor had been used by Pakistan in its nuclear weapons program. Today, Turkey with Russian and Japanese assistance is embarking on a major "peaceful" nuclear reactor program aiming to build some 30 reactors over the next twenty five years, starting first in Akuyu, in the Black Sea and in Eastern Thrace. During Pakistan's nuclear quest, Turkey was the prime conduit for bypassing the failed international embargo on nuclear technology and materials used by A. Q. Khan to build Pakistan's nuclear weapons. Since then, Pakistan has freely shared its nuclear technology with rogue states including North Korea. Turkey's political, cultural and military ties with Pakistan date back to the 1950's and the now defunct CENTO. Turkey does not have to reinvent the wheel. It has the scientific, the financial and the military commitment to attain its nuclear goals with Pakistani technology. The great unknown in this equation is how the US and Israel will respond to Erdogan's grandiose schemes. The challenge for Greece, Cyprus, Israel, the EU and the US is real. How do these countries plan to protect their interests in view of Erdogan's neo-Ottoman ambitions? The need for regional cooperation is greater than ever before.

Following the latest electoral results in Turkey, Ankara's public relations and think tank promoters in the US and Europe have started calling on policy makers to show "sensitivity and understanding" of Turkey's needs, interests and new political system. However, this theme has a long history. Every time Turkey is in trouble or Western governments stand up to Turkey's blackmail, we hear the same rationalizations. Preventing Turkey's return to a neo-Ottomanist/Islamic mode serves western interests. This cannot be achieved by succumbing to Turkey's blackmail, threats, revisionist actions, violations of basic democratic norms and unwillingness to abide by established international legal norms simply because Erdogan claims that his country is "different". Since WWII Europe and the US have extended a helping hand to Turkey and have tolerated its international and domestic misconduct. That cannot continue any longer. Hopefully, informed publics in Greece, Cyprus and in Israel will understand this message. Their countries are most immediately affected by the storm clouds gathering in their neighborhood. Only by firm and cooperative action can they counter Turkey's emerging threat.

BREXIT APPROACHES THE AUTUMN DEADLINE



Kirsty Hughes
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Few now think that a UK-EU Brexit deal will be done by the EU's October summit – the original deadline. But it will need to be done by November or at the latest December if any deal is to be ratified by the EU27, the European Parliament and Westminster ahead of Brexit day on 29th March 2019.

Brexit has looked over the last year or more, since Article 50 was triggered in March 2017 by Theresa May, more and more like a groundhog day. The Conservative cabinet remain deeply divided over whether to choose a 'hard' or a 'soft' Brexit. And while they argue and posture amongst themselves, it is hard to avoid the impression they see the real negotiation as within the Tory party and not with the EU. But this is, of course, a false impression and even May's slow 'shift' to a 'softer' Brexit looks, for the EU, more like a groundhog repeat of UK 'cake and eat it' demands than a serious negotiating position.

By early July, major businesses in the UK were finally starting to sound the alarm very seriously over the deeply negative impact of harder borders on just-in-time production, availability of skilled staff, investment decisions and more – Aerospace, BMW and Jaguar were amongst those speaking out. Where the debate had previously centred on how to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland, businesses brought the focus back, in part, to the UK's other borders with the EU.

Public opinion has shifted towards 'remain' since the vote just over two years ago. Polls for several months have suggested support of 51-54% for 'remain'. But this 'remain' sentiment has very little political voice – despite some highly active campaigns – as Labour continues, under Jeremy Corbyn, to accept the 2016 Brexit vote. Even in Scotland, the Scottish National Party (SNP), despite two-thirds of Scottish voters now supporting 'remain', puts more emphasis on a 'soft' Brexit than on halting Brexit.

There is, however, growing public support for a further referendum – a 'people's vote' – on whatever deal Theresa May comes home with (assuming she does achieve a deal rather than a 'no deal' outcome). But while the LibDems support this neither the Tories, Labour, nor (so far) the SNP do.

Progress has been halting since the EU and UK's joint report at the end of last year. Then they agreed a set of principles on how to keep the Irish border with Northern Ireland open, on finance and on the principle of a transition period until the end of December 2020. But despite the EU Council in March this year agreeing to move onto talks on the future relationship, progress has been stymied by lack of a clear and credible position from the UK, and lack of adequate progress on a backstop for Northern Ireland – and indeed on governance of the Withdrawal agreement.

