

Ankara University,
Faculty of Political Science
**The Turkish Yearbook of
International Relations,**
Volume 45 (2014), p. 65 - 91

Non-Traditional Security Issues of the Western Balkans: Actors, Causes and Implications*

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Abstract

For the moment wars were over in the Balkans region, but insecurities caused by weak states constitute an important concern for stability of the region. Therefore, it is argued that insecurity predicament in the Western Balkans is best explained in terms of the 'weak state'. A weak state is defined not merely as one with inefficient institutions but one that is unable or unwilling to enforce rules or to implement consistent policies. Accordingly, the non-traditional security issues in the Balkans threaten the democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the stability and the economic progress within the region, even with an impact beyond the Balkans. In this process, violent non-state actors (VNSA) and their activities in spheres of drugs and human trafficking, terrorism, corruption, money laundering and the proliferation of small arms endanger security in its all levels - human, societal, national, regional and international. In this article, it will be aimed to examine the severity of VNSAs problems and their implications in Western Balkans with reference to the weak state concept.

* An earlier and revisited version of this paper was presented at International Balkan Symposium, Friendship and Collaboration in the Balkans, Süleyman Demirel University, Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, International University of Antalya, EPOKA University, 5-7 October 2012, Isparta, Turkey under the title of "Rethinking Security in the Balkans: The Concept of Weak State and Its Implications for Regional Security".

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Introduction

It is important to note that the widening scope of security to transnational issues and deepening of actors in the realm of security is not simply a short-term fixation with the end of the Cold War competition as the defining axis for security. The threat posed by drugs, terrorism, transnational crime, and environmental degradation has been intensified precisely because of globalization.¹ The increasing globalization of world economy showed itself to have two faces. On the one hand, goods, services, people and ideas are able to move freely across national boundaries, bringing new opportunities for trade, cultural contacts and enhanced quality of international life. On the other hand, new illegal elements that emerged in the post-Cold War world and already established criminal organizations were able to take advantage of these trends more quickly and effectively than governments.²

In addition to end of the Cold War and globalization process, conduct of warfare has changed dramatically. The reality of war within states does not correspond with Clausewitz's thinking of war as an organized combat between the military forces of two and/or more different states. Through new wars, the decline of state legitimacy and power gives rise to rivalry amongst non-state actors and the distinction between public and private authority is blurred.³ Indeed, in the new wars, the monopoly of legitimate violence of the nation-state has broken down. In this process, the institutional and ideational weakness of the state constitute a fertile ground for emerging of violent non-state actors.

The literature on state weakness falls broadly into two categories. A first approach focuses upon the institutions and individuals that make up the state, as well as the capacities of state agencies. According to Joel S. Migdal, state strength is weighed in terms of

1 Victor D. Cha, "Globalization and the Study of International Security", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (2000), p. 394.

2 Melyvn Levitsky, "Transnational Criminal Networks and International Security", *Syracuse Journal of International Law and Commerce*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Summer 2003), p. 227.

3 Mary Kaldor, *New & Old Wars, Organized Violence in a Global Era*, 2nd Edition, California, Stanford University Press, 2007.

a state's capacity to 'penetrate society, regulate social relationships, extract resources and appropriate or use resources in determined ways'.⁴ A second approach has interpreted state strength in more than political-institutional terms. Barry Buzan stressed the importance of the 'idea' of the state in terms of people's perceptions of its nature and legitimacy.⁵ The weakness of the state in terms of low levels of socio-political cohesion may be further exacerbated by the lack of essential capabilities at the hands of many political leaders that are deemed essential in order to overcome this structural weakness and build strong states. Consequently, the weak states are presenting a serious security threat not only to national security but also regional and international security as well. So, issue of weak statehood is at the core of most of today's relevant security problems.

Traditional security conception focuses on the security threats that originates from abroad in terms of other states' capabilities and their revisionist aspirations. However, in the Western Balkans crucial security threats are closely related with the internal characteristics and developments. In the post-Cold War era, all the conflicts that took place in the region were intra-state ones. Therefore, a perspective that looks inside of the state should be introduced in order to understand the reasons underlying the intra-state conflicts. In contemporary Western Balkans, several countries face the internal security threats rather than external ones.

For the moment wars were over in the Balkans region, but insecurities caused by weak states constitute an important concern for stability of the region. Therefore, it is argued that insecurity predicament in the Western Balkans region is best

4 Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capacities in the Third World*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1988, p. 67.

5 Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, Hemel Hempstead, Harvester, 1991, p. 82.

explained and confronted in terms of the 'weak state'.⁶ Definitionally, state strength assumes an ideational and functional capability: the state's ability to provide national cohesion and public goods, respectively. Conversely, weak state phenomenon is one of the structural problems plaguing the Western Balkans; it reflects inadequate institutional performance but also certain legitimacy deficits. States in the region are weak for a number of reasons, which boil down to the overarching issues of legitimacy and efficiency. They are illegitimate in the eyes of many of their citizens, because the latter see them as dominated by a different ethnic group or, even more importantly, as serving vested particularistic interests.⁷ Under these circumstances, VNSAs emerge in response to inadequacies or shortcomings; i.e. when the state does not/can not provide safety, security, and the basic public services for its citizens, or certain groups of citizens (minorities). When the state lacks legitimacy and/or capacity, that is, it is a weak state, others will fill the gap, take advantage, or directly confront the state.⁸ In this article, it will be aimed to examine the severity of non-traditional security issues and their implications in Western Balkans with reference to the concept of weak state.

The non-traditional security issues in the Balkans threaten the democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the stability and the economic progress within the region, even with an impact beyond the Balkans. In this process, violent non-state actors⁹

6 Ivan Krastev, *Human Security in South-East Europe*, Skopje, UNDP Special Report, 1999.

7 Dimitar Bechev and Svetlozar Andreev, *Top-Down vs Bottom-Up Aspects of EU Institution-Building Strategies in the Western Balkans*, St. Anthony's College Oxford, South East European Studies Programme, Occasional Paper, No. 3 (February 2005), pp. 3-6.

