

Ljupcho Stevkovski:

The European Financial Crisis, Youth Unemployment and the Rise of Right-Wing Extremism

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Abstract

This chapter focuses on the effects of the economic crisis in the European Union and the potential threats to the Western Balkans, brought about by right-wing extremism. The key point of this research is based on the hypothesis that the rise of right-wing extremism in the European Union is a direct result of the rise in unemployment, especially among the young, which is one of the long term effects of the economic crisis. This growth of right-wing extremism in the EU will inevitably have a negative impact on the stability and security of the Western Balkans and the wider region of South-eastern Europe. Concomitant with the emergence of the economic crisis have been the prolonged and deepened negative effects, such as a fall in living standards, rising unemployment, and a lack of prospects for young people. This has resulted in a new generation of nationalists and right-wing opponents of liberal democracy who have come to the fore in the Balkans. These people are trying to win power, on national programs with an anti-European orientation. Characteristic of all right-wing extremist movements are the policies of the protection of national identity, populism, hate speech, homophobia, violence against immigrants and people of different faiths, calls for the homogenization of the nation, and calling on a higher level of morality. The impact of right-wing extremist groups usually increases before and during the elections when the established political parties easily resort to populist and nationalist rhetoric in order to win as many votes as possible. Many of them operate under the spiritual and financial auspices of radical domestic religious communities. Although being marginal groups, the danger arises from their exclusivity, with membership mostly drawn from young people who can easily resort to the use of violent methods. The gap between different ethnicities and religions is on the increase. Political parties are becoming tools of political socialization, rather than advocating the stability and prosperity of citizens, and are the main actors in the separation of citizens in all lines.

Keywords: European economic crisis, Western Balkan, youth unemployment, right-wing extremism, populism, nationalism.

Introduction

First of all this chapter will deal with the current situation of the EU's economic crisis and the problem of youth unemployment. For this purpose, this chapter is based on the unemployment rate across the EU27 and, more importantly, the unemployment rate among young people as one of the key facilitators for endangering the security and stability of the EU and the Western Balkans. The key point of this research is to diagnose the occurrence of right-wing extremism as a serious threat to security and stability associated with the emergence and growth of the economic crisis. The analysis proceeds even further by analyzing the context of the appearance and activity of right-wing extremism upon the discourse of possible consequences on the Western Balkans not only on an economic level but also and mainly on the level of peace, security and stability in the region. The importance of this research is supported by the region's recent history, which survived six military conflicts, a region marked by multi-ethnicity and multi religiousness, where several unresolved political problems have remained. These problems may very easily turn into a new cycle of conflict situations, if the processes of European integration are delayed indefinitely. In such a situation nationalist forces in the Balkans may be expected to continue the increase in right-wing and religious extremism, which combined with the economic crisis could trigger a new round of violence with unforeseeable consequences for the future of the region.

Political Aspects Associated with the Economic Crisis in the European Union

Vuk Jeremic, the former Serbian Minister of foreign affairs likened the current situation in the world to the period of the French Revolution, where, "The only constant was the impact of the revolution" when, "nothing was as before" (Jeremic, 2012). Zbigniew Brzezinski, the former U.S. national security adviser, notes, with reference to the current situation: "The world in the 21st century has entered a period of instability, because no [single] country is able to rule the world alone ... this instability threatens [the] appearance of greater chaos and various regional conflicts" (Brzezinski, 2012). It is obvious that the economic crisis has lasted too long and it has already created consequences which in the short and medium term can have serious implications, not only on

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an economic but also on political and social levels. It is evident that the crisis is more manifest on the southern borders of the European continent, unlike the north of the continent which is far more resilient. As a result of the crisis, communication between EU member states and Brussels, as well as between the regions, has been disrupted. The crisis has caused further tensions between the regions and central government.

