The Aspen Institute | Germany

DEMOCRATIZATION OF POLITICAL PROCESSES AND OVERCOMING POLITICAL-IDEOLOGICAL POLARIZATION

June 14-17, 2016 | Durrës

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The mission of The Aspen Institute is to improve the quality of leadership through dialog about the values and ideals essential to meeting the challenges facing organizations and governments at all levels. Over its sixty year history, the Aspen Institute has been devoted to advancing values-based leadership – to creating a safe, neutral space in which leaders can meet in order to discuss the complex challenges facing modern societies confidentially and in depth, with respect for differing points of view, in a search for common ground.

This reader includes conference papers and proceedings of Aspen Germany's conference on "Democratization of Political Processes and Overcoming Political-Ideological Polarization" on June 14-17, 2016, Durres.

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THE ASPEN IDEA

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE GERMANY PROMOTES VALUES-BASED LEADERSHIP, CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOG AMONGST CONFLICTING PARTIES, AND EURO-ATLANTIC COOPERATION TO SUPPORT AND ENHANCE A STRONG OPEN SOCIETY.

The Aspen Idea

The Aspen Idea goes back to 1945 when Chicago businessman and philanthropist Walter Paepke (1896-1960), son of German immigrants from Mecklenburg, arrived in Aspen, a then sleepy town in the mountains of Colorado. Under the impression of the human and moral catastrophe of World War II, Paepcke dreamed of "a place where the human spirit can flourish."

Paepcke was a trustee of the University of Chicago and close friends with its president Robert Hutchins as well as with philosopher Mortimer Adler. Together they shared one vision: To create a platform for dialog for leaders, thinkers, and artists from around the globe to step away from their daily routines and reflect on what makes good leaders and a good society.

Their dream came true in 1949 when Paepcke made Aspen the site for the celebration of the 200th birthday of German poet and philosopher Johann Wolfgang von Goethe to commemorate the historic and abiding philosophical ties that America and the rest of the world had with Germany, despite the aberration of Hitler and World War II. The 20-day gathering attracted such prominent intellectuals and artists as Albert Schweitzer, Jose Ortega y Gasset, Thornton Wilder, and Arthur Rubinstein, along with members of the international press and more than 2,000 other attendees. That year, Paepcke created what is now the Aspen Institute.

Today, the vision and reach of the Institute extend far beyond its original roots. In policy programs, seminars, public events, and global leadership initiatives, the form and force of the Institute have grown to confront contemporary challenges and matters of collective concern. The Institute is based in Washington DC and has campuses in Aspen, Colorado, and on the Wye River on Maryland's Eastern Shore. It also maintains offices in New York City and has an international network of partners in Germany, France, Italy, the Czech Republic, Romania, Spain, Japan, India, and Mexico.

Aspen Germany

As the first Institute abroad, Aspen Germany was founded in 1974 in the midst of the Cold War. Its founding members included former Chancellor Willy Brandt, former High Commissioner for Germany John J. McCloy, Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, the Governing Mayor of Berlin Klaus Schütz, historian Lord Alan Bullock, the future President of West Germany Richard von Weizsäcker, sociologist and politician Ralf Dahrendorf, and publicist Marion Countess Dönhoff among others. Together they envisioned creating a symbol of transatlantic community.

Under the leadership of Shepard Stone (1974-1988), Aspen Germany's first director, the institute made a significant contribution to achieving mutual understanding between the East and West blocs during the Cold War. Aspen was one of the few places where high-ranking East bloc and West bloc representatives were willing to meet in a neutral, respectful and confidential atmosphere in order to look for solutions to the East-West conflict together.

Stone's successors extended this tradition and also focused on issues facing Southeast Europe and the Middle East. Since the early 1990s, Aspen Germany has been focusing on the developments in Southeast Europe when the Institute joined forces with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and initiated the International Commission on the Balkans, which was followed by a young leaders study group on the future of the region. Today, Aspen Germany offers different fora for regional dialog, both on the Foreign Ministers' level as well as on the Subcabinet and civil society level.

Since its inception, Aspen Germany has been enabling constructive dialog amongst conflicting parties and promoting Euro-Atlantic cooperation to support and enhance a strong open society.

Tuesday, June 14, 2016

Arrival of participants during the day

Accommodation: Palace Hotel, Rruga "Pavarësia", plazhi Apollonia, Durrës, Albania

20:00	**Reception and Welcome Dinner** **Dinner speech by Ditmir Bushati, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania** *Venue: Palace Hotel, Terrace*

Wednesday, June 15, 2016

09:00 – 09:30	**Welcoming remarks and introduction by** Rüdiger Lentz, *Executive Director, Aspen Institute Germany* Odeta Barbullushi, *Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Albania*

09:30 – 11:00   **Session I:**
The role of parliaments

Aside from their legislative function, parliaments have an oversight and a representative role in the political systems of democracies. However, in the Western Balkans, the consolidation of parliamentarianism seems to be facing numerous challenges. What is the role of parliaments in the region? Can parliaments exercise their three core functions adequately? How can the representative and oversight roles of parliaments be strengthened? What is the role of opposition? How important is the contribution of opposition parties and how can it be supported? Which role does the organizational structure of political parties play? What are the effects of the EU enlargement process on parliaments in the region and how can they be attenuated? How important is parliaments' participation in public debate and how do parliaments live up to their role?

Moderator:	Rüdiger Lentz
Introduction:	Davor Boban, *The Croatian Parliament and the Transformation of the Political System*
Comment:	Christian Petry, *Member of the German Bundestag*

11:00 – 11:30   Coffee break

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11:30 – 13:00 **Session II:**
Radicalization and political polarization

Increasing radicalization of political parties and a growing polarization of political dialog are phenomena that have occurred throughout Europe, in particular more recently. Especially in the Western Balkans, political polarization has had severe consequences and has led to political crises in most of the countries. Why is political polarization on the rise? How can it be met? How can political crises be avoided? How can opposition better find its role of a democratic opposition? How can moderate, democratic opposition be strengthened? Is there a lack of a culture of compromise? Can a general strengthening of parliament and parliamentary procedures alleviate polarization? What does this mean for the future of the EU and the countries' Euro-Atlantic integration?

Moderator: Sonja Licht

Introductions: Dorian Jano, *Persistence of Political Polarization in the Balkans*
Věra Stojarová, *Political Polarization on the Rise: Czech Republic and Beyond*

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch break

14:00 Departure to Tirana

15:00 – 17:00 **Public event organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania on "The role of the European Union in the democratic processes in the Western Balkan region"**
Venue: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

17:15 – 18:15 **Meeting with H.E. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania and Leader of the Socialist Party (tbc)**

18:30 – 19:30 **Meeting with Lulzim Basha, Leader of the Democratic Party**

20:00 **Dinner with Ilir Meta, Speaker of the Albanian Parliament and Leader of the Socialist Movement for Integration**
Venue: Xheko Imperial, Rr "Ibrahim Rugova", Nr.56/H2, 1019, Tirane, Albania

Thursday, June 16, 2016

09:00 – 10:00   **Session III:**
Ideological and programmatic differences between political parties

On the first sight, given the number of political parties, the political landscape in Western Balkan countries seems very diverse. Nonetheless, distrust in politics and disengagement from political life runs high in the entire region. How can political parties better reach people and represent them? Is there really a so often referred to lack of vision in political parties in the region? What role does ethnicity play in multi-ethnic societies regarding programmatic developments of parties? What is the impact of the EU integration process?

Moderator: Helge Tolksdorf

Introductions: Roland Gjoni, *Ethnic Politics in the Western Balkans: The State of Play and Ways Forward*
Tim Haughton, *Castles Made of Sand and Stone: Political Parties and Democracy*

10:00 – 11:00   **Session IV:**
The role of media

Freedom of media and expression has been a concern in all countries of the region, as was again highlighted by the European Commission's recent enlargement strategy. What role does media play regarding the perception of politics in public and people's participation in elections? How does the quality of media impact on people's disenchantment with politics? What is the impact of a lack of media freedom on the political landscape? How are especially opposition parties affected? What is the role of the EU and how can the EU better support these essential freedoms?

Moderator: Edith Harxhi

Introduction: Remzi Lani, *Balkan Media: A Complex and Unfinished Story*

11:00 – 11:30   Coffee break

11:30 – 12:00   **Introduction by H.E. Milena Harito, Minister for Innovation and Public Administration, on: "Efforts of the Albanian government in promoting women's political participation"**

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12:00 – 13:00   **Session V**
                        Women's political participation

While legislation promoting gender equality is largely in place throughout the region, a lack of implementation and acceptance throughout society is often criticized. What are the major challenges women in politics are facing? What role do female members of parliament play? How can gender equality in politics be better promoted? What are the chances of gender equality regarding distrust and political disengagement of society? How does the organization of political parties affect women's political participation? What role do female voters play?

Moderator: Ana Trišić-Babić

Introduction: Abdulla Azizi, *Analysis of Women's Political Participation*
                        Practice in Macedonia and How to Move Forward

13:00   Lunch

14:30   **Departure to Kruja**

15:30 – 17:30   Visit of the Castle and Ethnographic Museum

17:30 – 18:30   Visit of the Old Bazaar of Kruja

19:00   Dinner at the Hotel Panorama Kruja

Friday, June 17, 2016

Departure of participants during the day

Dritan Abazović

Nora Aliti (tbc)

Abdulla Azizi

Odeta Barbullushi

Davor Boban

Josip Brkić

Gordana Čomić

Alina Dobreva

Gledis Gjipali

Roland Gjoni

Blerina Gjylameti

Edith Harxhi

Tim Haughton

Anke Holstein

Ramadan Ilazi

Dorian Jano

Dragan Krapović

Remzi Lani

Sonja Licht

Saša Magazinović (tbc)

Jani Makraduli

Kejdi Mehmetaj

Žarko Mićin (tbc)

Vjosa Osmani

Christian Petry

Snežana Radović

Konstantin Samofalov

Senad Šepić

Věra Stojarová

Jorida Tabaku

Edita Tahiri

Helge Tolksdorf

Ana Trišić-Babić

Romana Vlahutin

The Aspen Institute Germany

Valeska Esch
Senior Program Officer

Carina Kempf
Junior Program Officer

Rüdiger Lentz
Executive Director

Ingrid Schulte
Rapporteur

PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

Dritan Abazović
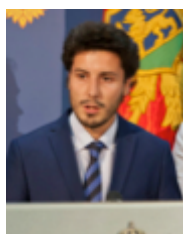
Dritan Abazović was born on 25.12.1985 in Ulcinj, Montenegro. He graduated from the Faculty of Political Sciences, Department of political science, at the University of Sarajevo, where he was awarded the "Golden Badge" and "Golden Charter" of the University. He received his Master's degree in 2008 from the Faculty of Political Sciences, Department of International Relations, at the University of Montenegro. Currently he is a doctoral candidate at the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Montenegro. Mr. Abazović is a longtime associate of non-governmental organizations in the field of human rights, the Euro-Atlantic and civic activism and has engaged in projects related to the promotion of multiculturalism in post-conflict areas of the former Yugoslavia. He was participant in several international programs, conferences and seminars. He specializes in several study programs. From 2005 to 2007 he was assistant at the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Sarajevo. In 2009, he completed the course for the Study of Peace (Peace Research) at the University of Oslo. At the same University he completed a seminar for professional development (Professional Development). 2011 he resided in the United States, the State Department IVLP program in Washington. From 2010 to 2012, he was Executive director of the Television Teuta (Ulcinj, Montenegro). From 2010 to 2012, he was Executive Director of NGO Mogul in Ulcinj. In 2010 he published his first book "Cosmopolitan culture and global justice". Since 2010, he has worked as a teacher in high school "Drita" in Ulcinj, teaching the sociology of Culture, Communication and the history of religion. In 2012 Mr. Abazović was one of the founders of a political party Positive Montenegro. Since 2012, he has been the youngest MP in the Parliament of Montenegro. In 2014, he was one of the founders of a political project Civic Movement (United Reform Action). He speaks English and Albanian.

Nora Aliti (tbc)

Member of the Macedonian Parliament (DUI).

Abdulla Azizi

Abdulla Azizi is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Public Administration and Political Sciences at SEEU in Macedonia where he has been teaching International Organizations; International Public Law; Institutions, Policies and EU Law since 2002. His research interests are Public Administration, International Organizations, and EU issues. From 2008 to 2010 he was Director of the Center for Research in Public Administration and in 2012 he became a member of the Macedonian National Council for sustainable development. He has also been engaged in and worked as a national expert for a number of OSCE and European Commission funded projects. He graduated from the Law Faculty in Skopje in 2001 and received his MA Degree in the field of International Policy in 2005. He successfully defended his PhD in the field of the EU in 2007. Additionally, he successfully completed a specialization at Ecole National d'Administration in Paris from 2001 to 2002. Dr. Azizi has published a number of university textbooks: "Current situation assessments in Macedonia and its challenges for membership in the EU" (2012), "European Union: Law, Institutions and Policy" (2010), "Multidimensional Dictionary: Terms in Administrative and Social Sciences, Policy and Diplomacy" (2009), "Social Policy in EU: Evaluation, Standards and the Challenges" (2009) and "The Principles of International Public Law" (2008). He has also published more than 40 scientific papers and research work in international journals and has participated in international scientific conferences abroad.

Odeta Barbullushi

Ms. Odeta Barbullushi is Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Albania. She was born in Shkodra on 16 June 1979. She obtained the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) from the University of Birmingham, Great Britain in 2010 in Russian Studies and Eastern European / International Relations. She holds an MA in Contemporary European Studies from the University of Sussex and an MA in International Relations and European Studies from the Central European University in Budapest. She also graduated in Journalism, Communication at the University of Tirana in 2001. Ms. Barbullushi worked as a lecturer at the Centre for European Studies, University of Birmingham and she has worked since 2009 to 2014 at the European University of Tirana, initially as Head of Department of Political Science and International Relations, and most recently as Vice / Rector for Research and Methodology, as well as editor of the scientific journal 'Polis'. She has been the (official) holder of several cases in the field of international relations and the Albanian issue Albania's Foreign Policy, Foreign Policy Analysis of Relative Theory and International Relations Issues, etc. She has been 'Honorary Fellow' at the University of Roehampton, London since 2011. Ms. Barbullushi in 2013, spent time as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Graz Karl Franzen, Austria. The scientific work of Ms. Barbullushi is focused on the domestic factors of foreign policy, conceptual and historical aspects of the process of European integration of the Western Balkan countries, various aspects of statehood and state-formation in the Western Balkans, Albania's relations with its neighbors and the EU role in the Western Balkans and the Mediterranean area. The postgraduate studies and scientific work of Ms. Odeta Barbullushi have been funded by a number of international scholarships and awards, such as the scholarship of Open Society Institute (OSI), Sasakawa Fellowship, Dorothy Hodgkins Postgraduate Award, Ernst Mach Global Fellowship, and 'Brain Gain Incentive' grant. Ms. Barbullushi during her academic work has coordinated and been part of a number of regional and international projects in the field of research, human rights in higher education and European integration of the Western Balkan.

Davor Boban

Davor Boban, born on December 2, 1978, is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Zagreb, Croatia. He holds B.A. degrees in political science and law and a PhD in political science. His main areas of interest are post-communist countries, democratization, modern democracies and autocracies in the post-communist world and systems of government. He teaches courses on political systems in Central Europe and post-Soviet space. In recent years, he spent two semesters at the University of Warsaw, Poland and at Indiana University in Bloomington, USA. In the last two years he was a visiting scholar at the Eurasian National University of L. N. Gumilyov in Astana, Kazakhstan, the Azerbaijani Diplomatic Academy in Baku, Azerbaijan and the Institute for International Relations, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine. He has participated in several international conferences: IPSA World Congress in Santiago de Chile in 2009, Annual CEPSA Conference in Plzen in 2013, Annual CEPSA Conference in Prague in 2014 etc.

