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Security Sector Reform as a Driver of Resilience in the Western Balkans:

The Role of the Common Security and Defence Policy

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the field of security and defence has become one of the fastest-growing areas of cooperation in the European Union (EU). This has significant ramifications for the EU's engagement in the Western Balkans. Current efforts to build a European Security and Defence Union imply that the accession process of the Western Balkan states will most likely incorporate an unprecedented amount of *acquis* in this field[1]. The EU's new Strategy for the Western Balkans, released in February 2018, defines the merit-based accession of the Western Balkan states as being in the EU's own security interests and calls for a stronger engagement in the field of security, foreign affairs and defence[2]. As the empirical record clearly shows that consolidated liberal democracies rarely, if ever, go to war with each other[3], it can be assumed that building democratic and cooperative security sector governance in the Western Balkans is a strong bulwark against relapse into conflicts. Security sector governance also contributes to the resilience of states and societies by fostering more inclusive and accountable security forces. Making a stronger link between security sector reform (SSR) and the enlargement process is thus of critical importance in enhancing the resilience of the Western Balkans, which is one of the objectives in the EU's Global Strategy.[4]

In this Think Piece, we discuss progress and needs in the area of SSR in the context of the new EU Strategy for the Western Balkans, reflecting specifically on the aspects of the EU's Action Plan in support of the Transformation of the Western Balkans[5] that are related to Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)[6]. To that end, we first analyse the drivers of resilience and fragility in the Western Balkans. Then we discuss the EU's record so far in supporting SSR in the region, with a particular focus on CSDP actions. Finally, we reflect on how actions related to SSR and CSDP contained in the EU's Action Plan could be operationalised in order to best contribute to achieving the desired outcome.

2. Drivers of resilience in the Western Balkans

The notion of resilience, defined by the EU Global Strategy as 'the ability of states and societies to reform, thus withstanding and recovering from internal and external crises',[7] has become a new buzzword in EU foreign policy. With an emphasis on a more pragmatic, bottom-up approach[8], building resilience can serve as a new catalyst for the EU's engagement in the Western Balkans, in line with the EU Strategy for the Western Balkans[10]. Drawing on the new resilience approach, the EU should focus on existing internal capacities of the Western Balkan countries, foster stronger partnerships and ensure local ownership. These principles should be central to the EU's efforts to strengthen security in the region. In this context, the EU will need to carefully manage several challenges (drivers of fragility)[11] and draw on existing capabilities (drivers of resilience).

Among the **drivers of fragility** are the legacies of intra- and interstate conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Kosovo** and Serbia. Organised crime cells emanating from the Balkans have been identified as a key threat as they are interlinked with weak governance structures[12]. In Montenegro and Serbia alone, 131 organised crime-related assassinations have taken place since January 2012, with only 14 cases solved[13]. Linked to this is the smuggling of weapons and ammunition currently stored in unprotected stockpiles in the region, which have also been connected to terrorist attacks in Western Europe[14]. Other issues relate to the existence of illicit stocks and the reactivation of deactivated weapons. Violent extremism in the region has also been identified as a security concern, with more than 900 fighters from the region travelling to war zones in Syria and Iraq in recent years[15]. Illegal migratory flows, some of which involve human trafficking, also pose a threat to the EU. This problem has been exacerbated by the recent refugee crisis, which has put considerable pressure on Western Balkan security and welfare systems.[16]

* Referred to for all purposes within the European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations (UN) as "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia".
** Throughout this paper, the designation 'Kosovo' is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

The rise of strong leaders and semi-authoritarian governments in the region challenge key principles such as democratic oversight, rule of law, and freedom of the press, which are at the heart of SSR efforts. The EU's model of liberal democracy in the region is being tested by the increasing influence of other geopolitical actors, such as Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and China[17]. Furthermore, Western Balkan states continue to suffer from a lack of capacity at the institutional/state level, characterised by weak rule of law, state capture and corruption[18]. The EU should also take into consideration that building the capacity of security forces in the Western Balkans without putting in place measures to ensure accountability and good security governance could result in more assertive policing (such as crowd control), undermining democratic accountability and the respect for human rights. A strong and resilient state might not always be in harmony with a resilient society.

In line with the resilience approach, a stronger focus should be placed on embracing and further enhancing existing **internal capacities** of the Western Balkan countries, rather than starting from scratch at each iteration of an SSR programme. Since the 1990s Western Balkan countries have come a long way in transforming their security sectors; they are now providers—and not just recipients—of security at the international level, including through participation in several EU and UN missions. Moreover, the region's vigorous civil society organisations can contribute to shaping political dialogue between the states of the region and the EU when it comes to security and migration issues. The strength and dynamism of civil society organisations varies across the region, however. Moreover, there are problems such as the lack of free media and political party dialogue that prevent a meaningful and inclusive public debate. Local ownership entails a commitment to work with a variety of local actors, including national governments, municipalities and civil society; and, given current authoritarian trends, the EU would be well advised to strengthen its support for civil society.

