

UDC 327(497:4-672EU)
Biblid: 0025-8555, 75(2023)
Vol. LXXV, No. 3, pp. 459–483
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2298/MEDJP2303459B>

Original article
Received 17 July 2023
Accepted 12 September 2023
CC BY-SA 4.0

The “Power of Weakness”? The Western Balkans and Europe’s Global Neighbourhood

Adam Bence BALAZS¹

Abstract: Putin’s war in Ukraine might result in a shift from the worn-out refrain of “Europeanization” towards a more realist approach to EU enlargement and its geostrategic stakes. Russia has turned into a significant threat due to its *weakness* rather than its power. The author considers the “power of weakness” a crucial concept in the ongoing aggression and its geostrategic consequences. Paradoxically, weakness might be an actual source of power in these uncertain times of global transformation. Is that an opportunity for the Western Balkans (WB)? Analyzing the troublesome Western Balkans’ EU integration based on their economic, demographic, and other (limited) features while relying on the decolonization approach, the author finds that their integration constitutes an emergency precisely due to their weak points. Russia and China seek for weakening states across the globe, minor players where anti-Western feelings are easy to instrumentalize. The WB candidates deserve to be better integrated into the list of European priorities. A lack of EU strategy in the WB might indicate the absence of sound perspectives for the Union’s broader international role. The paper explores Bertrand Badie’s decolonization approach, applying it to the Western Balkans, Hungary’s practice regarding the “power of the weak”, and Turkey, aiming to illustrate that weakness should not be perceived solely as the opposite of power, but as a suspicious international element since the Cold War onwards.

Keywords: the power of weakness; Western Balkans; EU enlargement; globalization; Bertrand Badie; decolonization; imperial legacies; Hungary; European perspectives.

¹ Andrásy University Budapest, Lecturer, Research Fellow, adam.balazs@andrassyuni.hu, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5023-5797>

This paper was presented during the panel ‘Between the Eastern Partnership and the Western Balkans. The blurring of EU policies’, as part of the UACES Conference held between 3-6 September 2023 in Belfast, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom.

Introduction

Every year, during the month of July, articles in Western European press commemorate Srebrenica. There is a recurring formulation in these commemorations: Who would have thought there could be war again in Europe? Between the lines, this phrase reveals a freeze in the European narrative. It latently says that if there is war, it cannot be in Europe. During the 1990s and up to the 2003 Thessaloniki Summit and the 2004-2007 Eastern Enlargement, the “end of History” was in the spirit of the times, and a war in Europe could only refer to past events. Observing global transformations in the medium term, i.e., since the collapse of the USSR, the progressive shaping of an enclave of EU candidate countries might become emblematic of the aforementioned narrative freeze: the European difficulty in facing the fact that the postwar period is a bygone era – and was already well before the 2022 escalation of Vladimir Putin’s war against Ukraine. An open conflict in Europe is not inconceivable anymore. The violent breakup of Yugoslavia, a player in the Cold War’s geopolitical game, marked the beginning of a turning point in contemporary European history. Ironically, the progressive end of the postwar period (in Europe) is symbolized by a heterogeneous set of countries blocked in a new postwar condition. The Western Balkans (WBs) still struggle to emerge from the shadows of the recent past or even risk bellicose relapses.

With Putin’s war, the WBs have caught new attention in the European Union (EU). However, the European integration of the Western Balkans is not exclusively a European story. Or, if it is, it connects to Europe’s more global neighbourhood, well beyond the WB enclave in Southeast Europe. Indeed, if the Ukrainian battlefield is undeniably in Europe, the global framework for resolving the conflict and making European security more sustainable is global.

It has become crucial for European security to consider how different regions of the world, from the Sahel to Central and Southeast Asia, perceive the war in Ukraine and think and feel about Europe. Since the escalation, consecutive United Nations (UN) resolutions have sketched a contrasted global picture. What is at stake for the Euro-Atlantic system of alliances is to avoid alienating countries that, for multiple and complex reasons, do not wish to take a clear position in the ongoing conflict or might, with time, take their distances from the Euro-Atlantic standpoint. The WBs are part of this global picture. Their EU integration is not merely an intra-European or peripheral issue. This integration process is part of the global patchwork of problematic macro-regions whose frustrations and resentment towards the “West” pose a security threat to Europe in the longer term. It is vital to locate the WB challenge on Europe’s global map rather than on its periphery – geographically and politically. Renewed reflection on the geostrategic importance

of the WBs' integration might be the opportunity to think more critically about Europe's place and role in the contemporary global world.

Instead of sterile discussions on European identity and cultural boundaries, let's rethink the WBs' situation in geopolitical terms. This might contribute to opening up the enclave and the way Europeans think and feel about the Southeast European countries engaged in the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP). This paper aims to show how the WBs connect to the most pressing geopolitical challenges of the global world. The common denominator between decolonized countries and the post-Yugoslav states is undoubtedly not cultural but geopolitical. Fractured macro-regions, fragile or failing states indicate the peculiar role of *weakness* in the transformation of the international order since decolonization.² The "power of weakness" is an existing concept in decolonial geopolitics (Badie 2018). The partial integration of newly independent countries is a significant failure of decolonization. Freshly emancipated states have been formally added to the international order without being duly recognized as equal players. This asymmetrical process has led to an anomaly: precarious and seemingly insignificant members of the international community turn their weakness into a questionable form of power examined in this paper: *annoyance*.

This twisted concept of weakness is worth applying to a broader spectrum of anomalies in power relations. How come international military coalitions fail in front of small terrorist cells (Afghanistan, Sahel)? What kind of political capital results from instrumentalizing groups who feel disadvantaged in liberal democracies? Why is a weakened power like Russia more threatening than if it had hegemonic means? How come asylum-seekers, crowds of individuals without substantial rights and deprived of mobility, are easily perceived as a significant threat by some of the wealthiest European societies?

It is vital to see that the EU integration of the WB candidates is the best way to prevent their weakness from being instrumentalized by global players like China and Russia. It is also crucial to relearn to measure adequate power in international relations and see how declining powers might become more dangerous than steadily emerging ones. A proper realist approach to geopolitics needs a substantial concept of weakness. This concept is not merely the opposite of power, what fails in front of traditional power, but a very source of power that eventually undermines the successful transition from yesterday's international order towards a fair global framework.

² The paper introduces the political concept of weakness in realist geopolitics. Based on an existing theory in decolonial studies, the author explores the possibilities of applying the concept to the European context, i.e., the EU integration of the Western Balkans, the shortcomings of cohesion (Hungary), and the patchwork of imperial legacies across the continent.

This paper will show how the WBs' European integration is inherently part of contemporary global challenges. It is not a secondary topic or a compartmentalized field studied at the expense of more pressing issues. Bertrand Badie's concept of weakness will be used to reframe the WBs in Europe's global neighbourhood and to bring a twist to the realist approach of international power relations to the WBs case. First, Badie's concept of weakness will be clarified. Second, the paper will define what Europe's "global neighbourhood" means by examining the UN resolutions voted since the 2022 escalation of Putin's war. This will allow a critical location of the WBs on Europe's global map. Third, a couple of European cases connected to the WBs will be examined: Hungary, Turkey, and the EU itself, to show the contrasting aspects of weakness as a promising concept for comprehending power relations in this age of global transformations.