Josip Brkić
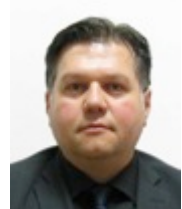
Josip Brkić was appointed Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina in April 2015. He also chairs the Commission for the NATO Integration Process of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Until his appointment to the Council of Ministers he worked at the Herzegovina University in Mostar. Mr. Brkić was Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Kingdom of Spain and Morocco from 2004 to 2008. Previously, he held several senior positions at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 2004 to 2008, the Ministry of European Integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina from 2000 to April 2003 and the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Western Herzegovina County in 2000. His professional involvement includes several years in the business sector, holding management positions from 2009 to 2015. Mr. Brkić was born in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1974 where he finished elementary and high school. He holds a law degree from the Faculty of Law at the University of Mostar and a Master's Degree in European Study from the University of Sarajevo and University of Bologna. He is a Ph.D. candidate in Public International Law at the Faculty of Law – University of Mostar. Mr. Brkić is married and has two sons. He is fluent in English and Spanish.

Gordana Čomić

Gordana Čomić has been member of parliament in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia for the Democratic Party (DS) since 2000 and the Assembly's Deputy Speaker since 2008. She is also a member of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and a member of the Committee for Social Cohesion in this institution. Prior to being elected to the National Assembly, she served as a member of parliament in the Provincial Assembly of Vojvodina (1996-2004). Moreover, she was vice president of the Democratic Party from 2001-2004. Čomić has been actively engaged in the women's movement in Serbia and is the founder of the Women Political Network and committed to the battle for equity in representation and participation of women in decision-making processes. Ms. Čomić has a degree in Physics and worked at the University of Novi Sad in the Faculty of Technical Sciences from 1984-1998. She is married and has four children.

Alina Dobreva

Alina Dobreva is a fellow at the Center for Media, Data and Society at the Central European University. She is an expert on EU media policy, political communication, media and democratization, public opinion and elections. Dr. Dobreva's research experience includes a variety of projects ranging from academic and NGO research to public opinion and marketing research, including a number of international comparative studies such as Media Pluralism Monitor, Comparative Study of Electoral Systems and the British Academy-funded "Political Communications in New Democracies. Government-Media Relations in Transition." She has worked as a researcher at the European University Institute's (EUI) Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom (CMPF), as a researcher and lecturer at the University of Leeds and as a fellow at the University of Oxford. She has contributed to various electoral campaigns through studies, planning and execution. Dr. Dobreva also worked for the Ministry of Finance in Bulgaria. She is author and co-author of numerous academic and policy publications on European media policy, political communication, democratization, public opinion and electoral studies.

Valeska Esch

Valeska Esch works as Senior Program Officer with the Aspen Institute Germany and is responsible for Aspen's Policy Program on Southeast Europe. Valeska joined Aspen in February 2009. She holds an MA in Political Science, International and European Law, and English Language and Literature with a focus on security politics, the EU, and Southeast Europe, for which she studied at the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn and the University of Birmingham. Ms. Esch has published on the EU's engagement in Kosovo. Prior to joining Aspen, she worked for an event management firm in Bonn and interned at the United Nations University's Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS).

Gledis Gjipali

Gledis Gjipali is Executive Director of European Movement in Albania (EMA), an independent, non-profit organization combining think tank and advocacy instruments. Mr. Gjipali started his career by working for several years at the Albanian Ministry of European Integration, dealing with reform in the judiciary system, property rights and anti-corruption. Since 2008 he has been a part of EMA, working to encourage and strengthen the present democratic experiences by promoting democratic values during the policy making process, analysis and implementation of public policies in the country. He has written several publications and reports in the areas of European integration, rule of law and anti-corruption and has served as Albania's country analyst for the Freedom House, Nation in Transit Report for the last five years.

Roland Gjoni

Roland Gjoni is a researcher in political science and international relations at the University College Dublin, Ireland where he is completing his doctoral studies on nationalism and ethnic conflict. He completed his postgraduate degree (LL.M.) from Columbia University School of Law under a Fulbright Scholarship and the Wolfgang Friedman Fellowship for International Law in 2005. Mr. Gjoni has extensive experience as a legal and policy consultant for the United Nations, the European Union, the World Bank and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and frequently publishes on state-building and political developments in the Western Balkan countries. He is currently a Balkan affairs advisor at the Center of Excellence of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania.

Blerina Gjylameti

Blerina Gjylameti was born in Tirana, on January 23, 1980. Mrs. Gjylameti has been a PhD Candidate in economics since 2009. She completed her undergraduate studies at Salerno University in Italy in the department of Economy and Commercial Financial Direction. She holds a Master's in Economic European Sciences from Tirana University. In 2006, after completing her higher education, Mrs. Gjylameti was nominated as effective Professor in Operational Management and Strategic Management at Skenderbej Military University and worked part time as an assistant professor at Tirana University, Faculty of Economics, Management Department. In 2008, Mrs. Gjylameti was appointed as an effective professor in Strategy of Human Resources at Tirana University, Faculty of Economics, a position that she held until 2013 and later continued in part time. During these years she published national and international scientific works in the field of economics. In 2013, Mrs. Gjylameti was elected Deputy of the Socialist Party in the Albanian Parliament, VIII legislature and a member of Parliamentary Commission of Economy and Finance. Blerina Gjylameti entered politics in 2012 when she was elected as Head of Socialist Woman Forum in Tirana. Alongside her political activities, Blerina has been positioned as a member of the working group for the creation of the economic program of the Socialist Party and part of the Parliamentary Commission for Territorial-Administrative Reform. Mrs. Gjylameti has been part of the Socialist Party National Assembly since 2013. In April 2016, she was elected Secretary for Electoral Coordination.

Edith Harxhi

Ms. Edith Harxhi is the Executive Director of the Albanian Policy Center, a new think tank that deals with policy advice, analysis and research in Albania and the Balkans. Prior to this, from December 2005 to September 2013 she served as the Principal Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Albania. While serving on that post Ms. Harxhi was responsible for Albania's bilateral relations, multilateral diplomacy, NATO and EU integration processes and specifically dealt with Albania's relations with Southeast European countries, the Western Balkans and Albanians living in the region. Ms. Harxhi has served for many years as a Special Envoy of the Albanian Government for the recognition of Kosovo's Independence, where she has visited many world capitals and international organizations lobbying for Kosovo's independence. She led numerous Albanian delegations abroad and represented Albania in dozens of international events and high-level conferences. Ms. Harxhi has also worked extensively on energy issues and has been in charge of the political negotiating team for the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline from 2006 until the successful decision on TAP. Prior to her appointment as the Principal Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Albania, Ms. Harxhi worked with the United Nations, and served as an advisor to the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo where she covered police and justice as well as minorities and gender affairs. During 2003-2005 she worked as UNDP international consultant on advising the Prime Minister of Kosovo on security affairs and establishing the Office of Public Safety. She also served in the UNMIK Office for Gender Affairs and drafted, in partnership with women's group from the Parliament and civil society, the first Gender Equality Law of Kosovo. Ms. Harxhi received a Master's Degree with Honors in Political Science and International Relations from the University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom. She has been actively involved in the academic and political debate on the question of Kosovo and is specialized in politics and society in the Balkans. She is currently working on the completion of her PhD thesis entitled: "The Ethnic Conflicts and the Albanian disorder in the Balkans". Ms. Harxhi is fluent in Albanian, English, Turkish, Italian and has an intermediate-level understanding of French.

Tim Haughton

Tim Haughton is Associate Professor of European Politics at the University of Birmingham where he served as the Director of the Centre for Russian, European and Eurasian Studies (CREES) from August 2012 to July 2014. He has held Visiting Fellowships at Harvard University's Center for European Studies, Colorado College, the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna, the Institute of International Relations in Prague and was a Austrian Marshall Plan Foundation Fellow at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies in Washington DC. He has published widely in a number of journals including *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, *Comparative European Politics*, *East European Politics*, *East European Politics and Societies*, *Electoral Studies*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, *Party Politics*, *Political Studies Review, Politics and Policy* and *West European Politics*. He has also written several articles for the *Washington Post*. He is the author of *Constraints and Opportunities of Leadership in Post-Communist Europe* (2005), the editor of *PartyPolitics in Central and Eastern Europe: Does EU Membership Matter?* (2011) and has been the co-editor of the *JCMS Annual Review of the European Union* since 2008. He is currently writing a book entitled, *Perishable Goods: Accelerating Cycles of Party Birth and Death in Central Europe and Beyond*.

Anke Holstein

Anke Holstein has been working as Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Tirana since July 2014. From 2011 til 2014 she worked as Policy Advisor at the Policy Coordination Division at the European External Action Service in Brussels. Prior, she was a Policy Advisor at the Directorate General for External Relations at the European Commission in Brussels. Ms. Holstein was Head of Section for EU-Personnel at the European Affairs Department at the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin from 2007 til 2009. She served as Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Ljubljana from 2003 to 2007. Previously, Ms. Holstein was Deputy Head of Division for EU External Relations with Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans at the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin. From 1998 till 2001 she worked at the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Sarajevo. Ms. Holstein is married and has twin daughters.

Ramadan Ilazi

Ramadan (Dani) Ilazi is Deputy Minister for European Integration of Kosovo, focused on strengthening the dialogue and cooperation between the government and civil society in the European integration agenda; supporting the development of the National Action Plan for Adaption for Acquis in Kosovo and coordinating the efforts of the government of Kosovo to promote Open Data. Dani was previously adviser to former Prime Minister, Hashim Thaçi (May - December 2014) and before joining politics, he was an active member of the civil society, serving as executive director of the Kosovo Institute of Peace from 2012-2014 and of Lëvizja FOL from 2008-2011. In 2012, Dani co-authored the paper "A Peace Treaty for Sustainable Peace: a new beginning for Kosovo and Serbia" which outlines a concrete platform for peacebuilding between Kosovo and Serbia. Dani has also taught courses on peace and conflict studies in educational institutions in Kosovo and has spoken in a number of international and regional events on issues concerning European integration and good governance in Kosovo. In 2007 the American magazine Time, published his profile. Dani holds a Masters degree from the University of St. Andrews, School of International Relations. Twitter @danlazi.

Dorian Jano

Dr. Dorian Jano is the Jean Monnet Chair Holder at Marin Barleti University and the director of the Albanian Institute of Public Affairs. He is also the coordinator of EU Policy Hub, a forum of young professional dealing with European integration issues. Dr. Jano received his PhD in Political Studies from the University of Milan. He holds a master's degree in Interdisciplinary Research and Studies on Eastern Europe (MIREES) from the University of Bologna, and a bachelor's degree in Economics from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. After completing his studies, Dr. Jano served as research fellow at the Institute for European Integration at the Europa-Kolleg Foundation in Hamburg (Germany) and the Institute for Advanced Studies at Collegium Budapest (Hungary). Dr. Jano has been a visiting scholar at the University of Arkansas, Clinton School of Public Servic and the University of Montenegro. His academic interests and research focus on EU enlargement, Europeanization and Southeastern Europe. He has presented on these topics at international conferences and has been published in international peer-reviewed academic journals.

Dragan Krapović

Dragan Krapović was born on August 26, 1978 in Podgorica (Titograd at the time). He completed elementary and high school in Budva. After graduation from high school in 1997 he began studies at the University of Montenegro in Podgorica in law. In 2002 he graduated and started internship at the Komercijalna Banka AD Budva (The Comercial Bank Budva) in the law sector and worked there until 2009. In 2009 Mr. Krapović left Komercijalna Banka AD Budva and started a private company working in tourism. He has very good knowledge of the English language and speaks and understands the Italian language. He also has a broker/dealer license from the Montenegro Securities Commission. Mr. Krapović is married to his wife, Sandra, and a father of two.

Remzi Lani

Remzi Lani is Executive Director of the Albanian Media Institute. He has a long career in journalism: *ZeriiRinise* (Tirana), *El Mundo* (Madrid), *Zeri* (Pristina) etc. Mr. Lani has authored articles on Balkan affairs for different local and foreign papers and magazines such as: *El Mundo* (Madrid), *The Guardian* (London), *Quimera* (Barcelona), *The International Spectator* (Rome), etc. He is co-author of the book "My Albania – Ground Zero" (New York, 1992) and the book "Masters of Humanist Philosophy" (Tirana, 2000 and 2010). Mr. Lani has collaborated with the Aspen Institute (Berlin), Istituto Affari Internationali (Rome), CESPI (Rome), Center for International and Strategic Studies (Washington), Carter Center (Atlanta), Hellenic Foundation (Athens), CIDOB (Barcelona), and Bertelsmann Foundation on different projects on Balkan issues. Mr. Lani was also an expert for the International Commission on the Balkans (Amato Commission). He was a founding member of the first Human Rights Group in Albania (The Forum for Human Rights) in 1990.

Rüdiger Lentz

Rüdiger Lentz is the Executive Director of the Aspen Institute Germany. Previously he served as the Executive Director of the German-American Heritage Foundation and Museum in Washington from 2009 until 2013. From November 1998 until December 2009, he was the Washington Bureau Chief and Senior Diplomatic Correspondent for Deutsche Welle. Prior to his assignment in Washington, he served as Deutsche Welle's Brussels Bureau Chief. Before joining Deutsche Welle, Lentz worked as a correspondent for the German news magazine Der Spiegel, after having served in the German Armed Forces for eight years and as a TV commentator and reporter at ARD/WDR, Germany's largest public TV and radio station. Lentz has also held various positions including that of Editor in Chief at RIAS-TV Berlin from 1990-1992. As the Executive Director of German TV from 2002-2005 he was responsible for the branding and market entrance plan of German TV in the US. He has been a Visiting Lecturer at Harvard University, the School of Foreign Service in Washington and a regular guest on CNN and C-Span. Lentz was born 1947 and studied international relations, history and economics at the University of Hamburg. He is a long time member of the Atlantik-Bruecke and a founding member of the German American Business Council (GABC) in Washington.

Sonja Licht

Sonja Licht graduated Sociology and received an MA in Socio-Cultural Anthropology from the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade. She authored numerous articles in local and international magazines, journals and books. She was part of the Yugoslav dissident movement from the late sixties, and from mid-eighties she was among the founders of numerous local and international civic organizations, including the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly in 1990. From 1991 to 2003 she led the Fund for an Open Society in Yugoslavia (later Serbia). In 2003 she established the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence, member of Council of Europe's Network of Schools of Politics devoted to the democratic capacity building of decision and opinion makers in 19 countries. From 1990s has been board member of many reputable international institutions. For promoting democracy and civic activism in Serbia and South East Europe she received numerous honors, including the Council of Europe Pro Merit, Star of Italian Solidarity and the French Legion of Honor.

Jani Makraduli

Jani Makraduli was born on 28th of March 1965 in Bitola, R.Macedonia. He gradated at University Sts. Cyril and Methodius in 1989 with a BS in Electro technical engineering. In 1994 he became Master of Computer Science. From 1990 until 2008 he was junior & senior assistant at the Electro technical faculty in the Computer Science department. He was a Member of Parliament of the R. Macedonia from 2001-2014, including coordinator of the Parliamentary group, and from 2008 until 2014 Vice-president of the parliament (first vice-president from the opposition), and also member of the IPU delegation. From 2011 until 2014 he was President of the Council of the parliamentary TV channel. From 2008 until 2011 he was President of the steering council of the Parliamentary Institute. From 2003 until 2006 he was President of government IT committee. From 1996 until 2000 he was Member of the Council of the municipality Center, Skopje. Mr. Makraduli has been a member of the central board of Social democratic Union of Macedonia (SDUM) from 1997 until present. Within that period, he was also member of the executive board of the SDUM from 1999 until 2013. In the period from 2006 until 2009 he was vice president of the SDUM and he was a member of election party board of SDUM for 7 elections. Other activities include: Team leader of National strategy for information society development in partnership with UNDP, and Member of subcommittee for monitoring electoral list in partnership with OSCE. He speaks fluent English.

Kejdi Mehmetaj

Member of the Parliament of the Republic of Albana (LSI).