Finally, the EU has a wealth of experience in supporting security sector governance in the region and beyond. It should draw on this experience when it comes to designing further engagements in the region. The next section discusses the EU's record in this area. Learning from what has and has not worked so far, the EU needs to focus on strengthening security sector governance and thus contributing to the resilience of Western Balkan states and societies bolstering their ability to deal with security challenges. In turn, a more resilient region will contribute to a more resilient Union[19].

3. The EU's role in SSR in the Western Balkans: the record so far

Although the EU is a relative newcomer to SSR, these activities have increasingly gained traction, in the context of both the intergovernmental CSDP[20] and of the EC-led external and enlargement assistance[21]. According to the new EU Joint Communication, **SSR** is

the process of transforming a country's security system so that it gradually provides individuals and the state with more effective and accountable security in a manner consistent with respect for human rights, democracy, the rule of law and the principles of good governance.[22]

It is thus a normatively driven and highly political process of transformation of a country's security forces.

Since its early SSR engagements in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990s, the EU has expanded its programming to cover many countries around the world, including in the Western Balkans. In the EU's neighbourhood, SSR has become a key element in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and **resilience building**. SSR can help strengthen a country's resilience by making its security forces more effective *and* accountable. According to the EU Global Strategy, a 'resilient state is a secure state, and security is key for prosperity and democracy. But the reverse holds true as well'. It continues: 'We will work through development, diplomacy, and CSDP, ensuring that our security sector reform efforts enable and enhance our partners' capacities to deliver security within the rule of law.'[23]

By enhancing the effectiveness, efficiency and accountability of the Western Balkans' security organisations, SSR can help address some of the key aforementioned security threats, including cross-border crime, terrorism, irregular migration

and hybrid threats. The EU already has a **strong track record** in improving border management across the region as part of its Integrated Border Management strategy,[24] which pursues the creation of borders that are both *open*, in that they facilitate the free movement of goods and people, and *secure*, in that they prevent unlawful activities, such as human trafficking, organised crime, and the illicit accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons. As part of its SSR efforts, the EU has sought to tackle other security threats, such as terrorism, extreme violence and, more recently, hybrid threats, including cyber-attacks[25]. Moreover, SSR can promote peaceful neighbourly relations by fostering cooperation among countries in the region and furthering the harmonisation of their security institutions in preparation for accession to the EU.

In order to achieve these objectives, the EU has deployed a broad range of **instruments**, including twinning programmes and other technical assistance funded by Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation (CARDS) in 2000–06 and by the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) since 2007; structured dialogue; cooperation agreements with EU agencies such as Europol and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency; and expert advice from the military, police and rule of law missions, launched under the umbrella of the CSDP in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo. One of the advantages of the EU as an SSR provider is the fact that it can draw on a wide range of policy tools in line with its comprehensive/integrated approach to security.[26] Increasingly, the EU has also sought to establish partnerships with other countries to achieve its SSR objectives. The EU Implementation Plan on Security and Defence states that the EU should: "take forward CSDP partnerships […] with partner countries which share EU values and are willing and able to contribute to CSDP missions and operations, including considering possibilities to strengthen their resilience"[27]. The EU's Western Balkan strategy draws on this commitment to increase cooperation with the region in the area of security.[28]

While the potential of the EU to play a role in SSR and to strengthen the resilience of its partner countries is significant, the record so far points to **key challenges** that need to be addressed. First, as noted before, the EU prides itself on its integrated approach to security; however, in practice, its SSR activities have suffered from problems of **incoherence and lack of coordination**, including institutional turf wars between the Commission and the Council,[29] inadequate civil–military coordination,[30] and policy incoherence among the EU and its Member States.[31] Efforts to implement a comprehensive and integrated approach since 2013[32] have contributed to improving coordination among different actors, in particular, by fostering a joint analysis and better information sharing among EU institutions in Brussels (EEAS, Commission). In order to facilitate coordination on the ground, the EU could enhance the role of the EU Delegations as a lead coordinator. For instance, the 'rule of law' team in the EU Delegation in Bosnia provides a model that could be followed in other countries of the region.[33] EU Delegations should act as a single point of contact for all EU components and facilitate coordination of SSR activities by the Member States. This would require, however, more SSR resources and expertise allocated to EU Delegations.