The "Power of Weakness": Badie's Geopolitical Theory

The postwar period, stretching from the end of World War II to the collapse of the Soviet Union, was strikingly teeming with heavily armed conflicts. The time of the wars in Korea, Vietnam, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, with their share of ideological discourse underlying geostrategic aims, is also the time of decolonization. The wars of this period have a common denominator: the defeat of the stronger. Indeed, if we measure power in terms of military might only, the outcome of these conflicts is puzzling as developing countries and societies managed to push back advanced nuclear powers.

The defeat of the stronger does not mean a clear victory for the weaker, but such defeats indicate asymmetry in the postwar balance of power on the international scale.

Since the end of the Cold War, this phenomenon has been permanent. "Is there anyone still winning wars nowadays?" – asks Badie. For him, the international order established after 1945 is not a successful geopolitical framework that would only face shortcomings in our contemporary world. It is a much older world order, the Westphalian one, that has been trying to "resist" the structural changes of globalization throughout the postwar period and until nowadays (2018, 59-97). For Badie, the Cold War era is the medium-term decline of a particular conception of power and hegemony (Badie, 2019).³ "It is time to accord a place to the player

³ The approach is not untypical in French historiography (Braudel [1949] 1990). In the age of "crises" and "states of exception", from short-term antiterrorist policies (Agamben 2003) to the Covid

from the *South*, from the periphery, outside the official scene, from those places that “have not entered History” (2018, 13). This potential place calls for the international order’s opening to the global world’s geopolitical realities. It is not a focus on the global scale at the expense of the international framework’s achievements: the idea of the “South reinventing the world” is instead a Western, self-critical contribution to a more sustainable global balance, with the West as a major power centre within it.⁴ Europe at home is not less “post-colonial” than her former colonies. Let’s examine the theory of weakness: it provides a global perspective on the WBs’ regional challenge and a substantial conceptual framework for *integration*.

A Theory of Integration

Integration is the keyword for Badie (2018, 21-28). His theory on failed decolonization should shed new light on European integration issues. Integration (into the international, i.e., UN system) is a three-step process: including new states, establishing well-balanced interdependence, and mobility.

The first step is the *inclusion* of freshly emancipated, new sovereign states. According to Mattias Iser, this first step has three layers: a formally legal, a political, and a moral one (Badie, 2018, 22; see Iser, 2015, 27-45). The legal procedure is, for Badie, the “most evident” one: following the proclamation of independence, the new state is admitted to the United Nations (2018, 22). The political layer is already more problematic. Politically, the aim is to fully recognize the new state as “a political player, interacting on all great international questions”. Decolonized states are stuck in formal recognition and remain “under tutelage”: “Their right to manage their domestic issues, to intervene in regional conflicts, and to fully join the international system is *de facto* denied” (23). In other words, the integration process blocks at a rather initial stage. Iser insists on a third moral layer within this first step. It is “esteem”: a given state carries its own values, history, and culture; disrespect towards these properties drives the integration process back to “the

lockdowns – these also meant being locked down in the precarity of the present moment (Hartog 2020), embracing longer-term historical continuities and political turning points might be a more constructive approach than an exclusive focus on punctual “breaking points” (Le Goff 2013). Nowadays in Europe, EU candidate countries are not only locked in a geopolitical enclave; lasting candidacy also blocks perspectives in time.

⁴ The shortcomings of the international system in front of the global world - this does not mean “cancelling” the former for the sake of the latter. The international order calls for constructive criticism so that democratic values remain at work in global governance to come (Buda 2023).

trap of universality” where integration and the emulation of European history are synonyms (Badie 2018, 24). Integration is not assimilation: it supposes difference, and only recognizing such difference would mean proper integration.

Badie comments on social integration to nuance the idea of difference: inequality and difference are not interchangeable notions, and recognizing difference should come along with reducing social inequalities globally. Otherwise, the global framework emerging from decolonization will remain the “most inegalitarian ever evented, highlighting a fundamental and critical stake of our international modernity” (2018, 25). Integration means the respect of differences on the one hand and the reduction of inequalities on the other. Modernity as a melting pot is a deadlock where inequalities rise and cumulate reasons for dissent and resentment. Global modernity calls for a nuanced concept of integration, distinct from violent assimilation into a historical narrative considered universal (Wallerstein 2006). What goes for global modernity should apply to intra-European discrepancies and narratives of modernization and “catching up”.

The second step of integration is *interdependence* – a peculiarly catchy notion, often considered a promise or almost a guarantee of order on the global plane. According to Hubert Védrine, economic interdependence is “blatant”. The global transformations of the last forty years have been characterized by an optimistic approach to the integrative potential of “globalized value chains” (Védrine 2021, 241-242). Except for a “couple of new institutions meant to facilitate the integration of newly independent states”, such as the first UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD I, 1964) or the UN Development Programme (UNDP, 1966), the international order has not adapted its institutional framework to the enlarging, global community of states. As a reaction, ill-integrated states have nurtured dreams of autonomy based on resent towards well-established powers who have not genuinely broken with their imperialist ways and colonialist means. The unkept promises of interdependence have turned independence into dissent (Badie 2018, 26).

Mobility would be the third step of full integration into the international community. In the age of globalization and significant progress in communication, a “more fluid global space” should have replaced the imperial logic where distance was a “privileged political resource” and a tool of colonial tutelage (Badie 2018, 27). Practically speaking, globalized mobility would be the evidence and guarantee of integration as a two-way street. Mobility would mean the mutual share of skills, competencies, and resources. According to Badie, the opposite tendency has been followed, leading to “the time of walls” (2018, 28). Instead of rethinking mobility in analogy to interdependence – or as a landmark – the centuries-old international (European) system has maintained its one-way patterns (2018, 59-97). This has

fragilized states where colonial exploitation and tutelage now run under other names, and only the imagination of precarious populations has the “mobility” to wander across a globalized world that is more of an iconic promise than an institutional achievement. In front, the old international system secludes itself from the “outside world” and indulges more and more explicitly in narratives such as “Fortress Europe” and other “bubbles” (Sloterdijk 2011).⁵

Stuck at the initial stage of formal recognition, the integration process of the decolonized has turned many of the newly emancipated countries against the international order, which, following Badie’s line of thought, should not be considered as well-functioning at all during the Cold War – the bipolar order corresponds to the period where nowadays’ significant shortcomings and discrepancies find their causes and origins. On the global scale, the question is not if there can be war again *in Europe*; the fact is that the “postwar” period teemed with wars and violence, recalling the relentless imperial conflicts of the 19th century’s “hundred years of peace”. For Badie, the Cold War was a failed transition rather than a golden age of globalizing integration and exchange, the very period when the Westphalian system got radically put to the test.