Žarko Mićin (tbc)

Member of the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia (SNS).

Vjosa Osmani

Dr. Vjosa Osmani, a lawyer educated in Kosovo and the United States, is an elected member of the national Parliament of the Republic of Kosovo. Now serving her second mandate, Mrs. Osmani is the most voted woman in the history of parliamentary elections in the Republic of Kosovo. In her previous mandate, she served as Chair of the Committee for European Integration and Vice-Chair of the Committee for Constitutional Reforms in Kosovo. Before running for parliamentary elections, Mrs. Osmani served as Chief of Staff and Foreign Policy Advisor as well as Legal Advisor to the President of the Republic of Kosovo. During this period, she was the President's representative in the Constitutional Commission, the body that drafted the first Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo. She was also a member of the Kosovo legal team at the International Court of Justice in the advisory proceedings related to Kosovo's Declaration of Independence. Ms. Osmani's work mostly focuses on rule of law (initiatives in fighting corruption and organized crime and ensuring an independent judiciary), foreign policy (euro-integration process, developing parliamentary diplomacy, etc.), human rights andsocial and equality issues (social inclusion, gender equality, access to justice, freedom of speech, etc.). She is one of the very few politicians in Kosovo who engages for a cross-party dialogue for issues that require national unity, at a time when Kosovo's political scene is very much divided and polarized. For that reason, the European Parliament has recently, in a Resolution, recognized and welcomed the initiatives that she and a colleague MP undertook to foster political dialogue. Mrs. Osmani completed her Bachelor's degree at the University of Prishtina and her Master's and Doctorate degrees at the University of Pittsburgh, School of Law. She currently teaches at the University of Prishtina and at the American College of Kosovo (in partnership with the Rochester Institute of Technology). She also teaches "*State-building and the Law*" at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law as a Visiting Professor.

Christian Petry

Christian Petry is a member of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) and their public administrator. He was born on March 15, 1965 in Neunkirchen, Saarland. He studied at the University of Applied Sciences for Public Administration and Management of the Saarland from 1985 to 1989 and graduated with a degree in public administration. He also studied mathematics with a minor in IT at Saarland University. He has been a member of the German Bundestag representing the St. Wendel constituency since 2014. His membership in Bundestag bodies and parliamentary posts include: the Finance Committee, the Committee on the Affairs of the European Union and a Panel established under Section 10a of the Financial Market Stabilization Act. Mr. Petry is married and has two children.

Snežana Radović

Snežana Radović was born in Podgorica on August 27, 1971. She studied in the Faculty of Political Sciences in Sarajevo and the Faculty of Philosophy in Nikšić. She completed postgraduate studies at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Podgorica and was granted several-months long study visit to Zagreb. Ms. Radović is Director General for European Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration. Prior to this position, she was Counselor in the Embassy of Montenegro to Hungary. During her mandate in Hungary, she followed political developments in the country, covered consular and accounting affairs, and actively followed the Hungarian EU presidency, which took place immediately after Montenegro acquired candidate status for membership in the EU. When needed, she acted as *Chargé d' affaires a.i.* in the Embassy. Prior to her mandate in Hungary, Ms. Radović was Counselor for several years in the Directorate for NATO in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She was Secretary of the Commission for Inter-Sectorial Activities in the Partnership for Peace as well as a member of the Coordination Team for the Implementation of the Communication Strategy on Euro-Atlantic Integration of Montenegro. Previously, she worked for seven years in radio and television in Montenegro where she was in charge of international relations and was editor of the desk for processing of foreign programs and international exchange. She has passive knowledge of several languages. She speaks English.

Konstantin Samofalov

Konstantin Samofalov was elected to the Serbian parliament in 2007, 2008, and 2012. In the parliament he was a member of the Defense and Internal Affairs Committee and deputy member of the Foreign Affairs Committee. He was also a Member of the Serbian delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (PA) (Head of Serbian delegation at 2010 Riga and 2012 Tallin NATO PA sessions), and of the Serbian delegation to the EU CSDP Parliamentary Conference. Mr. Samofalov joined the Democratic Party (DS) in 2000 and was the president of DS youth Belgrade from 2000 to 2007. From 2004 to 2008 he was member of the city assembly of Belgrade. Now he is one of the founders of the New Democratic Party (NDS) of former Serbian President Boris Tadić and its spokesperson. The NDS is one of four parties currently represented in the Serbian Parliament. Mr. Samofalov graduated from the Faculty of Law of the University of Belgrade in 2007 in International Law. He completed the senior executive seminar "Countering Narcotics Trafficking" at the George C. Marshall Center for European Security Studies in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany. He also took part in the past two sessions of the Halifax International Security Forum in Halifax, Canada. After serving in the Serbian armed forces as a member of the first generation of volunteers following the decision on professionalization, he graduated in the first cohort of students in Advanced Defense and Security Studies at the Military Academy (University of Defense) in July 2012. He was a board member of the Parliamentary Forum on small arms and light weapons, and also a member of European leadership network, a London-based think-tank. Mr. Samofalov is fluent in English and uses French.

Ingrid Schulte

Ingrid Schulte is a Master of Public Policy candidate at the Hertie School of Governance. Her main areas of interest are climate finance, energy security and issues at the intersection of climate and health, particularly in developing countries. She will be interning this summer with Climate Focus, an international advising company in Berlin, researching international climate politics with a focus on land-use policies. Previously, she spent two years doing community health work with the United States Peace Corps in Swaziland, Africa developing and managing projects spanning topics from female empowerment to clean water, hygiene/santiation and nutrition. She holds bachelor's degrees in Biology and Anthropology from Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusets where she was a recipient of the Dean's Award and a Max Kade travel grant for summer research and worked for the institution's Center for German and European Studies.

Senad Šepić

Senad is vice president of Party of Democratic Action, Member of Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina and director of the Political Academy of SDA. Senad graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo in 2003 and had the vocation of professor of history. Also, he graduated from the high school of journalism in Sarajevo in 2002, and in 2012 obtained a Masters Degree from the Faculty of Law. Senad is founder and director of the Political Academy of SDA, which has existed since 2008. This Academy is recognized as one of the best in the country and region and cooperates with international organizations from Europe and the USA. He is one of the founders of the Center for New Initiatives, a foundation that gathers center right parties and advocates for internal dialog and a European perspective for BiH. His blogs and opinions have been published on the most visited portals in the country. He has been a member of expert teams and programs of the Council of Europe and EPP from Brussels. He is a member of the presidency of the Paneuropean Union of BiH, a member of the Constitutional Commission of the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Chairman of the Delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of B&H to the Council of Europe. He is married and father of two sons and a daughter.

Věra Stojarová

Věra Stojarová works as an academic researcher and assistant professor at the Department of Political Science (Section Security and Strategic Studies) at the Faculty of Social Studies at Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic. Her professional career has focused on security and politics in the Western Balkan region, providing analysis of the regional conditions and readiness of Western Balkan states for EU integration for the Ministry of Defense of the Czech Republic (Analysis Foreign and Security Policy of Albania, Slovenia and Serbia for University of Defense under MoD Czech Republic). Dr. Stojarová has also published many texts dealing with security and politics in the Western Balkan region, most recently in 2014 by Manchester University Press (Stojarová, V. *The Far Right in the Balkans*, MUP, 2014). She has also cooperated with the NGO sector, giving lectures about security problems which societies in transition face (People in Need Foundation, lectures for Burmese dissidents in Thailand, lectures in Transnistria). She belongs to the leading Balkan security experts in the European academic community.

Jorida Tabaku

Member of the Parliament of the Republic of Albania.

Edita Tahiri

Dr. Edita Tahiri is Minister for Dialogue of the Government of the Republic of Kosovo, responsible for implementation of the Brussels agreement and Technical Dialogue between the Republic of Kosovo and Serbia since 2011 and the Head of Republic of Kosova Delegation at the Brussels Implementation Dialogue. Before taking on this role, she was Deputy Prime Minister (2011-2014) and Minister of Public Administration. She is the leader of the Regional Women's Lobby (RWLSEE) which she and other women leaders in the region formed in 2006. She was one of the founders and key leaders of the movement for Kosova's independence, the Democratic League of Kosovo, in the years 1991-1999. She was the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kosova (1991-2000) and she was a member of the Kosovo delegation to the Rambouillet Conference (1999). She also participated in the pre-Rambouillet negotiations in 1999 and the London Conference in 1992. Currently, she is the President of the political party, Democratic Alternative of Kosova, which is part of government in coalition with PDK. Edita Tahiri completed her postgraduate studies at Harvard University, at the John F. Kennedy School for Government in 2002 and holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration. She also graduated from the Edward S. Mason program for Public Policy and Management in 2002. She holds a Ph.D. in Political Sciences from the University of Prishtina in cooperation with SAIS Johns Hopkins University. Her thesis title is "International State-building and Uncertain Sovereignty" with a special focus on Kosovo, under the supervision of I. William Zartman and Alan Kuperman. In the years 2006/2007 she studied on a Fulbright Scholarship at the Johns Hopkins - SAIS University where she undertook doctoral studies in the Program for Conflict Resolution.

Helge Tolksdorf

Helge Tolksdorf is currently Head of the Division for EU Enlargement, Southeast Europe and Turkey in the Directorate-General for European Policy of the German Federal Ministry of Economics. Before assuming this position in 2003, he served as *inter alia* as Deputy Head of the Division for the Asia-Pacific Region and Deputy Head of the Division for General issues relating to Eastern Europe, both in the directorate-general for external economic policy of the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy. Mr. Tolksdorf studied international economic relations at the Higher Institute of Economics in Sofia, Bulgaria. He is married and has three children.

Ana Trišić-Babić
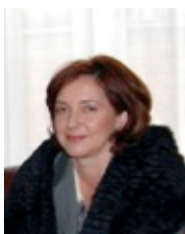
Ana Trišić-Babić is the founder and Head of the Executive Board of the organization FMO – Foundation for International Relations. FMO mobilizes a strong base of diplomatic and academic experience with a mission to educate and inform the public with regard to the most important affairs of national diplomacy, regional diplomatic aspects, regional economy and key international developments. The Foundation bases its work on three pillars – publishing, consulting and educational components and is a center for strategic analyses, policy proposals and educational projects. It acts as a discussion hub for domestic and international diplomatic establishment in BiH. Key topics are: Diplomacy/Foreign Relations, Security and Stability, European Union / Perspective of Membership, Investment / Trade / Development and Cross-Cutting Topics. From 2007 to April 2015 Ms.Trišić-Babić was Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Prior to being appointed to her position, Ms. Trišić-Babić served *inter alia* as Assistant Minister for Bilateral Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as Chairperson of the Commission for the NATO Integration Process of Bosnia and Herzegovina and as Head of Working Group I of the Stabilization and Association Agreement. Ms. Trišić-Babić holds a degree in International Public Law from the Faculty of Law of Schiller International University in London and took part in the Senior Executives in National and International Security Program at Harvard University. Ms. Trišić-Babić is fluent in English and German and has a good understanding of Russian and French.

THE CROATIAN PARLIAMENT AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

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Introduction

Parliament plays an important role in the functioning of the democratic political system in all three main types of systems of government – presidential, semi-presidential, and parliamentary. It can have an important role even in non-democratic systems if it is used as an instrument by the regime to persuade the domestic and international public that it has legitimacy and that it rules according to the will of people expressed in general elections. After the fall of communist regimes in Eastern Europe, one of the goals of the democratic transition was the transformation of communist assemblies into institutions similar to the legislatures that existed in the advanced democracies of the West. Free and fair elections, a multiparty system and continuous sessions during the year were aimed at allowing these neglected institutions to exercise their three core functions and to actively participate in building a new democratic political system. Early changes to constitutions and the adoption of relevant legislation were intended to enable this process, but real implementation of democracy, as we now know, was very difficult. Croatia shared this problem with other post-communist countries but with additional, specific issues related to war and the illiberal regime of President Tudjman and the ruling HDZ party. Relations between the president, government, and Parliament and the role of the ruling party were similar to those in Putin's Russia: there was an omnipotent president who was charismatic leader of the ruling party that enjoyed the absolute majority of seats in Parliament. That path dependency changed after presidential and parliamentary elections in 2000 when Croatia began its second transition.

Role of the Parliament

In the first decade after the fall of communism, the Croatian Parliament had a secondary role in comparison to the executive. This was a common situation that it shared with many other post-communist parliaments, but for different structural and functional reasons. Post-Soviet legislatures might be weak because party systems in their countries are non-consolidated and their presidents have been able to successfully confront them. On the other hand, examples of some other countries indicate that the consolidation of the party system does not necessarily contribute to greater power of the parliament. Croatia and Albania are similar in this respect: they have had problems with democratization and weak parliaments despite relatively quickly built stable party systems. As of 1990 to 2016, HDZ in Croatia has been in power for 18 years in total. According to this criterion it is one of the most successful parties in the post-communist world. In the first decade, Croatia had a semi-presidential system of government of the presiden-

tial-parliamentary subtype.[1] President Tudjman was elected twice by direct vote in the first ballot and was leader of the HDZ. This party enjoyed the absolute majority of seats in both chambers but, in spite of this, Parliament was the weakest institution of the state power, especially in comparison with the president. This put Croatia in the same category as post-Soviet countries, which have so-called super presidential systems where presidents dominate all other political institutions. The president and the parliament, according to the constitutional provisions, were in transactional relation, but in reality it was a hierarchical relation[2] that resembled the present-day relation between President Putin and the Russian State Duma.

Change of the government after parliamentary and presidential elections in 2000 enhanced the role of the parliament. The new president left his party and although he did not want to be "a ficus" in the office, this move was in accordance with the view that the president in a parliamentary system should not be a party member. This was a relief for the parliament, from which a majority of members formed the new government. Since then, the only head of the executive has been the prime minister and the head of state has had substantial constitutional powers only in foreign policy and national security. Unlike in the 1990s, Parliament in the new decade began to resemble legislatures of Central European and Western parliamentary democracies: no party had an absolute majority of seats and has been able to solely form a government; parties are the only ones who dominate Parliament; there have only been a small number of independent MPs and the president has no influence on Parliament.

Specific functions of the Croatian Parliament

In the first decade, elections in Croatia were free if not completely fair. Part of the media was under the regime's control and subsequently worked in its favor. Opposition worked freely but suffered from intraparty splits, access to all the media and the inability to fight HDZ's popularity built on nationalism during wartime. HDZ formed all governments after the parliamentary elections of 1992 and the only vein for oppositional parties to achieve any significant impact on the public was through Parliament. The importance of this was highlighted by the fact that there were no large public protests or any other form of non-institutional activities in Croatia, unlike in Serbia or Armenia[3], during that time.

Parliament played an important role in that sense because most oppositional parties advocated for further democratization of the country. They were not under the control of the regime and by pursuing deliberations in Parliament and presenting ideas to the public they contributed to the prevention of Croatia's transformation from a communist autocracy into the post-communist authoritarian system. Despite the war and the existence of the non-liberal democratic regime, stable functioning of Croatia's institutions was more similar to the other Central European countries than to the Southeastern European ones. With the latter, it shared the deadlock in the democratic transition and created a situation where the regime stabilized itself if it could not fully consolidate. That made the situation one in which Croatia shared the fate of some Latin American countries that had two transitions: the first one from autocratic regimes into the delegative democracy and the second one from this form of democracy into the liberal democracy.[4]

With a new decade arose a new problem. Once the dominance of the president was removed and the political institutions were reformed it became obvious that, like in the first transition, it was much easier to make constitutional changes and adopt new ideas than to bring them to life. The consolidated party system with strong parties who were not ready for complete transformation was the main obstacle for the establishment of the fully consolidated liberal democracy. Lack of intraparty democracy and non-willingness (or incapability) to fully develop rule of law in Croatia enhanced party leaderships in the executive and Parliament again became the most significant political institution for oppositional activity. At that moment the opposition was the former ruling party.