At this stage, the reasons behind these tensions can be traced mainly to economic reforms, such as reductions in the cost of production, disputes over the scope of austerity measures and the means to cover budget deficits. The whole package is of limited duration, as it creates tensions among vulnerable groups, especially in the south of the EU. Negative reactions to this have already been experienced in Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Greece, as well as in Germany, where the province of Bavaria opposed a key element of European integration, that is, solidarity, announcing plans to review the legality of the system of financial redistribution from the richer provinces to poorer ones (Stratfor, 2012). In some ways this process reflects the diagnosis of the breakup of the former Yugoslavia. It can also be noted that some of the richer states have asked for a reduction or have even requested a cancellation of the solidarity program for poorer states, which up until now has been a very important bonding element used in overcoming the differences in development between countries. This situation will certainly cause political tensions, restoring nationalist feelings. It might even pose a bigger threat to the southern states of the European Union, where the economic crisis has had more serious consequences and where ethnic tensions could attain a greater significance for the stability of both central government and member states. The current divisions between rich and poor at the level of states and between the regions favor this situation even further.

This will most definitely weaken the EU's internal cohesion at a time when there is a revival of many nationalistic concepts which according to the former Italian Prime minister Mario Monti could cause the "danger of psychological division in Europe". Monti claims that the North-South divide and resentment within the EU is alarming, suggesting that, on the one hand, "there is a front between the north and south and there are mutual prejudices" (Monti, 2012). On the other hand, Switzerland is having to limit the number of immigrants and restart negotiations with the EU about the free movement of citizens. This is as a result of the decision of the Swiss electorate in a referendum held on February 9, 2014 that clearly supported the initiative

“against mass immigration” (Miletic, 2014). This decision is tied up with the economic policy of Switzerland in the future.

Jürgen Habermas, one of the biggest contemporary supporters of the European idea, places blame for the current crisis on politicians and political parties, which “have no political substance, no convictions and do not care about anything except to get re-elected” (Habermas, 2011). He sees Europe as a project without any alternative that must not fail, as he says, because the “global community” is not only a viable idea, but a necessity that should lead to the reconciliation of democracy and capitalism. Moreover, he sees the exit from this situation in overcoming the lack of unity in the EU through the development of a two-speed EU. He believes that this is the way to overcome the problems confronting the enlargement of Europe so that all can benefit from the common market. In fact, by supporting the thesis that all citizens need to participate in the future of Europe, Habermas practically strengthens the German idea of Germany being the only real locomotive of European progress given its economic performance and the nature of German power in a more general sense.

Employment Consequences of the Economic Crisis in the EU

The economic crisis has political, economic and security implications. As far as the economic impact is concerned, it is essential to monitor the problem of unemployment, given that unemployment, especially youth unemployment, is a key parameter in any country, which is reflected in the recruitment process of antisocial, criminal and other negative behaviors.

In this direction, an analysis of the Eurostat survey, in connection with the unemployment rate in the EU and other non-European highly developed countries for the period 2000-2011, allows one to draw the following conclusions: The unemployment rate among the EU27 and euro-zone members has been increasing. More precisely in the period 2007-2011 the growth in unemployment is 2 percentage points (EU 27) and nearly 3% in the euro-zone. The current unemployment rate can be analyzed through data obtained from Eurostat for the period April 2011-January 2012 and from 2012 until January 2014. The conclusion is that the rate of the rise of unemployment in the EU27 ranges from 9.7% in 2011 to 10.4% in January 2012. An increase in unemployment is also present in the euro-zone countries too, from 10.2 to 11.2% in January 2012. More than half of the EU member states registered an unemployment rate at over 10%, while Spain and Greece lead by over 20%.

The employment situation is of particular importance, because of the connection between unemployment among young people with specific security threats. According to Eurostat, in 2012 the unemployment rate among young people at the level of the EU27 was 21.4%, while in the euro area it was smaller at 20.8%. The data rate of youth unemployment at the EU level is also alarming. According to Eurostat, this rate is 44.4% in Greece, 46.4% in Spain, 29.1% in Italy, 26.6% in Bulgaria, 29.4% in Ireland, 22.9% in France, 26.1% in Hungary, 25.8% in Poland, 30.1% in Portugal, 22.9% in Sweden, 21.1% in UK, and 20.1% in Finland.

The seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate in the euro area (EA18) was 12.0% in January 2014, and it has been stable since October 2013. It had also stood at 12.0% in January 2013. The EU28 unemployment rate was 10.8% in January 2014, and had been stable since October 2013, falling from 11.0% in January 2013. Eurostat estimates that 26,231 million men and women in the EU28, of whom 19,175 million were in the euro area, were unemployed in January 2014. Compared with 2010, when the number of unemployed people in the EU28 was around 15.9 million. Among the member states, the lowest unemployment rates were recorded in Austria (4.9%), Germany (5.0%) and Luxembourg (6.1%), and the highest in Greece (28.0% in November 2013) and Spain (25.8%).