The Main Forms of Weakness

The “power of weakness” is an anomaly in the international balance of power resulting from failed integration and the missed occasion to shift from the international to a genuinely global order. Before locating the Western Balkans in this biased global picture, let’s examine the anomaly and sketch the challenges of reconstruction on schedule. The lack of full recognition, interdependence, and global mobility have radicalized the emerging South, adding dissent, resentment, and “a spirit of vindictiveness” to its identity (2018, 28). According to Badie, the peculiar power of the weak has three primary forms: the weakness of states, the weakness of nations, and that of societies.

The weakness of newly emancipated *states* quickly became a significant stake in the postcolonial era. Instead of consolidating weak states, old powers have taken the profit of such fragilized members to forge the concept of “failed states” (Zartman 1995).⁶ For Badie, this new concept has legitimized Western interventionism in the

⁵ The so-called “migrant”, this recurring character of our fortified narratives, despite being identified with movement, is precisely someone whose main characteristic is to lack mobility – at least if this notion refers to the ability and the potential to travel and share skills, knowledge, and experience.

⁶ International relations have a nuanced glossary of weakness, from *fragile states* to Least Developed Countries (LDCs). It is vital to see that the same way “failed states” can be turned into

South, especially in Africa (DR Congo, Central African Republic, Somalia, and South Sudan), and did not count with the backlash, i.e., the instrumentalization, *by the weak*, of the UN system where they have not been well integrated.

The weakness of a postcolonial *nation* “condemns its political system, highlights the artificiality of its social contract, and tends to raise elites and populations against each other”. This also generates “cross-border solidarities” (2018, 116-117). These oppose macro-regional integration, which would suppose well-enrooted national constructions. Instead, they result in porous borders pre-emptively fractured by imperial boundaries. Lines drawn on the map and in the sand (Hardy [2016] 2018, 1-5) undermine the primary conditions for launching nation-building.⁷ Such shortcomings do not stem from the weakness of the states but the pre-emptively fractured national constructions.

The third form of weakness to consider is that of *social ties*. Due to two main reasons, freshly independent states have struggled to establish civil societies that could consolidate them. First, the “horizontality” of social ties is challenging to achieve in societies structured by clientelism and “segmented realities that confront clans, tribes, families” (Badie 2018, 118). This verticality of ties exposes societies to the “political power of the patronizing state or the arbitrariness of the intertribal game. Second, the low level of the Human Development Index (HDI) wounds democracy and “the overall political stability of new states”.

A Twisted Pattern: The Power of Annoyance

Annoyance as a twisted form of power results from interdependence (Elias [1939] 2000; Devin 1995). Akin to *sharp power* (Walker and Ludwig 2017), it consists of tacit means and methods of corrosive interference in well-established frameworks like a democratic state or an international alliance (the EU, NATO) or community (the UN) with the aim to undermine these from the inside (Tellenne

excuses for interventionism, fragile states and LDCs are easily tempted to use the examined power of weakness – hence the need to include this anomaly in UN and EU strategies in the concerned regions. “Failure”, “fragility”, and “underdevelopment” might not sufficiently cover the challenge: weak does not automatically mean powerlessness.

⁷ The nation-building process took centuries in the West. Nations slowly emerged from the Middle Ages before the French Revolution turned the nation into an inclusive political concept, coupling the process with industrial development in the 19th century (Hobsbawm [1990] 2012). There were already significant discrepancies between Western European nations – what to expect then from groups that embraced the nation-building narrative at a later stage, in the 20th century, and emerged as nations from the shadows of colonialism?

2019, 31). From *fake news* to electoral interference to the abusive use of a veto right, annoyance usually betrays the lack of adequate military or political power. Such attempts to turn the tables on effectively powerful players or institutions lead to the paradox of “power’s powerlessness” (Badie 2004): without proper and alert means of reaction to such corrosive attacks, i.e., without a well-prepared “immune system”, an objectively powerful player or institution can be hijacked by a weak player. However, in the wide range of cases where it can be observed, annoyance usually lacks the capacity to lead to a sustainable alternative: it can only destabilize the existing order and dissimulate the lack of power in the case of the opportunistic weak player (Tellenne 2019, 54).

For Badie, annoyance is a form of dissent that fractures the international order but has the advantage of highlighting the longer-term shortcomings of the Westphalian system. It is an institutional disturbance on the global scene in a geopolitical context where, already during the Cold War, nuclear superpowers lost wars against developing countries (Vietnam, Afghanistan). Since the end of the Cold War, this phenomenon has intensified through a comprehensive and complex range of challenges, from terrorism to populism and instrumentalized migration.

Decolonization has strengthened the idea that the just causes belong to the weak. The “ideas of nation, sovereignty, and development, that shaped the cause of the weak as evidently more just and urgent than the aims of the strong, got mobilized against powers not yet completely defeated” (Badie 2018, 121-122). In other words, along with the institutional resistance of the international system to a new global order, the anomaly above has its roots in the conflicts of the violent process of decolonization.

The discovery of a new set of tools in front of much stronger opponents was progressive. First, the idea of “soft balancing” came to light (Pape 2005) based on the fact that, per definition, weak states had to look for alternative resources to “hard power”, “accessible to the poor” (Badie 2018, 121). This led to the extensively disputed development of humanitarianism (Fassin 2010).⁸ Second, players in the emerging South understood how annoyance can hurt the strong much more than the strong can harm with its traditional conception of might. “With some ruse and limited material means, it was possible to strike the giant, to wound it, or even neutralize it if its public opinion was reached” (Badie 2018, 123). Public opinion can turn a military victory into a political defeat, as the 1968 Tet Offensive illustrates. This realization has opened the field to “violent entrepreneurs”, inhumane terrorist cells successfully defying old-fashioned military powers.

⁸ Soft balancing, which Badie calls the “global market of mercy” (2018, 122).

Badie elaborates on how this potential can, in a “more noble way”, characterize the strategy of decolonized states. According to Badie’s sources (Heikal [1972] 1973, 330), the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru would have used the following milestone phrase in 1961, during the first Summit of the Non-Aligned in Belgrade: “For the first time in History, the weak demand something from the strong”. It was the beginning of a “wonderful story” in times of change when, despite resisting the emergence of a globalized world, the old powers of the international order could not do anymore anything they wanted. It also began a new type of discourse in the South, demanding a “new international economic order” (Badie 2018, 126). The global scale started confronting the international. The development of the power of weakness is a matter of scales. Badie explains how this “innovation” impacts major conflicts nowadays. The Syrian War shows how superpowers (the United States) might get disabled in front of more regional players (Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia); regional powers are easily overridden by local actors whose alliances and antagonisms are often challenging to follow. In front, superpowers are “paradoxically prisoners of [their] prodigious resources”, starting with nuclear power. This innovative “inversion” of power relations commenced in an age that the West still tends to perceive as an international power balance based on mighty blocks. It is vital to see that, elsewhere in the world, the idea of a balance based on the traditional measure of power was progressively questioned through decolonization. As one of the leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement, Yugoslavia was a European state that played an active role in this “inversion”.