Second, a **lack of appropriate capabilities** has affected the implementation of SSR initiatives in the Western Balkans. This shortcoming has been particularly obvious in CSDP missions and operations, which have had a small size and narrow scope due to, among other reasons, the limited capabilities available to the EU and its Member States.[34] For instance, police and rule of law experts are in short supply for civilian CSDP missions.[35] While the European Commission disposes over a significant budget under the enlargement financial instruments, its expertise in the area of SSR is limited.[36]

A recent evaluation recommended that:
the EU should recruit more personnel with appropriate SSR backgrounds, bring in more external expertise, provide additional SSR training for staff and, where possible, utilise more expertise from EU Member States.[37]

Third, **sustainability** - or a lack thereof - is a key problem in many EU interventions. While SSR initiatives might have achieved some success in the short term, improving the efficiency of police and other security institutions (as in the EU Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina), these reforms are not always sustained over time.[38] In some cases,

the root problem relates to a lack of funding at the local level, which prevents local actors from maintaining costly, externally provided equipment or training, typically in a context of increasing donor fatigue.[39] In other cases, a lack of political commitment or political realities on the ground might constitute the main obstacle, as evidenced in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Fourth, the need for more meaningful engagement at the local level from the initial design stages and including a wide range of actors has also been identified as a weakness in CSDP and SSR interventions more broadly.[40] **Local ownership** can strengthen political commitment and hence the sustainability of reforms in the medium and long term.[41] It is not surprising that SSR initiatives in the Western Balkans have been met with obstruction from local actors. After all, they touch upon core attributes of sovereignty, such as who exercises the monopoly over the use of force. In these circumstances, the EU's attempts to portray its SSR programmes as purely technical or technocratic ventures are problematic, as they obscure the political implications of the interventions. SSR initiatives require a more strategic approach, with a clear set of priorities and objectives, an understanding of who may benefit or be disadvantaged in a particular context, and a plan for enhancing synergies between technical and political aspects to ensure local support for reforms.[42]

It is crucial that new initiatives in this area incorporate these lessons, in particular, a stronger commitment to local ownership and bottom-up initiatives in line with the resilience approach outlined earlier. In this regard, there is significant potential in the proposals included in the EU's Action Plan, as will be discussed next.

4. CSDP and SSR in the Western Balkans: moving forward

In the new Strategy for the Western Balkans, a reinforced engagement on security and migration is one of six flagship initiatives devised by the EU, which are further elaborated in the Action Plan. In this paper, we particularly focus on the following points: 1) status and future of EU mission and operations; 2) Western Balkans contribution to CSDP; 3) hybrid threats, intelligence, defence and SSR; and 4) the expansion of a structured dialogue on security and defence. *Status and future of EU missions and operations*

This point concerns both the future of CSDP interventions in the Western Balkans. Currently, there are two CSDP interventions in the Western Balkans. The first one is a military operation, **EUFOR Althea**, launched in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2004. The operation was deployed under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to ensure compliance with the Dayton Peace Agreement and to contribute to a safe and secure environment. Moreover, through its capacity-building mandate, this mission currently contributes to building the resilience of Bosnia and Herzegovina to deal with external threats. Following Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for EU membership in February 2016, the EU conducted its first Strategic Review of EUFOR Althea.[43] Completed in January 2018, the review recommends that EUFOR Althea place a stronger focus on maintaining a safe and secure environment; and the outcome was to shift capacity building activities away from EUFOR to NATO.[44] If the security situation does not deteriorate after the elections in October 2018, and if Bosnia and Herzegovina's accession process gets off the ground, then the next Strategic Review, scheduled for 2019, should trigger the gradual end of the operation by 2020. The EU will be particularly attentive to the evolution of the security situation during the forthcoming elections in the country.

The second CSDP intervention in the Western Balkans is **EULEX Kosovo***. The mission was launched in 2008 to support Kosovar authorities in establishing rule of law institutions. In addition to mentoring, monitoring and advising (MMA) and, more recently, providing support to the Belgrade–Pristina dialogue, EULEX has also had an executive role in the field of rule of law, mostly through the investigation, prosecution and adjudication of organised crime and war crimes. As Kosovar institutions have matured over time, EULEX's size and mandate have been scaled down. In June 2018, the mandate was extended for an additional two years, but further narrowed to MMA tasks and support for the Belgrade–Pristina dialogue. Only very few executive

functions remain in the area of witness protection and support for the specialist chambers and prosecutorial office. If the security situation does not deteriorate and Serbia and Kosovo* conclude a legally binding agreement by the end of 2019, EULEX could also be terminated by 2020.

Western Balkans contribution to CSDP operations and missions

The role of CSDP in the region will persist even as EU enlargement makes progress and EUFOR and EULEX come to an end. Indeed, these developments will usher in at least two new opportunities for strengthening resilience in the region through CSDP interventions.

