



The Impotence of the 'Feminine' EU in the Western Balkan Crises and the Future of Its Foreign - Security Policy

Alida Tomja

Alketa Dumani

Aleksandër Moisiu University,
Durrës, Albania

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Abstract

The Western Balkan crises, including the cases of Bosnia, Srebrenica, and Kosovo, have highlighted the European Union's struggle to address the challenges posed by Serbian chauvinism and Russian interference in the region. Despite the EU's efforts, it has failed to effectively manage the crises, leading to continued instability and violence. In contrast, the United States and NATO played a critical role in resolving these conflicts and restoring peace and stability in the area. This study aims to analyze the reasons behind the EU's impotence in the Western Balkans, with a focus on the cases of Bosnia, Srebrenica, and Kosovo. Using a qualitative case study approach and a thematic analysis of primary and secondary sources, the study will identify the key factors that hindered the EU's ability to address these crises. In addition to examining past failures, the study will also explore potential solutions for policy-makers to improve the EU's foreign-security policy in the Western Balkans. Moreover, the study will emphasize the importance of collaboration between the EU, the United States, and NATO in addressing the complex challenges in this region. Overall, this study contributes to the existing literature on the Western Balkan crises and the EU's foreign-security policy. By providing a comprehensive analysis of the EU's limitations in addressing these conflicts, the study offers insights into potential avenues for improvement and collaboration in this crucial part of Europe.

Keywords: European Union, Western Balkans, Bosnia, Kosovo, Foreign - Security Policy

1. Introduction

Over the decades, the European Union has overcome alternations of excessive optimism and Euro-pessimism while, at present, it can be said that it has begun to seem lost in a new geopolitical order. These deficits can be expressed in the words of Chris Patten, a former member of the European Commission, who stated that "unlike the United States, we are not important everywhere" (Patten, 2010). Today, the European Union is at a historic crossroads, in which it is not known what direction further political integration will take and, especially, whether or not it is possible and desirable for this integration to deepen in the form of a federation, which Winston Churchill imagined in 1946 as the "United States of Europe" (EU Pioneers), a fact that legitimized many reasons to be skeptical and pessimistic about his future. The reality has shown that in military terms, the European Union could not be more than a relatively weak power. Although it cannot be denied that the EU has been successful in easing tensions in regions where nations have fought against one another for centuries, it was impotent in the Western Balkan crises, for solving the problems where the US military assistance was

needed.

The case of Bosnia, Srebrenica and especially the case of Kosovo, highlighted even more the inability of the European Union to confront Serbian chauvinism and Russian savagery in the Western Balkans, but at the same time, the role and power of the United States and NATO were needed to restore peace and stability in this problematic and important region of Europe. This study raises critical research questions regarding the EU's ability to establish an independent army outside of NATO structures to support a foreign security and defense policy in the European region: Alternatively, will the EU continue to experience the same impotence observed in its response to the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s? Will Europe achieve security, peace, and prosperity comparable to its successes in its southeast peninsula, or is there a risk that Europe itself may be Balkanized, as suggested by Fatos Tarifa in his book, "Europe, a subject for all" (Tarifa, 2021)?

This study aims to critically analyze whether the EU can implement a European foreign policy that extends beyond its current policies towards Albania, Bosnia, or Northern Macedonia. Utilizing a qualitative case study approach and thematic analysis of primary and secondary sources, this paper will investigate the key factors that have hindered the EU's ability to address crises in the Western Balkans. Specifically, this paper will examine whether the EU will ever achieve European unity, defined as political and socio-cultural cohesion adequate to act as a unified actor in the broad range of problems in the Balkan region. Alternatively, will the EU continue to operate as a limited grouping of countries with strong nationalism, divergent political cultures, and differing objectives in their foreign policies, thereby reproducing the same ineffectiveness observed in response to the Western Balkan crises.

By identifying key factors that have hindered the EU's ability to respond effectively, this study offers insights into potential avenues for improvement and collaboration in this crucial part of Europe. Ultimately, this study seeks to answer critical questions regarding the future of the EU's foreign-security policy and its ability to address complex challenges in the Western Balkans.