8 Bülent Sarper Ağır and Murat Necip Arman, "Deepening of Security Conception and Violent Non-State Actors as the Challengers of Human Security", *Adnan Menderes University, Journal of Social Science Institute*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2014), p. 131.

9 Violent non-state actors include terrorist organizations, militias, warlords, and criminal organizations. A VNSA refers to any organization that uses illegal violence to reach its goals, thereby

(VNSA) and their activities in spheres of drugs and human trafficking, terrorism, corruption, money laundering and the proliferation of small arms endanger security in its all levels – human, societal, national, regional and international. Indeed, it can be easily observed that a large number of threats come from the non-traditional security sectors when one examines the security strategy documents of the states in the region. Therefore, it makes sense to look at non-traditional security issues in order to assess the security situation in the Western Balkans.

Weakness of the State Actor and ‘New Warfare’ Phenomenon

Approaches to the weak state phenomenon in IR literature primarily have taken two avenues. The first avenue is the neo-institutional approach and the second avenue is the ideational approach. The neo-institutional avenue focuses on the institutions within the state and their ability to govern.¹⁰ A weak state is defined not merely as one with inefficient institutions but one that is unable or unwilling to enforce rules or to implement consistent policies. For instance, the structures of weak states can encourage the threat of criminal activities, due to the ease with which criminal organizations are able to penetrate the state and its institutions.¹¹ Despite appearing strong with regard to the monopoly of the use of force, it is in fact rather weak when it comes to provision of public services and its political and administrative systems. In this context, the infiltration by criminal organizations into state structures threatens democracy, democratic institutions and public confidence.

contesting the monopoly on violence of the state. See, Ağır and Arman, “Deepening of Security Conception...”, pp. 123-136.

10 See, Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*.

11 Vera Stojarova, “Organized Crime in the Western Balkans”, *HUMSEC Journal*, Vol. 1, p. 92, <http://www.humsec.eu/cms/fileadmin/user_upload/humsec/Journal/Stojarova_Organized_Crime_in_the_Western_Balkans.pdf>, (access date: 10 July 2012).

The ideational avenue to studying the weak state is the security-inspired track, which focuses on the idea of the state as a legitimate actor in providing protection for the population.¹² This 'idea' of a legitimate state is born of a bottom-up approach to societal support for the state, referred to as state-societal cohesion. As characterized by Barry Buzan, weak state is a state where the level of socio-political cohesion is low because there is no single nation within a state territory and different ethnic groups coexist within one state, the process of state-building is not accomplished and governing elites are concerned with domestic threats rather than with external ones. There is no political and societal consensus within a state, coherent idea of a state among population and at the same time governing elites are not able to impose unity in such absence of political consensus.¹³ So, it is not sufficient to blame weak institutions for weak states, or objective taxonomical accounts measuring states according to the idealised Weberian model. So, analysis of the weak state is necessitated an outlook from the bottom-up that allows us to observe domestic realm of the security which is mostly related to the state's relations with the society.

Nizar Messari argues that when the state represents a solution to the security needs of one group of people, it is by nature a source of threat to another group. This is the case because the construction of the state is necessarily an exclusive process, and those who are excluded become in some cases a source of threat. It is at this precise juncture that the concept of identity becomes central in the discussion of security.¹⁴ In this respect, Mary Kaldor suggests that the goals of the new wars are about identity politics in contrast to the geo-political or ideological goals of earlier wars.¹⁵ The new identity politics arises out of the disintegration or erosion of modern state structures, especially centralized, authoritarian states.¹⁶ This politics tends to be fragmentative and exclusive. Social and political fragmentation

12 Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, pp. 69-82.

13 Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, pp. 97-101.

14 Nizar Messari, "The State and Dilemmas of Security: The Middle East and the Balkans", *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (2002), p. 420.

15 Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*, pp. 6-7.

16 Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*, p. 81.

and weak inter-group trust are often characteristics of situations of fragility and violent conflict. In situations of fragility, political identity, fragmentation and weak state institutions reinforce each other. They undermine state legitimacy and the formation of strong nation-wide governance systems. As a result, the social and economic context of new wars is characterized by weak or failed states, a collapse of the formal economy, and rivalry between criminal groups over natural resources or illegal commercial activities.

In the new wars, the monopoly of legitimate violence has broken down. Within this context, violence is effectively privatized as the state's control and monopoly over violence declines as an extension of the erosion of state capacity: "The new wars occur in situations in which state revenues decline because of the decline of the economy as well as the spread of criminality, corruption and inefficiency, violence is increasingly privatized both as a result of growing organized crime and the emergence of paramilitary groups, and political legitimacy is disappearing".¹⁷ Long ago, states arrogated to themselves a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. Since the end of the Cold War, intra-state conflict has been far more prevalent than inter-state, suggesting that assumption is no longer taken for granted by illegal combatants, guerillas, rebels, insurgents, or any other categorization of VNSAs.

After the end of the Cold War, weak states have become a common concern in post-conflict situations such as in the former Yugoslavia. And weak states constitute the major source of political, economic, social and cultural insecurity. Therefore, it is argued that human insecurity in the region is best explained and confronted in terms of the 'weak state'.¹⁸ In this context, European Security Strategy acknowledges the phenomenon of weak state as the cause of insecurities.¹⁹ and a spoiler of the

¹⁷ Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*, p. 5.

¹⁸ Krastev, *Human Security in South-East Europe*, p. 19.

¹⁹ European Council, *European Security Strategy, A Secure Europe in a Better World*, Brussels, 12 December 2003, p. 7,<

Europeanization process. In all countries of the Western Balkans it seems clear that the state has failed to offer security and development. For instance, in the case of Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania, the major security provider is not the state but the international community. The institutional and socio-political weakness of the state actor in the region force the international community to involve to stabilise the region. Because insecurities of weak states in the region can have a spill-over effect. Definitionally these insecurities include the threat of violent transfers of power, insurgency, secession, rebellion, terrorism, weapons proliferation, organized crime, refugee flows, mass migration, regional instability and ultimately, state collapse and anarchy.²⁰

Emergence of Violent Non-State Actors

The presence of VNSAs has long been a part of international conflict, but this phenomenon has traditionally been understudied. Realism, the traditionally dominant paradigm in International Relations discipline, looks exclusively at state actors, assuming that non-state actors do not have an impact on international relations.²¹ However, competing non-realist paradigms, such as liberalism or idealism, do consider the role of actors other than states. These paradigms, however, tend to emphasize the role of international organizations, as well as looking at the behavior of democratic governments in international affairs. The darker side of non-state actors in international relations, therefore, remains under-theorized.²² On the other hand, in recent years, political violence performed by non-state actors has come to the forefront of international relations. Indeed, today's security environment is endangered by the existence of a diverse range of VNSAs. These groups utilize

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>,
(access date: 12 June 2012).

