

## Security of the Balkans and 16+1 Initiative

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### Abstract

The New Silk Road initiative represents a very important trade and cultural communication line connecting the two ends of Eurasian continent - PR China and Europe. This initiative concern various aspects - political, economic and cultural as well as the security aspect. Balkans security architecture has been significantly transformed over the last 20 years, but it is still challenging. This paper analyzes a local security challenges and threats in the Balkans that may endanger the New Silk Road. Balkan security identity is complex category and understanding of local security conditions is necessary condition for the functioning of the Silk Road in this part of Europe. Through the Silk Road China gets a new role in the Balkans, which this paper is dedicated to mention. At the same time the New Silk Road could bring a new security threats in the Balkans.

**Key words:** New Silk Road, 16+1 initiative, security of the Balkans, Balkan security identity, security threats

## 1. Introduction

The goal of „One belt, one road“ project is the strengthening of political, economic, monetary and cultural ties between China, Central Asia and Europe. The realization of this project includes political, economic, trade and cultural elements. The integral part of this project is 16+1 initiative that gather states from Central and East Europe, including Balkans countries.

During the realization of 16+1 initiative, China is going to confront to many challenges from different areas. The most important questions of which will depend on the ultimate scope of these initiative will arise in the sphere of security. The initiative goes through many areas burdened by political turmoil, ethnic conflicts, underdevelopment, and events in those areas will directly be reflected on success of the initiative. One of those problematic places is the Balkans, which is marked as a particularly neuralgic area with frequent political turmoil and crisis.

The Balkans is characterized by different phenomena: political fragmentation, economic decline, the proliferation of weak states and the growth of organized crime. Also, the Balkans is an excellent example of the idea that security is indivisible, because instability in one country often cause instability in the whole region. For this reason, the Balkans is considered as one of the most vulnerable points along the Chinese initiative.

The assessment of security challenges, risks and threats which have the potential to jeopardize the "New Silk Road", and 16+1 initiative as its integral part, include: identification of security challenges, risks and threats, analysis of Balkan security identity, as well as the assessment of changes that may occur as a result of implementing the Chinese initiatives.

With a good understanding of the Balkans security identity and the impact on its positive development, we can improve the security of the Balkans, which will be directly reflected on the security China's 16+1 initiative in this part of the world.

## 2. Security identity

For the analysis of the Balkans security constellation, we can use different theoretical approaches. Extending of the security concept has renewed interest for

culture and identity issues in security studies. That is why the analytical concept of security identity is particularly interesting, as it represents a comprehensive approach through which we can explore different aspects of the security of the observed phenomena. The security identity, as part of a collective identity, in focus of scientific research puts not only a "traditional" understanding of security based on material factors that determine the existence of the state, but also the constructivist approach. Constructivists believe in the importance of identity in construction of security. Actors define their interests during the evaluation of the situation. In the constructivist approach, the recognition of the importance of identity for security leads to a more general assumption: that the immaterial and ideational factors are essential to the development and practice of security in global policy (Ćurčić, 2014:11). It is important to explain how, not why, actors educate and modify their identity and how do they understand the world, or in which way they define their interests in the field of security.

Security identity represents an important starting point in the analysis of contemporary reality. Foreign policy is linked to the construction of identity, since identity is always being formed by drawing clear boundaries between 'Us' and 'Other'. Feeling in danger of external threat promotes a shared identity and homogenization of social group.

The concept of security identity implies that identity construction is influenced by certain security settings. It is a kind of collective identity that is based on relevant responses the actors (group, society, state) makes in relations to its internal and external security environment (Vorotnyuk, 2013:109). Vorotnyuk considers that the key notions to determine security identity are 'image', 'role' and 'discourse' - attributes that actors possess and assign to themselves in relations to other actors. Rieker also believes that the core of the concept of security identity is security discourse. According to him, the nation-state security identity can be identified by uncovering the dominant security discourse undertaken by the political leadership in a given nation-state. By dominant discourse Rieker means the general understanding of security shared by the majority of the political elites at a given point in time (Rieker, 2006: 9). This approach is too 'state-centric oriented', because there are other security actors than states. But we can agree that establishing a dominant security discourse contributes to the understanding of security identity, although security identity is not limited to it.