Theresa May's red lines – leaving the EU's customs union and single market, not coming under the authority of the Court of Justice of the EU, and not maintaining free movement of people – have left observers and negotiators alike aghast. Not only would such red lines be extremely damaging for businesses whose supply chains run across the EU from the UK but also make it impossible to do a deal to keep the Irish border open – unless May dropped another red line of not having a border in the Irish Sea between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK.

How will this be resolved? Since early June, fears that a 'no deal' Brexit could still happen have resurfaced. The basic divorce deal in the draft Withdrawal agreement will not go through unless, along with a deal on money, the rights of EU citizens in the UK and transition, there is also an open border guaranteed in detail between Northern Ireland and Ireland. A 'no deal' Brexit is a real possibility still.

A 'no deal' Brexit would create political, economic and legal chaos – especially in the UK but with shockwaves hitting the EU too. Of course, one possibility is that in the midst of a 'no deal' crisis, public opinion shifts more sharply to 'remain', that Labour changes its position back to 'remain' or at least to a people's vote. A majority might at that point exist in the House of Commons to withdraw the Article 50 notification (though politically at least this will need support of the EU27). Equally, in such a crisis, there might be an early general election which might lead the way to a further EU referendum and a UK change of heart.

But in the meantime, Theresa May is putting forward 'semi-soft' proposals for the UK to have a customs partnership with the EU. In this 'arrangement', the UK would be not quite in the customs union but would collect tariffs on goods coming into the UK at EU rates while still having separate UK trade deals with the rest of the world – UK companies would request reimbursement from the UK government if UK tariffs were in fact lower than EU ones. Complex and hard to understand? Indeed. Likely to be accepted by the EU? No.

But an almost customs union on its own cannot ensure open, frictionless borders between the UK and EU. So May has edged towards proposing almost full alignment with the EU's single market for goods but not for services. This

and the customs partnership splits her cabinet deeply. And it runs right across EU guidelines on preserving the integrity of the single market.

As this ramshackle political show staggers forward, the UK economy, its international reputation and even its security is at stake. But the fact that in the political arena, there is no substantial political opposition to the Conservative government's weak, divided, damaging and shambolic government, tells us that UK politics is failing too. Whether England comes to its senses on Brexit in the coming months – since it is effectively England (and Wales) that are driving Brexit – is still to be hoped for but cannot be anticipated as very likely.

The EU for its part appears determined to preserve its institutional and economic set-up and to stand by Ireland recognising, as the EU's leaders do, the importance to the peace process and the Irish economy, of keeping an open border with Northern Ireland. Beyond that, the EU can only hope that the UK does indeed leave the EU next March – before its on-going political collapse distracts the EU any further from its own big challenges.

ARE COMFORTABLE INTRACTABLE CONFLICTS REALLY THAT COMFORTABLE?



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While most inter-state and inter-communal disputes eventually see their way to a resolution, about 5% of them end up dragging on for years, decades, even centuries. These disputes are called “intractable”. Some examples of intractable conflicts are those between Israel and the Palestinians/Arab World, the conflict between India and Pakistan over the disputed territory of Kashmir, and the dispute in Cyprus.

Overall, and probably rightly so, most people tend to see disputes as a major disruption: to peaceful co-existence, safety and security, commerce, development, and human rights. But alongside the “negative” view of conflicts, scholars also explore the possibility that certain intractable conflicts are actually “comfortable”, presenting the disputants with incentives to actively avoid seeking a resolution.

While the conjunction of the words “conflict” and “comfortable” appear intuitively to be the very definition of an oxymoron, in the case of the conflict of Cyprus, the “comfortable intractable” conflict perspective holds, for example, that: “... the once violent inter-communal conflict in Cyprus has transformed through the decade into a comfortable *status quo* that has enabled the main stakeholders, and everyone else directly or indirectly influenced by the problem, to take advantage of the situation on the ground, which has in turn developed a desire to intentionally protract the comfortable conflict.”¹

But there is another way to look at comfortable intractable conflicts, and that is as not so ‘comfortable’ but actually as ‘chronic’ stalemates, where, despite the hurting nature of the situation, the disputants still choose to maintain the *status quo*, either because they may think that the “cure” (resolution) may be worse than the *status quo ante*, or because they behave in a predictably irrational manner that results in a permanent choice of the default (*status*

¹ Mensur Akgün, ed. (2013). *Managing Intractable Conflicts: Lessons from Moldova and Cyprus*, (Golden Medya Matbaacılık ve Tic. A.Ş: Istanbul, Turkey), p.11.

quo) position, effectively negating the possibility of ever moving toward resolution.