20 Stewart Patrick, "Weak States and Global Threats: Assessing Evidence of Spillovers", *Center for Global Development, Working Paper*, No. 73 (2006), p. 1.

21 Kledja Mulaj, *Violent Non-State Actors in World Politics*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2009, pp. 1-2.

22 Mulaj, *Violent Non-State Actors in World Politics*, p. 3.

subversive means to exploit and disrupt the international system, frequently committing acts of violence against innocent civilians in the process.

While the vocabulary of conflict in international security traditionally centered on interstate war, with globalization, terms such as global violence and human security become common parlance, where the fight is between irregular sub-state units such as paramilitary groups, criminal organizations, and terrorists. Extremist groups because of their ability to organize transnationally and meet virtually, utilize terrorist tactics that have been substantially enhanced by the globalization process. Furthermore, globalization has given rise to a 'skill revolution' that enhances the capabilities of groups such as drug smugglers, terrorists, and criminal organizations to carry out their agenda more effectively than ever before.²³

Types of violent crime constitute the direct threats to the human security.²⁴ One of the most important direct threats to human security is organized violence such as terrorism. The transnational crime, narcotics trafficking, and the proliferation of small arms, all of which endanger personal safety and well being, are the other examples of direct organized violence. Terrorists are frequently prepared to engage in the indiscriminate murder of civilians. Terrorism is implicitly prepared to sacrifice all moral and humanitarian considerations for the sake of its end.²⁵ Acts of international terrorism by non-state actors are an unfortunate side-effect of a more open and closely connected world. That's why, international networks have developed among organized criminals, drug traffickers, and arms dealers creating an infrastructure for terrorism around the world.

Empirical data on the degree of threat posed by terrorism displays that it causes relatively few deaths if compared to other security concerns such as interstate war, or civil conflict. In recent years, the number of global deaths caused by terrorist

23 Cha, "Globalization and the Study of...", pp. 393-394.

24 See, Ağır and Arman, "Deepening of Security Conception...", pp. 123-136.

25 Paul Wilkinson, *Political Terrorism*, London, Macmillan Press, 1974, p. 17.

attacks averages to less than 2,000 annually. However, recent data show an increase in the lethality of individual terrorist incidents.²⁶ The most worrying issue is the possibility of terrorist groups' access to weapons of mass destruction.²⁷ Because, weapons of mass destruction are becoming more easily obtainable and so-called "dirty bombs" of nuclear material do not require sophisticated knowledge or material. The potential of weapons of mass destruction reaching the hands of terrorist groups has received particular attention. For instance, the sarin gas attacks by the Japanese Aum sect in Tokyo in 1995 has illustrated the relative ease with which chemical agents can be manufactured by radical groups.

While the potential for weapons of mass destruction to spread into the hands of terrorist organizations has generated considerable concern in the post-Cold War era, it is Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) that routinely spread to non-state actors engaged in violence. They are the primary weapons of many non-state actors with which this study is concerned: criminals, and terrorist organizations.²⁸ Their widespread availability and misuse contributes to transnational organized crime and conflicts of all types.

Crime has always represented a threat to the security of ordinary people in all countries. The goal of a large number of criminal acts is to generate profit for the individual or group that carries out the act. Therefore, criminal organizations that organize and pursue the crime activities are essentially illegal business organizations and no one actor can effectively fight against transnational organized crime in a unilateral manner. Because, with the globalization, crime is less local and more organized, and beyond the border. In this respect, the 1990s witnessed a

26 Elke Krahan, "From State to Non-State Actors: The Emergence of Security Governance", *New Threats and New Actors in International Security*, ed. Elke Krahan, New York, Macmillan, 2005, p. 5.

27 See, Bülent Sarper Ağır, "Küreselleşen Dünyada Kitle İmha Silahları ve Terörizm", *Küreselleşmeden Post-Küreselleşmeye Değişim Sürecindeki Dünya Düzeni ve Türkiye*, ed. Murat Saraçlı, Ankara, Lotus, 2008, pp. 99-129.

28 Mike Bourne, "The Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons", *New Threats and New Actors in International Security*, ed. Elke Krahan, New York, Macmillan, 2005, pp. 155-156.

significant rise in the scale of transnational organized crime. As well as providing a major human security threat to ordinary citizens, criminal organizations (in tandem with violent political organizations) have seriously undermined the capacity of the government to rule the country. At the 1994 UN Conference on Internationally Organized Crime, UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali referred to an 'empire of criminals' to highlight the problem of globally operating criminal gangs.²⁹

The type of illegal activity that generates the funds can vary but is often linked to corrupt practices, transnational organized crime networks, and increasingly terrorist groups. For instance, it has been suggested that the global narcotics market amounts to around 400 billion dolar, roughly equal to the world tourist industry. By 2006 money-laundering transactions were accounting for around 1.5 trillion dolar per year, somewhere between 2 and 5 per cent of global GDP.³⁰ Terrorist groups are financed by drug activities, and thus, narco-trafficking is a threat not only because drug poses danger to mankind, but it is also a source of funding for the terrorist groups. Thus, criminal terrorism can be defined as the systematic use of acts of terror for objectives of private material gain.³¹

Currently, one of the most dramatic threats to human security is internal armed conflict. A crucial feature of internal conflicts is the widespread violation of human rights by armed groups, from rebel movements to militias. With the proliferation of weapons, especially small arms and landmines, and the erosion of state control, threats to human security are increased, both because people are the direct targets of violence and as a result of the organized crime and random violence that occurs in these chaotic conditions.