The loss of the power in 2000 forced HDZ to reform itself. That enabled it to remain a relevant political actor and also prevent the new government from ruling without any checks and pressures from the opposition. Ivo Sanader, the HDZ's chairperson after Tudjman's death, turned the HDZ into the presidentialized party in which he dominated.[5] After HDZ came back to power in December 2003 and formed a new government with Sanader as Prime Minister, his domination in the party allowed him dominance over Parliament too. This has created similar relations in a triangle party-government-parliament as exist in some parliamentary democracies in Western Europe but with one important difference: Baylis argues that „[i]n any parliamentary system the relationship of the prime minister to his or her party and

[1] Shugart, Matthew S., Carey, John M. (1992), *Presidents and Assemblies: constitutional design and electoral dynamics*, Cambridge; New York; Oakleigh: Cambridge University Press.
[2] Shugart, Matthew S. (2005), Semi-Presidential Systems: Dual Executive and Mixed Authority Patterns, *FrenchPolitics*, Vol. 3, No.3, pp. 323-351.
[3] Way, Lucan (2009), „State power and autocratic stability: Armenia and Georgia compared", in: Wooden, Amanda, Stefes, Christoph

(ed.), *The politics of transition in Central Asia and the Caucasus: enduring legacies and emerging challenges*, Routledge, pp. 75-102.
[4] More about delegative democracy in: O'Donnell, Guillermo (1994), Delegative Democracy, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 55-69.
[5] Nikić Čakar, Dario (2013), Prezidencijalizacija političkih stranaka, Zagreb: Fakultet političkih znanosti.

the strength and discipline of the party in the party system are critical to his or her success or failure."[6] Reformed HDZ enjoyed that discipline but it was not only the product of the proper functioning of the party's organs. It was more a product of Sanader's dominance over the HDZ that almost resembled that of Tudjman's. Consequently, the main problem for the role and functioning of Parliament became the quality of the activities of relevant parties. Common party functions, such as aggregation and articulation of interests, representation of the society, creation of links between the state and society and education of their rank-and-file for public positions have been deficient since the establishment of the multi-party system. Therefore, the role of parties in power and the opposition is not the same as it is in the advanced democracies. Croatian parties are catch-all players that ignore their programs and ideology (if any) in order to maximize electoral votes. This is particularly evident in the establishment of patronage networks by some parties, especially the HDZ, whose network involves veterans' associations and the Catholic Church.

The second problem was the role of Parliament in decision-making. It was obvious after the change of the regime in 2000 when the new ruling coalition changed the system of government but proceeded to keep the executive as the core power and Parliament as the place for the second echelons of their rank-and-files. Before every general election, parties' leadership form electoral lists and determine the order of the candidates (Croatia has closed and blocked lists). As a result, the party in the government tightly controls the party in Parliament and the control functions of Parliament are therefore significantly reduced. In addition, many MPs are not fulfilling their duties or are not capable of doing them because their main function is to raise their hands to adopt bills initiated by the government. One illustrative example of that is negotiation with the EU in which Parliament is in a position to ratify and adopt EU legislation but the negotiations are led by people outside of it and without any significant influence of that institution. Hence the role of Parliament in the 2000s has been only partially enhanced, making that institution a passive actor who participated in but did not helm the transformation of Croatia's political system.

Conclusions and recommendations

The activity of the Croatian Parliament from the first multiparty elections in 1990 to 2016 can be divided into two periods. In the first period from 1990 to 2000, during the existence of a semi-presidential system and the rule of HDZ in a deficient democracy,[7] Parliament was the weakest institution of the state power in the triangle President-Government-Parliament. In the second period, after 2000, Parliament was only partially strengthened due to the change of the system of government from a semi-presidential system to a parliamentary system. The dominance of the president of the Republic from the first period completely disappeared and Parliament became independent in relation to the president. Transactional and hierarchical relations between the two institutions also disappeared because the president lost significant constitutional powers.[8]

After 2000, the influence of the president on Parliament was converted to the influence of prime ministers. Although the system of government was changed in 2000 from a semi-presidential to a parliamentary, problems still remain in other political subsystems– party systems– because the decision-making process in the relevant parliamentary parties is not sufficiently democratic. Since parties are dominant actors in Parliament, the lack of internal party democracy becomes a weakness of Parliament too. This means that the main problem is not the dependence of Parliament on the government but the influence of the leaders of the ruling parties on the institution that arises due to the weak impact of many MPs on the activity of their own party. The EU showed a significant influence on the democratization of Croatia during the accession process and on change of policy making to make it eligible for membership. Therefore, the recommendations for the strengthening of Parliament are further changes of the party system and its main actors toward bigger intraparty democracy, disappearance of patronage network, and building of professionalism among MPs to successfully fulfill their parliamentary duties. In this way, all three core functions of the Parliament can be better realized.

[6] Baylis, Thomas A. (2007), Embattled executives: Prime ministerial weakness in East Central Europe, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 40, pp. 81-106, p. 84.

[7] Merkel, Wolfgang (2011), Transformacija političkih sustava, Zagreb: Fakultet političkih znanosti.

[8] Duverger, Maurice (1980), A New Political System Model: Semi-Presidential Government, *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 165-187.

PERSISTENCE OF POLITICAL POLARIZATION IN THE BALKANS

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Introduction

The countries of the Balkan region have been continuously marked by deep political polarization and gridlock conflicts, which continue to impede democratic consolidation and progress toward European Union membership. If we refer to the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI), the party systems in the region have been characterized continuously by a moderate-to-high level of polarization (please see appendix).[1]

In Albania, a very tense political animosity and polarization has been noticed during and after elections. The latest parliamentary elections, although not contested as usual, have been characterized by continued mutual mistrust between the main political parties.[2] The harsh polarization and confrontational approach between the two major political groups have dominated political life even after elections with insults and accusations on either side, an antagonistic attitude of hardly discussing and negotiating over the country's most urgent issues (e.g. justice reform).

Political polarization in Bosnia and Herzegovina is almost exclusively divided along ethnic lines and still has a large number of political parties, considering its population size and the required coalition to govern the country. Radicalization and polarization in Bosnia and Herzegovina have led to the formation of two post-election ethnic party blocks (the Serbian SNSD-SDS and Croat HDZ-HDZ 1990) that impede coalition or alliance for major country's reforms.[3]

Croatia, an EU member state since 2013, is fairly characterized by limited polarization but still has radical parties at both extremes, although small parties are an issue on the rise.[4] The Croatian Conservative Party, rep-

1 Question 5.1 on Party System, asks whether there is a stable and socially rooted party system able to articulate and aggregate societal interests, considering also the level of polarization. A score of less than 4 indicates high polarization, a score of up to 7 indicates moderate polarization and a score of 10 considers low polarization of a party system.

2 See: OSCE (2013) "Report to the Permanent Council by the Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania", 31 October 2013" Available at http://www.osce.org/albania/107715?download=true; and "Albania's elections active and competitive, but mistrust between political forces tainted the environment, international observers say", 24 June 2013, Available at http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/103062.

3 Weber, B. (2014) "The Limits of The EU's Transformative Power in Bosnia-Herzegovina – Implications for Party Politics", in *EU integration and party politics in the Balkans*, Corina Stratulat (ed.), EPC Issue Paper No.77, p.103

4 Small parties with Eurosceptic views from the far-right-wing are the Croatian Party of Rights, Croatian Pure Party of Rights dr. Ante Starčević, Autochthonous Croatian Party of Rights, Croatian Christian Democratic Party and Only Croatia – Movement for Croatia, whereas from the far-left-wing are the Red Action party, a Eurosceptic party strongly against the EU and NATO.

resented in the European Parliament by its leader Ruža Tomašić, has joined the European Conservatives and Reformists, the Eurosceptic political group in the European Parliament.

In Kosovo the relations between the government coalition and the opposition remain difficult and polarized. Furthermore, Serbian minority parties are completely distancing themselves from political life while the radical nationalist Self-determination political movement is exerting violence and pressure on parliamentary life. Both of them are trying to adapt to the majority party system, causing political polarization among citizens.

In Macedonia lately, besides the polarized ethnic relations for political reasons, we have seen strong political polarization where the government lacks the political will to build and create an inclusive policy-making process, which has been followed by the opposition's boycott of parliament and several violent protests, which resulted in the government resigning.

Political polarization of Montenegrin politics has been previously witnessed on grounds of attitudes towards statehood and their ethno-national identities divided into pro- and anti-independence blocks. Polarized frictions more than between the government and opposition have been growing within the government and the opposition itself. After the 2014 presidential election, the opposition parties went through political interior disputes and divisions (e.g. some high officials of the Positive party left and formed the Civic Movement). Lately, the strong political polarization has been reflected in the media, which is significantly influenced by the business and political interests of the media owners.

The Serbian political scene is highly fragmented and the political elite continue to be polarized along statehood issues, such as Kosovo independence, autonomy of the Vojvodina province and other ethnically diverse regions such as Sandžak, which has a largely Muslim Bosniak population, or the Preševo municipality, which has large ethnic Albanian populations. As a result of the perceived EU pressure to normalize relations with Kosovo, EU membership in Serbia is a highly politicized and a polarizing topic in the political arena.[5]

Why persistent political polarization in the Balkans

Political polarization in the region has become more complicated and lately we have seen increased polarization and less compromise for a number of reasons. Political polarization has arisen from both continuously

historic rooted factors and the dynamically changing domestic and European context. From a historical account, the conflictual political culture in the region is seen to be conditional on the limited experience of liberal democracy before and during communist rule. In terms of a more current approach, the importance of domestic actors as well as the supportive role of the EU are the major reasons for the rise of radicalization in the region.

Legacies of conflictual political polarization

Conflictual political polarization in the region is primarily and foremost because of the legacies of war, the communist past, and the particular historical experience of the area.[6] The Balkans, contrary to the Central European countries, differ with regard to the extent that their political culture resonates with liberal values and the extent to which political dialog and compromise can be achieved. A pre-democratic political culture did not precede the transition period; institutions were not trusted and failed to deliver, leaving empty ground for the introduction of liberal democratic political culture and norms. Although more than two and a half decades have passed since the collapse of communism, the Balkan states are still failing to function in a democratic pluralistic context. In terms of political behavior, nationalistic, populist, and authoritarian tendencies are still deeply embedded in the region. In many of the Balkan countries, the non-democratic political cultures could be found on the political agenda where the narrow nationalistic and populist interests have a very strong influence.[7] The political polarization of today reflects the shallow roots of the political culture of dialogue, tolerance and compromise in much of the Balkan area.[8]

Domestic driven political polarization

The political atmosphere has been volatile and conflictual and the political scene is completely dominated by power struggles, not just between political parties but also within them. We find a very tense political atmosphere and increased polarization and intolerance, especially in the pre-election periods. Even after elections, the political parties in power have no respect for the 'rules of the game' and the legitimacy of the political opponents. In the highly-charged atmosphere of Balkan politics, opponents are considered more as 'enemies' than as legitimate political opponents. On the one hand, governments tend to exclude the opposition parties from the policy process. On the other hand, the opposition

5   The polarization over the Serbia-Kosovo dialog has been evidenced in the clear divergent official position of the government vis a vis that of the President. See: Bandović, I and Vujačić, M (2014) "The European Question in Serbia's Party Politics", in *EU integration and party politics in the Balkans*, Corina Stratulat (ed.), EPC Issue Paper No.77, p.54, 62.

6 International Commission on the Balkans (1996) *Unfinished Peace*, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
7 Gligorov, V.; Holzner, M., and Landesmann, M. (2003) *Prospects for Further (South) Eastern EU Enlargement: Form Divergence to Convergence?*, Global Development Network Southeast Europe (GDN-SEE), Vienna, p. 2.
8 Bugajski, J. (2001) *Facing the Future: The Balkans to the Year 2010*, ZEI Discussion Papers: 2001, C 86, p. 9.

has been weak and hardly developing constructive and coherent opposition. The attitude of the opposition has simply been to oppose rather than to offer clear, convincing and better sets of alternative policies, since they are seeking absolute power. The favorite mechanisms of the opposition have mainly been to boycott (e.g. Albania) or to hold street protests (e.g. Macedonia), which sometimes lead to violent conflicts. The increased political polarization can be evidenced in the rhetoric and public speaking of different political actors communicating their own conflictual views to the general public. The increased political polarization has most likely been reflected in public opinion polls or surveys, the election results and through continuous protests. Increased polarization has gone hand in hand with citizens' loss of trust in national politics, from both the sides of government and that of opposition.[9]

EU (indirect) role on Political Consensus?

The EU accession process in Central Europe encouraged some degree of political cooperation, through either depoliticizing certain issues, such as *acquis communautaire,* leaving little to no room for domestic autonomous politics or through the censure and marginalization of more radical parties.[10] The EU adaptive pressures considerably reduced the scope of public policy debate and had a tendency to generate domestic political competition around the question of which party was more committed to and more competent to guide the country to EU accession. Yet some of the political criteria that touch upon nationally sensitive matters and unresolved post-conflict issues – such as cooperation with the ICTY, return of refugees, state reform in Bosnia Herzegovina, constitutional compliance in Macedonia, or the Serbia-Kosovo dialog – have generated a sense of injustice and domestic polarization in most Western Balkan countries, making it difficult to reach internal consensus over the legitimacy of EU political conditionality.[11] Furthermore, the political polarization is in-

creasing with the more challenges there are over Europe and the distancing enlargement. The argument here is that, especially in countries where European integration is a far-reaching objective, it may produce more divisions within and between the parties. EU membership (the carrot) has been higher for those countries, as once the benefit (EU Policy Hub) has disappeared then the political will to comply is less, thus resulting in an increase in domestic polarization and radicalization.

In addition, the political fallout from the European integration process, which culminated with the Commissioner Declaration that no EU enlargement is envisioned for this mandate, has significantly increased skepticism among politicians. Such a delayed enlargement fatigue has increasingly split even the mainstream political parties into pro- and anti-Europeans, leaving both sides of the political spectrum open/raised to the extremes to be exploited for their own purposes.

What has political polarization brought to the region so far?

As a result of such polarized behaviors from the party (or mostly from individuals) in power, the countries in the Western Balkans went into institutional or political crisis. All these disturbances have limited the ability of countries to push forward reforms, leaving the region a step behind in the process of catching up with European integration. The highly polarized and confrontational political climate among domestic political parties, as well as their incapability to resolve their divergences through negotiations and consensus, has shifted the role of the international community from that of a mediator to that of an arbitrator party, undermining the democratic institution building processes. The political culture that has been developed in the region is that of a polarized political scene unable to avoid strong confrontation. Due to a strong political polarization, discrimination on the basis of ethnic relations or political affiliation deteriorates the functions of the democratic institutions and norms and presents a huge impediment to employment in the public sector. Furthermore, polarization between the ruling majority and opposition are diverting political attention away from the necessary/needed reforms and the required EU policy reforms. Increased polarization of the political climate throughout the region has benefited nationalist parties who are winning more electorates and ground.

Compared to the previous conflictual political culture in the region, today the region's difficult economical situation, the distant EU integration process, and the high level of corruption and civil political irritation and discontent are leading to tremendous party polarization. The risk of such persistent political polarization is that it may lead to radicalization. A more collective response in the context of intergroup conflict is rooted in fear and

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9   This can be concluded due to the continuous falling number of party members; the no massive gatherings in the elections campaigns; and the lower participation in elections. When asked to say who they trust, most citizens from the Balkans have little faith in their national institutions. See: survey results of Gallup Balkan Monitor (2010) *Insights and Perceptions: Voices of the Balkans.* Summary of Findings.

10   Studies in post-communist member states finds the European integration process to have been able to strengthen the position of some parties and weaken others, by either influencing coalition-making strategies through creating disincentives to form coalitions with extremist parties or through facilitating the ideological reorientation of certain parties towards transnational European party families. For a summary of the argument with further references See: Lewis, P. G., (2008) "Changes in the party politics of the new EU member states in Central Europe: patterns of Europeanization and democratization", *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, 10(2): p. 157; and Ladrech, R (2009) "Europeanization and political parties", *Living Reviews in European Governance* 4(1).