If dissuasion with hard power was the critical component of the bipolar order, weakness became an alternative to it – and successfully slipped through the superpowers’ thick fingers. Power alone “does not organize the international agenda as it used to since the end of the European Middle Ages” (Badie 2018, 105). Weakness, with its emphasis on the small confronting the mighty, its narrative inherited from decolonial wars, and its hardly visible means of military action against yesterday’s armed-to-the-teeth mastodons, might be an innovative unity better to judge the actual capacities of opponents in contemporary conflicts.

The power of the weak is not exclusively military. In international institutions, formally admitted members with such self-confidence can quickly turn the tables on the very founders of the UN system. Without full integration, which includes the consolidation of member states and two-way mobility, interdependence gets trapped. To give a European example, Badie refers (back in 2018) to the Greek case: “The economic future of Greece or some other fragile Mediterranean countries is more decisive for Europe than German power” (Badie 2018, 109). Though the French geopolitical analyst focuses predominantly on the Global South, he

mentions European cases that will now allow me to get back to the case of the successor states of the former leader of the Non-Aligned.

Indeed, after listing neoconservative (George W. Bush, Nicolas Sarkozy) and liberal (Ikenberry 2012) reactions to global transformations and the growing opposition between the international system and more fairly global order, Badie mentions a couple of contradictory European cases: Viktor Orbán in Hungary and Jarosław Kaczyński in Poland are interesting hybrids which use elements of ethnicist Western “defence” against the emerging Global South but at the same time play with the power of annoyance that appeared in the very process of decolonization. The question is, who plays the role of the “evil colonizer” in, for instance, the official Hungarian narrative?

Europe’s Global Neighbourhood and the Western Balkans

Badie’s theory has the advantage of shedding new light on ongoing conflicts and international positioning in the UN system. We have an unexpected variation in the power of weakness with Putin’s war. It is a former superpower that hastily tries to bridge the gap between its impressive nuclear arsenal and dramatically weakened traditional military tools and economic means with annoyance in energy supplies and the instrumentalization of the weak, from Mali to Serbia.

Following the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea, US President Obama opted for a humiliating response to Moscow’s move: “Russia is no more than a ‘regional power’ whose actions in Ukraine are an expression of weakness rather than strength” (Borger 2014). “The humiliated, writes Badie, etymologically speaking (*humus*), is the one who is put to the ground level, whose identity is conceived as the lowest and weakest one. And the refusal of this status, argues Badie in the decolonial context, is at the origin of a revolt that yesterday’s powers have never and nowhere defeated” (Badie 2018, 108). In 2014, Barack Obama, who tried to structure a new foreign strategy regarding global transformations, did not see that humiliating the Northern Asian regional power might turn counterproductive and hazardous for European security. In 2022, French President Emmanuel Macron did not grasp that it was too late to comfort Russia with empathetic (long) table discussions. Since the escalation of the war, Putin, who had strategically instrumentalized the weak links of the UN system, perceived Ukraine and the Euro-Atlantic system of alliances as weaker than they were. Since the failure of the invasion, the Russian leader has played a confusing game. The combination of traditional (super)power ingredients (nuclear threats and other fire-and-fury

phrases) and annoyance (proper to weak players) does not give the impression of a well-thought strategy and roadmap. However, weakness is crucial – both on the battlefield and on the global scene.

UN Resolution ES-11/1: An Instructive Global Vote

UN Resolution ES-11/1, voted on March 2nd, 2022, right after the beginning of the escalation, provides a relevant still of power relations in the contemporary global world. Though praised – as the resolutions that followed – for the vast democratic majority that condemned the aggression, it is crucial to look closely at the split of standpoints.

One hundred forty-one states condemned the aggression. Five voted against it. Thirty-five countries abstained, and 12 were absent. The majority is clear; the five who opposed the resolution (Belarus, Eritrea, North Korea, Russia, and Syria) need not be presented. The interesting cases are the abstainers and absentees. Among the abstainers, we have the demographic giants (China and India), the vast majority of Central Asia and a significant part of the Middle East, vast areas in the Sahel, West, Central, and Southern Africa, a visible part of Southeast Asia, and a couple of reluctant states in Central and South America. The absentees are located in these same regions.

There are regional specificities. Central Asian countries are split between abstention and absence. Interestingly, those who depend most on Russia abstained, while those with more latitude within the Russian sphere of influence (Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan) were absent. In the Caucasus, the three post-Soviet states opted for three different standpoints. Georgia, the victim of Russian intervention in 2008, voted for the resolution. Azerbaijan was absent, relying on its natural resources and backed by Turkey. Lately disillusioned by Russian support in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict against the Azeri neighbour (Whatley 2023), Armenia abstained. In the post-Soviet area, the UN Resolution gives a relatively clear picture of the Russian sphere of influence at the moment of the escalation.

How to explain other regions' abstention rates, especially in Africa? And why does it matter for Ukraine and the rest of Europe? A succinct digression on one case will help make a relevant point for the WBs: the Sahel. In and around Mali, the weakness of both states and nations explains abstention and absence. The Sahel region, with its interstate borders inherited from French colonial times, has been the victim of impotent states facing terrorist cells and separatist movements (sometimes in *ad hoc* alliances) taking profit from porous borders (Bensimon 2019) and impeded nation-building processes. The 2013 intervention led by France

(Operation Serval) that later turned into a problematic macro-regional peacekeeping experiment (Operation Barkhane) could not prevent the spread of the Malian conflict to neighbouring countries.

Paris, inclined towards military interventions in former African colonies, significantly when such action can somewhat distract attention from political shortcomings at home, did not realize how precarious the unity of the Malian nation was. This showed in the divergence between France's military agenda and the Malian government's priorities (Shurkin 2015). Following a double coup, Bamako spectacularly turned against France, accused of colonialist ways (Le Cam 2022), followed by Burkina Faso and Niger.

A failing state, weak nations, local actors using porous borders and trumping impressive military coalitions, and postcolonial resentment against the former colonizer – quite a few elements of Badie's theory meet on the Sahara desert's shore ("Sahel"). What is noticeable in the context of Putin's war is how Russia and China instrumentalize such weakened states and regions worldwide. Resentment towards the former colonizer was heavily fuelled by Russian propaganda (Duerksen 2022). Russia and China hunt for weakened states failed by Western actors in one way or another (Kayali and Caulcutt 2023) and this method is not specific to a region or culture.

Chess or Go Strategy?

Regarding military strategy, Putin's war is a game of *Chess* where the powerful pieces are delivered to Ukraine by Western countries. Nonetheless, despite the bloodshed in Ukraine, it matters for the successful outcome of the war and sustainable European security to see how the conflict takes place globally. And that is more a game of *Go*. This board game, as a "war machine", is different from Chess (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 436-437). Western stones are challenging in a region like the Sahel, surrounded by hostile local stones. Russia (or China) adds some of its own stones (which do not have identities like Chess pieces), surrounding and eventually grabbing the territory that was initially under Western control.

