European Integration Process Thirty Years after the End of the Cold War

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses what is, to our belief, one of the major policy achievements in the European history since the Peace of Westphalia – the ability to pursue values. In particular, democracy, human rights, market economy, free and fair elections, and freedom of media. These are produced by the European integration process that is understood to be a structural output of activities of the key international governmental organizations functioning on the broader European as well as on the global level (the EU, NATO, the OSCE, and the Council of Europe). This synergetic functioning has, in the period after the Second World War, and after the end of the Cold War in particular, transformed Europe into the continent with the highest living standard, an outstanding system of values, and other achievements. The European integration process is a European diplomatic, political, and historical innovation. This article discusses its origin, evolution, and development in the period after the end of the Cold War. Combined with the post Second World War period, this time frame represents five decades of integration shaping and thirty years of an intensive structural rise.

KEY WORDS: The Peace of Westphalia, the French Revolution, the End of the Cold War, European integration process, production of values, the Western Balkans

POVZETEK

V prispevku obravnavamo, kar je po našem prepričanju eden izmed večjih policy dosežkov v evropski zgodovini iz obdobja po sklenitvi vestfalskega miru – sposobnost uveljavljanja vrednot, za katere se Evropa zavzema na globalni ravni. To so predvsem demokracija, varstvo človekovih pravic, tržno gospodarstvo, svobodne in poštene volitve ter neodvisnost medijev. Te vrednote so plod evropskega integracijskega procesa, ki ga razumemo kot strukturni rezultat dejavnosti ključnih mednarodnih vladnih organizacij, ki delujejo v širšem evropskem prostoru in tudi na globalni ravni (EU, Nato, OVSE in Svet Evrope). To je sinergično delovanje, ki je v obdobju po koncu druge svetovne vojne – in še posebej po koncu hladne vojne – spremenilo Evropo v kontinent z najvišjim življenjskim standardom, izstopajočim sistemom vrednot in drugimi dosežki. Evropski integracijski proces je evropska diplomatska, politična in zgodovinska inovacija. V članku obravnavamo njegov nastanek in razvoj zlasti v obdobju po koncu hladne vojne. Skupaj z obdobjem po koncu druge svetovne vojne to predstavlja pet desetletij integracijskega oblikovanja in trideset let strukturnega zagona.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: vestfalski mir, francoska revolucija, konec hladne vojne, evropski integracijski proces, oblikovanje vrednot, Zahodni Balkan

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INTRODUCTION

The year 1989 that marks one of the milestones in modern European history is – with its current 30th anniversary – a necessary, useful, and challenging point of departure for an in-depth, but focused, general overview and contemplation of broader political trends.

With this in mind, we dwell on structural changes not only of the European continent, but primarily of its political identity that has evoluted tremendously from one point of view during the last three decades and from another one during the period after the end of the Second World War. To be able to fully cope with this metamorphosis, we have to go back to the point at which, to our mind, the modern European history in a broader sense began: to the Peace of Westphalia. This represents the beginning of the time frame, which serves us to analyze, comment on, and understand what Europe and its political identity are today. Our thesis is that the European integration process, as we understand it today, is a result of huge and structural dynamics of various processes that in the course of time, with their increasing synergy, produced Europe as the by far most integrated, structurally advanced, and value based space that we know.

The main aim of this paper is to test this hypothesis with applying an in-depth analytical overview of the European political history during the mentioned time period, with special emphasis on the last three decades. For this purpose, we use methods of analysis, comparison, commenting, generalization, and deduction, while applying approaches and apparatus of political sciences, history, sociology, and diplomatic studies. We focus on three outstanding historical periods, notably the periods from the Peace of Westphalia to the end of the Second World War, from then to the end of the Cold War, and from that time to the current political-historical situation. We explain them as periods of political history, integration history, and structural history respectively. Additionally, we pay special attention to the two sets of topical aspects, dividing each into three categories. The first one focuses on the evolution, characteristics, and perspectives of the European integration process, while the second one addresses the enlargement, geography, and values as three unique driving forces of the European identity building endeavor.

Together with their aspects, elements, and mutual dynamics, they pro-

duce, constitute and shape what we define as the European integration process.

General overview of the three periods

Political History

We stem from the assumption that modern European history began with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which ended the Thirty Years War in Europe.[2] The stream of structural changes, which the Treaty initiated, had become increasingly noticeable in the later course of time and, together with a decisive push for the French Revolution in 1789, constituted premises for constructing the skeleton of European political identity. One of the most important innovations from that period turned out to be the concept of a nation state as a way of introducing a political ordering of societies.[3] This caused a number of important political and social consequences for the later development of political institutions, concepts, and values. Among them also appeared the idea of a formal, institutionalized cooperation between states that could be understood as a primary seed for the later concept of an integrating Europe.[4] Hence, in this paper, we understand the Peace of Westphalia as a starting point of the evolution of the European integration process.

Because of the formation of the nation state, relations between major European powers received different and new dynamics. One of its aspects was a reflection of the competition between these Powers in the outer world, their overseas economic expansions, and the introduction of mercantilism.[5] The result of this, combined with their internal European dynamics, was that a rather small group of European states evolved as the political nucleus of Europe. These were England, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, the Habsburg Austria, Russia, Prussia (i.e. later Germany), and Italy, the latter two after their unifications in 1871 and 1861, respectively. With some changes (for example with the joining of Belgium and the United States of America in particular), this core remained practically the same till the end of the Second

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2   Comp. Benko (1987: 42–43), Jazbec (2002: 25–33), Satow (1979: 5), Sen (1988: 8).