With further operationalization of the term security identity we find that, when we talk about security identity of a community, state, region or other entity, the main

task is to recognize the leading security challenges, risks and threats, as well as the capacity of the analyzed collectives to face with threat, or to avoid them, or find other models to respond to the security challenges. Security identity of each region is composed of specific security problems, which make it different from other regions that have the same or a dissimilar type of security problems. However, the core of security identity doesn't pose a security problems, which in the era of globalization become also global, but the ways in which each community responds to security challenges, risks and threats (Dragišić, 2013:144).

Thus, the security identity of an entity is made by the totality of security challenges, risks and threats that jeopardize the a given entity, on the one hand, and capacities with whom entity can provide a response to perceived security challenges, risks and threats, on the other hand. An essential element of the security identity is the social perception of security. That is a perception of members of social groups on their own security, and the degree of recognition of certain types of endangerment as a real threats. Also, the security identity includes perceptions of members of social groups on the scope and quality of the resources that are necessary to confront to threats and protect them. In this way, by using security identity as an analytical concept, we can understand why is society inclined to some threats see as primary, while others are qualified as less important/dangerous. As part of the collective identity, security identity affects the formation and upgrade the other subgroups of collective identity, such as national, ethnic, cultural, religious identity.

There is an imperative that the concept of security identity should be included in security studies for several reasons:

1. The security identity is not the same as state of security.

The state of security of an entity is defined as a synthetic conclusion on the state and nature of the security phenomena, that evaluates the totality of threats that endanger a given entity in the analyzed period, and assessment of available capacity to provide an adequate response to individual forms of threat. The state of security refers to the presence/absence of a certain threat at given moment. Giving an answer to this threat, whether it is about a social, natural and technical-technological processes, requires appropriate, timely, systematic and continuous guidance of security activities in order to eliminate negative security phenomena. Those activities should be applied from the moment when they are registered (when they are securitized, or when there is a potential for transformation this challenge into a threat, or if increase the frequency

or impact of a risk). Social structure must possess the power of adaptation to the security threat through institutional and organizational changes. The state of security shall be determined by applying the method for risk assessments. Adopting the conclusions of the state of security assessment represents a synthesis of all security problems and the definition of security indicators. The evaluation of the state of security include the assessment of all working parts of the security system (Milosavljević, 2012:148). Security identity of an entity include previous state of security, current state of security and prediction of developments of state of security in the future. However, in addition to the state of security, security identity include the social perception of the security by members of a given entity.

## 2. Security identity is not the same as the security policy.

Security policy, in the narrow sense, is the sum of all measures, activities and procedures intended for the establishment and functioning of the security system (Keković, 2009:127). The aim of security policy is to create mechanisms and means for providing internal and external security of society. One of the basic constituents of the security policy are security interests. Security Strategy, as a form of strategic security assessments, is shaping ways, forms and methods of achieving security. In analysis, the starting point of creating the security strategy is research on the previous security threats and answers that are given to them. The current state of security of analyzed entities is the framework for taking operational security measures, and it is an essential element of strategic planning. Dominantly, strategies are oriented towards the future, they represent a landmark for all security stakeholders in one entity, but they are also a means by which an organization communicates with the environment (Mintzebrg, 2000). The goal of security strategy is to provide the survival of a given entity, through the implementation of internal and external security, and by giving effective answer to security challenges, risks and threats. Security identity, as we have noted, assume the capacity which an entity can use to respond on current challenges, risks and threats. This is predominantly related to the available political, social, economic and security mechanisms which society has for responding to security challenges, risks and threats. In addition, the security identity is defined by the particular political culture and tradition - in the existence of stable and functional community and government institutions and their mechanisms for solving social conflicts (Dragišić, 2013:144). Therefore, an important component of the security identity is the perception which society has on the security of an entity, ie the level of recognition of some threat as a

real danger. For this reason, understanding of the security identity represents the starting point for the development of security strategies. As Rieker noticed, a stable and durable change in security policy, depends on a change in security identity (Rieker, 2006:9). For this reason, it is necessary to influence the positive development of security identity by increasing the capacity for reducing security threats. It is possible to increase capacity through following activities: increasing military, intelligence and security capabilities, creating dissuasive mechanisms, improving methods for peaceful resolving conflicts etc. At the same time, there is necessity for monitoring and analyzing changes in the social perception of security from the members of that entities. In this way the security identity can affect on positive change in the security policy of a given entity.