The battlefield is in Ukraine, but the war and the struggle for global order *and* European security are happening in all those fragile regions that might seem and feel distant or irrelevant to the average European – the same way, let's notice, Ukraine feels far away for those countries who abstained at the UN without pro-Russian feelings or interests. That is what we can learn from UN Resolution ES-11/1. First, Ukraine feels far away from quite a few countries that abstained without pro-Russian feelings or interests (except the interest of not confronting any side of

the ongoing conflict). Second, it is worth critically reflecting on how far some post-Cold War conflicts felt in Europe (Somalia, Ruanda, Afghanistan, etc.).

Third, this does not relativize any horror. The constructive conclusion is to reconsider proximity and neighbourhood in this early 21st century, in the age of digital globalization, to get more aware of Europe's global neighbourhood (Balazs 2022). Distance is no longer a matter of miles, though proximity has never meant good neighbourhood relations. Proximity is given in space; neighbourhood is a set of ties to build up (Simmel 1903, 27-71).

The neighbourhood is also a matter of mobility. The EU has a highly privileged situation in terms of mobility, which is already clear compared to the EU's direct, Western Balkan neighbourhood. The challenge is to use mobility and freedom of speech better to enhance the mobility of critical and cosmopolitan thinking: How come so many countries abstained? What are the different sets of reasons? How is Europe perceived from the outside? How do close neighbours, i.e., candidate countries, think and feel about the EU? Finally, how to make sure countries that condemned the Russian aggression do not turn into calculating abstainers or cautious absentees?

Here we get back to the Western Balkans. The question differs from how far these countries are from the EU geographically, politically, or culturally. "Europeanization" tends to be a *porte-manteau* word that loses sight of geostrategic priorities. Among them, there is the challenge of not losing further countries from the orbit of the Euro-Atlantic system of alliances. Accession fatigue can quickly alienate WB SAP countries with strong Russian, Chinese, and Turkish influence. Here, again, like in Mali's case, the imperial background (for instance, Ottoman) or the role once played by a "liberator" (for instance, Russia) does not mean automatic alignment with Putin's ideology. It is the feeling of a weakening process ("we do not matter anymore"), the hopes triggered by new promises following failed or unkept ones that put distance between the "West" and its opponents (those who call it the "West", a somewhat vague denomination in geopolitics). The Western Balkans matter *because* they are weak, i.e., exposed to Russian and other interferences. Holding them up at the gates of the EU because they are weak is a ridiculous paradox – at least based on Badie's concept. It is not a matter of European "identity" but of security for both parts of the EU integration process.

The Power of the Weak: European Variations

Applied to the EU, some of its problematic member states, and candidate countries in the Union's direct neighbourhood, the twisted power of the weak should help re-read the shortcomings of the WB enlargement process. Following the 1995 accession of Austria, Finland, and Sweden, enlargement has only dealt with the integration of poorer peripheries to the East, Northeast (2004-2007), and Southeast of the Western core of the European construction. Since the 2003 Thessaloniki Summit, only one WB country has joined the institutional community (Croatia in 2013). The willingness of this member state to mediate and bridge gaps between the EU and WB candidates is questionable (Chastand 2022), debated (Luša and Picula 2022), though not as spectacularly polemic as the transactional tactics on the side of the Eastern Balkans, i.e., Bulgaria and Greece's behaviour when it comes to North Macedonia (Bytyci and Teofilovski 2022).

SAP countries have the disadvantage of an unfortunate chronology of events. Regarding enlargement, the war in Ukraine has brought new potential candidates to the limelight in Eastern Europe (Ukraine, Moldova) and beyond (Georgia). Is this speeding up of the enlargement process not happening at the expense of longtime WB candidates and the way they think and feel about the EU? Regarding cohesion, the inglorious cases of Hungary and Poland as counterproductive new members who, following a successful enlargement process, do not have a constructive approach to European cohesion undermine the chances of the WBs as toxic precedents: what to expect from Southeast Europe if East-Central Europe has already been that problematic and conflictual? Another failure of integration has arisen on the Southeastern borders of the EU. It stands up against the rules and values of the Euro-Atlantic system of alliances: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Turkey.

In short, the WBs appear once again as an enclave, now in a figurative sense: the six candidates' agenda is "stuck" between new members and old and new candidates. The common denominator of problematic new members and old candidates is their weakness.

The Hungarian Precedent

Recently, though not for the first time, the Hungarian leader clearly stated that his country's interest in the EU is purely financial (Inotai 2023). The style and manners of Viktor Orbán betray a position where a small and relatively insignificant (Nádasdy 2023) member of the EU struggles to use the only power it has at its disposal: annoyance in the EU – and NATO. Despite the resemblance with Putin's

Russia (Sz. Bíró 2023), the Hungarian “hybrid regime” seems to be EU-specific. EU documents explicitly state concerns over financial mismanagements in Hungary (Sorgi 2023). Lesser studied is the way Orbán’s regime has used EU mobility to let the steam of protest out of Hungary and consolidate a regime based on generalized apathy and the lack of political alternatives (Balazs 2023). More interesting for the present topic is how Hungary has abused the limelight of EU platforms to bargain with the European community and look more significant than it is in reality. An ill-integrated member (ab)uses the democratic system of the international institution and uses the rights of its membership to block the community without accurate political or economic weight. Orbán’s self-proclaimed “freedom fighter” role (About Hungary 2022) is somewhat akin to postcolonial narratives: morals would be on the side of the small fish emancipating from imperial rule. Hence the weak is in his right to be harshly demanding in front of the strong.

Orbán’s narrative about global transformations is a cynical combination of seemingly sound global premises and the Eurocentric illusion of the Old Continent as a “fortress” to defend against the outside world. The regime appropriates the (sound) idea that the West has lost its monopoly on power (Mahbubani 2018; Védrine 2021, 266), a set of geopolitical realities the West cannot ignore (“we are not alone in the world”, see Badie 2016). However, Orbán’s so-called “Eastern Opening” has resulted in a further slide towards the most extreme-right corners of politics, along with shallow economic outcomes. Hungary has taken up the somewhat contradictory role of a “Christian bulwark” (Balogh 2022) that would paradoxically defend the Old Continent against Europe. Based on the abuse of EU member states’ veto right, the Hungarian leader’s power of annoyance has isolated the country in the community of its allies. The interest in Central Asian partners also shows this isolation: Orbán goes where he is welcome. Unfortunately, diplomatic isolation in the Western system of alliances also plays a role in Budapest’s covert activity in the Balkans.