11   Anastasakis, Othon (2008) "The EU's political conditionality in the Western Balkans: towards a more pragmatic Approach", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 8:4, p. 366, 374.

frustration about group-based feelings of social exclusion and perceived threats.[12] The consequences of further radicalization of the situations may be irreversible, as previously experienced in the region (the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1993-1995, the disorder in Albania 1997, the Kosovo crises 1999, the conflict in Macedonia 2001).

Conclusions

Over the last years, countries in the region have persistently undergone different strong political polarization. Consensus on the objectives of democracy, market economies and European integration is weakening in the Balkans as the region is faced with a lack of accession prospects and inherited conflictual domestic politics. The political style is characterized by harsh political confrontation and uncivilized political behavior, especially during election campaigns and public debates, and by a lack of substantial political dialog and spirit of cooperation. The situation snapshot suggests that political polarization in the short run, if moderate, is becoming increasingly unlikely to be problematic. Yet in the long run, given the increased polarization of political views in the region, it is likely that the European future will be problematic and the viability and desirability of the state at stake.

How can political polarization be avoided and democratic consensus can be built? To answer this, we need to consider mechanisms, which foster inclusion instead of the winner-takes-all logic and create a dynamic constructivist conversation between domestic political actors on all sides, including interest groups and civil society, for a more consensus-seeking process. Domestic political will and civic pressure can make a political arrangement work under new political behavior and the liberal democratic power-sharing formula. Second, the EU needs to keep up the integration momentum and exert further political pressure on all political sides, influencing coalition-making strategies and facilitating settlements of ideological and political divergences.

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[12] Berting, P. (2010) "Two routes to anger: Perceived threat and social exclusion as predictors of radicalization", Unpublished MA thesis, Free University, Amsterdam.

POLITICAL POLARIZATION ON THE RISE: CZECH REPUBLIC AND BEYOND

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Europe's refugee crisis triggered changes in politics all across Europe. While German Chancellor Angela Merkel continued with the politics of accepting asylum seekers and asked for the relocation scheme, Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, together with Polish leaders, embraced the language of nationalist parties and called against Muslim immigration. Czech President Miloš Zeman, meanwhile, used the uncontrolled influx of refugees into Europe to start to stir up latent conflicts, laying the groundwork for upcoming presidential elections.

Zeman has constantly created a cleavage between the so called Prague Café (*Pražská kavárna*)[2], representing the *lazy intellectuals*, and the *hard working people represented by himself, as he is the president of a lower ten thousand people who talk about naïve politicians welcoming refugees who do not deserve compassion, as nobody invited them*[3]. Zeman uses populist techniques[4], dirty language[5] and blue jokes to spread fear and stir up emotions to give the impression that he is not the elite, but that he belongs to the normal people: "There are no racist[s], no xenophobes and no fascist[s] in my meeting[s]. There are people who are afraid [of the] migration crisis, having healthy self-preservation instinct [be]cause they see what is going on in neighboring states and do not share the naïve opinion of unnamed Czech politicians that the migration crisis will avoid our country."[6] The arguments are not only about his position towards immigration (Zeman calling immigrants the Trojan Horse in Europe, triggering fear of the Muslim invasion[7]). The Czech President also departed from the common EU line on the Israel/Palestine conflict, Russia generally, the Ukraine conflict the relationships with China, stirring up emotions against the EU and its political correctness and spreading fear of foreign rule

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[2] Zeman came up with this term labelling for intellectuals, quite often leftist, with multiculturalist points of view who stand against his politics. Another term used in this context is *Sluníčkáři (literally translated devotees of Sun)* or *Pravdoláskaři (literally translated as the devotees of truth and love)* which usually refers to the followers of Václav Havel ideas.

[3] Interview with Miloš Zeman, 22. 1. 2016 Blesk TV. http://tv.blesk.cz/video/2394504/zeman-vzkazal-uprchlikum-3-vety-nikdo-vas-nezval.html.

[4] C.f. Canovan´s conceptualisation of populism kind of revolt against established structures (elites) in the name of (the) people using simple, direct style and simple solutions very understandable to "everyone" (Canovan 1999) with Paul Taggart´s six characteristics of populism: hostility towards the representative politics, heartland and the people, lack of core values, sense of extreme crisis, non-political nature of populist movements and charismatic leader, chameleonic nature (Taggart 2004:66).

[5] *Fucked up law* (about changes in newly approved service law), *Cunt here and there* (about texts of Pussy Riot*). Live interview with Miloš Zeman for Radiožurnál 2.11.2014.

[6] Interview with Miloš Zeman, 30. 1. 2016, Deník. http://milos.chytrak.cz/2016/20160130-denik.php

[7] Zeman was known for his islamophobia even before the refugee crisis.

among people. He openly stands against the Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka (leader of the Czech Social Democratic Party) and his newly introduced policies (among others inclusion of mentally handicapped pupils in the basic school system). Zeman also stirred emotions when he acknowledged the good work of the police after the visit of Chinese president for "*defending displays of behavior of people out of mind*" (meaning those who were waving the Tibetan flag). The second pole of the polarized society and politics is represented mainly by the young, well-educated liberals from the cities and some members and supporters of the social democrats, led by Prime Minister Sobotka, who believe in solidarity in the European Union, the need to redistribute refugees, who are not fond of authoritarian regimes (like Zeman is) and believe in democratic values. Nevertheless, the president profits from creating the cleavage from *working smart people* vs. *lazy stupid intelligentsia*, as more people claim to trust him in the surveys: 55% confidence in March 2015 rose up to 63% in February 2016, making him the most trusted political institution in the country (confidence in government 40%, Parliament 36%, Senate 3 %)[8].

Zeman is surrounded by extremists and radicals. A journalist from Parliamentary Papers (*Parlamentní listy*), Radim Panenka, who used to be member of the far right party, National Party (*Národní strana*), gets exclusive interviews with the president. Hard-line supporter of Miloš Zeman (as well as Vladimir Putin), Jelena Vičanová organized a demonstration on November 17, 2015, where Zeman stood next to her, extremist Martin Konvička, and other far right/far left adherents (Miroslav Lidinský, Marek Černoch, Martin Nejedlý, Adam B. Bartoš, Petr Cvalín).

As voters in the Czech Republic face an electoral marathon in the upcoming years[9] it is not only the president of the republic who is triggering political polarization, but also other subjects hoping to gain the biggest portion of the pie after the elections. The opposition leader Petr Fiala from the Civic Democratic Party also sharpens his language by talking about sealing the borders while the Czech Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Secretary, the oligarch Andrej Babiš, talks about sending the army against the migrants.[10] Martin Konvička, entomologist and senior lecturer at the South Bohemian University, emerged as a new anti-Islamic leader in 2014 (leader of the movement *We don't want Islam in*

the Czech Republic and *of* Dawn-National Coalition *Úsvit-Národní koalice*)[11] for the upcoming elections. The cooperation of Dawn and the National Coalition only lasted until the beginning of May 2016, when people around Konvička announced the formation of a new party, Alternative for Czech Republic (*Alternativa pro Česko*), following the successful model of its German counterpart, Alternative for Germany (AfD – *Alternative fűr Deutschland*). Konvička became well known for his strongly anti-Islamic statements in his Facebook profile, which talked about concentration camps for Muslims, and was indicted for hate speech by State Attorney Josef Richter in April 2016. The foundation of aforementioned party, Alternative for Czech Republic, is also supported by former Czech President and Prime Minister Václav Klaus.

It is not only radical and extremist political parties on the rise, but also newly emerged anti-Islamic movements such as Angry Mothers (*Naštvané matky*)[12], whose members use their maternity to spread fear and hostility among people and mix anti-Islamic topics with maternity issues (childbirth, vaccination etc.), or the anti-Islamic No Pasarán[13] community. With both, the common denominator is the internet – it has never been so easy to share ideas via blog or the Facebook community.

Similar processes are taking place in other Visegrád countries. Since the 2005 elections, Polish society has been deeply divided into two camps with regard to traditions, the position of church and what the state should look. The same has occurred in Hungary, where society and politics have been divided into two hegemonic camps. **So why is political polarization on the rise?** The variables, which influence the formations of the extreme and radical positions of the political axis, are political[14], social[15], economic[16], cultural[17] and intercultur-

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8   STEM Survey. In: *Zemanovi důvěřuje stale víc Čechů. Vláda, Sněmovna I Senát si pohoršily*. 8.3.2016. http://zpravy.idnes.cz/duvera-v-politicke-instituce-zeman-unor-2016-stem-f5b-/domaci.aspx?c=A160308_113733_domaci_hro.

9   The elections for senate and regional governments (*Kraje*) are expected in 2016, for parliament in 2017 and for president in 2018. If there are no early election, the next year without elections could be as late as 2027.

10   *Czech president Miloš Zeman repeats the mantra „about illegal immigrants who should be deported to where they came from"*. In Britské listy 14.9.2015. http://blisty.cz/art/78991.html.

11   Short Dawn, formerly (from June 2014 to August 2015) Dawn of Direct Democracy (*Úsvit přímé demokracie*) or (from June 2013 to June 2014) Tomio Okamura's Dawn of Direct Democracy (*Úsvit-přímé demokracie Tomia Okamury*. The party was originally founded before the parliamentary elections in 2013 by Tomio Okamura in which it obtained 6.88% and gained 14 seats in the parliament. In 2015, several party members set up a new party independent of Tomio Okamura. Okamura then set up the movement Freedom and Direct Democracy, striving for direct democracy, referendum about EU membership, stricter immigration laws etc.

12   http://hrindova.blog.idnes.cz/blog.aspx?c=447138.

13   http://no-pasaran.cz/.

14   E.g. political discontent, convergence/polarization/fragmentation of the party system, PR electoral system, emergence of the opposite extreme formations, referenda that cut across the old party cleavages, creation of a new state, perceived internal/external threats, the political expression of nationalism, regime change, political culture, elite behaviour.

15   E.g. dissolution of established identities, middle class discontent, existence of social tension or conflict.

16   E.g. post-industrial economy, rising unemployment, economic cuts in the welfare sphere, economic crisis, war, foreign domination, economic transition.

17   E.g. fragmentation of the culture, demography and multiculturalization, impact of globalization, reaction to the influx of racially and

al[18]. While every case is unique, it is always a set of variables which matters (Stojarová 2013). A reason to include the political variable is that the political right and left move to the center and unite in their political stance, offering no alternative to the voters and providing space for extreme right/extreme left political formations (c.f. e.g. Eastwell 2003). This is also the case in Czech politics, as Czech politicians refrained from learning political culture from their counterparts in Western Europe and the parties instead became private clubs for only invited people. Political players refuse to assume responsibility and then leave the party only when facing serious indictments, resulting in only a recycling of politicians and no elite change.

The parties also fail in the articulation and concentration of group interests (Hloušek-Kopeček 2014). Application of the lustration law has been quite lax and so the collaborators of the previous regime and the political players from the communist period still belong to the political elite of the country, refusing to accept new blood into their ranks. The malaise with the politics, such as restricted access to the existing political parties, also makes the voter look for new alternatives and leads to the acceptance of simple and fast populist solutions. Social variables are important in our rapidly changing, interconnected world – it is much easier for the discontent voter to start a group of his supporters on Facebook (FB), sign a petition or write his own blog and thereby spread his ideas and reach thousands of people immediately via the internet. What is striking is that hate speech on FB is such a common phenomenon that it becomes part of daily life. To write anti-ideas is much faster than the process of their deletion or indictment of the person responsible. Political parties have lost their privileged position of making politics in this interconnected world. Cultural variables, such as the migration crisis, then act as triggers for further polarization of the society and politics. Media and its sensation hunters are also to be blamed[19] as they contribute to the fake news and polarization of society. Quality of media in the Czech Republic has fallen sharply and most media outlets refer to the public in tabloid manner.

Populism can be perceived as a threat or a challenge to democracy. If not addressed properly it can destroy the democratic system, however it can also give way to some new impulses and refresh democratic stability. As Benjamin Arditi, Paraguayan political scientist from Mexico University once argued, populism can be like a guest who comes late and drunk to dinner, does not behave with respect and manners and instead spells out the painful troubles of the group (Arditi 2005). Similarly, polarization brings new topics to the discussion and becomes a threat to democracy when not observed and treated carefully. The Weimar Republic, the French Fourth Republic, the Austrian democracy in the 1930s and the Chilean democracy failed because of the vast ideological differences between the parties, which made governing together problematic. One could argue if we can limit polarization, we might be able to make democracy more sustainable. Low polarization also has an impact on economic growth while higher polarization might lead to higher electoral turnout (Ladner 2014). Viktor Orbán or Jarosław Kaczyński[20] are examples of leaders who are changing the institutional settings of their countries enormously and thus threatening democracy and stability in their countries. **So how should polarization be approached?**

As already mentioned, every case is unique. For some countries, change in the electoral system (less proportional, more majoritarian components) limiting the role of anti-system players might make sense to avoid further polarization. Other proposals include the strengthening of the role of the prime minister and the government and introducing constructive votes of non-confidence for system stabilization (Kubát 2013). These proposals however, might also seem like threats to the current democratic systems in the light of Polish and Hungarian examples and strengthening one player might present a danger for the future and stability of the system if occupied by a politician with authoritarian tendencies. The system of checks and balances must be balanced so that no player is able to revert the democratic system, while still making sure that no player becomes a significant veto player and obstacle to the legislative process. Constitutions may sometimes be quite vague and can be interpreted as an argument for a strong prime minister, or, in the case of the Czech Republic, the president feels the temptation to push the limits provided by the Constitution. Again, we return to the need for elite change and political culture. Political parties should not refuse responsibility and become open to their sympathizers and voters, as they would constitute a fertile and stabile ground for them and would not easily be distracted by newly emerged populist players. The constitutional and democratic president should become president for all people and should not be one who creates cleavages, but rather one who unites. Politicians should be able to communicate and explain their decisions to the public so that voters do not succumb easily to new populist and polarizing formations.

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culturally different members of the population, popular xenophobia and racism, religion vs. secularisation, one's own ethnicity living outside the borders of a mother state.

[18] E.g. state humiliation, desire for higher status, position towards the competing project e.g. EU.

[19] One of the latest examples is the Prima TV report about the Iraqi refugees who, according to the TV interpreter, said that they were allocated to a re-painted cowshed. NGO Generation 2, which is taking care of the refugees', claim the translation from Arab language was misleading and incorrect.

[20] E.g. new laws bringing public media and Constitutional Court under government control in Poland or laws regulating media in Hungary.

Another potential threat or challenge may arise when the polarizing actor enjoys a landslide victory and enters a government. The Austrian Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) is a typical example – it helped to break the ÖVP-SPÖ cartel in Austria when a horrified Europe refused to shake hands with Austrian cabinet members after the landslide victory of FPÖ in 1999 and the concluded coalition of FPÖ and ÖVP. However, after two years in the government, the party's support dropped back to its previous ten percent. This may also be the most likely outcome for the governmental coalition in Slovakia, composed *inter alia* of nationalists, and in the past the anti-Hungarian Slovakian National Party (SNS) and the Hungarian ethnic party Bridge (Most-Híd).

Other proposals to eliminate populist players include participatory democracy. The idea is that giving people more meaningful opportunities to participate in their own self-governance and to practice working together to solve tractable problems can help to reinforce their wider perceptions of the legitimacy of the democratic system. Experience with the practicalities of governance and decision-making in complex communities also has the potential to increase the public's understanding of complex problems, including the trade-offs and necessary compromises inherent in all political decision making and public respect for informed decision-making (Johnson 2014). However, again, the example of the Swiss People's Party and its popularity in the last two decades comes into mind in the milieu of the participatory democracy per excellence. Some might argue in this context that too many referenda might make people more relaxed about the issues, creating more dichotomies and perceptions of the world as black and white, without looking at the additional info. A similar example in this context is the popular election of the Czech president – without additional multiple choice options the dichotomies of yes or no, black or white or two options lead to simplification and also polarization. The first direct presidential elections were the building block for the current polarization of the Czech society: liberals vs. nonliberal supporters of President Miloš Zeman, who loves to create conflicts, divide and rule and usurp more power from the vaguely written constitution. Similarly, the second round of presidential elections in Austria, scheduled for May 22, 2016, could also become a basis for the polarization of the Austrian society.