In January 2014, 5,556 million young people (under 25) were unemployed in the EU28, of whom 3,539 million were in the euro area. In January 2014, the youth unemployment rate was 23.4% in the EU28 and 24.0% in the euro area, compared with 23.7% and 24.1% respectively in January 2013. In January 2014, the lowest rates were observed in Germany (7.6%), Austria (10.5%) and the Netherlands (11.1%), and the highest in Greece (59.0% in November 2013), Spain (54.6%), Italy (42.4) and Croatia (49.8% in the fourth quarter of 2013). The unemployment rate in Slovenia in December 2013, according to the Statistical Office of Slovenia increased in all age categories, mostly among young people from 15 to 24 years, where the jump was from 32.4 to 33.8%.

The forecast is that the economic crisis will continue to deepen. The so-called "Baltic Dry Index", which is used as a measure of the health of the world economy, fell from October 2011 to January 2012 by 61%!

Research on the effects of the economic crisis, through the prism of unemployment, is of particular importance, if we want to provide scientific indicators that will suggest certain events that may occur in the future. That is to say that unemployment may have negative implications on political life,

security issues and other areas of society. If this situation were to last any longer, instability might manifest itself in the form of social protests and riots against governmental policies, with instability at an inter-ethnic level, and if any particular society should be multicultural in nature, religious conflict might well be probable.

The current economic crisis in the EU is characterized by the occurrence of violence from the position of so-called right-wing extremism. Amnesty International announced that the “others” in certain EU countries have been subject to discrimination because of their cultural habits and customs, a development that further strengthens right-wing extremism in the EU (Amnesty international, 2012).

The Political Situation in Southeastern Europe

The key point of this research is based on the hypothesis that the rise of right-wing extremism in the EU is a direct result of the increase in unemployment, especially among the young, as a result of the extended effects of the economic crisis. This hypothesis can be connected with the expectation that the growth of right-wing extremism in the EU will inevitably have a direct negative impact on the stability and security of the Western Balkans and the wider region of Southeastern Europe. For this purpose, the text uses the unemployment rate in general and more importantly the unemployment rate among the younger generation. Unemployment is therefore treated as a key parameter in any country, especially youth unemployment which can be reflected negatively in the recruitment process of antisocial, criminal and other negative behaviors.

As a result of the daily interest of political elites to maintain or win power in elections, their main actions are aimed at their own survival in the political arena. Before every election, political elites invest in a nationalist propaganda campaign, rather than in a competition of ideas for economic development. Increased ethnocentrism, populism, provocation, and intolerance towards “others” are recurrent phenomena in the region. The “others” are usually identified with different ethnic groups or religious, national minorities or people of different sexual orientation, globalism, the EU or NATO. The ethnocentrism of those elites often entails an emphasis on fostering an ethnic economy, that is, on the planning and realization of the economy, energy and infrastructure projects exclusively within their own ethnic group. Evidence shows an emphasis on promoting intra-ethnic trade,

ethnic education, ethnic culture, ethnic employment, or the promotion of fashion based on religious identity.

Political parties act as tools of political socialization, rather than advocating the stability and prosperity of all citizens, thereby serving as the main actors in the separation of citizens along all lines. In that sense, political parties place an emphasis on individual ethnic histories, the manipulation and revision of historical events, the manipulation of individuals and numbers, and invest in dividing mono-ethnic nationalist projects instead of national or regional projects of mutual interest. The Western Balkan region is confronted with the stagnation of democratic processes, the operation of a corrupt capitalism, autocratic tendencies, a controlled media, restrictions on the freedom of speech, self-censorship, the reduction of civil political culture, a decline in trust in institutions, low levels of social capital and increased repression. Furthermore, organized crime, corruption and lobbying are cancers that further erode regional economies. Figures become the main tool for manipulating and lying to the general public.