On the one hand, nothing is surprising in Hungary’s economic interest in Southeast Europe (Reményi et al. 2021). On the other, this interest is rather selective. Orbán shows solidarity with the WBs to the extent that it does not contradict his regime’s overt Islamophobia. Budapest officially states that “the challenge with Bosnia is how to integrate a country with two million muslims (*sic*)” (Szabad Európa 2021). Orbán has surprisingly friendly ties with President of Republika Srpska Milorad Dodik, a pro-Putin actor (AP News 2023). It is also likely that Orbán was involved in the 2021 “non-paper” issue, a plan to considerably redraw the map of the Balkan peninsula (Balkan Insight 2021). “Solidarity” looks more like a series of deliberate attempts to fracture the fragile post-Yugoslav area (Kovács 2022). Diplomatically, such opportunistic solidarities confirm the isolation

of Hungary in the West. Regarding the close Orbán-Vučić relations, the former foreign minister of Croatia, Vesna Pusić, said that “with such friends, Serbia does not need enemies anymore” (Hang 2021). Here, again, the situation resembles the classic instrumentalization of the weak: Orbán uses the partnership with Belgrade as a platform to send undermining messages to the EU. That misuse takes place in the context of Serbia’s accession fatigue where the support from Hungary as its first neighbour (however desirable) actually ends up being counterproductive, due to that country’s underdeveloped democratic practices. How to believe, from a Western European point of view, that such ties will not lead to similar “hybrid” regimes in Southeast Europe if the WB SAP countries join the EU?

Hungary is a weak link of the EU using its default power of annoyance. Similarly, the authorities in Belgrade challenge the EU’s limitations and consolidate a “stabilitocracy” (Fruscione 2020, 13-16) rather than deepening costly EU-accession-related reforms, building political capital on the weakness of an exhausted and confused SAP country without reliable “plan B”. In a twisted sense, there is a “plan B” for WB countries: profiting from a never-ending accession process. Cynically, *stabilitocracy is the plan B*. The power of weakness might sound attractive in theory. Is it not an opportunity to seize when a state/nation/economy/society lacks traditional power tools?

In reality, it is only an opportunity for leaders who build political capital on the instrumentalization of the weak: the population they are supposed to represent. The Hungarian minority of Vojvodina is particularly exposed to such instrumentalization. Budapest correlates the perspectives of this group to the personal friendship between the Hungarian prime minister and the Serbian president. Besides, it is not unlikely that Orbán considers the Republika Srpska as a “model” to follow by ethnic Hungarians in other countries (Romania and Slovakia). That would be a classic case of the instrumentalization of the weak. There is a correlation between the power of annoyance in front of stronger counterparts and the likewise arrogant mistreatment of precarious ethnic, national, and social groups.

The Turkish Precedent and the European Patchwork of Imperial Legacies

Erdoğan’s Turkey, or Türkiye, is a striking example of the consequences of longer-term accession fatigue and establishing a regime fed by anti-Western resentment. Moreover, despite its size, critical geostrategic position, and military might, Türkiye is yet another variation on the power of the weak: Erdoğan’s regime bears symptoms of a regional power whose geopolitical choices are tainted with

nostalgia for bygone *grandeur*. The power of the weak is not exclusively relevant in the case of small and weak states. It can also help estimate the behaviour of the power of states that used to be more powerful.

The European (ECC) integration of Turkey dates back to the 1960s. After the end of the Cold War, the question was not the “Europeanization” of Turkey. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s state not only followed a Western model of secularization (the French republican model and concept of *laïcité*); it was also a crucial NATO member, with its long terrestrial border with the USSR. In the 1990s, the geostrategic question was not to bring Turkey closer to Europe but to keep the country within the Western system of alliances. The Turkish case might contrast with the WBs in that the promises of the 2003 Thessaloniki Summit were sincere at the time. In the case of Turkey, promises had never been taken seriously. To put it in a more nuanced way, and based on the debates of the 1990s, promises of EU integration were not commitments to those EU leaders who made them. These were commitments to those who wanted to believe in them, i.e., Turkish politics and public opinion.

We see the results of such unkept promises. Türkiye has relapsed into the opposite of Western modernization; its leader fuels resentment towards Europe and the West and plays a blurred geostrategic game at the expense of good neighbourhood relations (Boniface and Védrine 2020, 112-113). Nostalgic of Ottoman *grandeur*, Türkiye also builds on Turkey’s Cold War status and undermines NATO’s integrity in times of war. Imperial nostalgia can quickly resurface if promises of modernization and Western convergence are not taken seriously. Turkey, as well as Russia, use lose nostalgic narratives to motivate the deepening of ties with WB countries. Such threats should motivate changing the paradigm: a weak country is a lesser problem inside the EU than left alone in its weakness, and without a reliable plan B, outside of the EU, in a region that looks more and more like the soft underbelly of European integration.

Europe is a patchwork of imperial legacies. If we take European diversity as a serious, normative concept and not merely as an appealing phrase, the challenge of European integration is to make a value out of this patchwork. Given that diversity is not a value in itself – the task is to turn it into a constructive asset. Claiming that one group from the patchwork is “less European” than the others is unfair and unfaithful to History in all cases: excluding the formerly colonized, i.e., the immigrants, is not one bit less unworthy than claiming that the European successor states of the Ottoman Empire, i.e., the Balkan countries, are not “really” in Europe. European diversity deserves better than identity issues. Differences can easily lead to resentment and frustrations and get instrumentalized by opportunist actors, resulting in Hungarian-like “freedom fighting” operetta or other pro-Russian

agendas. The power of the weak as an anomaly of integration and the traditional instrumentalization of the weak (a frustrated population, a fragile minority, or asylum-seekers without rights and mobility) come along. What matters is to prevent such profiting from weakness and adopt a more realist approach to the EU's direct and global neighbourhood, starting with the WBs.

Conclusion

The postwar European reconstruction tends to be perceived, like the international liberal order during the Cold War, as a success story. Badie shows how the failure of decolonization put to the test a centuries-old international system. The “power of the weak” highlights the structural shortcomings of the Westphalian system. In the case of postwar Europe, it is critical to grasp the inherent role of weakness in the integration process. Indeed, the six founding members of the European community might want to remember that they all lost World War II in one way or the other. This could generate a bit more empathy for the six WB countries who are still stuck nowadays in a postwar situation. After 1945, Western Europe could not have taken the reconstruction path without significant transatlantic help and support (Steil 2018). Beyond empathy, the stake is also to avoid turning the WBs into an instrumentalized set of weak states, i.e., to build European “identity” by contrast with European states who would not meet the standards.

Describing Europe as an economic giant and a political dwarf has become a commonplace. One way to reconsider the shortcomings of European politics and defence more critically is to reread postwar European history as a combination of wealth and weakness. Following the 2004-2007 Eastern Enlargement, the challenge is to turn the tables on abusive weak members, counter their power of annoyance built on their veto right and the unanimity rule, and draw conclusions regarding the EU's systemic weaknesses in the new geostrategic context of global transformations. Instead of sticking to the postwar narrative of recovery, European integration must bet on continental democracy to bridge the gap between cohesion (new members) and enlargement (old candidates).

Geopolitically, the concept of weakness has the advantage of better reading contemporary multiscale conflicts and the curious phenomenon of a missing winner. “Is there anyone still winning wars?” – asks Badie. The power of the weak, explored in the decolonial context, applies to EU integration too: Hungary's power of veto-annoyance, Serbia's establishment *outside* the EU with the appropriation,

by its leader, of empty promises, the decline of former imperial centres from Ankara to Paris and London, the instrumentalization of weak minorities and migrant crowds to compensate for the lack of military autonomy – with weakness, we get closer to the big – global – European picture.