### **3. The entrance of China into Europe**

China become interested in Balkans during the Cold War, when she started building strategic friendship with comunist countries: first with Albalia, later with Yugoslavia and Romania. After the dramatic political changes in the region that have begun with the replacement of Ceaucescu regime in Romania and culminated with violent breaking up the Yugoslavia, Beijing remained outside of developments in Balkans. The realization of the project "One belt, one road", ie the 16+1 initiative, as an infrastructure connection among Europa and Asia, once again put Balkans in focus of China's interests.

China's President Xi Jinping has made the policy of „New Silk Road by Land and Sea“, which connect China with the West, a key part of China's international relations. On 7 Semptember 2013, President Xi proposed to bild a „Silk Road Economic Belt“ during his speech at the Kazakhstan' Nazarbayev University. On 3 October 2013, he proposed to bild a „21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road“ during his speech at the Indonesian House of Representatives (Nolan, 2016:8). “New Silk Road” will begin in Xi'an in central China before stretching west through Lanzhou (Gansu province), Urumqi (Xinjiang), and Khorgas (Xinjiang), which is near the border with Kazakhstan. The Silk Road then runs southwest from Central Asia to northern Iran before swinging west through Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. From Istanbul, the Silk Road crosses the Bosphorus Strait and heads northwest through Europe, including Bulgaria, Romania, the Czech Republic, and

Germany. Reaching Duisburg in Germany, it swings north to Rotterdam in the Netherlands. From Rotterdam, the path runs south to Venice, Italy-where it meets up with the equally ambitious Maritime Silk Road. The Maritime Silk Road will begin in Quanzhou in Fujian province, and also hit Guangzhou (Guangdong province), Beihai (Guangxi), and Haikou (Hainan) before heading south to the Malacca Strait. From Kuala Lumpur, the Maritime Silk Road heads to Kolkata, India then crosses the rest of the Indian Ocean to Nairobi, Kenya. From Nairobi, it goes north around the Horn of Africa and moves through the Red Sea into the Mediterranean, with a stop in Athens before meeting the land-based Silk Road in Venice (Tiezzi, 2014). In this way, these two roads should include Europe, Asia and Africa, along with all seas nearby.

Through investment in infrastructure and by creating networks of ports, logistics centers, roads and railways, China wants to create a favorable conditions for the diversification of China's freight transport and energy, expanding market, to distribute products and improve trade between East and West. In this way, Beijing accomplishes its basic national interests - increases energy security, opens the market for Chinese construction companies and ensures food security for 1.3 billion Chinese. On the other hand, Balkans states get funds for modernizing their energy systems, infrastructure, shipping and transportation (Arežina, 2015:172). 16+1 initiative reflects China's need to ensure stable partnership with the Central and Eastern Europe countries, through a number of joint projects, in order to achieve two goals: long-term and sustainable presence of China in the European market and investing in the economy of the countries affected by the economic crisis.

China's entry into Europe via the Balkans and Central European countries represent a great historical novelty, because China emerges as a non-European country with a potentially large impact on developments in Europe. Large Chinese investments will affect the economic recovery of this countries, but also it will help in the establishment of China's political influence. The future of 16+1 initiative and the destiny "One belt, one road" will be determined by reaction of the US on the growth of Chinese influence in Europe, but also by an attitude that Germany, France, Great Britain and other European countries will have on this point.

The United States is, convincingly, the most powerful country in economic, political and military terms and successfully project soft power to Europe. China is the second most powerful country in the world with the fastest growing economy. The biggest trade exchange is taking place between the US and China, which indicates a

significant association between the two most powerful country in the modern world. Over the last eight years, Chinese President Xi Jinping (and his predecessor, Hu Jintao) and U.S. President Barack Obama managed to create momentum for bilateral ties that has withstood the impact of the 2008 international financial as well as U.S. domestic politics. The two countries managed to build and maintain "new type major country relations," which has brought tangible results for both sides. The two leaders made a point to meet regularly via bilateral visits as well as regional and international summits. These talks allowed them to make strategic and political decisions on some tough issues. As of January, the two countries have established 94 bilateral dialogue mechanisms, facilitating conditions for both sides to address tough issues through dialogue and negotiations (Youfa, 2017). The future of US-China relation depends on what policy will the Trump administration pursue. The current development of China and the United States relations gives grounds for optimism about the success of the 16+1 initiative, because China shows no interest to confront the existing policies of the countries in the region, nor to impose them her own political views.