For armed groups, violence is often employed not as a military tactic aiming for a takeover, but as a means to render the political status quo unsustainable. Violence in this context can

29 Peter Hough, *Understanding Global Security*, New York, Routledge, 2008, pp. 231-238.

30 Hough, *Understanding Global Security*, p. 230.

31 Wilkinson, *Political Terrorism*, p. 32.

take innumerable forms, particularly towards civilians; they include killing, raping, kidnapping, torture and extortion; attacks on crops, water sources, and other civilian infrastructures. Combatants often engage in parallel criminal activities, using force to extract resources for their own personal gain, through extortion, drug trafficking and illegal timber for example. A resultant environment of pervasive insecurity can contribute to the growth of “cultures of violence” and destroy social capital.

The breakup of Yugoslavia is an instance in which non-state actors played an important role. Conditions in Bosnia were widely described throughout the media as a “war”, although few regular military forces participated. Instead, various paramilitaries, sometimes supported by state allies, prosecuted the “war” entirely on their own.³² Therefore, it is possible to identify, in addition to the regular forces, three main types of irregular force: paramilitary organizations, generally under the control of an individual; foreign mercenary groups; and local police augmented by armed civilians.³³ For example, the UN Commission of Experts identified eighty-three paramilitary groups on the territory of former Yugoslavia during the Bosnian War - some fifty-six were Serbian, thirteen were Croatian and fourteen were Bosnian.³⁴ Often paramilitary groups are established by governments in order to distance themselves from the more extreme manifestations of violence.³⁵ For example, in Bosnian war, the fighting was characterized by forced human displacement, severe human rights violations and ethnic cleansing.

In the 21st century, the state monopoly on violence is being reduced to a convenient fiction. For instance, warlords and militias may have a territory over which they exercise some of the control functions of a government. Thus, it seems that states’ superior resources and authority are not necessarily sufficient to contain contemporary security threats. Terrorists, transnational crime networks, and arms traffickers are learning the art of

32 Mulaj, *Violent Non-State Actors in World Politics*, p. 1.

33 Kaldor, *New & Old Wars*, p. 49.

34 UN Final Report of the Commission of Experts, 27 May 1994, <http://www.icty.org/x/file/About/OTP/un_commission_of_experts_report1994_en.pdf>, (access date: 20 June 2012).

35 Kaldor, *New & Old Wars*, p. 98.

“asymmetrical warfare,” that is, to avoid state strengths and seek out its weaknesses. Instead of facing an overwhelming military enemy, they target civilians; instead of using central kingpins, they work in small independent groups; and instead of facing governmental controls, they move to offshore safe havens.³⁶ With the end of the bipolar system, some power and authority vacuum appeared and they were employed by organized crime networks and terrorist organizations in order to extend their own influence spheres. Additionally, the transnational nature of these threats implies that borders and national armed forces are increasingly unsuited for the provision of human, national, and international security. Moreover, they put into question the foundations of a security system based on the norms of national sovereignty and a state monopoly of the legitimate use of violence.

Non-Traditional Security Issues of the Western Balkans

The transition from communist rule to democracy, wars on the Balkans region in 1990s, and the presence of weak states provided a favourable environment for blooming of non-traditional security issues in the Balkans. In this context, the new risks and threats such as uncontrolled migration and coerced displacement, trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW), human-trafficking, corruption, terrorism, and the proliferation of organized crime have increasingly become the main topics of security agenda in the Balkans.³⁷ These threats and risks are making impossible to put sharp dividing lines between internal and external security because of their spill-over effects. In this section, it is aimed to examine the non-traditional security issues of the region with reference to the theoretical perspective outlined in the previous pages of the article.

³⁶ Elke Krahan, “New Threats and New Actors in Security Governance: Developments, Problems, and Solutions”, *New Threats and New Actors in International Security*, ed. Elke Krahan, New York, Macmillan, 2005, p. 202.

³⁷ Fotios Moustakis, “Soft Security Threats in the Europe-The Case of Balkan Region”, *European Security*, Vol. 13, No. 1-2 (2004), p. 141.

Organized Crime

Transnational organized crime is most often presented as a direct or even existential threat to the state. According to this view, crime groups are not only contributing to the decline of sovereignty but are also directly challenging the authority of states.³⁸ Transnational organized crime is a direct threat to individuals as well, and one of the best ways to illustrate this is to use the novel conception of human security. All former communist countries fell victim to high rates of corruption and crime in the years after 1989. The implosion suffered by the police and criminal justice system accounts for the strength of organised crime groups throughout the entire post-communist World.³⁹ It was exacerbated by the economic failure that followed the revolutions of 1989. The emergence of crime as a significant factor in former communist countries has fed instability and hindered their transition to more representative political and economic systems, thereby slowing their integration into the world political economy.⁴⁰ Because, criminal activities distort national economies through the influx of large amounts of money generated by illegal enterprise.

The spread and growth of the organized crime is certainly one of the most significant security risks in Western Balkans. The transition from communist rule to democracy, wars on the Balkans region in 1990s with their economic blockades and war economies, and the presence of weak states in the post-war context provided a favourable environment for networks of organized crime to bloom.⁴¹ So, the phenomenon of crime in the Balkans is a product of post-communist transition and conflicts resulting from the break-up of Yugoslavia rather than being endemic. But it should be emphasised that societal problems and weakness of the state actor contributed the growth of organized crime networks in the region. Therefore, organized crime is not only a developmental issue in the Balkans, reflecting the lack of

38 John T. Picarelli, "Transnational Organized Crime", *Security Studies: An Introduction*, ed. Paul Williams, New York, Routledge, 2008, p. 463.

39 Misha Glenny, "Balkan Organised Crime", *Is There An Albanian Question?*, ed. Judy Batt, Paris, Institute for Security Studies, 2008, p. 87.

40 Levitsky, "Transnational Criminal Networks...", p. 235.

41 Stojarova, "Organized Crime in...", p. 91.

adequately protected property rights and the lack of local employment opportunities.⁴² The regional organized crime networks find their expression in the trafficking of illicit goods (such as arms and drugs), economic crime, money laundering, the organisation of illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings.