Being quite aware of the fact that academics have little impact on politicians and that politics is a constant fight for power, let me conclude with some final remarks. It is necessary to think about platforms which can unite people with different opinions, of different ethnicities, beliefs, social strata, ages or sex. As political parties play a crucial role in pluralist democracies, they should not only be able to explain their decisions (however not in the way "*we do it cause EU wants us to do it*"), but also to listen to the *vox populi* and enter into dialog with them, as those people who feel unheard and underrepresented are most likely to be captivated by populist can-

didates. Schools should provide pupils with more civic and political education so they can lead discussions and communicate with politicians. Political parties should build their bases of voters and supporters and work with social movements. Politicians should also use the internet and new technologies to foster dialogue and discussions with the public. They should create and share a narrative that would mobilize the people and create a collective identity with their political projects. Otherwise, only people with similar ideas will unite in the social media, thereby strengthening social bubbles and contributing to further polarization. The Czech president should stay apolitical and unite people rather than divide while Czech politicians should learn the political culture from their Western counterparts and become accountable for their deeds. Last but not least, I'd like to recall a piece of advice from Belgian political scientist Chantal Mouffe to the EU: The EU as well as state institutions should become more accountable and more representative and this should be the objective towards which parties and social movements need to work together. The goal should be to create a European project that people can identify with, to enter into debate with people in order to know what kind of Europe they want while fostering a European identity so that people become interested again and identify with the European project.[21] The aim should also be to overcome the cleavage of old member states vs. new member states (or more precisely Visegrád countries) in order to live up to its motto *United in diversity*.

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ETHNIC POLITICS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS: THE STATE OF PLAY AND WAYS FORWARD

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Introduction

Ethnicity is defined as a feeling of belonging shared by members of a certain community based on assumed shared ancestry, history, language, religion, race, territory or descent.[1] While ethnicity per se is not a generator of instability and violence, its manifestation in political life within a multi-ethnic society can be used as a ground for group polarization and enmity. Therefore, politicized ethnicity or ethnonationalism in multi-ethnic societies is seen as a source of political polarization across ethnicities and an obstacle to social cohesion and national integration.

With the exception of Albania, in the last 25 years all six Balkan states have experienced violent conflicts where ethnicity has been often invoked as a primary cause. Many accounts of the break-up of Yugoslavia have explained the eruption of ethnic violence in the former Yugoslavia with the role of self-seeking politicians like Slobodan Milošević, FranjoTuđman, and AlijaIzetbegović by exploiting the common insecurities following the demise of the multinational federation and politicizing ethnicity. In fact, the initial root causes of the Yugoslav conflict may have not been ethnic at all but the wide spread violence along ethnic lines reinforced ethnic cleavages within all communities.

The intervention of the EU, U.S., NATO and UN was crucial to ending the ethnic violence in Bosnia, Macedonia and Kosovo and establishing peace plans and agreements, which have been largely successful, to preserve the ethnic peace and avoid a relapse in full scale violent conflicts. The region has not seen widespread armed conflicts since the Albanian armed insurgency in Macedonia in 2001, but peace consolidation remains a challenging task in Bosnia, Macedonia, and Kosovo.

Twenty-five years after the break-up of Yugoslavia, most Western Balkans societies are still recovering from armed conflict and widespread violence. Milošević, Tuđman and Izetbegović have all gone but the ethnically charged political environment has created conditions for old and new political actors across the Balkans to play the nationalist card to the detriment of democratic accountability and rule of law. Most countries have had to struggle simultaneously with competing processes of state-building and nation-building similar to "building a ship while sailing". The power sharing solutions implemented have predominantly been guided by the dynamics of ethnic conflict on the ground and consequently the constitutional frameworks

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[1] V.P. Gagnon (2004) The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s. Cornell University Press. pp.217, Bunce, V (1999) Peaceful versus Violent State Dismemberment: A Comparison of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia, Politics & Society, 27, pp. 217-237, Posen, B. (1993): "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," Survival, 35, pp. 27–47.

established are conducive to the long term politicization of ethnicity. [2]

Kosovo's riots of March 2004, the frequent skirmishes in the Northern part of Kosovo, and volatile inter-ethnic relations in Bosnia and Macedonia are strong reminders that ethno-nationalist issues still have the potential to be important triggers of conflicts with broader security implications for the region and Europe. As a result, ethnicity continues to be a salient and polarizing factor in most societies in the Western Balkans and ethnic parties claiming to represent ethnic communities have become the rule rather than the exception in the post-conflict situation. Particularly in Bosnia and Macedonia, political parties using the ethno-nationalist card have entrenched a system of ethnic patronage that is hard to dismantle with constitutional and democratic means.

So what does this mean for the future of the region? Are ethnic politics turning polarization between ethnic groups into a permanent feature of the political system? Is the "ethnification of politics" indefinitely going to hamper the necessary state-building and consolidation reforms required to join the EU? Are we going to see a shift from ethnic politics into a post-ethnic "normal politics" without external intervention?

This brief paper revisits some of the assumptions on the role ethnicity and ethnic parties in multi-ethnic societies by looking at the empirical record in the Western Balkans, focusing primarily on Bosnia and Macedonia. The next section looks at the impact of ethnicity in post-conflict societies and how ethnicity affects political party strategies. The third section focuses on the record of ethnic politics in Western Balkans, focusing on Bosnia and Macedonia. Section 4 concludes with some ideas on de-ethnicizing politics across the region.

Ethnicity as a Political Resource in Divided Societies

An ethnic party is defined as a political party which either declaratively or practically advocates for the rights of a certain ethnic group, by explicitly or implicitly referring to the ethnic group in party manifestos and electoral programs and defending and advancing its interest when in power.[3] Ethnic parties are generally expected to represent the interests of minority communities but there are exceptions to this rule depending on the number and demographic size of the politically mobilized ethnic groups and the degree to which ethnicity is salient in electoral politics. Thus in certain countries like

Bosnia and Herzegovina or Macedonia – although Bosnian and Macedonian communities constitute a relative majority in relation to other groups (Serbs and Croats in Bosnia and Albanians in Macedonia) given the size, territorial patterns, and organizational capacities of other non-dominant groups – Bosnian and Macedonian parties operate in a framework where political representation is ethnically framed and is generally viewed as ethnic or ethno-nationalist parties.

Once ethnicity becomes a political resource, ethnic parties and politicians can use a number of strategies for mobilizing voters on ethnic grounds, accessing power and consolidating their electoral success. The most widely known strategy is that of "ethnic outbidding" when political parties take more extreme positions on issues involving ethnic and national identity to outcompete other forces within the same ethnic group. Ethnic outbidding efforts translate into aggressive political programs, campaign language, and political strategies between and within ethnic blocs.[4] This spiraling process of intra-ethnic competition relegates other important issues that have a cross-ethnic appeal such as unemployment, corruption, social justice, and environment into the background of political campaigns, preventing debates on programmatic issues.

When the ethnic outbidding pressure recedes and two or more ethnic parties largely cover the field of ethnic politics by emphasizing ethnic issues over other social issues, ethnic parties can also gradually become "ethnic tribune parties" and are largely perceived as the most effective advocates in their respective communities.[5] Due to the expectation that votes for other parties will be wasted, voters are inclined to keep voting for these parties because of their reputations as tribune parties and because they indirectly expect them to channel power and resources to the community. In large part, the long term coalition of the VMRO and DUI in Macedonia illustrates this situation where parties have managed to project themselves as the "guardian" of their respective Macedonian and Albanian communities and have squeezed the middle ground for other less moderate parties. Both parties have shown a tendency to provoke or heighten ethnic tensions, either prior to elections or when they want to divert the attention from non-ethnic issues and governing failures to ethnic problems and consolidating their voters against potential rivals. "Controlled incidents" with ethnic background are then used to reassure their respective ethnic constituencies that VMRO and DUI are the most ardent defenders against the rival ethnic group.

[2]   Dayton Peace Accords (1996), Ohrid Framework Agreement (2001), Ahtisaari Plan for Kosovo's final status (2007).
[3]   Chandra, K (2007), Why Ethnic Parties Succeed: Patronage and Ethnic Head Counts in India, Cambridge University Press. Chandra also adds that ethnic parties are expected to draw a disproportionate amount of members, leader and votes exclusively from a certain ethnic community and frequently in a certain geographical considered as its electoral stronghold.

[4]   Horowitz, D. L. (1985). Ethnic Groups in Conflict. Berkeley: University of California Press.
[5]   Mitchell, P, Geoffrey E. and O'Leary B. (2009) 'Extremist Outbidding in Ethnic Party Systems is not Inevitable: Tribune Parties in Northern Ireland', Political Studies 57: 397–421.

When a framework of intra-ethnic competition is stabilized with two main parties turning into "ethnic tribune parties", rival parties or new comers involved in intra-bloc competition are often forced to pursue a more moderate political campaign in order to discredit the established nationalist parties through a strategy of "ethnic underbidding".[6] An underbidding ethnic party continues to appeal to its own ethnic community but adopts a more moderate stance toward the dominant ethnic group. This strategy is usually provisional and is abandoned once initial success to out-compete traditional parties is achieved. For example, initially the SNSD led by Milorad Dodik was able to attract support from the international community by projecting a more moderate stance on the future of the Serb community in Bosnia relative to the SDS party founded by Karadzic. Once this strategy helped him break ground amongst moderate voters he abandoned the ethnic underbidding strategy and started making nationalist appeals, threatening with complete secession of Republika Srpska from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A less successful strategy is that of counterbidding, employed by parties which seek to move away from ethnic issues in order to appeal to a more moderate middle ground that cares about ethnic issues but is also concerned about other cross-ethnic issues such as economic prosperity, rule of law, openness and transparency in government.[7] To a certain extent this strategy has been tried by new parties in Bosnia like Naša Stranka, but they have hardly been able to garner more than 5% of the vote. The middle ground parties can be quite successful in times of sustained ethnic peace when ethnic identity, ethnic discrimination and other issues recede in importance. However, once ethnic tensions are renewed, counter-bidding or cross-ethnic political parties are usually squeezed by traditional ethnic parties, which often orchestrate ethnic tensions in order to keep the ethnic polarization high and fend off counterbidding efforts of non-ethnic parties.

The strategies of ethnic parties differ significantly based on the status of the party (traditional or new), overall ethnic climate (ethnic tension versus ethnic peace) and party position (governing or opposition) and election cycles (before and after elections).[8] Traditional parties have a tendency to keep their ethnic rhetoric high but in the long run may even moderate their stances unless presented with outbidding pressures from new comers. When ethnic tensions are low, newcomers do not always embark upon outbidding pressure but may well be strategic about the electoral terrain available and run on a program that combines ethnic cleavages with broader social issues resonating with large segments of populations. Also parties that have access to power are expected to moderate their position on ethnic issues and continue "business as usual" once elections are over whereas opposition parties tend to radicalize their position on ethnic issues and portray the incumbents as "too weak" or "sold out" before elections.

Ethnic Parties in the Western Balkans: The State of Play in Bosnia and Macedonia

A large number of political organizations in all the Western Balkan states are ethnic or minority parties and a large part of them compete in elections. The post-Dayton Bosnia is viewed as a typical case of consociationalism where Bosniak, Serb and Croat ethnic groups share power at all levels of government. The Ohrid Framework Agreement does not mandate power sharing in the government between Macedonian and Albanian parties, it provides for local autonomy, equitable representation and veto powers on issues of vital interest to the Albanian community. The Ahtisaari Plan, which was incorporated into Kosovo's constitution, provides asymmetrical representation and veto power on issues of vital interest to the Serb community at the central level, a high degree of autonomy at local level, and the right of Serbia to provide financial and technical support to Serb municipalities.

Cursory research on the political parties in the region shows that of more than 400 parties registered in the six Western Balkan countries, more than 120 claim to represent a certain ethnic community and a large part of them are actively participating in elections.[9] The legacies of the conflict and the constitutional frameworks have created a framework of ethnic representation where political fragmentation is very rampant across ethnic groups and within the same ethnic group. For example, in Kosovo where non-Albanian communities constitute less than 10% of the population of 2 million there are about 28 minority parties claiming to represent the Serb, Turkish, Bosniak, Gorani, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, thus competing for less than 150 thousand votes. The largest of the Serbian parties, Lista Srpska, received less than 40 thousand votes in the last elections of June 2014, but due to reserved parliamentary seats and ethnic quotas it currently has 9 MPs, 1 Deputy Prime Minister, 2 ministers and 5 deputy ministers at the central level and at the local level it runs 9 out of the 10 municipalities where the Serb-community is in majority.

6 Coakley, J (2008) 'Ethnic Competition and the Logic of Party System Transformation', European Journal of Political Research 47: 766–93.
7 Coakley, J (2008) @Ethnic Competition and the Logic of Party System Transformation", European Journal of Political Research 47: 766–93.
8 Zuber, Ch. (2011) "Beyond outbidding? Ethnic party strategies in Serbia", Party Politics 19(5) 758–777.

9 For example, in Serbia out of 75 parties about 42 claim to represent Hungarian, Bosnia, Croat, Albanian, Roma and other communities. In Albania, 8 parties claim to represent the Greek, Macedonian and Roma communities. In Kosovo more than 30 ethnic parties representing the Serb, Bosniak, Turk, Roma, Gorani and Croat communities. In Montenegro about 30.

Lista Srpska was created in 2014 and is to a large extent controlled by Belgrade and in a very short time managed to render the other well established Serb parties in Kosovo politically irrelevant. As the future of the Serb community in Kosovo is still being negotiated in the EU facilitated dialog between Kosovo and Serbia, in the next section we look at the record of ethnic politics in Bosnia and Macedonia where due to the consociational nature of the Dayton and Ohrid agreements, ethnic politics has taken place for more than 20 years.[10]

The Entrenchment of "Sextet" in Bosnian Politics

The Dayton Accord, which ended the war in Bosnia in 1996, created an ethno-federal state of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) between two loosely connected entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where Muslim and Croat populations are predominant, and the Republika Srpska, with a large Serb majority, and the jointly shared autonomous district of Brcko. The Constitution recognized BiH as the shared state of the three constituent peoples: Bosniaks (48%), Serbs (37%) and Croats (14%) and Other undesignated groups (1%). Consistent with the requirement of the consociational approach, this system has incentivized the establishment of ethnic parties, which focus their political programs on ethnic issues, and main parties from the dominant ethnic groups. Since no Bosniak, Serb or Croat parties can garner the required number of seats to form the government, parties from the three communities share power at the federal level in proportion with their vote share and established ethnic quotas. Ethnic parties are then represented in the collective federal presidency, a two chamber parliament, and a government where each minister has two deputies from other ethnic communities. The ethnic representation extends in all levels of government and civil service at municipal, cantonal and state level.

Notwithstanding the variations in their political programs, most parties claiming to represent their respective Bosniak, Serb and Croat communities focus on ethnic issues. Broadly speaking, Bosniak parties demand a strong federal state with reduced powers for the two entities, Serb parties are interested in maintaining the highest level of self-rule for the Republika Srpska and, if possible, complete independence from BiH, and Croat parties are interested the re-organization of the state in order to get their own Croat entity outside of the Bosniak/Muslim dominance.

The first post-Dayton elections represented the first opportunity to move away from ethnic politics in favor of multi-ethnic parties. In order to prevent ethnic parties from government, the international community invested a lot in the Unified List, a cross-ethnic coalition of Bosniak, Croat and Serb political organizations. The results of the first elections were disappointing and ethnic parties took more than 70% of the popular vote.