2. Literature Review

The writings about the European Union's involvement in the Western Balkans crises suggest that the EU has been ineffective in managing conflicts in the region, especially in Bosnia, Srebrenica, and Kosovo. Scholars have explored the reasons for this inability and examined the future of the EU's foreign-security policy in the area.

In one article from *The Economist* called "Lessons from 'The Leopard'," the author argues that Europe is becoming too complacent with its decline in power and influence. The author notes that European countries are not addressing internal issues, such as an aging population and low birth rates, which will have long-term consequences for the region's stability.

However, other scholars present more optimistic views. Andrew Moravcsik's article "Europe: The Quiet Superpower" argues that the EU has significant soft power capabilities, allowing it to influence global norms and institutions. Similarly, John McCormick's book "The European Superpower" suggests that the EU has the potential to become a true superpower with a strong economy and military capabilities, but it must first overcome its internal divisions and develop a cohesive foreign policy.

Chris Patten's article "What is Europe to Do?" raises concerns about the EU's foreign policy, arguing that it lacks a coherent strategy and is too cautious in its approach to conflicts. He suggests that the EU must be more proactive in addressing global challenges such as climate change and terrorism and focus on promoting its values and interests on the global stage.

Fatos Tarifa's books "Pamundësia e Projektit European" and "EUropa, një subjekt për të gjithë" both focus on the challenges facing the EU and its potential to become a unified and effective global actor. Tarifa argues that the EU must address its internal divisions and develop a more cohesive foreign policy to achieve this goal.

In an article by Daniel Everts, he examines the EU's response to the conflict in Bosnia and identifies various factors that contributed to the EU's lack of preparedness and effectiveness in dealing with the crisis. Everts argues that the EU's response was hindered by institutional and decision-making difficulties, as well as a lack of consensus among member states on the appropriate response to the conflict.

Finally, the EU Pioneers document "Winston Churchill: calling for a United States of Europe" highlights Churchill's early support for European integration and the formation of a unified European state. The document suggests that Churchill's vision for Europe could serve as a blueprint for a more united and powerful EU.

Overall, the literature suggests that the EU has struggled to effectively manage conflicts in the Western Balkans due to a lack of a coherent foreign policy strategy, internal divisions, and differing political cultures among member states.

The role of the United States and NATO in resolving conflicts in the region is also important to consider.

3. Methodology

The methodology utilized for this paper entails a qualitative research approach that involves critically analyzing existing literature on the role of the European Union in the Balkans. A range of sources including academic articles, books, and reports from international organizations were examined to answer research questions related to the EU's ability to achieve unity in the Balkan region, implement successful foreign policy, and mobilize an army outside NATO structures.

A critical analysis approach was employed to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the EU's actions in the Balkans, and to identify the factors that have contributed to the EU's successes or failures. In addition, the paper employs case studies of Bosnia, Srebrenica, and Kosovo to provide a comparative analysis of the EU's actions in the Balkans and to draw conclusions about the EU's ability to achieve unity and implement successful foreign policies in conflict-ridden regions.

Overall, the methodology used in this paper aims to provide a comprehensive and objective analysis of the European Union's past and current role in the Balkans, while also identifying potential areas for future research.

4. Analyzing the Bosnian Case: Causes of the EU's Failure

The conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the 1990s was a complex and brutal conflict that lasted for several years, resulting in the displacement of millions of people and thousands of deaths. It was part of the wider disintegration of Yugoslavia, which had been a multi-ethnic, socialist federation in the heart of the Balkans until the early 1990s. The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina began in 1992, following the country's declaration of independence from Yugoslavia. The conflict pitted three main ethnic groups against each other: Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), Croats, and Serbs. The Serbs, who were the largest of the three groups and had a significant presence in the country, were opposed to Bosnian independence and sought to create a new Serbian state on Bosnian territory (Burg, S., & Shoup, P. 2015).