Exploiting chaos, insecurity, lack of proper organization and nonexistence of the rule of law, the organized crime groups have established their strongholds in Southeastern Europe and created links with high-ranked political officials and parts of the military establishments.⁴³ The links between the state and organized crime were strengthened during the 1990s following the collapse of the socialist regimes in the region and during the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia. Criminal gangs attached to political elites in the various states threaten their transformation, their democratization and the process of integration into Euro-Atlantic structures.⁴⁴ It is claimed while economic progress obviously has led to a certain ‘normalization’, the fact remains that organized crime is still often linked with (persons in) state institutions and that because of the nature of the weak states in the Balkans.⁴⁵ According to one senior UNMIK official, “When we talk of organised crime in Kosovo, we are very much dealing with politicians, [and] ministers”.⁴⁶

42 Bojan Dobovsek, “Transnational Organized Crime in the Western Balkans”, *HUMSEC Journal*, Working Paper Series, p. 1, <www.humsec.eu/cms/index.php?id=341>, (access date: 15 July 2012).

43 See, Radovan Vukadinović, “Challenges to Security in Southeast Europe”, *South-East Europe Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 5 (1999), p. 13.

44 Stojarova, “Organized Crime in...”, p. 111.

45 Wolfgang Benedek, “The Human Security Approach to Terrorism and Organized Crime in Post-Conflict Situations”, *Transnational Terrorism, Organized Crime and Peacebuilding, Human Security in the Western Balkans*, eds. Wolfgang Benedek, Christopher Daase, Vojin Dimitrijevic and Petrus van Duyne, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 10.

46 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Crime and its Impact on the Balkans and Affected Countries*, Vienna, 2008, p. 106, <http://www.unodc.org/documents/Balkan_study.pdf>, (access date: 10 June 2012).

Under these conditions, the fight against organized crime faces many problems such as the reluctance of local organs to deal with the criminal structures and involvement by the elite in illegal activities. For example, in September 2001, almost a year after Milosevic was toppled, some 700 kilograms of heroin and cocaine were found in a private bank's vault in central Belgrade. It turned out that the vault was rented to BIA two years earlier, which used it to store drugs confiscated by customs in previous years, allegedly for "safekeeping". Although this was clearly illegal by Serbian law, no charges were ever brought against BIA officials, nor was it explained why such a large quantity of drugs were stored in such an awkward fashion.⁴⁷ Efforts to break this sort of relations and prosecute elements of organized crime resulted in terrorist attacks on state institutions and representatives like the former Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic.⁴⁸ It is alleged that Djindjic's attempts to purge the security services from criminal elements led to his assassination in March 2003.⁴⁹ The assassination of Djindjic proved that criminal structures allied with or supported by state security institutions can undermine the stability of a country.

Finally, since organised crime transcends national borders by moving westwards for commercial purposes, it brings with it the threat of violence, conflict and terrorist activities, and poses a relevant security threat to the EU. Thus organised crime is a problem that the Balkans shares with all of Europe.⁵⁰ Indeed, organized crime groups in the Balkans are cross-border and well

47 Dejan Anastasijevic, "Organized Crime in the Western Balkans", *HUMSEC Journal*, 2006, p. 5, <http://www.etc-graz.at/cms/fileadmin/user_upload/humsec/Working_Paper_Series/Working_Paper_Anastasijevic.pdf>, (access date: 5 May 2012).

48 Benedek, "The Human Security Approach...", p. 8.

49 Dejan Anastasijevic, "Getting Better? A Map of Organized Crime in the Western Balkans", *Transnational Terrorism, Organized Crime and Peacebuilding, Human Security in the Western Balkans*, eds. Wolfgang Benedek, Christopher Daase, Vojin Dimitrijevic and Petrus van Duyne, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 155.

50 Rosa Balfour and Corina Stratulat, "The Democratic Transformation of the Balkans", *European Policy Center*, Issue Paper, No. 66 (November 2011), p. 28.

integrated in corresponding European counterparts. According to the Council of Europe and the European Commission in 2006: *The overall accepted perception is that organised and economic crimes in South-eastern Europe threaten democracy, the rule of law, human rights, stability, and social and economic progress in the region.*⁵¹

As an important aspect of organized crime, money laundering is the procedure whereby funds acquired through illegal activity are rendered legal by being processed in the formal financial system, thus disguising their origin. While this is a crucial problem across the world, it is even more so in developing countries or states in transition where the financial and legal systems are still to mature.⁵² Organized crime groups represent a very harmful influence on the economic development particularly by investing great sums of illegally earned money into legal businesses. Accordingly, the post-war situation in the Balkans has been exploited by criminal groups to carry out a variety of activities, which produced dirty money to be laundered in the licit economy. Therefore, tackling money laundering is important in order to address organized crime such as drug trafficking, arms sales, and, most recently, terrorism.

Consequently, although the organized crime is still a serious problem in the Balkans, the 2008 United Nations Office on Drug and Crime report states that organized crime seems to be on the decline. The basis for this assertion is taken from European police sources, which report a decrease of organized crime activities with a Balkan background in the fields of human trafficking, immigrant smuggling and heroin trafficking.⁵³ All countries of the region in their struggle against the organized crime have ratified the United Nations Convention against

51 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Crime and its Impact on the Balkans and Affected Countries*, p. 17.

52 Eleni Tsingou, "Targeting Money Laundering: Global Approach or Diffusion of Authority?", *New Threats and New Actors in International Security*, ed. Elke Krahnman, New York, Macmillan, 2005, pp. 91-92.

53 See, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Crime and its Impact on the Balkans and Affected Countries*.

Transnational Organized Crime.⁵⁴ In spite of positive developments, much remains to be done to strengthen the rule of law, intensify the struggle against organized crime and corruption and ensure the proper functioning of state institutions in the region.