Chinese investment of 10 billion dollars, which is provided for the implementation of projects, is going to help the economically weakest region of Europe to strengthen its economy and contribute to the stability of the whole of Europe. At this level, the main security challenge can be fear of a strong China and doubts about the sincerity of China's intentions in Europe (Dragišić, 2017).

„The New Silk Road“ represents infrastructure link between China and European countries, which will provide a shorter time and faster transportation of goods. Also it will allow distribution, market and technological positioning of Chinese companies on the European continent. For this reason, a special group of global security threats that can compromise Chinese projects originate from large multinational companies. Those companies may see the development of projects in the framework of the "New Silk Road" as serious competition and sources of threat to their interests. The power of large corporations shouldn't be underestimated, because they have large capital and a number of legal and illegal means to oppose, and even eliminate, competition. The risk of negative impacts can be increased by possible merger of multinational companies with organized crime groups, terrorist organizations, or with countries which China's projects see as an instrument of its own geopolitical marginalization.

#### 4. 16+1 Initiative and the Balkans

The Balkans, in terms of security, is one of the most sensitive areas along 16+1 initiative. All Balkan countries, except Greece and Turkey, are members of the 16+1 initiative. Greece participated at the Summit in Suzhou as observers, which makes Turkey the only Balkans country that is out of this process. Turkey, although is not a part of this initiative, has significant bilateral relationships with China and many important roads in the framework of "One belt, one road" passes through Turkish territory, or a territory and province of countries in Central Asia which are under strong Turkish influence. It means that each security assessment of the Chinese initiative needs to take into consideration Turkey as an important factor of (in) stability (Dragišić, 2017). China clearly shows desire to improve relations with Balkan states, which have been proven with significant investments and intensification of trade and other relations with countries in the region.

It was necessary to invest capital in completing existing projects and the launch of new highways, railways and related facilities of capital importance in order to Balkan become well integrated and transport efficient area. In addition to investment in transport infrastructure, a lot of China's capital flows into the energy sector, especially in the construction of power plants and the sector of 'green energy'.

When it comes to **Serbia**, three Chinese projects are in progress. Serbian and Chinese officials signed in December 2014 a loan agreement for the second phase of a renovation process at 'Kostolac' thermal power plant complex, which includes the construction of a new 350MW unit and increase of capacity of the adjacent open-pit coal mine 'Drmno'. Chinese companies have already constructed the 'Mihailo Pupin' Bridge over the Danube River, in Belgrade, plus 21 km of access highway. China Shandong International Economic & Technical Cooperation Group Ltd.-SIETC signed with the Serbian government contract to build a section of road on Corridor 11. This is a section from Obrenovac to Ub and from Lajkovac to Ljig and 'Morava Corridor' from Pojate to Preljina. These sections of road are part of the future highway from Belgrade to the Montenegrin border, as well as part of Corridor 11 which will stretch from a Timisoara via Belgrade to the Montenegrin city of Bar on the Adriatic coast. In addition to these projects in Serbia is opened Chinese trade center "Dragon", the first wholesale center in the Western Balkans. In early 2012 JP EPS signed with Canadian-Chinese consortium Lavalin and CNPEC a Memorandum of understanding on the development of

the project reversible hydropower plants "Bistrica" on Lim River. In July 2013 Chinese company Huawei and the Serbian Railways signed an agreement to modernize the entire telecommunications of Serbian Railways. In June 2015 Everrest Production Company opened a factory in Ruma for the production of memory foam mattresses and pillows (Arežina, 2015:176-177).