3   Among other, it gave the decisive push for the formation of diplomacy as we understand it today.

4   This could primarily be seen through various forms of de facto multilateral gatherings of the European leaders, such as the formalized series of Congresses during the first half of the 19th century, beginning with the Congress of Vienna, but also through numerous similar, though primarily ad hoc gatherings in the 18th century as well.

5   This could be also understood as the origin of the globalization process.

World War,[6] and as such strengthened the theatre for the European identity building process. During the next three centuries, relations among them crafted out European political and diplomatic dynamics,[7] as well as ways of keeping the balance of power, although countries were often changing sides and allies in those processes. But it was exactly the stability of those processes that offered Europe a possibility to avoid the, so far unprecedented, calamities and to continue to develop institutionally. Indeed, it did not prevent conflicts, tensions, and wars between the European powers. However, none of it was as destructive as what was witnessed during the Thirty Years War. The devastation that hit Europe during that period was the biggest and most destructive calamity in the then recorded history.

However, herein discussed and generalized period of political formation of Europe and its identity ended in a similar way as it began. The first half of the 20th century was marked by the two World Wars, including the interwar period spanning over three decades as well.[8] Within three centuries, Europe witnessed and got through two similar periods of unprecedented destructions. The first one was limited to the European continent and was religion-based (conflicts between the Catholics and Protestants), while the second one had global dimensions and was ideologically based (capitalism, Nazism, and communism). As the ground reason for the second calamity, one could point out the fact that the international order as such collapsed. Institutions that were built in the past were not able to function in different historical conditions, hence there was no political formation which would have been able to compensate the institutional political violence spread around Europe and consequently dispersed globally.

Additionally, one could conclude with an even more remarkable observation: in each of these two cases, Europe also managed to produce its revival. In the first case, with the establishment of a nation state based political theatre that was able to prevent a similar breakdown for three centuries. And in the second one, with the establishment of an integrating capacity theatre that was able to guarantee the appearance of the Europe's unique outlook on integration. The first innovation pa-

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6   One should also mention here the Holly Seat, with its strong diplomacy. But we do not list it as a part of the group, since the way and nature of its behaviour in the international relations was rather different, with different means and methods, not being primarily the prerogatives of a nation state.

7   It is important to note that the period of classical diplomacy timewise practically coincides with these three centuries, namely from the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 till the founding of the League of Nations in 1920). Comp. Anderson (1993), Berridge (2015), Jazbec (2009.b) etc.

8   Cooper (1996: 8) speaks explicitly about the second Thirty Years War.

ved the way for bilateral diplomacy and the second one for multilateral diplomacy.

INTEGRATION HISTORY

As the Peace of Westphalia could be seen as the seed for the later different political dynamics in Europe (from destruction to a national ordering of European affairs), also the adoption of the Atlantic Charter in August 1941, signed by the American President Roosevelt and the British Prime Minister Churchill, could be understood as a seed for the integrative postwar European history (from destruction to international and integrated ordering of global affairs).[9]

For the purpose of this research, we see three milestones that mark its integration trend. Firstly, the emergence of structures in the decade from 1945 till mid-fifties; secondly, the adoption of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, and thirdly, the demise of the Cold War in the late eighties/ early nineties.

The establishment of the United Nations Organization (the UN) in June 1945 in San Francisco was the direct result of the multilateral interwar period heritage of the League of Nations and of the series of meetings between the leaders of the Allied Powers, following the signing of the Atlantic Charter (conferences in Tehran in 1943, in Yalta in 1944, and in Potsdam in 1945). The founding of the UN as a universal international governmental organization was an act of universal importance and global outreach with long term political, diplomatic, economic, and value-oriented consequences. This was further on cemented by the development of the system of the UN's specialized organizations. It is important to note that Chapter VIII of the UN Charter foresees that regional arrangements could be included in the "maintenance of international peace and security". As the Atlantic Charter presents a philosophical seed in the origin of the European integration process, the above quotation presents its policy, substantial aspect.

Within the afore-mentioned historical core group of countries, a conclusion emerged that there has to be a way out of the historical divisions and wars as well that there is an urgent need for it. The new appro-

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9   One would hardly oversee the fact that it was exactly Churchill who stated, as the first one, in his lecture in Fulton in 1946 that world affairs found themselves in the Cold War.

ach has to enable an organized, institutional, and collective recovery of Europe that would reach across war divisions and hatred. To get as close to this core group of countries as possible, one should have a look at those who were in the centre of both NATO's and the EU's founding members (alphabetically): Belgium, France, Germany,[10] Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.

Hence, the remaining of the 1940s and the first half of the 1950s represent what we call the European integration miracle. During that decade, a series of fundamental international organizations was established on the broader European territory, which presents structures that till today remain to be the basis of the European political and diplomatic paradigm. Their policy and value frames have been, besides in the UN Charter (1945), provided also in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948), the European Convention on Human Rights (1950),[11] and in the European Social Charter (1961).

Upon the previous preparations and diplomatic activities, followed the establishment of NATO and the Council of Europe in 1949. In the following years, the European Communities got out of the Franco–German dialogue and with the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1951, as well as of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, paved a way to the creation of the todays EU.[12] Twenty years later, in 1975, the adoption of the Helsinki Final Act marked the establishment of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which preceded the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Through the enlargements of these organizations during the Cold War period, irreversible and policy firm foundations of the European integration process were laid down.[13] It should be particularly pointed out that enlargement, as a policy and political tool, was one of the main drivers of those organizations (especially of the EU and NATO). It also served as a solution to crises that both organizations were facing through their histories. The EU and NATO received additional and decisive structural boost with the collapse of a bipolar world and with a

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10 The Franco–German cooperation was one of the axis for the notion of the European integration process.