First, Western Balkan states can step up their own **contributions to CSDP actions** elsewhere. Today, all Western Balkan states (except Kosovo) are signatories of framework partnership agreements (FPA) with the EU and are taking part in CSDP missions. Moreover, all countries in the region have found a niche in which they can make a contribution to CSDP missions. For example, Serbia usually offers military medical teams to EU training missions, while Albania's niche is explosive ordnance disposal. Nevertheless, their contributions remain limited in size and restricted to military missions.[45] Even so, both sides have shown growing interest in including Western Balkan states in civilian CSDP missions as well.

Despite the political intention of the Western Balkans to step up their civilian contributions to EU interventions, 'insufficient coordination, limited resources and legal limitations pose a significant hindrance to this process'.[46] The role of the EU and its Member States in addressing these challenges is indispensable. So far, they have been supporting the development of systems for the recruitment, training and deployment of civilians in the Western Balkans either through bilateral[47] or multilateral[48] frameworks. Building upon these initiatives, the EU Member States could further open their training capacities for the Western Balkan states. The EU could also adapt existing and future instruments such as the European Peace Facility, to support these countries' mission preparation, planning, deployment and redeployment assistance for CSDP missions and operations. EU future

support should also foster coordination among different Western Balkan ministries and civil society organisations that are potential stakeholders in civilian CSDP missions.[49] This will help the development of the whole-of-government approaches in the Western Balkans and make the region's crisis management mechanisms more interoperable with the EU's integrated approach.

Second, the EU should promote greater **regional cooperation in the field of CSDP**. This could entail regional capacity building projects that foster the creation of a regional policy community as a driver of further inclusion of the Western Balkan states in the EU's current and future civilian missions. One option is to support existing training centres - such as the Peace Support Operations Training Centre in Sarajevo or the Multinational Operations Centre in Belgrade - to build expertise on civilian interventions including CSDP, while increasing their regional outreach. Western Balkan states already take part in the South-Eastern Europe Brigade (SEEBRIG) initiative, either as full members or as observers.[50] Some countries of the region have already joined some of the existing EU battle groups. Building on these experiences, the EU could support the establishment of a Western Balkans Battlegroup, an approximately 1,500 strong battalion sized-unit composed of personnel from the region and deployable for small-scale rapid response under the CSDP.[51] An EU member state, such as the neutral and neighbouring Austria, could step in as extra-regional participant thus, not only filling potential gaps in capabilities, but also serving as a lead nation. While the creation of such a unit would certainly be politically challenging at the moment, there are at least two reasons why this policy vision should be pursued. First, the merger of former enemies in the service of European security is of great symbolic value, not only with respect to trust and reconciliation in the Western Balkans, but also as proof of the transformative power of the EU. Second, linguistic and cultural similarities which exist in the Western Balkans would facilitate communication within the Battlegroup and its overall effectiveness.

Building capacity in the area of hybrid threats, intelligence, defence and SSR

The second point of the Action Plan calls for the development of further participation in actions related to hybrid threats, intelligence, space issues, defence and SSR.[52] When it comes to **hybrid threats**, building on the 2016 Joint Communication on Countering Hybrid Threats (Action 18),[53] the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission (specifically, the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations) have already offered the Western Balkan states to take part in the Hybrid Risk Survey, although at the time of writing (September 2018) no Western Balkan country had completed the survey.[54] Once this happens, the EU will develop its targeted support based on the results of the survey, which comprises a questionnaire that identifies key partners' vulnerabilities to hybrid threats. If the Western Balkan states officially request to take part in the survey, the EU will be able to respond by offering support based on partners' individual needs, in a demand-driven process. Although tailor-made for each partner, the EU could in the future also foster regional cooperation in this field given that the states in the region share many vulnerabilities to hybrid threats, and the EU can also learn from their experiences.

The EU's support in the field of hybrid threats is closely connected to the work of the Western Balkans Task Force on Strategic Communications (StratCom), which was established in 2017 and became operational in June 2018. If the EU is to offer meaningful support in this field, however, the Task Force needs to be endowed with a significantly increased capacity to deliver on its broad mandate.[55] The upcoming referendum in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the name agreement scheduled for 30 September 2018, with an expected heavy disinformation campaign, will be a major test in this regard.[56]

The EU should also use the impetus provided by the accession process to support comprehensive **SSR** in the Western Balkans, including defence and intelligence reforms. In addition to rule of law reforms that are normally expected under Chapters 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights) and 24 (Justice Freedom and Security) of the *acquis*,

the EU has a unique opportunity to put its new EU-wide strategic framework on SSR into practice in the Western Balkans and use its integrated approach to push for reforms in the full spectrum of security sector governance. This „SSR-isation" of chapters 23 and 24 however should not be based on a one-size-fits-all approach, but should be pursued gradually and pragmatically, starting in each country through carefully selected entry points. In addition, the EU should step up its capacity building efforts in this area by increasing the resources, funding and expertise available to the Commission. This will be particularly important when it comes to ensuring an effective exit strategy and transition process following the termination of current CSDP missions and operations in the region.