Zeijanf Chinese provinces has signed an Agreement with **Bulgaria** on the establishment of a joint Bulgarian-Chinese industrial zone in Bozhurishte near Sofia. In October 2009 China's largest metal trader, China Minmetals Corporation, signed the 800 million dollar contract with Aurubis Bulgaria, one of the biggest copper smelter in Europe. At the beginning of 2010, Chinese company Polar Photo-voltaics and Wiscom proposed to build a solar plant in Ihtamanu, near Sofia. Great Wall Motor, a Chinese car manufacturer, signed an agreement with Litex Motors worth 80 million Euros in November 2009 (Szcudlik-Tatar, 2010:358). Production in China's car factory Great Wall Motors-Litex Motors in Bahovici started in February 2013. Lifan Group Group opened a factory for assembling air conditioners, and Huawei and ZTE were given shares in the Bulgarian telecommunications market. China Luoyang Float Glass group started negotiating on the production of glass with Visa Glas. China's National Nuclear Corporation has expressed interest to build a new reactor of 1000MW nuclear power plant at Kozloduy. It has been given priority to Chinese companies in realization of projects for the second nuclear reactor power plant "Belane" (Arežina, 2015:178).

For many years, China is the largest Asian trade partner of **Romania**, with a significant volume of trade in which China invested mostly private capital. There are more than 8 thousand Chinese companies in Romania (Szcudlik-Tatar, 2010:357). In May 2012, China Huadian Engineering Co. was selected to build a 500MW coal-fired plant worth €1 billion at the Rovinari thermal power station. China National Electric Engineering Construction Corporation will conduct a modernization works at Romania's Mintia-Deva thermal power plant, under a contract worth about €250 million, as agreed in September 2014. The winning bidder for expansion of Tarnita-Lapustesti hydropower plants will be a Chinese company. Chian General Nuclear (CGN) is going build two new reactors at the Cernavoda nuclear power plant (Levitin et al., 2016: 11-12). Also, it is notable increasing presence of Chinese multinational companies such as Lenovo, ZTE i Huawei.

There is ongoing implementation of several projects in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**. Autoputevi Republike Srpske (RS), has signed preliminary agreement with

Chinese firm Sinohydro for the construction work for a 93km long section of a 186km long motorway linking the Entity's capital of Banja Luka with Croatia's Adriatic city of Split. In December 2014, government of the Federation of B&H signed a Memorandum of Understanding with a consortium led by China's Gezhouba Group for the construction of the 450MW unit at Tuzla thermal power plant. China Development Bank is financing construction of the Stanari thermal power plant. Also, China is financing construction thermal power plant Banovici, with capacity of 350MW (Levitin et al., 2016:9).

The interest of Chinese investors hasn't bypassed **Macedonia**. In 2010 China started with negotiation with Government of Macedonia about the project in the valley of the river Vardar, which involves the construction of 12 hydroelectric power plants. In 2011, China International Water and Electric Corporation signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the government of Macedonia about this half billion worth project, wherein 85% of the investment is provided by China Development Bank (Filijović i Kilibarda, 2013:52). The Chinese Exim Bank is providing most of the funding for two stretches on the highways linking Kicevo-Ohrid and Miladinovci-Stip (Levitin et al., 2016:11).

**Albanian** government and China's Exim Bank signed in December 2014 a Memorandum of cooperation under which Exim Bank will finance the completion of construction of Albania's Arber motorway towards FYR Macedonia and further to Bulgaria, linking the Albanian Ionian Sea coast and the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. Also, it was announced that Albania has obtained Chinese support for the development of an industrial park in coastal city of Durres (Levitin et al., 2016:11).

Chinese companies have been interested in realization of project thermal power plant Plomin C in **Croatia**, as well as for the construction of a nuclear power plant in Osijek. Beijing has also expressed interest in the port of Ploce and Rijeka, as well as for the development of railway infrastructure (Arežina, 2015:179). In mid-2017 are expected the first Chinese investments in Croatia-invest in the development of tourism in Krapinske Toplice.

In Sept 2014 China Exim Bank approved \$875 million loan to **Montenegro** for the construction of the first priority section (Podgorica - Kolasin) of the major motorway project connecting the country's port of Bar (Adriatic Sea) with its border to Serbia. China is interested in construction of hydropower plants on the rivers Moraca and Komarnica, and building the new unit at Pljevlja thermal power plant. China is also interested in construction The Blue Corridor, a project that will stretch along the entire

eastern shore of Adriatic and Ionian seas, from Trieste in Italy to Greece via Croatia, Montenegro and Albania (Levitin et al., 2016:8).