11 It was the first Convention adopted by the Council of Europe.

12 Among many links to those documents the author used the following one: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/in-the-past/the-parliament-and-the-treaties/treaty-of-rome. Constitutive documents of other, here discussed international organizations are available on their respective websites.

13 Due to the Cold War division in Europe, the process was in its core parts bound only to the Western Europe. However, the dialogue between the two blocks was held by both, the Council of Europe and the CSCE (contrary to NATO, and the EU, i.e. its predecessors).

simultaneous enhancement of globalization. Hence, they also became widely recognizable and got their up-to-date policy frameworks.

Compared with the previous period that spanned over three centuries, this one lasted for a half of a century, when taking into account the time between signing of the Atlantic Charter and the end of the Cold War.

THE END OF THE COLD WAR

Though not being a particular period in the development of the international community as well as of Europe, the end of the Cold War marks a unique and structurally highly important event.

With its political, diplomatic, security, and other consequences, the end of the Cold War spans beyond the most of the break-even points in modern European history. Due to the stream of changes, it is comparable with the French Revolution (they took place exactly two centuries apart) and with the end of the Thirty Years War (approximately three and a half centuries time difference between them).[14] The Peace of Westphalia succeeded a major European calamity, while the French Revolution marked the beginning of the political transition (along with the brutal use of force and violence) from monarchies to liberal political orders. The end of the Cold War, on the contrary, marks the end of the almost half a century long bipolar global division and tensions between the East and West that never burst out as a major military conflict, in spite of many crises around the globe.[15] Additionally, historians claim that the revolution of 1989 was a peaceful revolution, i.e. a revolution without revolution, although its consequences were felt around the globe.[16] The year 1989 holds a unique mark of Annus Mirabilis.[17]

Three multinational countries – the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), and the

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14 Comp. Böttcher (1995:150) and Cooper (1996: 7).

15 The author of this paper recalls the discussion he had in Belgrade in summer of 1989 with Ignac Golob, one of the most known Yugoslav Ambassadors of that time, who was a Slovene national and who later built an outstanding career in Slovene diplomacy as well. Ambassador Golob argued that various crises around the globe could be solved rather easily, with the consent of both super powers. However, the real problem would, in his opinion, appear when the Baltic – Balkans arc breaks. Much later, Golob added that he realised this when he was following discussions at the CSCE in Vienna where he was the Yugoslav Ambassador till the late 1980s. (Jazbec, 2002: 233–234).

16 Ash (2000: 596) claims that there exists not a single point in the world that hasn't been touched by consequences of the end of the Cold War.

17 Comp. Jazbec, 2006.

Czechoslovak Socialist Federal Republic (CSSR) – based on socialist/ communist political system and ideology collapsed, Germany was reunited (the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic), a vast number of countries gained or regained their statehood and the whole area from the Iron Wall in the middle of Europe to the Soviet Far East and Mongolia was democratized.[18] The whole political transition occurred within a couple of years without a bigger military conflict.[19] However, the later stream of events led to a war that followed the dissolution of the SFRY.[20]

Political geography reveals that the main territory where changes took place was the triangle spanning between the Baltics, the Balkans, and the Black Sea. This was the nexus that witnessed huge political and security dynamics with numerous aspects and modalities of change.[21] These states are diverse in ways of their formation, from a regained statehood in the case of three Baltic republics, to the demise of the German Democratic Republic, peaceful and consensual dissolution of the CSSR, newly gained statehood in the territory of the SFRY (though Serbia and Montenegro were functioning as kingdoms already before the formation of Yugoslavia in 1918), as well as political toughness in Romania and tectonics in the Caucasus. In favour of the policy and strategic importance of this triangle speaks the fact that the majority of new members of the discussed organizations, in particular of NATO and the EU, came from that geographic area. Obviously, the area continues to carry its specific strategic importance as well. Largely, the membership of the three Baltic states in NATO presents the reason why the Russian Federation tables its claim that with this move NATO entered its former territory. This is also the area that is included in the US policy and political initiative of the Three Seas (Baltic, Adriatic, and the Black Sea), launched in 2016.

The end of the Cold War marks also the transition from the bipolar to a multipolar world order, though the transition has not been very clear, definite, or obvious. In particular, since during the last hundred years, Europe has witnessed three global powers being part of its political, security, and diplomatic architecture. The Russian Federation (formerly the Soviet Union and before that the Czarist Russia) has been

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18   Fukuyama (2014) speaks about globalization of democracy.

19   The Berlin Wall fell in October 1989 and the CSSR was dissolved on 1 January 1993.

20   One could argue that the 20th century began with the two Balkan Wars and ended with the third one.

21   Tunjić refers to this area as *the Europe in between* (2003).

for the major part of the period one of the dominant powers on the European continent, having a changeable influence, for various reasons. The United States entered the European affairs during the First World War and remained an indispensable part of them throughout the 20th century. It was exactly the strategic dialogue between these two powers that led to the German unification and consequently to the end of the Cold War in Europe.[22] As for China, it was only during the last decade of the herein discussed time period, that it started entering in the European affairs. The trend has been increasing and one of the illustrative examples of the Chinese policy interests in countries of Central and Eastern Europe is the Chinese initiative 17+1. These are also countries that joined the European integration process after the end of the Cold War. They have become the focus of interest of all the three major global powers and are at the same time settled in the nexus of the discussed process.

Such strategic dynamics would not have been possible in any of the earlier European history periods. It was only the end of the Cold War that enabled the emergence of political circumstances, which allowed the appereance of this dynamics. However complicated it might seem, we believe that, overall, it presents an opportunity for a successful course of the European integration process.