Dan Ariely, a *Professor of Psychology and Behavioral Economics at Duke University*, in Durham, North Carolina, USA, and the author of several books that explore human decision making², has developed a possible explanation for the question of comfortable intractable conflicts. According to Ariely, politicians, and other decision makers in such situations, end up steering their constituencies into extended periods of intractable conflicts, which are, in fact, anything but comfortable, because of three main reasons: loss aversion, fear of regret, and action-inaction bias.

How do these three human reactions come into play to create the comfortable intractable conflict picture?³

Loss Aversion

According to Ariely, when contemplating proactive steps to change the *status quo*, decision makers are often driven by a tendency to focus, and emphasize on what can be lost if things go wrong, as opposed to what may be gained if things go right. While it's totally reasonable to assume that taking risks exposes to both the possibility of losses and gains, we usually end up spending much more time contemplating the downside of failure than the upside of success. Such an attitude inevitably leads to an aversion from loss, which in turn leads to avoiding taking any action that can effectively lead to a change in the *status quo* – such as a resolution, for example. Since no change is likely to take place spontaneously, loss aversion inevitably increases the possibility of resolution avoidance.

Fear of Regret

Fear of regret is another powerful driver to do nothing. Since taking risks can lead to either gains or losses, if we do something, there is clearly a chance that things will not go right and we may live to regret our decision to act. Conversely, if we take no action whatsoever, it seems to us that there is less cause for regret; it is easy to see how the intuitive perception can be very misleading in this case. After all, not taking an action can lead to the same sense of regret as taking an action. But the perception alone is usually enough to freeze us into inaction – lest we regret our action.

² Dan Ariely is the *author, among others, of "Predictably Irrational," "The Upside of Irrationality," "The Honest Truth about Dishonesty" and "Irrationally Yours."*

³ The explanations of loss aversion, fear of regret and action-inaction bias are based on several papers by Dan Ariely and others, including: Dan Ariely, Joel Huber, Klaus Wertenbroch (2005) When Do Losses Loom Larger Than Gains? *Journal of Marketing Research*: May 2005, Vol. 42, No. 2, pp. 134-138. Ariely, D. (2008). *Predictably irrational: The hidden forces that shape our decisions*. New York, NY: Harper.

Action-Inaction Bias

This bias is a different way of describing fear of regret. The bias expresses itself in a strong sense of regret that accompanies an action we take, compared to a smaller sense of regret that we feel when we do nothing (inaction). This differential intensity is explained by the fact that, having taken an action, we can track it back in our memory all the way to the decision point and even before it; this process causes us to feel that had we not taken any action we wouldn't be in the current situation today (the situation we regret), and such a recognition is usually accompanied by self-recrimination, intensifying the action bias. After several experiences of action-based regret, we will be much more likely to choose inaction.

How does all that connect to protracted comfortable conflicts? Well, it turns out that decision makers and politicians tend to “suffer” from loss aversion, fear of regret and inaction bias; that is quite understandable, since public officials tend to constantly worry about being blamed by their constituencies for taking actions that turn out to bear negative results, or be judged as incorrect. Politicians abhor regret – it's a sign of weakness, and hints at bad choices and faulty decision making⁴. What would be easier than claiming that the conflict is “comfortable” and that “time is on our hands”, and avoid all these unpleasantness?⁵

⁴ <https://www.haaretz.com/why-politicians-avid-regret-and-can-t-make-peace-1.5417521>

⁵ Crocker, C. A., Hampson, F. O., & Aall, P. R. (2004). *Taming intractable conflicts: Mediation in the hardest cases*. Washington, D.C: United States Institute of Peace Press

EAST MEDITERRANEAN: FORMING ALLIANCES - DEFINING ENEMIES

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The joint declaration following the second Trilateral Cyprus-Greece-Israel Defense Meeting in Larnaca, Cyprus on 22 June, 2018 did not surprise anyone with its vague wording about cooperation, collaboration and strategic consultations that is till the three Defense Ministers – Angelides, Kammenos and Lieberman – meet again, in Israel this time, in the foreseeable future.¹ Nevertheless, it is difficult to believe not only that British Armed Forces Minister Mark Lancaster’s visit to Cyprus, but also the identical phrases which were used, in order to describe the main subjects discussed with Cypriot military officials, referring to the third successive annual renewal of the Bilateral Defense Cooperation Program (BDCP) between the UK and the RoC, were purely coincidental . Lancaster’s visit comes four months after UK Defense Minister Gavin Williamson held talks in Cyprus with local military officials.² While very little has been announced after the completion of those consultations held at the same time, Greek-Cypriot media sources kept the possibilities open for a new round of trilateral meetings between Cyprus and Greece along with Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon as well as with Ramallah’s Palestinian Authority, focusing on regional security issues. The question one might pose would involve identifying the exact factors or countries which are able to threaten what is vaguely referred to as *regional stability*.