One of the most tragic events of the conflict was the Srebrenica massacre in July 1995, in which over 8,000 Bosniak men and boys were systematically killed by Bosnian Serb forces (Sells, M. A. 1997). The EU had established a "safe area" in Srebrenica and had promised to protect the population, but it failed to prevent the massacre. As the conflict escalated, there were calls from some European leaders for a European solution to the crisis. However, the European Union (EU) and its member states were ill-prepared to intervene decisively, and the conflict continued to rage on.

The failure of the European Union (EU) to effectively resolve the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina and prevent the Srebrenica massacre can be attributed to a range of factors. These include:

1. **Limited experience in managing international conflicts:** At the time of the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EU had limited experience in managing international conflicts (Tocci, N. 2004). The EU was formed primarily as an economic union, and its member states were not prepared for the kind of military and humanitarian intervention required to resolve the conflict.
2. **Institutional constraints:** The EU faced institutional constraints in terms of decision-making processes, which were often slow and bureaucratic. The EU also lacked a common foreign and security policy, which made it difficult to coordinate member states' responses to the crisis.
3. **Lack of consensus among member states:** There was a lack of consensus among EU member states on how to respond to the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Some member states favored diplomatic solutions, while others favored military intervention⁵. This lack of consensus made it difficult for the EU to take decisive action.
4. **Inability to use military force:** Many EU member states were reluctant to use military force in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This was partly due to the memory of World War II, which made some member states hesitant to use military force in Europe again; and partly as a consequence of limited military capabilities of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) (Matlary, J. H. 2002). The ESDP lacked the necessary resources and logistical support to carry out a military intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

⁵ There were several EU member states that favored diplomatic solutions to the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Among them were countries like Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium, which advocated for diplomatic and economic pressure to be exerted on the warring parties to reach a peaceful settlement. Other countries, such as France and the UK, initially favored military intervention as a way to stop the conflict, but later shifted their position towards a diplomatic approach. However, there was no consensus among the member states, which made it difficult for the EU to take a coherent and effective approach to the crisis.

5. **Dependence on the United States:** The EU was heavily dependent on the United States for military and logistical support in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The EU lacked the military capabilities to intervene effectively in the conflict and relied heavily on the United States for military assistance. The United States was more willing to intervene in the conflict and had greater military capabilities to do so. In 1995, the Clinton administration decided to intervene using NATO forces to launch airstrikes against Bosnian Serb positions (Daalder, I. H. 2000), which helped to bring an end to the war and pave the way for a peace agreement that was signed in Dayton, Ohio, later that year.
6. **Domestic politics:** Domestic politics in some EU member states also played a role in the failure to resolve the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Some member states were reluctant to intervene in the conflict due to concerns about public opinion and potential backlash from their own populations.
7. **Historical tensions:** The conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina was fueled by historical tensions between ethnic groups. Some EU member states were hesitant to intervene in what they saw as a domestic issue and believed that the conflict should be resolved by the parties involved.

Overall, the EU's failure to resolve the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina and prevent the Srebrenica massacre was a result of a combination of factors, including institutional constraints, lack of consensus among member states, dependence on the United States, and domestic politics. The crisis highlighted the need for greater coordination and cooperation among EU member states in the areas of foreign and security policy, as well as the need for a more effective crisis management mechanism within the EU.

5. Analyzing the Kosovo Case: Causes of the EU's Failure

The conflict in Kosovo during the late 1990s was marked by brutal acts against ethnic Albanians by Serbian forces, including mass killings and forced deportations (Mertus, Julie A. 1999). Despite international efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement, the conflict escalated and ultimately led to NATO's intervention in 1999, which forced Serbia to withdraw its forces from Kosovo. However, the European Union's role in resolving the Kosovo conflict was limited and fraught with challenges.