STRUCTURAL HISTORY

Almost fifty years after the signing of the Atlantic Charter, it was Paris that hosted the Conference for New Europe organized by the CSCE, in November 1990, where the Charter of Paris for a New Europe was adopted. The Conference itself and the adoption of the Charter triggered a series of summits of European leaders in the new international environment and a series of adoptions of Treaties that crafted out the current European identity. To the most important among them are considered to be: the Maastricht Treaty (1992), the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997), the Treaty of Nice (2002), the European Constitution (the Constitutional Treaty) (2004), and the Lisbon Treaty (2007).[23] The comple-

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22   When the US President Reagan visited Germany in June 1987, he gave a speech at the Brandenburg Gate close to the Berlin Wall and made the following appeal: "/.../ if you seek peace/ ... /Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this Wall!" (Robinson. P., "Tear Down This Wall", Prologue Magazine, Summer 2007, Vol. 39, No. 2, available at: https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2007/summer/berlin.html). Full video speech is available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MDFX-dNtsM. The speech was prepared by Richard Holbrooke, who was at that time the US Ambassador and Head of the US Allied Mission in the West Berlin.

23   The European Constitution was signed in 2004, but never ratified, due to its rejections on referendums in France and in the Netherlands. It was succeeded by The Lisbon Treaty, which was signed in 2007 and ratified in 2009.

mentary effect of the institutions and treaties has produced a corpus of values that form the basis of the European identity as a whole.

Similarly as the multilateral meetings between the leaders of the Allied Powers during the Second World War led to the founding of the UN and paved a way to the period of integration, a series of bilateral meetings (with immense multilateral consequences) between the US Presidents Reagan and Bush Sr. respectively with the Soviet leader Gorbachev (Reykjavik October 1986, New York December 1988, and Malta December 1989) led to the peak of the integration period with the end of the Cold War, and paved a way to the period of the structural advancement.[24]

The dynamics of the European integration process in this period has been maintained by enlargements of the key international organizations, especially the EU and NATO. Enlargements have been always parts of policies as well as political answers to major challenges and crises, which the latter two were facing initially. This aspect fully emerged exactly during this period. Both organizations were, since the very beginning of the 1990s, subjects to an avalanche of criticisms. First NATO, because critics argued that with the collapse of the Soviet Union the enemy disappeared and hence there was no reason anymore for its existence. And then, both of them, especially the EU, due to being caught by a surprise when the war in the Balkans burst out after the dissolution of the SFRY as well as for the way they handled/addressed the situation.

But at the same time, the enlargement received a new and strong integration boost when practically all countries that gained or regained their independence after the end of the Cold War expressed their firm foreign policy ambitions for joining these two organizations.[25] This gave the current basis and complemented the frame of the European integration process. It both received and cemented its transatlantic as well as trans-asian dimension ("From Vancouver to Vladivostok"), including countries not only from the broader European area, but from practically almost the whole Northern hemisphere. Therefore, the European integration process could be understood as a specific political

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24 Gorbachev and Reagan met in Reykjavik in June 1986 at a break through meeting. In June 1987, less than a year later, Reagan visited Berlin and in December 1988 they met in New York, in presence of the Vice-President Bush Sr. Almost exactly a year later, in December 1989, Gorbachev and Bush Sr. (as a President) met in Malta, a few weeks after the fall of the Berlin Wall. It was an unprecedented and hardly imaginable series of top bilateral meetings that enabled and managed the end of the Cold War. It is also additionally admirable how the German Chancellor Kohl grasped the moment and simultaneously pushed through the reunification of Germany.

25 The only exemption was Moldova that due to its highly complicated position decided to opt for neutrality.

venue that brings the US and the Russian Federation together (as participating states in the OSCE), sees them individually in NATO (only the US), and in the Council of Europe (only the Russian Federation), while none of them in the EU. Hence, it would be referential to claim that European integration process is globally unique, since no comparable cases exist on any other continent, notably such that would be, in spite of the presence of various regional arrangements, able to produce that broad, in-depth, strong, and flexible structural integration dynamics. This dynamics serves as a driver, a catalyst, and a compensator for the management of political and policy affairs within its scope.[26]

Compared with the previous two periods that spanned over three centuries, as well as half of a century respectively, this one has reached three decades so far (having in mind the time frame of this contribution). Throughout the whole period of almost four centuries, the European identity was articulated and aggregated, rising from the origins of its political core through the integration enrichment and, finally, to its structural mark. The whole process has been gaining on momentum, increasing its thrust while accelerating its drive. Because of its progressive historical advancement, it was possible that each following period was gaining on structural synergy and dynamics, thus, resulted in a shorter time needed.

Additionally, based upon the diplomatic achievements of the previous two periods, this one managed to produce a rather complete synergy between bilateral and multilateral diplomacy as a global output of the European integration process (what could be seen as one of its strongest and most efficient tools during the herein researched period).[27] We understand this diplomatic form as a postmodern diplomacy.[28] This diplomatic form is one of the reflections of the complexity of the contemporary, highly globalized international community. It is also among those actors that further on contribute to the production of this complexity. At the same time, however, it firmly backs up the understanding that one cannot fully cope with the notion of diplomacy without placing it in a direct correlation with given social and historical circumstances.[29]

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26 One could also claim – for the purpose of this contribution – that this could be an argument for Europe being such a developed and attractive place to live in with such a high living standard.