It is not the first time the West, and especially the United Kingdom, initiated regional alliances in order to protect militarily the East Mediterranean region. In 1954, at the UN General Assembly during the debate over the first Greek Appeal on Cyprus, the Saudi Representative along with other Arab Delegations critical to the West, contested the British argumentation with a series of rhetoric questions: "*Who is meant to be protected by Britain’s presence on Cyprus? The Arabs? And who is threatening them? Are they*

¹ Press and Information Office of the Republic of Cyprus, *Press Release: Joint Declaration of the Cyprus-Greece-Israel second Trilateral Defense Meeting held in Larnaka, Cyprus, on June 22, 2018*. (22.06.2018)
<https://www.pio.gov.cy/en/press-releases-article.html?id=2510#flat>

² Cyprus Mail Online, UK Armed Forces Minister on two-day visit. (22.06.2018)
<https://cyprus-mail.com/2018/06/22/uk-armed-forces-minister-on-two-day-visit>

threatened by themselves?".³ While the questions were officially left unanswered, Britain intended to remain the guarantor of Western interests in the Middle East and East Mediterranean. Serious efforts were made by London during the years 1949-1953 in order to create a common ground of a multinational regional military alliance by restructuring the Cyprus-based *British Middle East Command (MEC)*, whose main goal would have been the prevention of a possible Soviet expansion in the region. The new Middle East Command would have- directly or indirectly - included regional players, such as Greece, Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon and Israel, along with other states in the Levant. Surprisingly enough, Greece and Turkey did not object to the possibility of such a bilateral cooperation, since both countries were about to enter NATO. Nevertheless, serious obstacles came from Israel's concern over a possible Nasserist reinforcement, as a result of a dangerous '*Anglo-Saxon naivety*', as seen by David Ben-Gurion. The Israeli Prime Minister had no doubt, that in case Egypt became a part of the Command, President Gamal Abdel Nasser would use the US and British military equipment in order not to assure regional stability but to solve the Jewish Problem by force, once and for all.⁴ At the same time though, President Nasser did not want to cut ties with Moscow and he decided not to become a part of Britain's strategic regional alliances. In the end, London was unable to convince the West, and especially the US, about the effectiveness of a regional multinational military alliance in the East Mediterranean⁵ - a fact that did not prevent the Suez Crisis in 1956.

Six decades later, in case regional pro-Western players are willing to form a strategic military alliance in the East Mediterranean, their primary dilemmas will have to focus on defining who their common enemy is. Israel feels threatened by Hamas, the Iranian-backed South Lebanon's Hezbollah, and last - but not least - by Iran's presence in a fragile post-war Syrian status quo, which is to be defined. The Republic of Cyprus' concern stems from the continuous Turkish occupation of the 1/3 of its internationally recognized territory, as well as from Turkey's determination to alienate the RoC administration from its natural gas resources. Greece, apart from its historical ties, political and constitutional commitments with the Greek-Cypriot Community, feels threatened by Turkey's ability to foster anytime a severe refugee crisis in the Aegean or even to instigate a warm incident, in case Athens declares its EEZ, which will include the island of Kastelorizo. While Israel and Jordan cooperate silently on major issues of common interest since the start of the Syrian crisis, continuous tensions in the West Bank, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip do not enable their military high-rank officials to shake

³ ISA-Israel State Archives/RG93/MFA/263/6 International Organizations Department, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Gideon Rafael, General Secretary, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs and United Nations Department, Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 27.12.1954.

⁴ David Ben-Gurion, *Beayot ha'Medina – Mediniut Khutz shel Yisrael* (Jerusalem: Sherutey Modiin, 1951), 16.