Due to the role of **intelligence** agencies in human rights violations, political abuses and past armed conflicts in the countries of the Western Balkans, it is of utmost importance for the consolidation of democracy in the region that its intelligence agencies be accountable and democratically governed. To that end, the EU has provided support for the reform of the interception of communications in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The EU could offer similar support elsewhere in the region, although countries will have to request such assistance, as there is no *acquis* in this field.

Western Balkan states currently take part in a number of intelligence cooperation formats.[57] The EU should continue fostering stronger intelligence sharing among the Western Balkan states by promoting a format among the Western Balkan states modelled after the European Club de Berne. This would be a strong contribution to more effective counterterrorism and countering violent extremism efforts, as well as to the fight against organised crime and hybrid threats, all having strong regional level dynamics. By politically prioritising and furthering the inclusion of the Western Balkans in these forms of cooperation, the EU and its Member States could foster greater trust among the region's intelligence communities, thus making intelligence sharing more meaningful, regular and effective.

In the field of **defence reform**, the EU should also step up its involvement. Following the changing nature of military roles in Europe after the Cold War,[58] the role of the military forces

across the Western Balkans has been also re-envisaged to encompass not only traditional tasks of territorial defence, but also support to international peace and security and aide to civilian structures during emergencies.[59] In the more recent past, armed forces of the Western Balkan states have been used to address some of these non-traditional security threats, including disasters and illegal migration. However, as the use of military force is not necessarily always the optimal way of addressing non-military threats, the EU's support to defence sectors in the Western Balkans should prioritise strategic dialogue in the context of negotiations of chapter 31. Capacity building activities – not only multilateral, but also bilateral ones - could be funded through new instruments such as the European Peace Facility.

An important challenge will certainly be an emerging new division of labour between the EU and **NATO**. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO had been primarily responsible for common defence (Article 5 of the Washington Treaty) and for supporting defence reform as part of its enlargement strategy, while the EU increasingly took upon itself the responsibility for non-Article 5 crisis management tasks. For instance, while EUFOR has had a role in supporting the reform of the Bosnian Armed Forces, NATO has been spearheading international efforts to support defence reforms in the Western Balkans. In light of recent developments both inside Europe and in trans-Atlantic relationship, such division of labour might need to be revisited. The EU's unmatched influence and interest in the Western Balkans provide a strategic opportunity for the EU to play a stronger role in promoting defence reforms in this region and thus shape the transatlantic discussion on the emerging division of labor with NATO. Due to NATO's increasing re-focusing on territorial defence and the EU's growing interests in defence, there is a window of opportunity for the EU to step up its role in defence reforms in the region. In line with the Action Plan, the EU should step up its role in building the capacities of the defence sector, drawing on the capacity-building role played by EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The fact that not all Western Balkan states are seeking NATO membership is only strengthening the case for a greater role for the EU in this area.

One way to proceed is to foster the creation of a **Western Balkans Annual Defence Review**, which would emulate the EU Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) programme expected to start fully functioning in 2019.[60] The review would deepen defence cooperation in the region and bring Western Balkan states' defence spending plans in line not only with each other, but also with the EU, so that they can integrate more smoothly upon accession. This should not be seen as duplication, but rather complimentary to similar NATO programs such as biannual Partnership for Peace Planning and Review Process (PARP). Involving Western Balkan states in CARD will strengthen their defence link to the EU in general and European Defence Agency (EDA) acting as CARD's Secretariat.[61]

Western Balkan states should also consider applying to join selected projects of the EU's **Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)** on security and defence through an administrative arrangement. One of them is the European Union Training Mission Competence Centre (EU TMCC), which could train the Western Balkan CSDP trainers as a way of enhancing the regional and national capacities in this field. Another potentially relevant project is the European Training Certification Centre for European Armies, which could guide Western Balkan states in harmonising their own military training with evolving EU-level standards. This would help the states improve interoperability before joining the EU. The project on the European Medical Command could be of particular interest to countries like Serbia, whose niche in CSDP missions has been military medicine. Another PESCO project of potential interest for the entire Western Balkans region is Military Mobility, which would help states from the region to harmonise their military transport procedures with emerging EU-level standards.