27 Comp. the leading European role in concluding the nuclear deal with Iran in 2014.

28 For more on postmodern diplomacy see Jazbec, 2006, 2007 and 2009.b.

29 This finding serves as a starting point for dwelling on sociology of diplomacy (see Jazbec, 2014).

Main characteristics and production of values

Complementarity, Complexity, and Complicated Nature

These three aspects form the very core of the characteristics of the European integration process. It took, though, some time for them to become obvious. One could claim that the process of integration was clearly evident after the dual enlargement (of both NATO and the EU) in 2004. Only the largest number of newcomers in both organizations offered a clear and fully understandable view on the organizational dynamics of these two organizations as well as on their production of values. One could also claim that it first became apparent in the area of provision of security.[30]

We understand their complementarity in the synergy between their founding missions and, consequently, in their implementation of activities/responsibilities: collective defense (NATO); free movement of goods, persons, services, and capital; market economy; rule of law; crisis management (the EU, partially also the Council of Europe and NATO); human rights; democratic elections; freedom of media (Council of Europe, partially also the EU, and the OSCE); and comprehensive security (the OSCE).[31] These are the premises for the concepts of democracy and human rights, rule of law and market economy at its core, and for which all the discussed organizations stand for. The whole innovative and structural paradigm is complemented by a number of key institutions (in particular by the European Court of Human Rights) as well as by a number of declarations (such as the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter). Both institutions and declarations provide a firm and direct link to the universal mission to maintain global peace and security, pursued by the UN. At the same time, this global contribution of the European integration process – a de facto result of a number of European regional arrangements – rests on the European hard power provided by NATO, as well as on the European soft power provided by the EU, the Council of Europe, and the OSCE.

Strangely enough, although the complementarity of their missions is more than obvious, organizations started to behave on a complementary basis not more than a decade and a half ago.

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30 Comp. Jazbec, 2005.

31 It is important to note that the OSCE performs its mission through three dimensions: the politico-military, the economic and the environmental. But generally, it is known as the biggest regional security arrangement.

Regional provision of global peace and security, if we follow the terminology of the UN Charter, is in the case of the European integration process also a rather complex issue. Hence, we have to have a look at it from a holistic point of view.

At the top of its vertical position, there is the UN with its universal mission. On the second vertical level, one could find the four herein discussed organizations, namely NATO, the EU, the Council of Europe, and the OSCE. Formally speaking, they are regional arrangements, but de facto, they have a global impact on maintaining peace and security. The third level would be housed by institutionalized regional forms of cooperation, like the European Economic Area (EEA), the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), the Nordic Council, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, etc. The next level would see less formal arrangements, like the Višegrad Group, while there are numerous other arrangements in a form of Charters or just cooperation initiatives, like the Adriatic Charter, the Danube Cooperation,[32] the Alpine Convention, etc.

From one point of view, there is a clear vertical distribution of arrangements and from another one, also rather clear horizontal distribution. Their formal, regular, and informal ad hoc activities, initiatives, and behaviour, all depending on the arrangement in question or on the level of positioning, take a variety of actions that contribute to the richness of the European integration process as a whole. Nevertheless, they also contribute to its complexity and occasionally to its complicated nature. There is a variety of crisscross relations and interactions in place that produce a dynamic, fluid, and flexible policy and a pragmatic oriented picture. However, there is no need to doubt, in particular when we discuss activities of actors on lower vertical levels, that they would not have a mission or a goal that is not welcomed within a given regional context, serving interests of their protagonists.

Following this stream of thought, it would be quite logical or expected to see also the complicated nature of those actors, given an outstanding level of their complementarity as well as complexity. We could say this stems to a certain extent automatically from their number, various positions, and numerous missions.

Continuing from the notions of complementarity and complexity, the

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32   The International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River.

complicated nature of the European integration process rests basically on the fact of the overlapping of members and missions of the organizations in question.[33] But while each of their core missions remains basically the same (adjusting to the ever changing international environment), the number of their members increased heavily during the previous three decades.

The EU comprises 27 members, NATO 29 (with North Macedonia as the future thirtieth when the ratification proces is finished), the Council of Europe 47, and the OSCE 57 participating states. All the EU members are also members of the Council of Europe and participating states in the OSCE. The majority of them are also members of NATO. Due to their participation in the OSCE, the US, Canada, and the Russian Federation are part of this process as well. The fact of having both, the US and the Russian Federation on board of the process makes it additionally complex and complicated (organizationally, policy-, and political-wise). The US is heavily involved in the Pacific and Asian bilateral and multilateral affairs (in the latter through the Asian Pacific Economic Council – APEC). The Russian Federation is involved in the Asian affairs as well, particularly in the Central Asian ones, also in both bilateral and multilateral (in the latter primarily through the Organization for Security Cooperation, where China is also a member). This aspect could serve as an advantage for the European integration process, since it could strengthen it and make it globally efficient, inclusive, and acceptable. Nonetheless, this will depend primarily on two points. Firstly, on the EU's capability to improve its capacities to be an organizationally efficient player, capable of adopting global policies and value based decisions, and secondly, on its relations with other global actors (the US, the Russian Federation, and China) and on the relations among them.

However, for the core mission of this process, it is not least important to have a look at those countries that are active in all four roles. Those countries form the driving force of the process. Therefore, having in mind a highly complex structure of the EU that covers practically all aspects of social life of modern societies and due to the already mentioned membership overlapping, one could say that the EU membership presents the main thread of the European integration process.

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33   Formally speaking, in the case of the OSCE we do not speak of *member* states, but of *participating* states. Having in mind this basic difference that adds to a particular profile of the OSCE, we use in this contribution the term »member« as a general form for countries that figure both as members (in the cases of the UN, NATO, the EU and the Council of Europe) and as participating states (in the case of the OSCE).