Corruption is intimately related to organised crime, being both a cause and a consequence of it. Actually, the activities of organized crime such as trafficking in drugs, human beings, and weapons are deeply embedded in the pervasive culture of corruption in the Western Balkans. In most countries of the region corruption is systematic and well organized, and has taken root in state institutions of power, including the judiciary, police and secret services.⁵⁵ The linkage between corruption and organized crime creates an even bigger problem for states to address, especially when both find inroads into state structures. Because, crime groups promoting a culture of corruption can have a deleterious impact on the social cohesion of states, undermining their ability to project power. Widespread corruption often leads to a breakdown of the trust and legitimacy publics have in states.⁵⁶ If left unaddressed, corruption and organized crime are likely to lead to state failure, as we have already witnessed in the Balkans.

Corruption, which is deeply rooted in the region naturally involves the political elites and state institutions. This phenomenon is regarded as a threat for four reasons: 1) because the reform of political institutions is greatly dependent on anti-corruption measures; 2) because the establishment of a healthy market economy is impossible without curbing corruption; 3) because a formal acceptance of anti-corruption measures without their implementation in practice is not sufficient to qualify countries in the region for the European integration; 4) because without adopting anti-corruption laws in line with European

54 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Crime and its Impact on the Balkans and Affected Countries*, p. 13.

55 Istvan Gyarmati and Darko Stancic eds., *Study on the Assessment of Regional Security Threats and Challenges in the Western Balkans*, Geneva, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2007, p. 2.

56 Picarelli, "Transnational Organized Crime", p. 463.

standards, it is impossible to adapt to EU regulations.⁵⁷ The Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International shows Slovenia on rank 26 of 180 states, Croatia on rank 62, Macedonia on rank 72, Serbia, Albania and Montenegro equally on rank 85 and Bosnia and Herzegovina on rank 92.⁵⁸ According to Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer 2006, the Southeastern European average in terms of annual bribe paying is 4.5 times as high as the West European average.⁵⁹

Terrorism

Terrorism has deep roots, especially in the Balkans, and may easily find fertile soil in national and ethnic conflicts, as well as in the consequences of recently ended ethnic conflicts. Minority groups, if unsatisfied with their status, or strengthened nationalist movements may easily become pray of the organizers of terrorist activities.⁶⁰ From the viewpoint of Western researchers and policy analysts the threat of terrorism in the region of Southeastern Europe stems mainly from the aftermath of Bosnian wars and the fact that as result of these wars radical Islam has entered the Bosnian and other Balkan arenas through different routes.

In particular after September 11 attacks on the USA, concerns have been raised as regards the possible infiltration of Balkan countries by international terrorist groups, among which Al

57 Ferenc Gazdag, László Póti, Judit Takács, and Péter Tálás, “Assessment of the Security of the Western Balkans and a Comparative Analysis of the Threat Perception in the Countries of the Region”, *Study on the Assessment of Regional Security Threats and Challenges in the Western Balkans*, eds. Istvan Gyarmati and Darko Stancic, Geneva, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2007, p. 17.

58 Transparency International, *Corruption Perception Index 2008*, <http://www.transparency.org/news_room/in_focus/2008/cpi2008/cpi_2008_table>, (access date: 10 June 2012).

59 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Crime and its Impact on the Balkans and Affected Countries*, p. 17.

60 Vukadinovic, “Challenges to Security...”, p. 12.

Qaeda of course figure prominently.⁶¹ In this context, it is argued that Albania faces a further threat as different Islamic terrorist organizations attempt to take advantage of the power vacuum and use Albania as a safe haven for their planning and preparation activity – a strategic risk not just for Albania but for the region as a whole.⁶² On the other hand, it is argued in a critical manner of above-mentioned argument, while Al Qaeda and other Islamic militants tried to establish their presence in the Muslim-populated parts of former Yugoslavia, such as Bosnia, Kosovo, and Sandžak, they were rejected by the locals, who mostly see religion as a matter of ethnic identification, not faith.⁶³

Whilst on 17 October 2001 the Embassies of the USA and the United Kingdom in Sarajevo were closed down under threat of terrorist attacks,⁶⁴ in 2004 the International Strategic Studies Association came forward with allegations that the London and Madrid bombings had links to Bosnia.⁶⁵ Under the effect of such allegations, terrorism is considered by Bosnia's national security policy as one of the highest threats for the stability of both the region and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Bosnia-Herzegovina is distinct in this respect since most other countries in the region do not place this issue at the top of the list of security threats.⁶⁶ However,

61 International Crisis Group, *Bin Laden and the Balkans: The Politics of Anti-Terrorism*, ICG Balkan Reports, No. 119, (9 November 2001).

62 Krastev, *Human Security in South-East Europe*, p. 16.

63 Anastasijevic, "Getting Better?...", p. 151.

64 Lyubov G. Mincheva and Ted Robert Gurr, "Unholy Alliances: Evidence on Linkages between Trans-State Terrorism and Crime Networks: The Case of Bosnia", *Transnational Terrorism, Organized Crime and Peacebuilding, Human Security in the Western Balkans*, eds. Wolfgang Benedek, Christopher Daase, Vojin Dimitrijevic and Petrus van Duyne, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 202.

65 International Strategic Studies Association (ISSA), *Madrid Bombings Highlight Extent and Capability of Islamist Networks*, 2004, <<http://128.121.186.47/ISSA/reports/Balkan/Mar1204.htm>>, (access date: 20 June 2012).

66 Olga Palinkasev, "View from Bosnia and Herzegovina - Study on the Assessment of Regional Security Threats and Challenges in the Western Balkans", *Study on the Assessment of Regional Security Threats and Challenges in the Western Balkans*, eds. Istvan Gyarmati and Darko Stancic, Geneva,

Strategy for Combating Terrorism of Bosnia-Herzegovina admitted that the existing infrastructure is insufficient to address a growing threat posed by potential terrorist attack.⁶⁷

The distinction between organized crime and terrorism is made by reference to their ends; criminals seek profits while terrorists have political motives and specifically seek to weaken the state. The existence of trans-state nationalist, ethnic, and religious movements and their transborder identity networks provide settings conducive to collaboration between terrorists and criminals.⁶⁸ Accordingly, terrorism and organized crime are very strongly related to each other in the Balkans; one cannot function without another. For example, the link between the Albanian mafia and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) during the Kosovo conflict seems to be a good example. Makarenko cites a study that describes the funding of KLA activities through mafia drug money and the protection that the Albanian mafia enjoyed by the KLA in turn to carry out its smuggling of heroin into Western Europe.⁶⁹ This collaboration between organized crime and terrorism have eroded respect for the rule of law. Both undermine confidence in state structures and threaten the security of individuals and communities. Vera Stojarova claims that demilitarization of the KLA and the creation of political parties and military and police forces involving the members of KLA has provided only a partial solution to the question of the existence of the KLA.⁷⁰ High unemployment and the low standing of the law

Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2007, p. 79.