⁵ David R. Devereaux, *The Formulation of British Defense Policy Towards the Middle East, 1948-1956* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), 43-74.

hands in public. On the one hand, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza cannot serve as an alibi to Hamas' political and military practices. On the other hand, it is not difficult to understand why Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the Arab and Muslim World are not willing to openly condemn a Palestinian entity, although the international community considers it as a terrorist organization. It is true that Egypt will not be content with a possible Iranian exit to the Mediterranean, or even with a Turkish presence in the greater natural gas pipeline map – since any of these developments might affect Egyptian natural gas exports to Europe. One might even assume that revisionist Turkey could be defined as the main destabilizing factor in the region. Nevertheless, despite President Erdogan's controversial presence in the international diplomatic scene, he has proven to be a key regional player, still able to build bridges with Russia and Iran at the never-ending Syrian saga, while nobody can ignore that Turkey is, and will remain, a very important NATO ally.

Forming a regional military alliance in today's East Mediterranean is not a simple task. However, under these present circumstances and interrelations, defining a common enemy seems to be intriguing. One should not ignore that regional equations are still incomplete: Constantly changing variables in Syria may bring about further regional turmoil, since the US have not yet said their last word about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Iran's place in the world and Russia's return to the Levant. One might as well think that the region is experiencing a slight *déjà-vu*, with the British Sovereign Bases in Cyprus getting ready for the upcoming post-Brexit era.⁶

Undoubtedly, stability in the East Mediterranean has to be the common goal. Nevertheless, in order to form a sustainable regional military alliance, a common enemy has to be defined.

⁶ cf., Gabriel Haritos, *Prospects for Upgrading Israel-UK Regional Cooperation in a post-Brexit Era*, Policy Paper 1/2016, Cyprus Center for European and International Affairs, University of Nicosia, 6.7.2016; Γαβριήλ Χαρίτος, *Προοπτικές Αναβάθμισης της Περιφερειακής Συνεργασίας Ισραήλ-Βρετανίας στην μετά-Brexit Εποχή*, Κείμενο Πολιτικής 1/2016, Κυπριακό Κέντρο Ευρωπαϊκών και Διεθνών Υποθέσεων, Πανεπιστήμιο Λευκωσίας, 6.7.2016 http://ccea.unic.ac.cy/wp-content/uploads/PolicyPaper_1-2016.pdf

WHAT TO DO WITH (THE NORTH OF) KOSOVO? THE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EU



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Introduction

Kosovo has never been an easy place to live in – and to deal with. After the Serb-Montenegrin units managed to reconquer the territory during the Balkan Wars (1912-13) and reclaim the so called 'cradle and heart of Serbia' from the Ottomans in the area, Kosovo officially became the part of Serbia again (Zupančič and Pejič 2018). The Treaty of Bucharest (1913), which internationally legalized the new reality in the region, was met everything but positively by the Albanians – not in Kosovo only, but in the whole territory of the so called 'ethnic Albania'. Namely, the Albanians had hoped that the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire would bring them some sort of autonomy or even independence. For a few millions of Albanians these aspirations turned to bear fruits (Albania was established as a state in November 1912), whereas the Albanians living in Kosovo were not that fortunate and got instead of independence another set of 'foreign rulers' (Serbs).

Following a NATO-led military campaign against Federal Republic of Yugoslavia a good century later (1999), also the Kosovo Albanians managed to get rid of what they called 'Serbian yoke'. But the political question of Kosovo (statehood) has not been resolved yet. After the declaration of independence of Kosovo in 2008 and the gradual and painful process of gaining international recognition (many influential countries, though, do not foresee the recognition in the near future), the European Union (EU) put itself in charge of the stabilization of this part of the former Yugoslavia. Probably the most difficult issue, which remains to be resolved on the axis Prishtina-Belgrade-Brussels, is the issue of the northern part of Kosovo – the area north of Ibar River, predominantly populated by Serbs.

What can(not) be done by the EU, and why is this so?

In the post-conflict environment, it is almost impossible to isolate the factors that supported or hindered the peacebuilding efforts of a certain actor. Hence, the performance of the EU in peacebuilding in Kosovo should be assessed through the prism of a wider conundrum of several international actors active in this post-conflict society (states with their own interests,

international governmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations etc.). On the other hand, a long series of flaws that have happened under 'the EU flag' should not be ignored (corruption cases, bad practices in the EU institutions etc.; see Capussela, 2015; Zupančič et al 2018), especially because so vast resources have been committed to Kosovo by the EU (financial, human, material etc.) without knowing the efficiency.