With an additional step of deduction, we could say that the inner circle of this process consists of those countries that are members of both, the Schengen area and of the Euro zone. Here, to a much of an extent, we come to those countries that formed the European nucleus in the period from the Peace of Westphalia till the Second World War.

Dwelling on the complementarity, complexity, and complicated nature of the European integration process, therefore, brings us to the very understanding of what this process is and how it has been formed.

PRODUCTION OF VALUES

The production of values stems directly from the triangle of complementarity, complexity, and complicated nature. This could be seen as the very heart of the European integration process. One could even claim that it is the production of values what this process stands for and is all about. Synergetic output of various levels, aspects, and areas of overlapping within the structure of this process is the issue of values that define the European integration process and which are at the same time its result. They are – or the set of those values is – a crystallization of a century's long process of aggregation, articulation, and implementation as well as the final peak of a structural achievement of what the European identity, a notion and a differentia specifica represents.

The set of values, produced by the process in question, has one very clear characteristic: in its evolution, it is directly bound to an individual. Individuality, as an emanation of a human being that is free in its original position, derives directly and clearly from the heritage of the 1789 French Revolution: equality, brotherhood, and freedom. From then on, an individual is in the focus of social affairs as a whole. This focus points out, in particular, two aspects of the status of a modern individual: emancipation and protection. An individual is free and protected by a set of legal instruments that shall guarantee his or her rights at both national and international levels. In relation to the latter, the individual has a political right and legal possibility to seek protection by international institutions when being oppressed by national institutions of his or her own state.[34] Together with the abolition of the death penalty, this is one of the most far reaching

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[34] There exists a legal possibility to seek protection/justice from one's own state at the European Court for Human Rights, when legal venues in one's own state are procedurally exhausted. This de facto means that a citizen can sue his/her own state before the international legal institution.

advancements of the heritage of the French Revolution and of the European integration process.

From the number of values that form the whole set, seven of them stand out: democracy, rule of law, human rights, freedom of individuals, market economy, free and fair elections, and freedom of media. They form the core part of the whole set and are its synergetic output. Among many of them and without having the ambition to list them all, one shall also point out the four freedoms of the EU: freedom of movement of persons, goods, services, and capital.[35] Lately, the issue of equal opportunities is becoming increasingly important and present as one of the values that qualify the outstanding role of the EU as well as the global trend setter.[36] The same goes for the abolition of the death penalty.[37] Largely speaking, these values could be generalized as peace, welfare, and stability/security.

We mentioned earlier that the power of the European integration process rests, from one point of view, on the hard power provided by NATO, and from another point of view, on the soft power provided by the EU, the Council of Europe, and the OSCE. This set of values, therefore, also represents the essential part of the EU's soft power. Nonetheless, at the same time, this soft power – and the produced values included – is a very sensitive and vulnerable phenomenon. The discussed process is still far from having clear, firm, and permanent institutions that would have been able to keep on producing those values, regardless of the changed international circumstances. Lessons learned from the 2015–2016 migrant crisis show how soft power achievements, such as free movement of persons (within the Schengen area) and capital (within the euro zone), could be put under question mark.

Production of values comes out of the discussed proces that has its own evolution and dynamics. It is a dynamic social process that continues to produce values that evolve, advance, and upgrade. At the same time, these values also present criteria and standards. They define the ways in which societies mature and are able of further democratic metamorphosis.

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35 One could also add here free movement of knowledge as the de facto fifth freedom.

36 Comp. also Jazbec et all., 2011.

37 Comp. Jazbec, 2008.

Post–Cold War Aspects

The third period – the structural one – is marked by some specific aspects that additionally point out the uniqueness of the European integration process.

Due to the changes that the end of the Cold War brought to the international community and social affairs in general, this has been the period in which the European integration process witnessed its strongest increase so far throughout its history. It has expanded, strengthened, and synergized its outreach, results, and influence. The same goes for its acceptance as well as implementation track. However, it also brought along difficulties.

There have been four enlargements of NATO during the post-Cold War period: in 1999 by three new members (the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland), in 2004 by seven (Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia), in 2008 by two (Albania and Croatia), and by Montenegro in 2018; all together by thirteen. In the same period, there have been four enlargements of the EU: in 1995 by three countries (Austria, Finland, and Sweden), in 2004 by ten (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, and Slovakia), in 2007 by two (Bulgaria and Romania), and in 2013 by Croatia; all together by sixteen. The number of NATO members almost doubled (from 16 to 29), while of the EU more than doubled (from 12 to 27). The number of member countries in the Council of Europe increased from 22 to 47, and the number of participating states in the OSCE from 22 to 57, in both cases more than doubled. These numbers confirm an unusually high and parallel enlargement dynamics during the previous three decades.

One could claim that the break-even point was reached in 2004, with dual enlargements of both NATO and the EU. Of course, numbers do not tell everything and are by themselves not necessarily the most important indicator. However, they point out a growing organizational and procedural complexity, an increased proportion of discussed topics, advanced internal dynamics of the decision making process, all in all with strong influence on the management process in general. This shows on the surface from one point of view, particularly at the OSCE (and to a certain extent also at NATO), where the decision making re-

sts on consensus and not on voting, but also at the EU due to a rather complex system of voting and weighing votes.