A review of projects in the Balkans shows that China invests in all Balkan countries regardless of whether with some countries have better political relations (Serbia and Romania) or does not support the politics of the State concerned (Albania regarding the attitude towards Kosovo and Metohija). China is guided by economic interests, and doesn't favor any country, which reduces the possibility of harmful effects of existing political disputes.

### **5. Security and the Balkans security identity**

The Balkans is a region with turbulent history which is marked with a number of crises, war and conflicts. When we look at the twentieth century, we notice that the only period of relative peace in this region, paradoxically, was during the Cold War. The conflicts in the Balkans tended to spill over into the rest of Europe (The First World War began in the Balkans, while in the Second World War one of the bloodiest zone was in this area). In the last decade of the twentieth century in the former Yugoslavia started fratricidal conflicts which resulted with political fragmentation, economic decline, proliferation of weak states and the growth of organized crime. The term "balkanization" is based on the perception of the Balkan security identity, and it is created to denote an endless crisis, chaos, irrationality, without a sustainable solutions for the existing conflicts and mechanisms based on real interest. Precisely, when we talk about the Balkan security identity, this region has been synonymous with crisis situations, wars, barbarism, the absence of stable and functional state, the lack of legal mechanisms and political will for peaceful resolving of conflict. It is noticeable a great influence of foreign powers on the local political leaders and chronic economic underdevelopment (Dragišić, 2013:145). Thus, the Balkans is used to describe the image of defragmentation state, ethnic conflict and rivalry forces which are fighting for control of a territory.

Today, the security of Balkans has been transformed from conflict formation, in which he was during the end of XX century, into security regime. The main security problems can be classified into two groups: classical threats and asymmetric threats. The classical security challenges involve conflicts between states or different entities within the state, so we talk about challenges that are located at the intersection of societal and political sphere, or about the ethno-territorial disputes. As the most important classical challenges stand out problems with the recognition of the status of

Kosovo and Metohija, the constitutional reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the situation in Macedonia in the context of the creation of the co-called Greater Albania. The second group of challenges are asymmetric challenges, whose stakeholders are non-state actors in the Balkans. Among the asymmetric challenges, the most important are the organized crime, terrorism and a various types of crime, ethnic and religious extremism as a consequence of bad social and economic conditions and high unemployment.

All Balkan countries except Greece, Romania, and Serbia (which proclamation of the so-called Republic of Kosovo directly threatens the national and state interests) recognized the so-called Kosovo. Old historical aspirations of Albanians to create so-called Greater Albania is the most dangerous political project that threatens the national interests of Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Greece and can directly create instability in the region. On the other hand, having in mind primarily hers national interest, China hasn't recognized the independence of the so-called Kosovo, and as a permanent member of the UN Security Council she opposes on attempt of violent and illegal secession. China doesn't agree with the establishment of a precedent in international law, because it could be reflected on the questions of Taiwan and parts of China such as Tibet or Xinjiang. Also, using that precedent, any of the 56 recognized minorities could go footsteps of unilateral action and self-proclamation. In the perception of Albanians and other ethnic groups who support the secession of Kosovo and Metohija, China can be seen as "pro-Serb oriented", and the entire 16+1 initiative can be recognized as an instrument to strengthen the position of Serbia in the Balkans. But, the fact is that China shows no aspirations to favors any country at the expense of the interests of other members of the initiative, which is proven by active Chinese projects in all Balkans countries. Therefore, we don't expect that such kind of perception of China-Serbia relations can seriously jeopardize the projects within the initiative.

Macedonia is facing with a lot of problems in the field of security: name dispute with Greece regarding the use of the name Macedonia, Bulgaria's territorial claims, but also territorial claims by Albania. Situation in Macedonia is particularly problematic because of the aspirations of Macedonian Albanians to create their own entity within the so-called Greater Albania. Existing tensions have the capacity to grow into ethnic conflict between Macedonians and Albanians, and security experts this situation see as the consequences of bad influence of international community. As a potential scenario they predict transformation of Macedonia into binational state, with the aim of creating

cantons, and at the end the federalization of Macedonia. The consequences of political turmoil can be reflected on the security situation in southern Serbia<sup>198</sup>. If the political situation doesn't consolidate it is possible to happen an escalation of violence which will affect on neighboring countries, and jeopardize the projects within the Chinese initiative.