In spite of almost two decades of engagement by the EU (and other international actors), Kosovo remains one of the least developed European countries with widespread unemployment, corruption and overall bad performance in the rule of law sector. Almost 20 years after the Serbs (the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) *de facto* lost power over Kosovo, many people still largely rely on particularistic networks to access resources, jobs etc. The question 'who you know', 'who can help you', and 'how much does it cost to resolve an issue' replace the efficient state administration, which as of now exists only in embryo. The EU presence in Kosovo cannot be charged with being unaware of these wrongdoings. On the contrary, several interviewees (the staff of the EU Office in Kosovo and EULEX, researchers working in think-tanks and alike) have acknowledged that the political-criminal elites in Kosovo seem to be stronger than all international organizations and do not turn a blind eye to that. The other thing is, whether they have a leverage to confront such wrongdoings. The answer is quite straightforward – they don't. However, the responsibility is not their (only), but has to be understood in the wider structural reasons and understanding of the difficulties the EU is facing on its attempted way to become a normative or even a global actor.

The possible solution would be that the EU, as the main peacebuilding actor in Kosovo aiming to establish the rule of law and a functioning economy, should press the EU member states, which have the final say in CSDP decisions, to provide the wherewithal to fulfil the missions mandate – even if, like in Kosovo, this may sometimes challenge 'the stability-above-all argument'. In other words, as we claim [in a recently published monograph](#) on Kosovo (Zupančič and Pejič, 2008), it is not enough for EU member states to only provide funding for 'peacebuilding activities' (which is perhaps a relatively easy part), but the commitments for the stabilization should also be reflected in a way that the EU member states second to missions in Kosovo their most knowledgeable experts (not only those who *want* to go to Kosovo because of good salaries).

Furthermore, it would be important to reach the political agreement(s) in all EU member states that, at least, the stabilization and normalization of Kosovo is in everyone's interest, regardless of (political) statehood of Kosovo. Such arrangements can be reached – though not easily –, as it has been demonstrated with the launching EULEX mission in 2008, whose deployment has been made possible also because none of the EU member states, including [five 'non-recognizers' \(Greece, Cyprus, Spain, Slovakia and](#)

[Romania\) did not object its establishment](#). The reason of non-objecting the mission by the 'non-recognizers' was the fact that the improvement of the rule-of-law in Kosovo does not go at the account of any of the member states and that the establishment of this very mission does not imply the recognition of Kosovar statehood.

On the other hand, [if 'the stability argument' prevails at the expense of the unwavering implementation of reforms at the EU level – and it usually does in the case of Kosovo](#), unfortunately – it is better for the mission or operation's leadership to explicitly state the mandate's objectives cannot be met in such circumstances where full support is lacking. If this is the case, the CSDP mission or operation's leadership should require the mandate to be changed or suggest it be closed and withdrawn from the post-conflict society. But it is, of course, a wishful thinking that the employees of well-paid CSDP missions and operations would themselves be interested in abolishing their jobs.

The north of Kosovo and its specifics

Another question that pertains to the north of Kosovo in particular is the issue of dealing with the most troubling issues north of the Ibar River. Many people in 'the north' (Serbs) claim that the Albanians are not the main source of threat for them anymore. On the contrary, as many argue (see Zupančič, 2018, forthcoming), the criminal elites with alleged ties to the political establishment have become the main source of insecurity in the north of Kosovo. In other words: the local Serbs now argue that they do not feel that much pressure from the biggest ethnic group in Kosovo anymore, but rather that [their ethnic compatriots are something a Serb has to be afraid of](#).

Such a stance has been publicly stated also the Kosovo Serb opposition political leader Oliver Ivanović, who has been assassinated during daylight by the unknown criminals in the centre of Kosovska Mitrovica in March 2018. This intra-ethnic cleavage with often criminal background has been acknowledged by several interlocutors from the EU side. The majority of interlocutors the author of this contribution has had a chance to talk to believe that the executors with ties to Serbian criminal underworld assassinated him because he dared to openly confront the political elites in Kosovo and Serbia. Apart from this assassination, which has half a year later not bear any results, when it comes to the question of perpetrators, the residents of northern Kosovo daily face verbal attacks and intimidations, if they challenge the Serbian political elite in the north of Kosovo (Srpska lista). Some of them also have experience of attacks on their belongings and/or property (bombs planted under cars, arsons etc.). The EU, however, usually does not do much more than 'strongly condemning any form of violence'. The perpetrators – being very much aware of incapability of international actors (including the EU) and local legal enforcement agencies – thus remain at large, without even the need of being very cautious, as they know no one can actually stop them. The EU officials in Kosovo, when speaking on the condition of anonymity,

usually admit this has been the case, and are themselves frustrated by their incapability to 'do something'.