The threat is even greater, if on these conditions one adds the religious element as a key indicator for assessing future potential conflicts. According to the available data, religious division has drastically increased in the last twenty years (Wilson Center, 2003). Although all states, according to their constitutions, declare themselves to be secular societies, essentially and practically the role and influence of the clergy in political life has grown in recent years in almost all the countries of the region. One would expect that this emphasis on religion would result in more love, understanding and tolerance. Nevertheless, to the contrary, religion has been used to legitimize mono-ethnic concepts and geopolitical games. The increased number of constructed or renovated religious buildings or monuments in all religious provenances, in the region, bears witness to how much is invested in divisions and differences. According to the Sarajevo Center for Islamic Architecture, in Bosnia and Herzegovina alone, over 550 new mosques had been built by September 2004. So much investment in new mosques or new churches, instead of focusing on a rise in the economy and development, or less unemployment, serve as an act of division for sure.

In a poll carried out by the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research, conducted on political culture in Macedonia, the answers to the question "for which core values are you prepared to even fight" are really interesting: for the Muslims this value is religion, whereas Christians are prepared to fight to defend their state (Simoska, Gaber & Babunski, 2001).

It could equally be summarized that in those countries with predominantly Muslim populations the answer would be the same. The political culture of the citizen in the state must be known by any politician acting in a multicultural society.

Economic Characteristics of the Western Balkan Region in Terms of Unemployment

The hypothesis that the rise of right-wing extremism in the EU is a direct result of the increase in unemployment, especially among young people, is confirmed by the statement of British Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, who believes that “if the euro zone does not come up with a reasonable vision for the future, there might be an appearance of a different range of growing nationalist, xenophobic and extreme movements throughout the European Union” (Clegg, 2012). The problem of unemployment was a dominant issue in the speech by José Manuel Durão Barroso, President of the European Commission, during the high-level conference on youth employment in Brussels (Barroso, 2014). Veselin Vukotic, the rector of the University of Podgorica, pointed out that: “The problem of unemployment is a key issue nowadays, from which emerge all the others, including crime and terrorism“. The research question of this chapter deals mainly with the effects of the economic crisis in the European Union and the possible threats to the Western Balkans, such as right-wing extremism. To the extent that the Western Balkan economies directly depend upon trade and economic relations with the EU, so any economic shock within the EU undoubtedly has an impact on the economic development of all the countries in the region and their relationship with the EU.

According to the European Commission (European Union edition, 2012), since 2012 the Western Balkan economies have been moving at a slower pace. In nearly all countries, there has been a registered decline in exports, an increase of budget deficits, with a decline in GDP, and forecasts of a recession in the next few years. Whilst the reasons for decline may be attributed to the deterioration of the international situation, they are primarily a result of the worsening economic situation in the EU.

The key negative consequence of this situation is an increase in unemployment in all countries in the Balkans. Most unemployment is recorded in Kosovo with over 50%, followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina at 44.8%, Macedonia with 28.8% and Serbia with 24.1%. When it comes to the

unemployment rate of young people, the data is alarming. According to Radio Sarajevo, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, over 58% of young people under the age of 30 are unemployed. According to the Statistical Office of Macedonia, 52.5% of young people aged up to 24 years are unemployed, and in Serbia, this percentage is around 50%. An International Labor Organization (ILO) report estimates that in Montenegro youth unemployment reaches 58%, while in Kosovo it reaches over 75% of the young population (Dotto, 2011). EU members from this region also noted an increase in youth unemployment among as follows: Greece around 60%, Bulgaria 30%, 24.5% in Hungary, Romania 23.6%, Slovenia 33.8% and Croatia at 49.8 (Eurostat, 2014).

As a consequence, young people often choose to permanently leave their home towns (Danas, 2014) or even become prey to various criminal networks and organizations (Vukotic, 2014). Young people are the core driving force of social protest and their protests often end in violence. A notable number of young people is included in the right-wing extremist organizations motivated by their slogans such as for honor, freedom, and homeland (Firstenau & Bašić Savić, 2010).