After examining the case, it became clear that there were several factors that led to the EU's failure to effectively address the genocide in Kosovo:

1. **Lack of consensus among member states:** Similar to the Bosnia case, there was a lack of consensus among EU member states on how to respond to the Kosovo crisis. Some member states favored a diplomatic approach, while others believed that military intervention was necessary to prevent further atrocities⁶.
2. **Limited military capabilities:** The EU had limited military capabilities at the time, which made it difficult to mount an effective military response to the genocide in Kosovo. The EU had to rely on NATO to carry out military operations, which meant that the EU had limited control over the intervention.
3. **Institutional constraints:** The EU faced institutional constraints that limited its ability to take decisive action. For example, the EU had to work within the framework of the United Nations, which often led to delays and bureaucratic hurdles. As stated by Vachudova (2005), the EU faced challenges in its efforts to address the Kosovo crisis due to the necessity of operating within the confines of international law and the United Nations, which frequently resulted in bureaucratic hurdles and impeded the ability to take timely and effective action.
4. **Diplomatic failures:** The EU's efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement between Serbia and Kosovo failed, which further complicated the situation. The EU's envoy to Kosovo, Wolfgang Petritsch⁷, attempted to broker a

⁶ After examining the Kosovo crisis, it became clear that, similar to the case of Bosnia, there was a lack of consensus among EU member states on how to respond to the escalating conflict. Some member states, such as Germany and the United Kingdom, favored a more assertive approach involving military intervention to prevent further atrocities against ethnic Albanians by Serbian forces. On the other hand, other member states, such as Italy and Spain, advocated for a diplomatic solution to the crisis, emphasizing the importance of negotiation and dialogue between the conflicting parties. This lack of a unified stance on the part of the EU contributed to a delay in taking effective action to address the genocide in Kosovo, allowing the violence and bloodshed to continue for several years before NATO intervention finally brought the conflict to an end.

⁷ Wolfgang Petritsch was the international community's special envoy for Kosovo from 1999 to 2001. During this time, he played a key role in negotiating the Kumanovo Agreement, which brought an end to the Kosovo War and paved the way for the establishment of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Petritsch also oversaw the drafting and adoption of Kosovo's first constitution in 2001.

peace agreement, but his efforts were ultimately unsuccessful.

5. **EU and US Different Perspectives:** The EU was not the only international actor involved in the Kosovo conflict. The United States played a significant role in the conflict, and its interests often diverged from those of the EU (Holbrooke, Richard. 1999). This created additional challenges for the EU and made it difficult to take a cohesive and effective approach to resolving the conflict. The US approach to the conflict was often at odds with that of the EU, which was focused on finding a diplomatic solution and avoiding military action. The US prioritized the use of force and was more willing to take risks in pursuit of its objectives. This created tensions between the US and the EU and made it difficult for the EU to present a united front in negotiations with Serbia and the Kosovo Liberation Army.

Despite these challenges, the US played a significant role in ending the conflict by exerting pressure on Serbia to withdraw its forces from Kosovo and by supporting the establishment of an international administration in the territory. However, the US involvement also had long-term consequences, including the emergence of a de facto independent state of Kosovo, which is not recognized by Serbia and some other countries, and ongoing political tensions in the region.

6. Conclusions

Based on the analysis presented, it can be concluded that:

- The European Union has faced significant challenges in its efforts to establish itself as a strong actor in foreign and security policy. Despite its economic and financial power, the EU has struggled to achieve the degree of unity necessary to effectively address crises and conflicts within its own borders.
- Furthermore, the lack of consensus among member states on matters of foreign and security policy has resulted in a significant military capacity deficit, leaving the EU reliant on the United States for defense and strategic direction.
- The study also highlights the significant constraints faced by the EU in terms of democratic legitimacy and effectiveness. These limitations have hindered efforts to produce a consolidated Federal Europe, and the EU has been unable to operate as a single state in the form of the United States of Europe.
- In light of these challenges, it is unlikely that the EU will be able to transfer sovereignty in the field of foreign policy, defense, and security to a non-national authority in the near future. This means that the EU will continue to require the support and guidance of the United States in matters of global importance.

In conclusion, while the EU may be a powerful economic and financial actor on the world stage, its limitations in terms of unity, democratic legitimacy, and military capacity suggest that it will continue to rely on the United States for strategic direction and defense.

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