As of autumn 2019, only a handful of the Western Balkan countries are still not formally members of NATO and the EU. Nonetheless, they all have a kind of institutional cooperation with both organizations, as follows: NATO – for North Macedonia as the future thirtieth member the ratification process is well on track, while Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Serbia participate in the NATO Partnership for Peace Programme (Serbia does not share the membership ambition). As for the EU, Montenegro and Serbia are negotiating for the membership, Albania and North Macedonia are candidate countries and waiting to receive the date to start the negotiation proces, while Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo concluded the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU. One should note here that there has not been any EU enlargement in the Western Balkans since 2013, while between the last two enlargements of NATO there was a period of ten years (2008 and 2018). This standstill has not served as an encouragement as well as stimulation for the European integration process and its perception in the region of the Western Balkans.

This was the period of crises that hit international community and, in our opinion, also slowed down the integration dynamics. Moreover, the global financial crisis and the migration crisis hit decisively the dynamics of the European integration process in the third decade after the end of the Cold War. In comparison with the first two decades that can count as successful ones, the third one took an opposite turn. The emergence of the crises and the way in which the EU handled them uncovered a certain inefficiency of this complex bureaucratic machinery.[38] However, it should not have been like this. In 2009, the Lisbon Treaty entered into force with cementing the post-Cold War advancement of the EU as a core of the whole integration process. Among other things, it gave, the EU a legal personality, meaning that, strictly formally, only then the EU became an international organization. Additionally, only after that legal advancement, the European External Action Service was able to develop as a diplomatic service of a legal subject, similar to a service of compared with a nation state. The third decade after the end of the Cold War coincided with the legal

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38   A popular comment to the response of the EU to the migration crisis was that the EU was constructed to manage the European affairs and not external crises. However simplified this might be, it pointed out the lack of crisis management mechanisms for such type of a global challenge.

advancement, as said, but because of facing two major global crises, almost one after another, it was neither the decade of any further major advancement in their structures, nor of efficiency and improvement.

Moreover, such organizational structure depends, in many ways, on leadership capabilities, which is exactly the point of the existence of the European Council as the top political body, which decides on crucial issues as far as the functioning, management, and global appereance of the EU are concerned.[39] The praxis has shown that this body functions well when there is a core small group of strong leaders, with almost a precondition that the German Chancellor and the French President are at its very center. After the departure of Helmut Kohl and Jacques Chirac from these two positions, the generation change became a definite fact. Even more so, since these two leaders were the last ones, among the European top leaders, who personally experienced the Second World War period. This point of view has been important since the EU was formed with an ambition to overcome the atrocities and divisions from that War. Having a first-hand account of that period was somehow a natural guarantee to have this aim permanently in mind. The question of European leaders determines the EU's global positioning as well as promotion of its values.[40]

Finally, the post-Cold War period and the structural changes in the international relations, i.e. in the world order, brought an undeniable possibility for Europe to become a global actor. Throughout this period, the integrated Europe as the main driver of the European integration process has been facing the competitive challenges emerging from the actions of the US and the Russian Federation. The slowdown in the enlargement process, the decade of crises, and the leadership question have disabled Europe to be self-assured and compete within this triangle. The question of China with its steady appearance during exactly the same period in global affairs has posed another top challenge to this major test.

EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES

The post-Cold War period presents the most dynamic, intensive, and structurally rich advancement of the European integration history. At

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39   To serve as a real top political body, the EU Council also has, as of the Lisbon Treaty, its full time President.

40   The German Chancellor Angela Merkel is a leader with far the longest period in power and is at least from this point of view the only exemption, when speaking of the leadership crisis in Europe.

the same time, it is also a period during which this process became crystal clear, wide spread as well as put to a multilayered test. We have tried to dwell on these aspects and contemplate on them as well throughout this contribution.

Since the whole process rests on states that are involved in its functioning, it is their number (of members or participants) that gives the initial push to the dynamics of the process. Therefore, one could claim that the states, via their performance in the related international governmental organizations, build the process itself. There rests a direct connection to the Peace of Westphalia and to the importance of a nation state today as well as there is also the ground for contemporary multilateral performance of those nation states.

From this – not only statistical – circumstances, derive other characteristics and processual achievements. Herein, we discuss some of the most visible and outstanding ones from the discussed period.

It became clear that enlargement is the main driving force of the European integration process. This has been confirmed, in particular on the cases of the NATO's and the EU's post-Cold War enlargements, their dynamics, number of new members, and the time span in between the different enlargements. To much of the extent, we think this could be additionally proved if one would make a comparison between the post-World War Two and the post-Cold War enlargements, new members, and in particular the similarities between the international circumstances, present when various enlargements took place.

Due to the number of new members, after each post-Cold War enlargement, this influenced internal management capabilities of a given organization. Each increase of the number of states that participate in modus operandi, and thus in the decision making process, influences directly the advancement of its management. Consequently, also the scope and dynamics of integration – which is at the end of the day the administrative procedure with top political decisions – was influenced, if not already significantly determined. Simultaneously, relations between member states and the organization, as well as between member states in pursuing their own interests and those of the organizations, gained on complexity, but got also more complicated.

The issue of values additionally affirmed its central position in the

whole process. One could possibly argue that without a strong pursue of values, the whole process would be only – though still useful – a technical and administrative endeavor. To repeat, generally the process stands for peace, welfare, and stability/security. Yet, from a more theoretical point of view, we could claim that, during the discussed period, the European integration process arrived to a point where its two dimensions are obvious. From one point of view, the process is a territorial topic and from another one, it is a value based and oriented topic.