Right-wing Extremism and Violence in the Balkan Region

The growth of the radical right in Serbia is directly related to the end of the Yugoslav wars, which were accompanied by great economic strife. Moreover, there are still significant political actors aiding this trend. Among them for example, is the ultranationalist right-wing political party – “The Serbian Radical Party” – which enjoys popular support in Serbia. “The Serbian radical right should therefore be considered not only as a threat to the security of individuals or society, but also as a serious danger to state security” (Turkish Weekly, 2013). Alexander Popov, a prominent civil society activist, suggests that according to the Serbian police and security service (BIA), a number of right-wing extreme organizations are operating in Serbia and the only chance for the region to prevent increased violence is through European integration (Popov, 2007). Zarko Korac, Serbian psychologist and politician, speaking about neo-Nazism in Serbia, believes that Claire-fascism is a greater threat, due to its autochthony. Claire-fascism is an ideology that combines the political and economic doctrines of fascism with theology or religious tradition. The Serbian right-wing extremist group “SNP Nasi” announced putting up surveillance cameras in apartments near a new lesbian and gay center in an attempt to shut it down (Balkaninsight, 2013). According to surveys, Serbian society

remains deeply homophobic, as a result of which gay people tend to live in isolation and with a high degree of secrecy.

The growth of the extreme right has also been registered in Croatia. In April 2012, a few hundred members of the “United against Fascism” group protested in Zagreb against the far right holding rallies, and supported a ban on the holding of an international conference of European extreme-right parties, organized by the Croatian Pure Party of the Right (HCHSP). In this context, the President of Croatia, Ivo Josipovic, said that “in the country (Croatia) there is an ustasha-snake, which is not widely accepted, but we know that it exists and we must be prepared to deal with it in an appropriate way” (BETA Press, 2012). Racism in Croatia is expressed in the following ways: resentment against players of different color and race in football matches, fascist symbols during music concerts, or violent behavior during gay parades. Footage shows Simunic shouting “for the homeland” over a microphone - the fans respond “ready”. The chant is reportedly associated with the Ustasha, the Croatian pro-Nazi regime that ruled during the Second World War. Marko Jurcic, from the Center for sexual orientation and gender identity, believes that right-wing extremism in Croatia can be recognized as a neo-ustasha movement that is part of the numerous political parties, from which it receives its support. At the same time, there is a less noticeable neo Nazi movement, which unlike the neo-ustasha nationalism, has its roots in the Second World War, and is even more racist (Riemen, 2011). Alen Budaj, Director of the “Margel Institute” in Zagreb agrees with this division of extremism in Croatia. He argues that, in Croatia the threat of the neo-ustasha is much larger than neo-Nazism, because it received great support from non-parliamentary right-wing parties (Budaj, 2012). Stjepan Mesic, former Croatian president, suggests that “not only is extremism in Croatia strengthened, but the state together with the Catholic Church tolerated and even sponsored it. For a period of twenty years, the regime in Croatia systematically reduced and kept quiet about the crimes of Nazi-fascism and the ustasha. At the same time, hardly anyone mentions the fact that it demolished more than 3,000 monuments of anti-fascist fighters and victims of fascism in the last 20 years” (Mesic, 2014). Lately throughout Croatia nationalist protests and violence have been organized against bilingualism in Vukovar (close to the Serbian border) although bilingualism is a constitutionally guaranteed right (RTS, 2014). Nazi hunter and director of the “Simon Wiesenthal” Center, Efraim Zuroff, warned of the strengthening of neo-fascism everywhere in the EU, especially in some of its eastern states,

such as Croatia, where the situation has deteriorated significantly (Zuroff, 2014).

The findings suggest that the neo-Nazis in Bosnia and Herzegovina are equally active, using the Internet for their own promotion. So far, the movement promotes the ethnic identity of the Bosniaks, without the interference of religion. Their program is a “national and secular Bosniak state” (Huseinovic, 2013).

According to some analysts, right-wing extremism in the Balkans is more manifested on a national and (or) religious basis, rather than racially motivated. Namely, Dragan Popovic, director of the Center for Practical Policy, claims that unlike extremism in the European Union, the target of right-wing extremists in Serbia is national minorities. Right-wing extremist groups in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia, Greece and Bulgaria, have devised an ideology of denial of the rights of other nations or groups who are different from them in speech or gender.