Expansion of the structured dialogue on security and defence

The EU Action Plan calls for 'the expansion of structured dialogue on CSDP-related cooperation'. A more **strategic format** could be established to facilitate not only the structured dialogue on CSDP but to better structure the entire security and defence policy dialogue with the Western Balkan states. This setting could follow the model of the Eastern Partnership Panels to establish a Western Balkan Security Partnership, including EU institutions, EU Member

States and Western Balkan countries as key partners (other international partners such as NATO and the OSCE could be invited as observers). The strategic dialogue should cover not only issues related to the participation of the region in CSDP operations and missions, but also other related security and defence issues such as SSR, defence reform, participation in PESCO, EDA, etc.

Such dialogue could also serve as a framework to agree a clearer division of labour and cooperation with NATO on capacity building in the defence sector, for instance. An option would be to conclude a **Regional Security Compact** based on common needs and shared responsibilities. The Compact would set out key commitments in the area of SSR both on the part of the EU and the Western Balkan countries.[62] Such a Compact would help Western Balkan states to progressively align their security and defence policies with those of the EU, ensure greater ownership on all sides and increase sustainability and comprehensiveness of SSR in the region.[63]

The conclusion of a Compact could be followed by bilateral Joint Action Plans specifying a list of priority activities at the national level, resources pledged, stakeholders involved, and a schedule of their implementation.[64] In order to coordinate EC-led and CSDP-related activities, a security cluster for the Western Balkans, should also be established composed of the EC, EEAS and selected Member States.[65]

Monitoring and evaluation of progress achieved should be the task of Joint Coordination Boards whose reports can feed directly into accession negotiations under Chapter 31 of the acquis, which covers foreign, security and defence policy. To provide for a legal basis for this upgraded partnership on security and defence issues, the FPAs signed with Western Balkan states should be broadened beyond CSDP interventions to cover a broader range of security issues, such as hybrid threats, defence, counterterrorism, violent extremism, cyber security and irregular migration.[66]

5. Conclusions

As demonstrated in this paper, the EU has a strong track record in the area of security sector governance in the Western Balkans, including the deployment of CSDP missions and operations. The new Western Balkan strategy - and its Action Plan in particular - provides new momentum for further engagement and hence an opportunity to strengthen the resilience of the Western Balkans. Currently, the Western Balkan states are still more importers than exporters of security, hence the EU should support their capacities in order to enable them to make a stronger contribution to the CSDP. When it comes to the implementation of Action Plan provisions, the EU and its Member States should consider drivers of fragility - key internal and external security threats - and foster existing capabilities to promote more resilient states and societies, both in the region and in the EU.

The Action Plan rightly envisages a more active role for the Western Balkans as contributors to - rather than passive recipients of - security, principally by supporting capacity building and encouraging a deeper partnership with the region. This entails more contributions from the region to CSDP operations and missions, integration of Western Balkan states in new EU-wide defence initiatives such as PESCO, and enhanced political dialogue between the EU and the Western Balkans in areas of security and migration. Given the increasing focus on security and defence at the EU level, this seems like a natural step. In order to achieve meaningful results, however, these initiatives need to receive vigorous backing from EU institutions and, more importantly, from the Member States, along with the political commitment needed to support the enlargement process and the accession of all the Western Balkans into the EU. This would imply a more integrated but also more strategic approach towards the region, including through the establishment of a Regional Security Compact as a way of facilitating local buy-in for the necessary reforms. Inclusive partnerships, as opposed to an EU-driven process, and local ownership in the broadest sense – during the whole policy cycle and including a wide range of societal actors - should also ensure that EU SSR activities strengthen the resilience not only of the Western Balkans states, but also their societies.

Footnotes and Remarks:

[1] According to the following report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament, the European Commission should set up a Directorate-General for Defence (DG Defence): European Parliament. 2017. *Report on the Annual Report on the Implementation of the Common Security and Defence Policy*. A8-0351/2017. Brussels: European Parliament. 13 November, p. 11. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A8-2017-0351+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN

[2] European Commission. 2018. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions: A Credible Enlargement Perspective for and Enhanced EU Engagement with the Western Balkans. COM(2018) 65 final. Strasbourg: European Commission. 6 February. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-credible-enlargement-perspective-western-balkans_en.pdf

[3] Dafoe, J. Oneal R. and Russet B, 2013. 'The Democratic Peace: Weighing the Evidence and Cautious Inference' International Studies Quarterly, Vol. 57, No. 1, pp. 201-214. https://academic.oup.com/isq/article-abstract/57/1/201/1799623

[4] High Representative of the European Union. 2016. Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe—A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy. Brussels: European Union, p. 9. https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf

[5] European Commission. 2018. 'Action Plan in Support of the Transformation of the Western Balkans.' Annex to Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions: A Credible Enlargement Perspective for and Enhanced EU Engagement with the Western Balkans. COM(2018) 65 final. Strasbourg: European Commission. 6 February. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/annex-communication-credible-enlargement-perspective-western-balkans_en.pdf

[6] This paper does not discuss security-related matters that normally fall within the field of justice and home affairs and that are covered by negotiating Chapters 23 and 24 of the acquis.