67 Kenan Dautovic, "Bosnia and Herzegovina", *Security Policies in the Western Balkans*, eds. Miroslav Hadzic, Milorad Timotic and Predrag Petrovic, Belgrade, Center for Civil-Military Relations, 2010, pp. 41-42.

68 Mincheva and Gurr, "Unholy Alliances:...", s. 190.

69 Christopher Daase, "Terrorism and Organized Crime: One or Two Challenges?", *Transnational Terrorism, Organized Crime and Peacebuilding, Human Security in the Western Balkans*, eds. Wolfgang Benedek, Christopher Daase, Vojin Dimitrijevic and Petrus van Duyne, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 57.

70 Stojarova, "Organized Crime in...", p. 102.

are the reasons most former KLA fighters have found it easy to slide into organized crime.

Trafficking of SALW

Trafficking of SALW originates in the legal production small arms but then extracts arms from legal channels to sell them to a host of criminal and rebel groups.⁷¹ So, in this way, the widespread availability and misuse of SALWs contributes to conflicts of all types, and is closely related to current concerns such as weak and collapsed states, human rights abuses, and the pantheon of both traditional and nontraditional security issues.⁷² The availability of SALW in conflict-prone contexts is a key factor in the scale and destructiveness of conflicts. Likewise, for crime and social violence, the presence and use of SALW makes violence more destructive. It also contributes to fear and insecurity, sometimes stimulating intra-state security dilemmas and arms races that can intensify violence and destruction.⁷³

The wars in former Yugoslavia left massive quantities of weapons and other military hardware - from small arms to plastic explosives and even light artillery - outside of effective government control. Before its violent breakdown, Yugoslavia maintained the fourth largest army in Europe, with the matching military industrial complex.⁷⁴ In addition, great numbers of firearms were imported into the region during the Yugoslav conflicts. The partial collapse of the Albanian state in 1997 also fuelled the smuggling of weapons in the region. According to the UN, about 650,000 weapons have been taken from more than 280 government depots.⁷⁵ In this respect, SALWs contribute to the proliferation of criminal elements and organized crime, by acting as the enablers of violence and threatening behaviour.

However, the situation has certainly much improved since the time of active conflicts. Firearms trafficking is not even mentioned

71 Levitsky, "Transnational Criminal Networks...", p. 230.

72 Bourne, "The Proliferation of Small Arms...", p. 155.

73 Bourne, "The Proliferation of Small Arms...", p. 156.

74 Anastasijevic, "Organized Crime in...".

75 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Crime and its Impact on the Balkans and Affected Countries*, p. 53.

in the Council of Europe's situation reports on organised crime in the region.⁷⁶ But Iztok Prezelj emphasises that any major political and security destabilization could immediately revert the otherwise positive trend in the field of SALW.⁷⁷ As an example, during the conflict in Macedonia in 2001 around 10.000 pieces of weapons were distributed among the civilian population. In September 2002, it was estimated that the number of SALW in circulation was 150.000- 200.000 pieces.⁷⁸

The South East Europe Small Arms Control Center (SEESAC) report estimates that over two million weapons are in the hands of private persons, compared with about 850,000 of the state in Serbia. Furthermore, almost 950 thousand weapons in private ownership are illicit - unregistered and of unknown origin.⁷⁹ The most dangerous psychical consequences of SALW proliferation are fear and tension prevailing among ethnic groups in certain parts of Serbia. A characteristic example is the southern part of the country where the perception of security threats completely differs depending on ethnic belonging.⁸⁰

In the environment of high unemployment, wild privatization, fast democratization, weak governments, corruption, unsolved war-related issues, painful memories, freely moving war criminals and internally displaced people and refugees who do not want to or cannot return, the availability of SALW may create some alternative windows of opportunity for solving problems by violence.⁸¹ The key victims of proliferation of SALW are actually

76 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Crime and its Impact on the Balkans and Affected Countries*, p. 84.

77 Istok Prezelj, "The Small Arms and Light Weapons Problem in the Western Balkans", *Transnational Terrorism, Organized Crime and Peacebuilding, Human Security in the Western Balkans*, eds. Wolfgang Benedek, Christopher Daase, Vojin Dimitrijevic and Petrus van Duyne, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 207-226.

78 Ivana Tomovska, "Macedonia 2001 and Beyond: New or Old War?", *HUMSEC Journal*, Issue. 2 (2008), p. 87.

79 Jelena Unijat, "SALW - Grave Problem in Serbia", *Western Balkans Security Observer*, No. 2 (September-October 2006), p. 13.

80 Unijat, "SALW - Grave Problem...", p. 15.

81 Prezelj, "The Small Arms and...", p. 210.

individuals in the region. This is why the human security aspects should be explicitly stressed when dealing with the SALW problem.⁸² Since, in the Western Balkans region, SALW still continue to be a problem in the post-conflict time, analysis of national security documents of countries of the region shows that many documents indicated illegal trade with and availability of conventional weapons as a security threat.

Demographic Dynamics of Security and Human-Trafficking

Demographic dynamics and population movements have important ramifications for human security. Because serious human security concerns persist in the form of displaced persons facing poverty, unemployment, poor housing conditions and limited access to such social benefits as education, justice and freedom of movement.⁸³ Therefore, the forced migration of refugees and internally displaced persons are severely destabilizing factors for the Balkans region.