The Balkans has been burdened by constant crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina since the end of civil war in 1995. Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the most fragile part of the Balkans, can be misused in order to jeopardize Chinese project. In that country Wahhabi movement is very active, and its members may connect with Uighur separatists from China's Xinjiang province. As the result, Bosnia and Herzegovina can be misused in the context of the Global Jihad in order to obstruct of Chinese projects. Another threat comes from a possible Russian involvement in this area. The Russian politicians believe that the initiative "One belt - one road" is detrimental to Russia's global interests, and Russia seems to be increasingly aggressive in defending its spheres of interest originating from the former Soviet empire (Brauner, 2014). For this reason, the Russian influence in Republika Srpska can be misused in the context of Russian resistance to the Chinese initiative. Also, resolving internal issues of Bosnia and Herzegovina can result with threats to the Chinese initiative. Constitutional reconstruction process moves between the demands of extreme Bosniak political circles for full centralization, and demands from Banja Luka for greater autonomy or even separation of the Republika Srpska. Such a situation could lead to new conflicts, and armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina could jeopardize the 16+1 initiative, because it would draw Serbia and Croatia into conflict (Dragišić, 2017). Great powers could exploit the political disagreements in this country as a means to stop 16+1 initiative and expel China from this part of Europe.

A specific group of security threats are made by asymmetric threats originating from the non-state actor. Among them organized crime stands out in particular. Armed conflicts in the past, the institutional weakness of the countries in the region, transition issues, system corruption caused the emergence and spread of organized crime in the region. Organized crime in the Balkans doesn't recognize neither state nor ethnic boundaries, because those who are involved in the smuggling of narcotics, prostitution

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<sup>198</sup><http://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/379410/Dragsic-Moguc-etnicki-sukob-u-Makedoniji>

and human trafficking are only interested in profit (Barišić et. Al., 2014:84). Today, organized crime represent permanent security challenge for several reasons: first of all there is a close link between organized criminal groups and groups of extreme nationalists. Also, domestic and international criminal organizations work closely and apply violence to the commission of offenses, and in each other's accounts for market dominance. In addition, at leaders of organized crime activity occurs a political aspirations, other than the pursuit of financial gain and power. Through cooperation with the political elites, organized crime have linked with state structures, improving its strategic position for the future, taking control of some parts of the state apparatus, primarily over the repressive structures (Fatić, 2005:74). Taking the most profitable industries and legalization of illegally acquired capital lead to further devastation of the economic base of the state and to corruption in all spheres of social life: civil society, educational and health institutions, political parties, religious organizations.

16+1 initiative represents a serious threat to the interests of organized crime, because the most lucrative economic activities will be placed under strict control and will be taken over by a large Chinese company in cooperation with local governments. Having in mind the political impact and international character of these groups, we can safely say that they will try, through corrupt activities and blackmail, to impede the implementation of projects under this initiative. The Chinese initiative will contribute to strengthening the institutional capacities of the Balkans countries and improving their ability to resist organized crime. If they fail to undermine this initiative, we can expect that organized criminal groups will try to redefine criminal activity in order to adapt to new circumstances. Organized crime is a social phenomenon that is constantly transforming, so we can expect that organized criminal groups even try to find a way to take benefits from initiative. Therefore, organized criminal activity, associated with the activities of the countries that oppose this initiative and large corporations, may represent a significant security problem in the future. In security assessments a special attention should be given to analysis of organized crime activity, although its capacity can't jeopardize the initiative in general.

Terrorism, as a form of asymmetric threats, is another way of the potential threat to China's initiative in the Balkans. In most of Balkans countries the Wahhabi movement is active, and fighters from this area have been recruited, trained, and some of them went to Syria and Iraq. Individuals and groups from this region may be instrumentalized to take a terrorist act against the Chinese initiatives within global

jihad. Also, a special threat comes from China's internal enemies who can estimate that the Balkans is the weakest link for endangering China's initiative. Some of China's internal enemies who conduct activities around the world are: Uighur separatists (related to the international jihadist network), Falu Gong sect (they tried to organize protests against Chinese President in Belgrade), the Chinese Catholic Church, the so-called Front of National Liberation and groups associated with Taiwan (Trifunović, 2016). These threats must be taken seriously and there is a need for coordinated operation in the monitoring of this phenomenon by states who are members of initiative. Prevention requires the exchange of intelligence between China and states who are members of initiative in the context of this threat, since holders of terrorist attack in the Balkans can be external factors, and there is a possibility of cooperation between internal and external holders