Having in mind the structural dynamics, including the candidate and aspirant countries and the significant slowdown in the negotiation process with Turkey, the biggest EU candidate country so far, the primary geographical focus of the Process currently lays on the Western Balkans region. Nevertheless, the possible completion of the enlargement is far from foreseeable and certain, even there. Therefore, it could be argued that the geographical dimension of the Process at the time being is rather known.[41] Another significant geographical focus is put on the countries of the Eastern Neighborhood Policy. Though, the enlargement in that case is not a topic of discussion, this example could serve as the illustration of the European integration process being value oriented. This dimension and its applicability depend neither on the geographical dimension nor on the level of structural cooperation between the countries and the institutions of the Process. The acceptability and implementation of values, produced by the process discussed, depend only on the interests of various third parties (states in particular). The set of values, produced by the process, is a universal one. This could be at least argued upon the Universal Convention on Human Rights. It is possible to conclude that there is a spreading trend of these values taking place globally, without being enforced by any institution. All in all, one could state that the set of values, produced by the European integration process is an example of a geocentric approach of the continent that throughout its history often tended to be Eurocentric, at least from the beginning of the overseas economic expansion after the signing of the Peace of Westphalia.[42]

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41   In both cases, the enlargement dynamics in the Western Balkans as well as with Turkey is not direct point of this paper. It primarily serves as a reminder of what has not been done so far and what is still to be finished, along the procedures, but also along the policy and political contemplation. One can hardly overlook an impression that more could have been done in the last decade and a half.

42   The period and the form of classical diplomacy, broadly accepted as one of the major periods in the development of diplomacy, serves as a typical example of a Eurocentric approach in international relations. Comp. Benko, 1998: 54–55.

In the third – and the last here discussed – decade, one can also notice few structural challenges that the process faces currently. We understand them as contradictions and they will have to be dealt with the policy approach of related institutions with the aim not only to get away with them, but in particular with the aim to further advance the Process, upon the recent political experiences.[43]

Strictly structurally speaking, we see two kinds of those challenges. One is the contradiction of the integration vs. disintegration and the other one the integration vs. nationalism/populism. It would be difficult to claim these two are new types of challenges. However, with the immense growth in the membership, particularly of NATO and the EU, within the discussed period, they became more obvious and present. One could additionally claim they have been increasingly spreading, for various reasons. An example of this phenomenon is the UK's exit from the EU, popularly known as Brexit.

Two value oriented challenges are the abolition of the death penalty and the necessity of addressing the climate change. The abolition of the death penalty could be viewed as the peak of the value system pursued by the process in discussion. It could serve as its global ID, provided the Process (and its institutions) will have the capability, power, and a unanimous will to enforce it. And as for the climate change issue, as the current (and as well future) reality, it is another example and test for the Process and its relevance. Like the world's nuclear arsenal determined the question of survival of the international community till the end of the previous millennia, it is now urgent to determine how to respond to the climate change. It represents the peak in understanding what nowadays poses the question of survival. This is not the issue of war and peace anymore, but it is a threat that the human race is facing as a whole. However, this threat consequently leads again to the issue of war and peace. This means that the current issue of survival of the international community is an advanced, synergetic case of what it used to be not that long ago.

And last but not least, the already mentioned issue of the EU's global appearance (as the process' structurally most advanced part) presents a multivectorial test for the credibility and efficiency of the European

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43   The author of this contribution believes that they do not pose an existential threat to the process. Nevertheless, they have to be dealt with consistently, in order to keep the post-Cold War momentum of the process running with the advancing tempo.

integration process. Judging from its long, steady, and ever advancing evolution, one could argue the process by itself possesses capability to continue this way.

CONCLUSION

This contribution aims to present and generally point out on the structural policy level, the importance of the European integration process for the current stage of development of the international community, as well as for the recent European history as one of its major policy characteristics.

We define the European integration process as a structural output of the activities of the key international governmental organizations on the broader European as well as on the global level. With these actors, we have in mind the EU, NATO, the OSCE, and the Council of Europe. They all work in compliance with the UN policies, upon the Chapter VIII of its Founding Charter. This approach delivers a unique understanding of their synergetic functioning that has, in the period after the Second World War – and after the end of the Cold War, in particular –, transformed Europe into the continent with the highest living standard, an outstanding system of values as well as with other achievements. European integration process is a European diplomatic, political, and historical innovation with an almost half a millennia long evolution that rests on the five decades of the integration shaping and the thirty years of an intensive structural growth. It has changed European geography, values, as well as its structure and institutions.

It consists of a complex web of institutions that are able to produce system of values, i.e. the way of life that is acceptable to every human being, has a firm ethical component, and offers potential for its further development along that track. Because of its complex structure and variety of interdependent structures that cover practically all areas of human life, the EU is at the very core of this endeavor. However, it is possible to produce this unique Process only in synergy with other listed actors. Hence, it was possible to develop this phenomenon only after the end of the Cold War when globalization took over.

Geographically, the European integration process spans across much of the Northern hemisphere, but in practice, it functions on the Eu-

ropean continent. And even here, it is an unfinished project. Thirty years after the end of the bipolar world order, the central part of the Western Balkans is not yet a full part of this integration effort. It is our belief that the three previous decades should had ended with this accomplishment. But they did not. There is no clear, all-encompassing explanation why it did not happen (and it is also not the aim of this paper to dwell on this). However, one issue seems to be clear enough: in the post Second World War history, the enlargement process served as the main driving force for the advancement of the European integration process. There have been global crises that affected Europe during the previous thirty years and it reacted to them well. But enlargement, as the top policy response, was not complete as it should and could have been.

We see the future of the European integration process in two tracks: in a substantial enhancement with the enrichment of its core values and structures, and in a geographical sense, in the inclusion of the Western Balkan countries in the whole spectrum of its structures. Only with such substantial and geographical round up, the European integration process will remain attractive for other world regions as well as a source of achievements and best practices.

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