Civil wars generate large waves of forcibly displaced persons. In the name of ethnic homogenisation large numbers of persons are displaced within their own country, while others are more or less forced to flee to neighbouring countries (ethnic migration) or to seek asylum elsewhere (refugees). Displacement became a serious issue in the Western Balkans after millions of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) were littered across the region (the majority in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Serbia) as a result of the wars in the 1990s, the 2001 internal strife in Macedonia, and the numerous conflicts in Kosovo in the 2000s. In response to this situation, Dayton Accords envisioned a post-conflict democracy with internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms which provided that 'all refugees and displaced persons have the right freely to return to their homes of origins'. In a like manner, United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1244, which initiated the peacebuilding

⁸² Prezelj, "The Small Arms and...", pp. 224-225.

⁸³ Alexandra Tragaki, "Demography and Migration as Human Security Factors: the Case of South Eastern Europe", *Migration Letters*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (October 2007), pp.103-113.

process in Kosovo in 1999, sought the ‘protection and promotion of human rights’, together with ‘the safe and unimpeded return of all refugees and displaced persons to their homes in Kosovo’. In spite of efforts for solving human displacement, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of January 2009 there were 132,071 refugees and 352,905 IDPs remaining in the Western Balkans.⁸⁴ These huge numbers of refugees scattered over all the former Yugoslav republics represent one of the most vulnerable groups.

Connected to demographic security of the region, human-trafficking is another non-traditional security issue. Human trafficking is perceived as a grave human rights abuse and a serious transnational crime requiring an integrated and coordinated human security approach.⁸⁵ The destruction of social fabric caused by the war, coupled with massive migrations, and the economic collapse, worked together to create fertile ground for dealers in human beings. Balkans region is simultaneously the source, the transit route, and the destination for the trafficking of human beings, who largely fall in two categories: women, used for sex trafficking, and illegal migrants, heading for Western countries. It is estimated that 120,000 victims of human trafficking or more are coming to the EU through and from the Balkans each year.⁸⁶ Therefore, the illegal trafficking towards Western Europe increases the risks to the security of the entire continent. The millions of people that participate in the grey economies in the Balkans are also a significant source of illegal workers in Western Europe. Illegal immigrants also form a natural setting not only for the spread of organized criminal groups but also of terrorist organisations.⁸⁷

84 Assessing Human Security in the Western Balkans, *CSIS-EKEM Policy Report*, November 2010, <http://csis.org/files/publication/101105.CSIS-EKEM_PolicyBrief4.pdf>, (access date: 12 July 2012).

85 Alja Klopčič, “Trafficking in Human Beings in Transition and Post-Conflict Countries”, *Human Security Perspectives*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2004), p.11.

86 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Crime and its Impact on the Balkans and Affected Countries*, p. 15.

87 Moustakis, “Soft Security Threats...”, p. 149.

Most of the South Eastern European countries are indeed in the process of upgrading their border control and of reviewing their current legislation to include the human trafficking in their criminal code. The signature of the Palermo Anti-Trafficking Declaration on the initiative of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe in 2000 can be interpreted as a manifestation of the political willingness of these countries to join their endeavours in countering this phenomenon at the international level.⁸⁸

Conclusion

Given weak states have lack of institutional capacities and socio-political cohesion, they would suffer from deficits in legitimacy, capacity, provision of public goods and inclusiveness. Therefore, they can cause some important security threats such as terrorism, transnational organized crime, refugee flows, mass migration and regional instability. Connected to this, the term “new war” refers to armed conflicts conducted in the context of very weak states. Especially, it is the post-conflict era in which a variety of non-state actors can activate illegal activities and criminality by using power vacuum. Therefore, VNSAs often bear the potential to disturb or undermine the processes of post-conflict peace- and state-building. Because VNSAs have hardly any interest in consolidated statehood or stable peace since this would inevitably challenge their position. These actors are in many instances not just a local affair, but they act across borders and may destabilize entire regions. Indeed, the geopolitical setting of the Western Balkans provides a transit-region for the activities of the VNSAs.

Over the past years, the overall security situation in the Balkans has evolved without a major recourse to violence. However, positive peace in the region continues to be fragile. So, the non-traditional security issues in the Balkans threaten the democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the stability and the economic progress within the region, even with an impact beyond the Balkans. In this process, VNSAs and their activities in spheres of drugs and human trafficking, terrorism, corruption, money laundering and the proliferation of small arms endanger security in its all levels – human, societal, national, regional and international.

⁸⁸ Klopčič, “Trafficking in Human Beings...”, p. 12.

Consequently, it can be easily observed that a large number of threats come from the non-traditional security sectors when one examines the security strategy documents of the states in the region. The state responses to non-state violence include zero tolerance, containment, legal measures, diplomatic measures, inter-governmental cooperation, and covert operations. In addition to responses of the state, international efforts to combat non-traditional security issues have intensified considerably in the last two decades. The impetus for these efforts comes from a realization that no one state in the region has the means to combat these kind of issues on its own and within its own borders. So, it should be taken into consideration of Mary Kaldor's suggestion by which she maintains that 'any effective approach to security has to be aimed at the extension of the rule of law and civil society across borders. This could be done through further enlargement of the EU so that its definition and practices of security would be exported to other states.⁸⁹ So, the prospects of EU membership for the Western Balkans can have a desecuritising effect on the sources of instability and insecurity in the Western Balkans.

In this context, it should be stated that the strengthening of weak states is dependent on the success of state-building processes. And state-building processes of the weak states in the Balkans are closely related to the European integration process of the region. But most of the threats targeting the physical integrity and dignity of human beings are locally produced and unique to the region. So, it is argued that a bottom-up approach which would provide participation of civil society in agenda-making process rather than setting up a human security agenda in Brussels is necessary.⁹⁰ Because, a top-down approach of state-building ultimately leads to a 'top-down local democracy' which does not answer to people's concrete needs

89 Mary Kaldor, "Europe at the Millennium", *Politics*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (2000), p. 60.

90 A. Şevket Ovalı, "What is to Be Done: A Complementary Security Architecture for the Balkans", *The Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Security, Challenges to Balkan Security and Contribution of the International Organizations*, 14-15 May 2008, İzmir, Dokuz Eylül University Press, 2009, p. 177.