The officials of the EU institutions in Kosovo argue that not much can be done in this regard, as they are not equipped with necessary tools. In such a security vacuum, in which the general wisdom tells that the state administration (with repressive apparatus, too) has not been efficient, the so called 'instability structures' emerged. We have in mind certain persons in the north of Kosovo, who actually have the power and control over this part of Kosovo and are better not to be challenged and confronted. Their reach is, however, much greater and is not limited to Kosovo only.

In such a context, ordinary people start to behave differently, adapting their everyday lives to the fact that they do not believe that Kosovo police (which is staffed also by Serbs) has any significant power and that policemen in official uniforms of the Kosovo state are any kind of a safety guarantee, but are rather left to handling petty crime and traffic violations. In such an environment of general distrust in the institutions, the locals become forced to develop their own strategies of 'everyday peace' (read: survival), which is met with the silent approval of EU officials working in Kosovo, who tacitly admit that in these circumstances, when the EU member states support is not unwavering, it cannot be much different.

The EU officials involved in the peacebuilding efforts in Kosovo thus keep arguing that their hands are tied and the only thing they can do is to try to award EU-funded projects to people allegedly without any ties to 'the structures'. On the other hand, for 'the structures' it is very easy to open a new company, which allegedly is not connected to them, and continue benefit from the EU tenders (aimed for improving the living conditions in Kosovo, or peacebuilding in a wide sense). Thus, for the EU, its reliance on economic instruments to conduct peacebuilding, and ignoring the problems everyone is aware of, makes for quite an ambiguous policy – particularly, if the EU aspires to become a normative power actor, which sets the standards of 'normalcy' in international relations.

The last issue exposed in this contribution is the question of the EU's support for civil society. Undoubtedly, civil society is needed for the development of stable democracy. However, several locals (we could call them 'NGO entrepreneurs') directly benefit from the fact that international organizations and states have relatively a lot of money for the development of civil society in post-conflict societies. Kosovo is not an exception to the rule. Thus, it is widely rumoured – though never publicly written, as it might be dangerous – that quite a few of people, who have been involved in civil society activities from the beginning of 'post-conflict phase' (so, from 1999 on) and have so become 'the chosens' of the internationals, enjoy a lot of privileges that are unattainable to their ethnic compatriots.

As few employees of NGOs argue (this allegations are, of course, very difficult to verify), some high-profile persons working and/or leading NGOs in the north of Kosovo use foreign donations for their lucrative reasons in particular (some of the means of doing can be quite intelligent and can be discussed in a new contribution), without much sincere commitment to the projects for addressing gender inequality, human rights and other 'buzzword projects' that get easily sponsored by foreign donors. Namely, a handful of people in Kosovo have soon realised that adopting the EU vocabulary and collaborating in the framework of several EU-sponsored projects can bring considerable financial benefits, without any significant of responsibility. In other words, the non-governmental organisations that have sprouted across Kosovo and have been doing the projects related to human rights promotion, minority rights, gender equality, freedom of speech, local ownership, democratisation and improving the record within other 'EU values' have not at all lacking the money. "It is very simple", one of our interlocutor admits. "You simply take a grant proposal you have used last year, do some lip-service, and 'sell' it to the EU or some other donors again. Also they are happy to finance such projects, as they have to spend money and justify their 'existence' and work in Kosovo." Instead of any further discussion at this point, I believe the EU (and other international organizations) should seriously reconsider what they have been doing with regard to improvement of life and stability in post-conflict environment in the north of Kosovo. The situation as of now is that the EU is not considered as much more in terms of credibility than a well-fed and blind milking cow, which always gives milk, but does not ask for any feedback where had the hectolitres of milk gone to.



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HYBRID WARFARE AND THE FUTURE OF NATO



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On 11 July 2018, Greek authorities announced that two Russian diplomats would be expelled from the country, while another two would be barred from entry. According to the Greek government, these individuals tried to foment opposition and even generate upheaval in an effort to derail the recent agreement between Athens and Skopje that is likely to pave the way for the FYR Macedonia's NATO membership. On the same day, incidentally, NATO allies in Brussels reached a decision to establish "Counter Hybrid Support Teams", which will provide NATO members with "tailored, targeted assistance", in "preparing for and responding to hybrid activities".¹ Russian activities in Greece, at first glance, appear to be at a typical example of "hybrid warfare. This is an umbrella term describing a novel type of warfare characterised by a seamless integration of conventional and irregular operations, "sponsorship of political protests, economic coercion and a powerful information campaign".²