In the analysis of security challenges, risks and threats in the Balkans, challenges that come from political, economic and social spheres have a special place. Balkans countries are trying to consolidate their politics, however they are accompanied by a heavy legacy in building a modern democratic society, especially in the socio-economic sphere. The transition from the socialist to liberal democratic order and market economy, have been followed by an extensive privatization and restructuring of economy, which has led to an unprecedented level of unemployment and systemic impoverishment of whole branches of the economy. High unemployment in the Balkans countries may affect the perceptions of citizens that the initiative will threaten small businesses and bring Chinese workers in this area, which will result in a higher degree of competition in the labor market. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze and evaluate the potential subversion activity that can be undertaken with the aim of jeopardizing the initiative. Quality response to this potential threats is strengthening intelligence and security system of a countries that are members of initiatives, raising their integrity and creating conditions for high-quality and timely exchange of information.

Particular attention should be paid to the so-called situational threats that are a result of natural disasters, technical and technological disasters and accidents, which may seriously jeopardize the initiative. Tracks of new roads, railways and other infrastructure will pass through areas that were often affected by floods, earthquakes, landslides, forest fires and other natural disasters. In order to proactively work with the aim of diminishing the effects of natural disasters, it is necessary to do a risk mapping, high-quality design and construction of large infrastructure projects. In the framework

of 16+1 initiative, a special attention should be given in responding to emergency situations. As a result of sabotage, terrorist and cyber-attacks it can arise a endangering of human health and life, environmental degradation and destruction of critical infrastructure. It is very important to influence on strengthening existing and building new mechanisms for joint action in responding to emergencies between countries that are members of 16+1 Initiative.

The first step in finding ways of achieving security in the Balkans in context of Chinese initiative is identification of potential threats and holders. As a next step it is necessary to form a special working body that will deal with monitoring threats and coordinating action among members of the 16+1 Initiative. That working body should be organized through organizational units that cover specific threat. Some of necessary organizational units should be: units for emergencies, terrorism, organized crime, cyber threats, subversion, social and economic threats (Dragišić, 2017). In that way, this working body will represent an optimal response to Balkans security challenges, risks and threats in the context of the Chinese 16+1 initiative.

## **6. Conclusion**

The Chinese presence in Europe through the project "One belt - one road", ie initiative 16+1, is a historical novelty that will be reflected in a number of areas of social life - political, economic, infrastructural, cultural, and especially in the sphere of security. This initiative could potentially face with many challenges at global and regional levels. From global strategic challenges stand out those that may arise from global and regional powers who may view the initiative 16+1 as infringing on their areas of influence, driving competition rather than cooperation. The second global challenge to 16+1 initiative comes from multinational companies that realization of this project can see as a direct threat to their interests.

Each region has a specific security dynamics which create the overall image of the security in a given area. The Balkans is neuralgic area with frequent political turmoil and crisis and with a number of unresolved issues at the intersection of socio-economic sectors. Such security constellations can be directly reflected on the security of the initiative and to jeopardize its realization.

The concept of Balkan security identity represents a good starting point and high-quality analytical framework for the study of security challenges, risks and threats in the Balkans that might compromise the realization of Chinese projects. Analyzing the Balkans security identity and by understanding of its constituent elements, we can get the picture of the major security challenges, risks and threats in this area, the scope and quality of resources for countering security challenges, as well as the social perception of the security by the citizens of the Balkan states.

Events in Kosovo and Metohija, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia show that the impact of external factors on the political and security processes in the Balkans is very big. That is a significant determinant of the Balkan security identity, which must be the starting point for any analysis of the security of the region, particularly in the context of the New Silk Road. Regional and global powers can interfere in the policy, security, economy and other area at this region in order to create a conflict with a goal to stop the 16+1 initiative and expel China from this part of Europe.

Positive development of Balkan security identity is imperative because it contributes in improving security situation in the region. As the development of identity can go in both directions, it is important to proactively respond to new threats to the region. The Chinese presence in this area will bring new threats which can affect on change of the Balkans security architecture, as well as on the security identity. State member 16+1 initiative need to be prepared on this new security situation.

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