When the European Union and international actors have tried to support multi-ethnic parties, the results have been limited and short lived. Ever since 1996, the political scene has been dominated by 6 or 7 major political parties representing the three communities.[11] The vote share for the nationalist parties has increased to 85%, leaving very little ground (about 15%) to other smaller parties with cross-ethnic or non-ethnic electoral programs. Despite the international intervention to create a more viable centralized state at the federal level, ethnic issues dominate the agenda of political parties, which hardly dedicate the time and energy to finding solutions for cross-ethnic problems of poverty, corruption, unemployment or economic growth.

The only time that traditional nationalist parties were left out of the government at both the federal and state levels was in 2000-2002 when the SDP led a large multi-ethnic eleven party coalition called the Alliance for Change. The SDP led coalition received substantial support before and after elections from the international community, which was also instrumental in forging a post-election coalition that left the traditional ethnic parties (SDA, HDZ and SDS) out of office. The multi-ethnic parties Social Democratic Party of BiH (SDP), Naša Stranka and United Front have managed to a certain degree to have a multi-ethnic membership and political platforms but their electoral success is hampered by the entrenched nature of ethnic politics.

On the Serb political camp in 1997, the international community rallied to support Milorad Dodik as prime minister of the Republika Srpska (RS), although the DSD had only two seats in the RS parliament. Dodik was seen as a moderate leader with little or no direct connection to the wartime establishment and represented a viable alternative to the SDS, which was formerly led by Karadzic. Dodik initially committed to work on reconciliation and an untied Bosnia for all communities but once in power, he gradually shifted and stepped up his nationalist rhetoric, outbidding the SDS and turning himself into a nationalist by publicly announcing that the RS had the right to declare impendence from BiH. The combination of nationalism and populism has now turned him into one of the most powerful politicians in the country.

Although ethno-nationalist parties are unable or unwilling to strike compromise on most policies, a group of six parties and their leaders referred to euphemistically as the "Sextet" has been taking turns in government for

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[10] McEvoy, J. O'Leary, B (2013) "Power Sharing in Deeply Divided Places", University of Pennsylvania Press

[11] Bosniak parties include SDA, SBiH, SDP, Serb parties are SNSD, SDS and Croat parties HDZ and HDZ-1990.

almost 20 years.[12] These parties describe themselves as strong advocates of their ethnic community while continuously sharing the spoils of power with ethnic rivals. They have built an extensive system of patronage by channeling resources, jobs, privatization deals, concessions, government public work tenders, and through informal rules and practices ensure a division of turf and benefits along ethnic lines. Twenty years after Dayton, the Sextet practically presides over a system of ethnocracy where democracy has been transformed in a hegemony of ethnic parties from each community.[13]

Party democracy and debate are stifled and main decisions are made by a handful of leaders from each community. Although frustration with government inefficiency, corruption and clientelism is very high across the ethnic groups, civil society remains organized along ethnic lines and a limited number of multi-ethnic civil society organizations are weak and disorganized. As voters widely regard politics as "dirty business", political frustration is high but political participation and election turnout very low. Occasional outbursts of frustration with bad governance, nepotism, patronage and corruption similar to the multi-ethnic youth riots of 2014 in many BiH cities is stifled and isolated through sustained media campaigns, coercion or co-option of leaders and activists in networks of ethnic patronage.

The EU integration and constitutional and state reforms are hampered, as conflicting goals of ethnic powerbrokers have become permanent sources of decision-making deadlocks and crises. The international community and particularly the EU, who were once seen as necessary but transitional peace guarantors, have become constant deadlock-breakers of the ethnic politics and a permanent feature of peace agreements. Ethnic politics shows no signs of abating and ethnic leaders and communities continue to amass resources and power for their own communities as if they were preparing for the next ethnic confrontation.

Macedonia: A Bi-national Oligarchy

Macedonia had a less violent and more promising start than other regional neighbors after it declared independence in 1991. In the post-independence period, all ethnic communities mobilized politically in their own political parties and ethnic tensions between Macedonia and Albanian communities have been a recurring feature of Macedonia's society since 1991. Initial contention of the Albanian community focused on provisions of the Constitution of Macedonia, which defined Macedonia as a state of Macedonians and other communities. Albanian community representatives viewed the consti-

tutional status as a setback compared to the 1974 constitution, which recognized Albanians and Turks nominally as nationalities.

Twenty-five years later, Albanian parties claim that the Albanian community is discriminated against and have continuously demanded changes in the constitutional framework to enhance Albanian community rights, whereas Macedonian parties emphasize the fact that the Macedonian community is the largest national group and generally consider the Albanian demands for more rights with suspicion and distrust.

The Albanian political camp has gone through several changes since 1991 as a result of a series of successful "ethnic outbidding" efforts. Following the initial boycotts and an unrecognized referendum on territorial autonomy, the Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP), as the largest Albanian political party in Macedonia, participated in post-independent parliaments and governments in Macedonia. After some initial success in advancing the rights of the Albanian community, the PDP soon splintered and was outflanked by the Democratic Party of Albanians, a new party bringing together various political activists presumably dissatisfied with the poor record of the PDP in defending the Albanian community.

DPA initially projected itself as a more aggressive defender of Albanian interest and was advocating for consociational solutions for Macedonia. It dominated the Albanian political scene until 2001 but rapidly lost support once the National Liberation Army launched a short lived insurgency against the Macedonian security forces. After the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA), the NLA leadership established the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), which since 2002 has become the dominant Albanian party. DUI runs on a nationalist program demanding full implementation of the OFA and touts its successful war credentials anytime it is criticized. DUI has been the dominant Albanian party in Macedonia, winning all central and local elections since 2002. For almost 15 years at the central level, DUI has been a junior coalition member in four governments and led the largest Macedonian parties.

On the Macedonian political establishment, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation – Democratic Party of Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) and the League of Social Democrats of Macedonia (LSDM) have been taking turns as ruling parties since 2001. Widely viewed as a more nationalist and populist party, the VMRO, which led the government at the outbreak of the armed conflict in 2001, lost power to the LSDM in the first elections held in 2002 after the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA). After initial progress with the implementation of the OFA and a controversial decentralization of local self-government, LSDM suffered criticism of being unable to stand up to Albanian

[12] Bosnia's Future Europe Report N°232 – International Crisis Group, 10 July 2014

[13] Bosnia's Future Europe Report N°232 – International Crisis Group, 10 July 2014

pressures and since 2006 VMRO has continuously won all central and local elections.

Since 2008, as the prospects of NATO and EU accession became unattainable due to the Greek veto over Macedonia's state name, VMRO led by Nikola Gruevski increasingly embarked upon a nationalist and populist program emphasizing the ancient roots of the Macedonian nation. Although VMRO shares power with DUI, the implementation of a 600 million Euro Skopje 2014 project to promote an exclusively Macedonian identity as well as allegations of unfair treatment of Albanians have strained inter-ethnic relations.

The intra-Macedonia political polarization reached its peak in February 2015 after the LSDM released transcripts of a government led wiretapping scandal that revealed the direct involvement of VMRO and DUI senior officials in government corruption, election fraud and undue influence over judiciary, media, and civil society. An EU commission expert team confirmed serious symptoms of state capture at all levels of society, finding amongst other things:

> "apparent direct involvement of senior government and party officials in illegal activities including electoral fraud, corruption, abuse of power and authority, conflict of interest, blackmail, extortion (pressure on public employees to vote for a certain part with the threat to be fired), criminal damage, severe procurement procedure infringements aimed at gaining an illicit profit, nepotism and cronyism; ... unacceptable political interference in the nomination/appointment of judges as well as interference with other supposedly independent institutions for either personal or party advantage."[14]

Both VMRO and DUI have significantly increased their vote shares since they first joined the coalition in 2008, whereas the second largest parties in both communities, LSDM and DPA, have halved. As the wiretapping scandal has shown, both the VMRO and BDI are presiding a system of bi-national oligarchy where they project themselves as the guardians of their respective communities but otherwise pursue very similar non-ethnic and instrumentalist goals of expanding their resources for themselves and their families in clear disregard of the rules of democratic system.[15] They have now created a system of government, which is hard to dismantle by constitutional means.

Despite the success in the implementation of the OFA, the Albanian community's discontent with DUI has increased rapidly due to the alleged inability of the DUI to defend the Albanian interest against an aggressive nationalist VMRO. Ironically, the VMRO's position as an "ethnic tribune party" amongst Macedonian voters is

pushing the LSDM to appeal for support in the Albanian community in order to become a dominant party of the Macedonian community. However, as ethnicity is heavily politicized across communities, bridging the ethnic gap and attracting Albanian voters appears to be an uphill battle for LSDM. The opposition and civil society groups are constantly holding demonstrations, but so far it has been difficult to create a cross-ethnic coalition with the critical mass to reform the system. The links with VMRO run too deep to allow any cross-ethnic coalition to emerge and they will together continue to use nationalist scaremongering and end of the world scenarios, like the Kumanovo armed incident, in order to keep their political fiefdoms intact.

As in the Bosnian case, the country's Euro-Atlantic integration and democracy have stagnated and the tension is very high within Macedonian and Albanian communities and between them. The overall post-independence experience of Macedonia shows that political space will continue to be organized along ethnic lines in the years to come. Although Macedonians and Albanian communities may be equally dissatisfied with the chronic crisis, ethnic distrust prevents cross-ethnic political processes. Multi-ethnic initiatives to reform the political system and the state are proving difficult to build and sustain.

On the Albanian side, newcomers into the political scene are trying to capitalize on the Albanian discontent with DUI, hoping to mount an "ethnic outbidding" effort. However, new Albanian parties appear to be more interested in dethroning DUI than fixing the many problems of Macedonia which are there to stay and will not disappear with DUI's electoral defeat. While it is still unknown how long will it take to replace DUI, it is clear that the next wave of Albanian political demands will focus on re-configuration of the state along ethnic lines beyond the arrangements offered by OFA.

Ways forward: Is post-ethnic politics desirable or possible in the future?

The brief overview of ethnic politics in the Western Balkans shows that once ethnicity is politicized and ethnic parties are created, state-building may suffer perpetually as "ethnification of politics" makes the political system heavily dependent on ethnic loyalty and thus less conducive to political compromises and national cohesion. So far, nationalist parties in Macedonia have been able to provide a certain level of predictability in politics, which resonates with the expectations of large numbers of ethnic voters from the rival communities in BiH and Macedonia and serves the international interest of putting stability before democratic accountability. Also the international community, by emphasizing stability, has become increasingly dependent on ethnic power brokers who can maintain local peace, to the detriment of democracy and rule of law. However, in the long run, disagreements about who runs the state and

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[14] Recommendations of the Senior Experts' Group on systemic Rule of Law issues relating to the communications interception revealed in Spring 2015, Brussels 8 June 2015

[15] Macedonia: Defusing the Bombs - International Crisis Group, 9 July 2015

how should the state be organized may threaten the relative peace between ethnic groups.

To be fair, ethnicity is far from being the source of all evils in the Western Balkans and you only need to look at Albania to understand that consolidating democratic stability and rule of law can be a daunting challenge, even when ethnic diversity is not a problem. Bad governance, stalled reforms, rampant corruption, entanglement of politics and organized crime do not take place only in multi-ethnic societies. Autocrats who coerce the media, suppress the opposition and consolidate their grip to power with seemingly legitimate, free and fair elections can flourish even in ethnically homogenous societies in the Western Balkans and beyond.

The key difference is that while in Albania extreme polarization and state-building failures remain immense, political change may gradually come from within and as the political system matures, a new generation of politicians may be able to complete the democratization and rule of law reforms. On the other hand, in Bosnia, Macedonia, Kosovo, ethnic groups do not agree on the fundamental nature of the state and its direction, so de-ethnicizing the political processes without external intervention seems impossible. Ethnic politics has displayed lock-in tendencies, which are multiply determined by collective memories of ethnic violence, the constitutional frameworks established, the political enterprises of ethnic leaders, and the expectations of ethnic voters. The framework of intra-ethnic competition is also reinforced by kin-states, external influences of global actors and processes.

Assuming that "constrained change" is a key property of ethnic identity and ethnic communities are not going to disappear in the near future, what can the international community do to help the de-ethnicization of politics in the Western Balkans? How can the constitutional frameworks, electoral law and political party regulations be reformed in order to reduce the salience of ethnicity in political processes?

The first approach to reduce the salience of ethnicity in favor of multi-ethnicity is a top down approach where the international community forces dramatic changes in the constitutional frameworks, electoral system and political party laws in order to outlaw ethnic parties. This is both anti-democratic and probably impossible to achieve in Bosnia and Macedonia due to the powerful role of local leaders in resisting change that affects their grip on power. Short of this drastic and probably counterproductive intervention, it is possible to introduce rules and procedures that encourage multi-ethnicity for the establishment, registration and participation in elections.[16] These rules make it difficult for ethnic parties to compete by requiring cross-ethnic membership, leadership and national presence for competing in elections. The downside of setting cross regional or cross-ethnic composition as a pre-condition for competing in elections is that it may disproportionately affect parties from small ethnic communities which may fail to attract support and establish their presence outside their region and turn them into political outcasts. Restricting ethnic parties may have an adverse effect on the democratic process as it forces such outcast groups to venture into anti-constitutional activities, potentially mobilizing supporters for an armed struggle against a government.

Another suggestion is to employ a bottom up approach that makes the current system more transparent by increasing pressure for change from within. One alternative to challenge the "business as usual" approach to ethnic politics may be to make the current system more open and transparent by building aggressive multi-ethnic civil society groups that monitor the electoral performance based on the state-building and good governance indicators and not judging parties based on ethnic performance. In addition, encouraging underrepresented groups from all ethnic groups to enter politics can increase the pressure points on the entrenched ethnic parties from youth, women and emerging middles classes.

While this appears as a "more of the same" prescription, the recent intra-group polarization between insiders and outsiders of the political establishment in Kosovo, Macedonia, Bosnia, and Montenegro show that even within dominant ethnic groups, generational and class differences are becoming more expressed and may lead to political projects that pose a threat to ethnic politics in the longer run. However, it is hard for new political initiatives to break ground into the closed political landscape of traditional parties maintained through patronage networks in business and media sectors. Therefore, one area of intervention is to reform the current system with newcomers but at the same time make the party recruitment, financing and decision-making processes more open to public scrutiny.

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[16] Reilly, B (2001); Democracy in Divided Societies: Electoral Engineering for Conflict Management, Cambridge University Press.

CASTLES MADE OF SAND AND STONE: POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEMOCRACY

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Paper to follow.

BALKAN MEDIA: A COMPLEX AND UNFINISHED STORY

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1. Between stagnation and decline

Issues of freedom of expression in general and those of freedom of the media in particular in Balkan countries keep becoming more and more complex. A black and white view of them would be counterproductive. An analysis solely from the *angle of democracy,* as often happens, would be insufficient. The media is certainly one of the pillars of democracy, but the media is also *one of the industries of capitalist development* of our countries. This is often underestimated, if not forgotten altogether. As a matter of fact, issues of freedom of the media today, to a large extent, are issues of the media markets, if we could use this term.

Different reports about freedom of expression indicate that **freedom of the media in the Balkans oscillates between stagnation and decline**. According to the 2015 annual country reports by the European Commission, when it comes to freedom of expression, the candidate and potential candidate countries for EU membership made "no progress" (Montenegro, Kosovo, Serbia); backslid (Bosnia); or "continued to backslide" (Macedonia). The sole exception is Albania, which made "some progress."

Should we refer to the report by Reporteres sans Frontieres, we would see that Serbia ranks 59th, BiH ranks 68th, Albania 82nd, Kosovo 90th, Montenegro 106th, and Macedonia ranks 118th. The report underscores some progress in Serbia and Montenegro, a decline in BiH, Macedonia and Kosovo, and stagnation in Albania.

Should we refer to the Freedom House ranking, the Western Balkan countries continue to be considered as countries with "partly free press," with the exception of Macedonia, which has dropped down to the category of countries with "not free" press. Montenegro ranks 80th, Serbia is 87th, Kosovo is 96th, BiH is 104th, Albania is 106th and Macedonia is 136th.