The seizure of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014 was catalytic towards bringing the hybrid warfare concept to the spotlight, as it constituted a highly successful, and for this reason alarming, case study of the Russian capacity to wage a new kind of war. The Crimean annexation begun as a covert military operation, combining a disinformation campaign and surprise at the operational level, with masked gunmen storming government buildings and a full invasion of the peninsula taking place thereafter, using Russia's airborne, naval infantry, and motor rifle brigades.³ While the conventional instruments employed were well known to Western analysts, the artful use of mainstream and social media for propaganda and disinformation purposes, as well as the level of integration of irregular forces (mercenaries and local

¹ Brussels Summit Declaration, Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels 11-12 July 2018, available at www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_156624.htm [accessed 14 July 2018].

² M. Kofman and M. Rojansky, "A Closer look at Russia's 'Hybrid War'", *Kennan Cable*, No 7, April 2015, Kennan Institute, The Wilson Center, available at www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/kennan-cable-no7-closer-look-russias-hybrid-war [accessed 15 July 2018].

³ Ibid.

militias) with regular elements of the Russian army caught policy planners by surprise.

In the following years, the domain of communication became a central pillar of NATO and EU thinking, with initiatives such as the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga and the EU anti-propaganda unit aimed at countering Russian narratives which could render Western nations vulnerable to political manipulation by the Kremlin. Moreover, the disposition of the Russian army to combine regular and irregular forces in its doctrine led the West to adapt its military posture accordingly. Countries such as Estonia and Sweden (despite not being a NATO member) started emphasizing training on irregular warfare, while the alliance bolstered its rapid reaction capabilities through the forward deployment of NATO assets in Europe.

Can we therefore say that the Crimea “lesson” in hybrid warfare was a useful one? Not entirely. For starters, hybrid warfare has become a catch-all concept that includes everything and anything, from media narratives to military maneuvers. In policy terms, this may prove to be a dangerous development. NATO deterrence has, since the Cold War years, relied on a conventional “red line”, i.e. an armed attack against one of its member states. The blurring of the red line generated by the hybrid warfare concept may lead to a non-militarized event perceived to be part of “hybrid warfare” causing a militarized response, triggering a cascade effect that would otherwise be avoided. Deterrence, in other words, becomes less credible and escalation more likely.

Furthermore, there is a danger of misreading Russian strategic thinking on the basis of a single case study characterized by a unique set of circumstances. The population of Crimea is predominantly Russian and thus amenable to Russian media influence. Meanwhile, the geographic proximity of the peninsula to Russia and the existence of Russian military personnel in Crimea rendered the blending of regular and irregular tactics not only feasible, but also highly appropriate for the particular operational environment. There was simply no need for a direct confrontation with the Ukrainian army through the mobilization of substantial conventional forces. It is unlikely, however, that this scenario can be repeated elsewhere. Russian operations in Syria, for instance, have been much more “traditional”, indicating that Russian strategic culture has not transformed but rather evolved, with conventional operations remaining at the center of the Russian military doctrine. Meanwhile, the conventional capability gap between Russia and Europe is widening, as most NATO members are reluctant to commit resources to defence. The emphasis placed on things like strategic communications could, in this regard, further undermine European defence capabilities by diverting already scant resources from crucial conventional areas.

The analytical usefulness of the hybrid warfare concept, finally, should be re-evaluated. The popularization of the term by American military theorist Frank Hoffman was undertaken in an attempt to conceptualize the evolution of the battlefield environment that transcends the linear division between regular and irregular warfare.⁴ While a number of analysts argued that “hybrid warfare in one form or another may well be the norm for human conflict, rather than exception”,⁵ it can be argued that as a tactical-operational concept, hybrid warfare may still provide military planners with relevant insight. Nevertheless, the more recent tendency to place the label of hybrid warfare to non-military activities may have the adverse effect of both underestimating Russian conventional capabilities and overestimating Moscow’s capacity to employ non-military means in a coordinated manner. Misperceptions may therefore arise, leading to miscalculation and erroneous security policy choices which could render NATO less, not more, secure in the long term.

⁴ F. Hoffman (2007), *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Warfare*, Potomac Institute for Policy Studies.

⁵ W. Murray (2012), “Conclusions: What the Past suggests”, in W. Murray and P. Mansoor, (Eds), *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present*, Cambridge University Press, p. 290.

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