[7] High Representative of the European Union. 2016. Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe—A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, Brussels: European Union, p. 23. https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf

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[14] European Commission. 2018. Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: Elements towards an EU Strategy against Illicit Firearms, Small Arms & Light Weapons and Their Ammunition—'Securing Arms, Protecting Citizens'. JOIN(2018) 17 final. Brussels: European Commission. 13 June. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018JC0017&from=ga

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33 Algar-Faria, G. et al. (2018) 'Policy paper on coordination of local capacity building', EU-CIVCAP Deliverable 6.2, available from: https://eu-civcap.net/portfolio/deliverables/

34 Korski, D. and Gowan, R. 2009. Can the EU Rebuild Failing States? A Review of Europe's Civilian Capacities. ECFR Policy Report. London: European Council on Foreign Relations. https://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR18_-_Can_the_EU_rebuild_failing_States_-_a_Review_of_Europes_Civilian_Capacities.pdf

35 Juncos, A.E. Forthcoming. 'EU Civilian Crisis Management.' In Blockmans, S. and Koutrakos, P., eds. Research Handbook on the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. Elgar Publishing.

36 Interview 4. The Commission has significant expertise regarding Chapters 23 and 24 of the acquis, which address specific parts of the security sector.

37 European Commission. 2018. Evaluation of EU Support for Security Sector Reform in Enlargement and Neighbourhood Countries (2010–2016): Final

Report. Executive Summary, p. 5. http://www.3dcftas.eu/system/tdf/SSR%20Evaluation_Executive%20Summary.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=437

[38] Interview 2.

[39] Juncos, A.E. et al. 2017. 'Evaluating International Efforts on Local Capacity Building.' EU-CIVCAP DL6.1. Bristol: University of Bristol. 25 May. https://eucivcap.files.wordpress.com/2017/05/eu-civcap_deliverable_6-1.pdf

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[41] Edmunds, T., Juncos, A.E. and Algar-Faria, G. Forthcoming. 'EU Local Capacity Building: Ownership, Complexity and Agency.' Global Affairs.

[42] European Commission. 2018. Evaluation of EU Support for Security Sector Reform in Enlargement and Neighbourhood Countries (2010–2016): Final Report. Executive Summary. http://www.3dcftas.eu/system/tdf/SSR%20Evaluation_Executive%20Summary.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=437

[43] Williams, N. 2018. 'Bosnia and the EU: Time to End Operation Althea.' European Leadership Network. 30 April. https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/bosnia-and-the-eu-time-to-end-operation-althea

[44] Numanović, S. 2018. 'Brigadier General Martin Dorfer: EUFOR Is Not Spying on Anyone.' Dnevni avaz (Bosnia and Herzegovina). 29 June. https://avaz.ba/english/393293/brigadier-general-martin-dorfer-eufor-is-not-spying-on-anyone

[45] As of June–July 2018, the number of staff from the region deployed in CSDP interventions is as follows: Albania 5 (EUTM Mali 4, EUFOR Althea 1), Bosnia 2 (EUTM RCA 2), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 3 (EUFOR Althea 3), Montenegro 13 (EUFOR Atalanta 12, EUTM Mali 1) and Serbia 22 (EUFOR Atalanta 6, EUTM Somalia 6, EUTM Mali 3, EUTM RCA 7).

[46] Karlsrud, J. and Milošević, M. 2014. 'Mapping Western Balkans Civilian Capacities for Peace Operations.' Journal of Regional Security, Vol. 9, No. 2, p. 85. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276349149/download.

[47] A good example is the project supported by the Czech Development Agency in Serbia, with the goal of establishing a regional system for the preparation of civilian experts for participation in international peace operations.

[48] One example is the CSDP training programme provided to Western Balkan partners since 2006 by Austria, Croatia, and Hungary in cooperation with the European Security and Defence College and funded through the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX).

[49] In this field, civil society organisations can play an important role as a pool of experts and trainers, and also as policy entrepreneurs. In Serbia, for example, the non-governmental think thank ISAC Fund, supported by the Czech Development Agency, jump-started the process of capacity building within state bodies for civilian missions, including CSDP. See https://www.isac-fund.org/en/programmes/peace-support-operations/cooperation-ministry-defence-czech-development-agency

[50] SEEBRIG is a wider initiative that includes countries from outside the Western Balkans: Albania, Bulgaria, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Romania, and Turkey. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia are currently only observer countries. See https://www.seebrig.org