The lack of European military autonomy connects to Europe's global place and role. It is a matter of security to integrate weak candidate countries and keep an eye on fragile states outside of Europe due to China and Russia's Go game. Regarding the closer neighbourhood, improving the synergy of the EU and NATO might help keep close countries West-oriented. In Europe's global neighbourhood, it is vital to identify the origins of newly instrumentalized resentment and anti-Western feeling: is the object of resentment a specific country, a former colonizer, the EU, NATO, the US, or the IMF? What Western failure or shortcoming is in the background of China and Russia's progress on the global Go board?

Overall, this first exploration of the power of weakness in the European context has the advantage of overriding the worn-out notion of "Europeanization" and other identity issues. It allows a renewed focus on geostrategic priorities and security. It highlights that the WBs are not another topic, compartmentalized in Academia or unrelated to the most pressing challenges of the global world. The WBs are "part of the solution" for Europe if the Old Continent refreshes how it considers the "outside world" and reconsiders the contemporary meaning of proximity and neighbourhood. It would be a significant step forward in integration to connect debates and realize that focusing on the WBs is not at the expense of other topics. In times of war in Europe, integration is not a matter of cultural "preferences" but of security, coming along with democracy.

Bibliography

- About Hungary. 2022. "Speech by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán at the opening of CPAC Texas", *About Hungary*, August 4. <https://abouthungary.hu/speeches-and-remarks/speech-by-prime-minister-viktor-orban-at-the-opening-of-cpac-texas>
- Agamben, Giorgio. 2003. *Etat d'exception* [State of emergency]. French translation by Joël Gayraud. Paris: Seuil.
- AP News. 2023. "Bosnian Serbs Award Putin With Medal of Honor", *AP News*, January 8. <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-putin-politics-government-milorad-dodik-7edc18d0133bbde4c5b84879c0dbe724> [Accessed 19 February 2023].

- AP News. 2023. “Bosnian Serbs award Putin with medal of honor”, *AP News*, January 8. <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-putin-politics-government-milorad-dodik-7edc18d0133bbde4c5b84879c0dbe724>.
- Badie, Bertrand. 2004. *L'Impuissance de la puissance. Essai sur les incertitudes et les espoirs des nouvelles relations internationales* [The powerlessness of power. An essay on the uncertainties and hopes of the new international relations]. Paris: Fayard.
- Badie, Bertrand. 2016. *Nous ne sommes plus seuls au monde* [We are not alone in the world anymore]. Paris: La Découverte.
- Badie, Bertrand. 2018. *Quand le Sud réinvente le monde. Essai sur la puissance de la faiblesse* [When the South reinvents the world. An essay on the power of weakness]. Paris: La Découverte.
- Badie, Bertrand. 2019. *L'Hégémonie contestée. Les Nouvelles Formes de domination internationale* [Hegemony contested. The new forms of international domination]. Paris: Odile Jacob.
- Balazs, Adam Bence. 2022. “The Western Balkans: A European Story. Variations on Proximity and Neighbourhood”, *Communications*, Geneva Graduate Institute, May 27. <https://www.graduateinstitute.ch/communications/news/western-balkans-european-story>
- Balazs, Adam Bence. 2023. “The Missing Scale: Eastern Europe in Hungary’s Geostrategic Representations”, *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political. OnlineFirst*, June 23. <https://journals.sagepub.com/eprint/FHUZAMTGA44MWP6ACP4D/full>
- Balkan Insight. 2021. “Disputed Non-Paper is Stirring Dangerous Dreams in the Balkans”, *Balkan Insight*, April 21. <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/04/21/disputed-non-paper-is-stirring-dangerous-dreams-in-the-balkans/>
- Balogh, Péter. 2022. Clashing Geopolitical self-images? The strange co-existence of Christian Bulwark and Eurasianism (Turanism) in Hungary. *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 63(6): 726–752.
- Bensimon, Cyril. 2019. “La zone des « trois frontières », point brûlant de la guerre au Sahel” [The region of the three borders, a burning point in the Sahel war], *Le Monde*, November 27. https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/11/27/la-zone-des-trois-frontieres-point-brulant-de-la-guerre-au-sahel_6020752_3212.html
- Boniface, Pascal, and Védérine, Hubert. 2020. *Atlas géopolitique du monde global: 100 cartes pour comprendre un monde chaotique* [Geopolitical atlas of the global world: 100 maps to understand a chaotic world]. Paris: Armand Colin/Fayard.

- Borger, Julian. 2014. "Barack Obama: Russia is a regional power showing weakness over Ukraine", *The Guardian*, March 25. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/25/barack-obama-russia-regional-power-ukraine-weakness>
- Braudel, Fernand. 1990 [1949]. *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* [The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world in the time of Philip II]. Vol. 1-3. Paris: Armand Colin.
- Buda, Péter. 2022. "Vége az egypólusú világrendnek, vagy ez csupán illúzió?" [Is the unipolar world order over, or is this just an illusion?], *Szeged.hu*, November 15. <<https://szeged.hu/cikk/vege-az-egypolusu-vilagrendnek-vagy-ez-csupan-illuzio-buda-peter-szegedi-eloadasa>>
- Bytyci, Fatos, and Teofilovski, Ognen. 2022. "North Macedonia votes to end dispute with Bulgaria, clears way for EU talks", *Reuters*, July 17. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/n-macedonia-votes-resolve-dispute-with-bulgaria-clears-way-eu-talks-2022-07-16/>
- Chastand, Jean-Baptiste. 2022. "In Croatia, the new grandiose Peljesac Bridge will isolate Bosnia a little more", *Le Monde*, July 10. https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2022/07/10/in-croatia-the-new-grandiose-peljesac-bridge-will-isolate-bosnia-a-little-more_5989610_4.html
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Guattari, Félix. 1980. *Mille plateaux* [Thousand plateaus]. Paris : Minuit.
- Devin, Guillaume. 1995. Norbert Elias et l'analyse des relations internationales [Norbert Elias and the analysis of international relations]. *Revue française de science politique*, 45 (2): 305-327.
- Duerksen, Mark. 2022. "Russian Disinformation Strategies in Africa". Strategic Multilayer Assessment. *Africa Center for Strategic Studies*, August 30.
- Elias, Norbert. 2000 [1939]. *The Civilizing Process. Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell.
- Fassin, Didier. 2010. *La Raison humanitaire* [Humanitarian reason]. Paris: Seuil.
- Fukuyama, Francis. 1989. The End of History? *The National Interest*, Summer 1989(16): 3-18.
- Hang. 2021. "Leghűbb szövetségesének is kellemetlen lett Orbán" [Orbán has become a burden for his closest ally], *Magyar Hang*, July 10. <https://hang.hu/hataron-tul/leghubb-szovetsegesenek-is-kellemetlen-lett-orban-127845>
- Hardy, Roger. 2018 [2016]. *The Poisoned Well. Empire and its Legacy in the Middle East*. London: Hurst & Company.