At the same time, the members of right-wing extremism have changed their image. Instead of “Spitfire”-jackets, black heavy boots and shaven heads, now most of them are dressed in suits and do not attract any special attention. They are trying to promote themselves positively among citizens and struggle for winning elections at the municipal level. They are opponents of globalization. In order to gain the sympathy of citizens they use slogans that are characteristic of leftist parties, related to the social element and place an emphasis on taking care of “the people” and the “state” (Bojic, 2007). Anyway, it seems that one feature connects all characteristics of the right-wing populists. During the crisis they are trying to instrumentalize the fears of the voters; whereby, right-wing populists rely on voter dissatisfaction. They offer simple answers to complex problems such as the economic situation, unemployment and social insecurity. They primarily want to remove, drive away or return home, those whom they refer to as, the stranger or the “other” (Shmit & Bashic Savic, 2010). We can assume that with the deepening of the economic crisis, these groups and parties will, in the future, become a real political force with a desire to win political power.

Neo-Nazi graffiti can often be found on city walls and in schoolyards. In high schools one can see students with shaven heads, T-shirts and badges referring to music groups, which are associated with or propagate Nazi ideology. Teachers often do not know the meaning of music groups such as “Foreskins”, “Blades”, “Specials”, or “Agnostic Front”, whose shirts are worn by their school students. They communicate among themselves with symbols and

codes that clearly determine the right-wing extremism of their groups. Namely, number “28” is the second and the eighth letter of the alphabet (B and H) that indicates the origin of “Blood & Honour”. On the other hand, a tattoo often writes “Combat 18”, which is considered to be the armed wing of “Blood & Honour”. Number “18” indicates the first and eighth letter of the alphabet (A and H), or the initials of Adolf Hitler, whereas number “88” stands for the initials of the alphabet for the greeting “Heil Hitler” and so on (Velicki, 2013, pp. 70-71).

As a form of communication, right-wing extremists attempt to conquer the Internet. The number of neo-Nazi networks in just one year tripled in 2010. NGO “Jugendschutz.net”, formed in 1997 to protect young people from the influence of right-wing extremists, registered 1900 sites dealing with the Nazi-related ideas. Around 10,000 users per day read blogs and visit neo-Nazi Internet platforms.

Lately, prominent members of the right-wing extremist groups are involved in sports. They are active in establishing sports clubs or are involved as referees of sports matches (Omerašević, 2013). Their aim is to spread neo-Nazi ideas in the amateur leagues, especially among the younger generation, where recruitment is very easy. In that way, fan groups are infiltrated by extremist right members. Right-wing extremists are often leaders of fan groups and are also nominated for local elections.

We are also witnessing dangerous attempts at rewriting the history of the Second World War in order to remove the blame from those responsible for the Holocaust and other crimes against civilians. Through the means of education, nationalist culture is forged in almost every segment of society (Arnautovic, 2014). Popular folklore is used for hate speech. “Nationalism in Bulgaria is strengthening”, says Daniela Mihailova, director of the initiative “Equal Opportunities”, an NGO based in Sofia. “The targets of the nationalists are always the ‘others’, and that includes Muslims, different ethnic groups, Jews, the gay community and refugees”, said Solomon Bali, chairman of the Bulgarian branch of the Jewish organization B'nai B'rith. Many state institutions today are under the influence of Ataka - the nationalist party that in 2005 first entered Parliament by winning nearly nine percent of the votes. Today, a deputy of the party chaired the parliamentary ethics committee, and the party has a representative on the Committee for the Protection from Discrimination. “So it is not surprising that their decisions are frequently supported by discrimination, rather than combatting it”, said Krasimir Kanev, chairman of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (Vaksberg & Švarc, 2014).

Recently in Macedonia, the participation of minors in violence on an inter-ethnic basis has been registered. It is believed that political parties manipulate the growth of nationalism for their own ratings, almost before every election. Furthermore, the politicization of violence among young people is notable. According to the Ministry of Interior Affairs: “the number of minors, who in 2013 were discovered and sanctioned for participation in incidents, rose to 150 people” (Kurir, 2013). In Macedonia, the first seeds of neo-fascism were planted by skinheads. With shaven heads who greet each other in the style of their ideological leader, Hitler (Diversity media group, 2013). Their ideology is extremely nationalistic; they advocate the expulsion of minorities and they are against the rights of marginalized groups, such as the Roma, and social cases.