[51] Despite the fact that the battlegroups have not been used so far (they became operational in 2007), steps have been taken in line with the EU Global Strategy's call to overcome 'procedural, financial and political obstacles which prevent the deployment of the Battlegroups'. The most recent case in point is a proposal made by the High Representative in June 2018 for the creation of a European Peace Facility, which would increase the percentage of costs of military operations covered from the common budget, including those that may be undertaken by EU Battlegroups. See https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf

[52] European Commission. 2018. 'Action Plan in Support of the Transformation of the Western Balkans.' Annex to Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions: A Credible Enlargement Perspective for and Enhanced EU Engagement with the Western Balkans. COM(2018) 65 final. Strasbourg: European Commission. 6 February, point 2.14. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/annex-communication-credible-enlargement-perspective-western-balkans_en.pdf

[53] Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council. 2016. Joint Framework on Countering Hybrid Threats: A European Union Response. JOIN(2016) 18 final. Brussels: Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council. 6 April, p. 15. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016JC0018&from=EN

[54] The Survey was previously conducted in the Republic of Moldova; Jordan and Georgia have officially requested to take part as well. European Commission. 2018. Joint Report to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council: On the Implementation of the Joint Framework on Countering Hybrid Threats from July 2017 to June 2018. JOIN(2018) 14 final. Brussels: European Commission. 13 June, p. 11. https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/joint_report_on_the_implementation_of_the_joint_framework_on_countering_hybrid_threats_from_july_2017_to_june_2018.pdf

[55] The Task Force, which, as of August 2018, had four people in its team, is monitoring the media and offering counter-narratives on EU enlargement,

both within the EU and the Western Balkans. http://europa.eu/whoiswho/public/index.cfm?fuseaction=idea.hierarchy&nodeID=3704412

[56] The EU has already initiated a campaign ahead of Macedonia's referendum, under the name 'Imagine the Future Together'. See Tumanovska, M. 2018. '"Imagine the future together" – EU Campaign in Macedonia'. Radio Free Europe (Macedonia). 29 August. https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/29459644.html

[57] Some of these formats are Europe-wide, such as The Forum, while others are region-specific, such as the South East European Military Intelligence Chiefs, or more ad hoc, such as the Counterterrorism Network under the Police Cooperation Convention for South East Europe.

[58] Edmunds, T. 2006 'What are armed forces for? The changing nature of military Roles in Europe', International Affairs, Vol.82. No.6, pp.1059-1075

[59] The role of armed forces in maintaining internal security is not equally defined in the region. While Serbia and Croatia, for example, foresee the use of armed forces to protect internal security alongside police other countries such as Bosnia and Hercegovina and Kosovo* have refrained from such an approach. See: Marley, J. 2014. 'New Model Armies: Rethinking Military Purpose in Post-Conflict Southeastern Europe', Journal of Regional Security, Vol. 9, No. 1. pp.31-50. https://www.regionalsecurityjournal.com/index.php/JRS/article/view/43/34

[60] European Commission. 2018. 'Engaging with the Western Balkans: An Investment in European Security.' EPSC Brief. Brussels: European Political Strategy Centre. 17 May. https://ec.europa.eu/epsc/sites/epsc/files/epsc_-_brief_-_engaging_with_western_balkans.pdf

[61] Currently, Serbia is the only Western Balkan state with an Administrative Arrangement concluded with EDA and other countries in the region should be encouraged to follow suit.

[62] When conceptualizing a new format for strategic dialogue on SSR, it must be noted that there is an existing dense array of mutually reinforcing platforms for dialogue between the EU and the EU Member States with the region that cover the internal security dimension of SSR (encompassing rule of law related policy areas such as police cooperation, police and justice sector reform etc.). These include the EU-Western Balkan Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial Forum, the Berlin process, the Salzburg Forum, the Brdo Process, the Integrative Internal Security Governance framework (IISG), the Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe (PCC SEE) to name only some.

[63] A particular challenge will be how to include Kosovo. If a Member State objects, Kosovo could be given observer status at the outset, with full inclusion depending on the outcome of the legally binding agreement with Belgrade.

[64] Activities resulting from plans that are relevant for internal security could be incorporated in the three action plans of the Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG) framework, which aims to align Western Balkan states' internal security policies with those of the EU in the areas of a) counterterrorism, b) the fight against serious and organised crime and c) border security. To avoid overlapping and duplication by other international (non-EU) partners, a clear plan of who is in the lead and who provides funding should be devised. See http://wb-iisg.com

[65] European Commission. 2018. 'Engaging with the Western Balkans: An Investment in European Security.' EPSC Brief. Brussels: European Political Strategy Centre. 17 May. https://ec.europa.eu/epsc/sites/epsc/files/epsc_-_brief_-_engaging_with_western_balkans.pdf

[66] Tardy, T. 2018. 'Revisiting the EU's Strategic Partnerships.' EUISS Brief Issue No. 1. Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, pp. 1–2.

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