- Hartog, François. 2020. *Chronos: The West Confronts Time*. Translated by S.R. Gilbert. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Heikal, Mohamed Hassanein. 1973 [1972]. *Nasser. Les documents du Caire* [Nasser. The Cairo documents]. Paris: J'ai lu.
- Hobsbawm, Eric J. 2012 [1990]. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ikenberry, John. 2012. *Liberal Leviathan. The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Inotai, András. 2023. "Mentális és erkölcsi szenny halmozódott fel" [Mental and moral trash has been accumulated], *Magyar Hang*, June 23. <https://hang.hu/komporszag/inotai-andras-mentalis-es-erkolcsi-szenny-halmazodott-fel-komporszag-155508>
- Iser, Mattias. 2015. "Recognition between states?" In: *Recognition in International Relations. Rethinking a Political Concept in a Global Context*, edited by Christopher Daase, Caroline Fehl, Anna Geis, and Georgios Kolliarakis, 27-45. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kayali, Laura, and Caulcutt, Clea. 2023. "How Moscow chased France out of Africa", *Politico*, February 23. <https://www.politico.eu/article/france-africa-russia-emmanuel-macron-vladimir-putin-mali-central-african-republic-burkina-faso/>
- Kovács, Gábor. 2022. "Az Orbán-kormány pikáns ügyleteket bonyolít a Balkánon" [The Orbán government's spicy business in the Balkans]. *Hvg.hu*, December 27. https://hvg.hu/gazdasag/20221227_Az_Orban_kormany_Balkan
- Le Cam, Morgane. 2022. "Le Mali pousse la France vers la sortie" [Mali pushes France towards the exit], *Le Monde*, February 1. https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2022/02/01/le-mali-pousse-la-france-vers-la-sortie_6111828_3212.html
- Le Goff, Jacques. 2013. *Faut-il vraiment découper l'Histoire en tranches?* [Do we really have to slice up History?] Paris: Seuil.
- Luša, Đana, and Picula, Boško. 2022. "Europeanization and/or Euro-Unionization? The Croatian Model in the Western Balkans". In: *The Europeanization of Montenegro. A Western Balkan Country and its Neighbourhood in Europe and the Global World*, edited by Adam Bence Balazs, 97-130, Baden Baden: Nomos.
- Mahbubani, Kishore. 2018. *Has the West Lost it? A Provocation*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Nádasdy, Ádám. 2023. "Orbán kötekedő fellépése miatt máshogy néznek a magyarokra Londonban" [Due to Orbán's provocative style, Hungarians are perceived differently in London], *HVG*, July 5. <https://hvg.hu/elet/20230705>

- _Nadasdy_Adam_Orban_kotekedo_fellepese_miatt_neznek_mashogy_a_magyarokra_Londonban
- Pape, Robert. 2005. "Soft Balancing Against the United States", *International Security* 30 (1): 7-45.
- Reményi, Péter, Pap, Tibor and Pap, Norbert, (2021). The Changing Room for Manoeuvre of 'Visegrad' Hungary in the Western Balkans. An Extraordinary Change in Hungarian-Serbian Relations. *Politics in Central Europe*, 2021(17): S1, 791-819.
- Shurkin, Michael. 2015. "The French way of war", *Politico*, November 18. <https://www.politico.eu/article/the-french-way-of-war/>
- Simmel, Georg. 1903. "Soziologie des Raumes" [The sociology of space], *Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung und Volkswirtschaft*, vol. 27, 27-71.
- Sloterdijk, Peter. 2011. *Bubbles. Spheres Volume 1: Microspherology*. Translated by Wieland Hoban. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).
- Sorgi, Gregorio. 2023. "EU lawmakers say Hungary is not ready for frozen EU funds", *Politico*, May 17. <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-lawmakers-say-hungary-is-not-ready-for-frozen-eu-funds/>
- Steil, Ben. 2018. *The Marshall Plan: Dawn of the Cold War*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Szabad Európa. 2021. "Muszlimellenes retorikája miatt bírálják Orbánt Boszniában" [Orbán is under criticism in Bosnia for anti-Muslim rhetorics], *Szabad Európa*, December 23. <https://www.szabadeuropa.hu/a/muszlimellenes-retorikaja-miatt-biraljak-orbant-bosznia-hercegovinaban/31623036.html>.
- Tellenne, Cédric. 2019. *Introduction à la géopolitique*. Paris: La Découverte/ Repères.
- Védrine, Hubert. 2021. *Dictionnaire amoureux de la géopolitique* [A sentimental dictionary of geopolitics]. Paris: Plon/Fayard.
- Walker, Christopher, and Ludwig, Jessica. 2017. "The Meaning of Sharp Power. How Authoritarian States Project Power", *Foreign Affairs*, November 16. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2017-11-16/meaning-sharp-power>
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. 2006. *European Universalism. The Rhetoric of Power*. New York: The New Press.
- Whatley, Mat. 2023. "Lasting peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan will reduce Russia's influence", *Foreign Policy*, May 12. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/05/12/peace-armenia-azerbaijan-russia-nagorno-karabakh/>
- Zartman, William, ed. 1995. *The Collapsed State. The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

Adam Bence BALAŽ

“MOĆ SLABOSTI”? ZAPADNI BALKAN I EVROPSKO GLOBALNO SUSEDSTVO

Apstrakt: Putinov rat u Ukrajini može da ishoduje promenom izlisanog koncepta “evropeizacije” ka realističnijem pristupu proširenju EU i njenim geostrateškim ulozima. Pre nego zbog svoje moći, Rusija se pretvara u značajnu pretnju zbog svoje slabosti. Autor ovog rada “moć slabosti” smatra ključnim konceptom u tekućoj agresiji i njenim geostrateškim posledicama. Paradoksalno je da slabost može da bude stvarni izvor moći u nesigurnim vremenima globalne transformacije. Da li je to prilika za Zapadni Balkan (ZB)? Analizirajući problematičnu evropsku integraciju Zapadnog Balkana zasnovanu na njihovim ekonomskim, demografskim i drugim (ograničenim) karakteristikama, oslanjajući se na pristup dekolonizacije, autor zaključuje da integracija u EU predstavlja urgentnost upravo zbog njihovih slabih tačaka tj. slabosti. Rusija i Kina tragaju za oslabljenim, manjim državama gde su anti-zapadna osećanja lako instrumentizovana. Zapadnobalkanski kandidati zaslužuju bolju integraciju u listu evropskih prioriteta. Nedostatak strategije EU na Zapadnom Balkanu može ukazivati na odsustvo čvrstih perspektiva za širu međunarodnu ulogu Unije. Rad istražuje pristup dekolonizacije Bertranda Badija, primenjujući ga na Zapadni Balkan, praksu Mađarske u vezi “moći slabih” i Turske, s ciljem da ilustruje da slabost ne bi trebalo posmatrati samo kao suprotnost moći, već kao sumnjiv međunarodni element od Hladnog rata nadalje.

Ključne reči: moć slabosti; Zapadni Balkan; proširenje EU; globalizacija; Bertrand Badi; dekolonizacija; imperijalno nasleđe; Mađarska; evropske perspektive.