New Islamic movements in Kosovo, such as Bashkohu, Forumi and Paqja Studentore, are not a direct threat to Kosovo’s stability, but they could be if they became more politically active. (Karadaku, 2013). There is no widespread violence, nevertheless the roots of conflict, the roots of violence are still alive (Pani, P. & Fidanoska, E. 2013). “Different ethnicities, different religions still hate each other and as a result of that people are living separately” (Turkish Weekly, 2013).

It is important to emphasize the fact that the growth of nationalism, and the level of right-wing extremism in the Balkans is the result of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. After 2005, with the breakup of the economic crisis and its prolonged and deepened negative effects (such as falling living standards, rising unemployment, and the lack of prospects for young people) right-wing opponents of liberal democracy started recruiting a new generation of nationalists. In all the Balkan countries they try to reorganize and win power, but with an anti-European orientation built upon a national program.

It could be said that nationalist platforms with neo-Nazi and far right-extremist programs have yet to come to the fore, if the social problems deepen (Bartlett & Prica, 2012). It seems that European integration processes have no alternative. In this regard, the President of the European Council, Herman van Rompuy, stated that “the entry of the Western Balkans into the EU will put an end to a history fuelled by constant conflict”. At the same time, European analysts warn of worrying trends in the European integration processes. The path to membership of the EU is becoming more demanding and longer. “The new expansion could not be expected before the year 2020, and in the case of Macedonia, Bosnia and Kosovo, it may take even longer”,

says Florian Biber from the Center for the Study of Southeast Europe. He suggests that it is a bad practice that in the Western Balkans there appear to be two groups of countries, “those who can” (Serbia, Montenegro and Albania) and “those who cannot” (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Kosovo), and the reasons for those “who cannot” damage any attempt at making any progress in the path towards Euro-integration (Maksimovic, 2013).

Conclusion

A characteristic of all right-wing extremist movements is the policy of the protection of national identity, by referring to ethnicity and the homogenization of the nation, whilst calling on a higher level of morality and a struggle against alleged corrupt political elites. The impact of an extremist right-wing group usually increases before and during the elections, when the established political parties easily resort to populist and nationalist rhetoric in order to win votes.

Right-wing extremists in the Balkans can be divided into nationalists, neo-Nazis, Claire-fascists and sports hooligans. It is thought that Claire fascism constitutes a greater threat, especially in Serbia, because of its autochthony. Right-wing extremism in Croatia can be recognized as neo-ustasha and they are part of some political parties. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, hooliganism has a special dimension because it is intertwined with nationalism. Many members of such groups operate under the spiritual and financial auspices of religious communities and the diaspora.

While in Germany, neo-Nazism or neo-fascism was mainly directed towards racial and political intolerance, in the Balkans they are primarily based on ethnic and religious grounds. In this case, the reinterpretation of the national “tradition” is an ideological strategy of modern fascism. Although in the case of marginal groups, the danger arises from their exclusivity, and a membership made up of mostly young people who may easily decide to resort to the use of violent methods. The target groups of right-wing extremists are national minorities, the Roma, differently oriented sexual groups, and then the so-called associations of “national traitors” that militate for issues, such as a civil society, or human rights. A delay in the process of EU enlargement would be a risky development that may lead to the disruption of security and stability in the Western Balkans. Confirmation of this thesis can be found in the existing obstacles to the Belgrade-Pristina negotiations, the complexity of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the situation regarding the naming dispute

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between Macedonia and Greece. These conflicts or disputes could easily escalate against the background of an uncertain European membership, supported by nationalist circles.

Besides, the uncertainty of European enlargement would not only lead to greater Euro-skepticism, but could also result in a decline of trust in institutions and in the existing political elites, with the possibility of political activity of a new generation of politicians, of both the extreme left or right-wing, with populist and nationalistic political programs. In such circumstances, in terms of increased unemployment and poverty, it may be easy for inter-ethnic conflicts in the region, destabilization, and a new cycle of conflicts to be restored. Due to the multicultural character of the region it might be realistic to expect the emergence of violence and clashes on the religious plain. The delay of European enlargement also serves structures associated with organized crime, or the so-called Balkan “confederate mafia”.

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