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**Inherited Structural Disadvantages or a Lack of Foreign Assistance?
The Western Balkan States between their Troublesome Past and their Uncertain
'EU Future'**

While mainstream literature and political actors from the leading world (Western) democracies in particular continue to seek the reasons for the different regional successes in post-communist democratisation and economic marketisation primarily in the impacts of structural differences inherited from the (mainly pre-communist) past, a closer comparative look at developments in the different parts of post-communist Europe reveals a more complex set of reasons for their diverse trajectories. Not denying the relevance of some historical factors, particularly some specifics of their communist legacies (Petrovic, 2013; Kitchelt, 2003; Ekiert, 1996) linked to their pre-communist socio-economic disadvantages, this paper argues that the main reason for the slower progress of the Balkan (and particularly the Western Balkan) states in post-communist transition in comparison to their counterparts in East Central Europe and the Baltics lies primarily in the different levels of received Western (particularly EU) assistance and support for conducting post-communist reforms. Especially important in this regard has been the negative impact of the changed EU approach towards further enlargement after it began feeling 'enlargement fatigue' in the aftermath of its 'mega enlargement' of 2004/07, which led to the adoption of additional and tougher accession conditions for the new candidates for EU membership from the Western Balkans.