Last, according to freedom of speech indicators of the IREX Media Sustainability Index 2016, Macedonia (1.47 out of 4) and Serbia (1.89) rank in the group of countries with an "unsustainable mixed system," while Kosovo (2.37), Montenegro (2.41), Bosnia (2.46), and Albania (2.92) rank in the group of countries with "near sustainability".

As may be seen, although a general consensus is lacking and there are several differences in the evaluations of these organizations for different countries of the region, what may be said is that the **problems and difficulties that freedom of the media encounter in the Balkans are the same, but the degree of their display or aggravation varies from one country to the other**. Of course, the situation appears more serious in Macedonia, where an anti-media regime has already been installed.

A number of historical, political, economic and other factors exert considerable impact on the development of the media in the Balkan region.

It is clear that **tradition** is not a helpful force when it comes to free speech. Under communism, what was labeled information was in fact propaganda. After the fall of communism, nationalist propaganda took the place of communist propaganda in the countries of the former Yugoslavia. The media was as much a victim of war as it was its instigator. Balkan societies have not detached themselves clearly and definitely either from the remote communist past, or the near past of nationalist conflicts. Without a doubt, these factors have an impact on the development of the media and its freedom.

The Balkans of today is the region of hybrid democracies, where the tendencies to illiberalism are becoming increasingly dominant. Illiberal threats to Balkan democracies are **religious extremism**, which not so rarely is media extremism, or cyber-extremism; **populism,** which in the Balkans appears in the form of nationalistic populism, pro-Europeanist populism, anti-Europeanist populism and in many other forms; nevertheless, in all cases, it is demagogic and anti-liberal and, after all, uses the media as a tribune of political demagogy; **new nationalism**, a virus that has affected precisely those groups that, in theory, were considered the most immune to nationalist disease: youth, and is increasingly appearing in the form of cyber-nationalism.

Unfortunately, all syndromes and threats to liberal democracy that have emerged in the countries surrounding our region, from the Orban Syndrome to the Berlusconi Syndrome, have been replicated in one form or another in the countries of the Balkans, thus harming their democratic progress. These features have without a doubt had a clear impact on the freedom of the media.

Third, **the severe economic crisis** that the region is experiencing has had a direct impact on the media landscape, leading to a climate of fear and insecurity among journalists. Journalists are losing jobs and their salaries are not being paid regularly. It would not be a mistake to say that a media proletariat exists today in all countries of the Balkans.

2. When clientelism becomes a norm

The fall of the authoritarian regimes in the Balkans in the early 2000s led to an improvement in the situation of media freedom. However, this did not last long. Gradually, **independent media was replaced by clientelistic media; repression was replaced by pressure; censorship was replaced by self-censorship; and open control was replaced by hidden influences**.

Although the countries of the Balkans have adopted media legislation that is generally positive, especially the one related to defamation and access to information, the implementation of this legislation remains problematic. Laws are written according to European standards and are implemented according to Balkan standards.

Furthermore, there is no lack of attempts to slide back, such as the proposal of the Albanian Government last fall to recriminalize defamation, or the latest decision of the Constitutional Court of Albania to abrogate anti-monopoly and anti-concentration provisions in the broadcast law, which opens the path to narrower pluralism in the Albanian media.

All the countries of the region have adopted Freedom of Information (FOI) laws, which have been in force for more than a decade. In some of the countries, FOI laws are under revision and are being amended in order to better fit the new context of development of the internet and new technologies, aiming for a more proactive approach in offering information to the public. However, **there is a stark discrepancy between the generally high standards of the FOI laws and their implementation.** There is a general consensus that what most countries have in common is that public officials do not respect the law and intentionally delay its implementation, with the aim of discouraging journalists and citizens. In all countries, FOI laws stipulate a penalty for officials who hinder or refuse to release information. However, these penalties, even though low, in most cases are not implemented.

For years now, when I have tried to provide a snapshot description of the media situation in the Balkans, I have referred to the comment that a number of authors have used in characterizing the media situation in post-communist societies: **"The press became pluralistic, but not independent" or "The press became free, but not independent".**

Independence is in fact the main challenge of today's Balkan media. Clientelism is the key word that we could use to characterize the situation. Instead of serving the public, the media is now at the service of the interests of business and politics. In a sense, Balkan media is sandwiched between business and politics. **The media appears on the one hand as an extension of politics and, on the other, as an annex of the different businesses.**

As a recent report of the European Parliament ("Media freedom in the Balkans: state of play") notes, "the host of outstanding media-related issues includes political interference; problematic financial dependency; the significant share of state aid and its arbitrary distribution; dwindling media revenues; intimidation of journalists; poor working conditions; and under funded public broadcasters that are directly or indirectly controlled by governments and affiliated interest groups, among others."

Although we continue to use the term "media markets," it would be more accurate to talk about "media scenes." As a matter of fact, it seems that in the Balkans, we are still in a *pre-market phase,* for the simple reason that no economic logic, or no market logic, could justify the existence of overcrowded media landscapes that we have in all of the Balkan countries. Just to provide an example, Albania holds the first place in Europe in terms of number of daily papers per capita (22 of them, in a country with a population of roughly 3 million), but it ranks last in Europe when it comes to the circulation of daily newspapers per capita, because altogether these 26 dailies produce less than 70,000 copies.

Although much has been said on *transparency of media ownership and of media finances,* progress in this field has been limited. Legal amendments have not resulted in the improvement of the situation in practice. The business of media can hardly be considered transparent in the Balkans. **Who owns what? Who are the owners? Who pays whom? And who owns the owners?** These are questions that are still lacking answers.

In their latest research study "Financial engineering for state and media capture," Brankica Patkovic and Sandra B. Hrvatin underscore that, "in most countries, media are instrumentalized for political purposes, while the media market is merely an euphemism for state oriented advertising." To provide another example – the Government of Macedonia continues to be the biggest advertiser in the country, channeling public funds permanently to pro-government media, while also influencing and directing private advertisers to the same media outlets.

3. The challenge of illiberal threats

Though the positive role of the media in the democratization process is usually taken for granted, in fact, the matter is much more complex. Huntington warned long ago that **just as it is an 'instrument of democracy,' the media may also be an 'instrument for the reduction of democracy**.'

The truth is that during the period of the post-communist transition, including the present moment, politics has influenced and modeled the media more than the media has influenced and modeled politics.

What we notice at present is that politics has turned into *"tele-politics,"* or rather, increasingly more into *"cyber-politics."* The mediatization of politics (and even its Facebook-ization) is certainly a normal and global phenomenon. However, as I have noted on other occasions, it seems that instead of the mediatization of politics, in fact we see *"the political clientelization of the media."* Since it shifts the focus of the media from the public to politics, it serves politics instead of serving the public. What one notices in the Balkans today are the **use, misuse and abuse of the media** by politicians.

The most serious form of political clientelism is found in public broadcasters, which remain unreformed old-fashioned institutions. For a long time, the Albanian Public Television has not been able to carry out its mission and has lost significant ground to private television. Its audience is less than 3 percent in the capital. Controlled by the previous government and ignored by the current one, PBS in Albania has been and remains a victim of the permanent political conflict in the country. A negative effect is that, after a quarter of a century of endeavors to transform and reform public televisions, the public has lost trust in the very idea of public media, an idea that currently seems almost discredited. In a sense, it can be said that **we have transitioned from a state sector media monopoly of communism to a private sector media monopoly of post-communism**.

Partisanship in Balkan media is still in high dosages, and even in extreme forms, as is the case of the media in Montenegro. New Balkan democracies are a variant of *"contested democracies,"* with a high degree of political polarization. Unfortunately, the phenomenon of polarization also appears as media polarization. What we notice today is polarization along ethnic lines in BiH, polarization along political lines in Albania, polarization along political and commercial lines in Montenegro and polarization along political and ethnic lines in Macedonia.

The fact that Balkan media does not maintain the necessary distance from political groups, but on the contrary, identifies with them, has led to a situation whereby the decline in the credibility of politics has been inevitably associated with the decline in the credibility of the media. For part of the public in the Balkans today, it is difficult to make a clear distinction between politicians and journalists.

The quick development of online and social media in all countries (Albania currently only has about 1.45 million accounts on Facebook) is increasingly shifting the gravity center online. Blogs, portals, discussion fora and other tools have significantly democratized journalism, while at the same time rendering it more complex. While the internet, new media and new technologies have certainly provided more opportunities for freedom of expression, for civic journalism and for the enhancement of democracy in general, this freedom has also given rise to new concerns, such as the spreading of gossip, baseless accusations, undue criticism, and in more extreme cases, hate speech and cyber-nationalism. The reaction of the Albanian blogosphere (as well as Serbian blogosphere) after the events in the Belgrade stadium, when the two countries were involved in a cyber war, or media war, testifies to the fact that challenges are large and unfamiliar.

The general social-political context on the one hand and the speedy development of the social media on the other have led to a new situation whereby illiberal, anti-

liberal media has moved from the margins to the center of the stage. Conspiracy theories are blooming online and offline. Along EU and West-supported civil society, there is the emergence of *uncivil society*, one with radical, anti-liberal, and anti-European tendencies, supported by some of the governments of the region, Russia, Turkey or business groups. The same is happening with the media.

As was underscored in the beginning of this text, religious extremism, populism and new nationalism have appeared first and foremost as media phenomena. This is one more reason to turn more attention toward the situation of the media, the inclinations and tendencies of its development and undoubtedly its impact on the democratic process.

4. EU accession and media freedom

The EU integration process has been a transforming force of former communist societies in general. However, it has not been such a force when it comes to media systems and particularly to freedom of expression.

"Reversed transitions" in Hungary and Poland and *"frozen transitions"* in most of the Balkan countries demonstrate that we are all in the same boat. The situation of freedom of expression in Budapest, Sofia or Warsaw does not appear to be any better than in Tirana, Belgrade or Sarajevo. Negative developments in Eastern European countries, without a doubt, have a negative influence on the countries of the Balkans and, above all, demonstrate that we have not yet reached what might be considered the *point of irreversibility.*

As Petkovic and Hrvatin write, "the EU is increasingly relegating its media policy to the realm of economic competition as opposed to the protection of basic human rights…" This approach, as well as the lack of a specific EU policy toward media in the Western Balkans, allow for a lot of room for political leaders when it comes to limiting or infringing upon freedom of the media.

Some recent positive developments such as the Speak-Up Conferences, the drafting of Guidelines for EU support to media freedom and media integrity, should be accompanied by a strict monitoring process, clear conditionality and serious assistance. Above all, the unequivocal message that **freedom of expression is non-negotiable** should be rendered clearly.

ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION PRACTICE IN MACEDONIA AND HOW TO MOVE FORWARD

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Abstract

From previous studies we have read about the historical aspect and social factors related to gender equality, the legal basis for gender representation in political life, the responsibilities of institutions and strategies regarding the representation of women in politics. However, many other issues regarding gender representation in political life in Macedonia remain to be discussed.

The framework of this paper will analyze the following issues: the challenges of women in political life; the role of women in parliament; how to improve gender representation in politics; distrust and disengagement of women in politics; what political parties can do regarding gender representation and the role of women as voters.

Besides the above-mentioned circumstances, I will analyze current activities and strategies planned by the competent authorities in order to improve the situation and suggest steps to promote the equal involvement of women and men in politics.

Introduction

Macedonia has made notable advancements and achieved visible results in the efforts to establish balanced gender participation in politics (NAPGE, 2007:22). Many legislative improvements have been made and various legal mechanisms exist, but their implementation has been unsatisfactory.

The table in the attachment shows how women have been represented in politics during election cycles.

After the parliamentary elections of 1990, women's associations pointed out that there is not enough time to wait for gender equality to happen naturally, since it may take many decades until the real emancipation of society takes place. Special measures were adopted with the introduction of the 30% quota for female members of Parliament in 2002. It proved that political parties put women at the bottom of their lists, as the 30% was not reached. Thus, later changes were made to ensure that at least every third person on the list is a woman. Since women who were selected as MPs resigned in favor of male candidates who ranged behind them, recent legal changes (in 2014) provide that if women resign, they will be replaced by the next woman on the list.

1. What are the major challenges women in politics are facing?

The political obstacles that women face include:

- *The spread of "male model" in politics.* Political life is organized according to male views about politics and is often based on the idea of "winners and losers", competition and confrontation. Women tend to give priority to societal concerns, such as social security, national health care and children's issues (Shvedova, 2002:36);

- *The lack of party support in the financing of women candidates and lack of financial resources.* As making an effective campaign carries a great cost, this presents a serious obstacle for women. Inheritance legislation is gender neutral, it has not supported a change in traditions and women still are excluded from inheritance. Currently, between 11-13% of women own land or property (Reactor, 2012). Discrimination of women is a general occurrence, but some groups are more affected then others. Examples are Roma, Albanian women and women from rural areas. Most Roma women and girls face double discrimination: gender and racial (Progress Report: 2013), and around 89% of Albanian women and 64% of Roma women are not economically active (Mojskoska-Blazevski, 2011);

- *Women's political engagement represents the next challenge.* Another obstacle is the dual role of women: as mothers/women who will take care of the housework and also perform their professions (lawyer, doctor, teacher etc.). Political activities appear as a third challenge, which may adversely affect family and professional careers. More than half of the women felt that their household obligations limit their freedom (Statistical Office, 2011). However, this should not be so. Instead, women should see their lives as a continuum. They must set priorities for what they want to achieve in life and work in chronological order to achieve them (to become women, mothers, professionals or deputies).

- *Women's lack of self-confidence* as a result of self-perception that politics is a "dirty game"; but also low confidence of men in women to be involved in politics (as a result of obedience to social roles for women and men); presentation of women by the media as "the weaker sex" and others.

From what has been mentioned above, we can conclude that the obstacles to the participation of women in politics are not only legally and systematically enshrined in the state, but are also related to a number of other factors that determine the level of emancipation of society.

2. What role do female members of parliament play?

In the last parliamentary composition (2014) in the Macedonian Parliament were 42 women of a total of 123 MPs.[1] Parliament had 3 vice-presidents, of whom only one was female.

The Parliament has 21 permanent working bodies (of which 6 had female presidents), and other bodies where women were represented with 9 members, of a total of 45.

Parliament has 3 councils (women were presidents of 2 councils), which included 15 women members of the total of 68 members.

Parliament has 9 delegations, on top of which were 3 female presidents, and one vice-chairman.

Parliament has 46 parliamentary groups for cooperation with other countries, in which there were only 11 female presidents.

3. How can gender equality in politics be better promoted?

Equal participation in public life can be achieved if it is within the legal system and political culture and there are secured measures for equality in power sharing and active participation in policy-making at all levels. In this regard, the Government of Macedonia formed a group composed of representatives of the competent ministries[2] and representatives of civil society organizations working in the field of gender equal opportunities. This working group had the authorization to create a National Action Plan for Gender Equality (2007-2012).[3]

Macedonia has established institutional mechanisms for equal opportunities for women and men at the national[4]

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[1] Parliament was dissolved on April 6, while the next elections expected to be held on 5 June 2016 if the preliminary conditions are met as determined by the political parties in "The Agreement of Przino".

[2] Certain institutions were responsible: MLSP, local governments, political parties and civil sector.

[3] To achieve strategic objective II (Essential Representation of Women in the Executive, Legislative and Judicial Authority) and strategic objective III (Raising Awareness of Women and Men for the importance of Women in the Political and Public Life and in the Processes of Decision-making) had provided activities and indicators. *For more see at:* http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/dokumenti.nspx

[4] At the national level the following are responsible: Department for Equal Opportunities (DEO) and the State Advisor for Equal Opportunities within the MLSP. DEO examines the cases reported (from the public and private sector entities) for unequal treatment based on sex and is charged to develop a procedure for protection against gender-based discrimination. In all ministries a Coordinator and Deputy Coordinator for equal opportunities were appointed. They are responsible for the introduction of a gender perspective, implementing the Strategy for Gender Equality and must submit an annual report to the MLSP for actions taken. The Commission on Equal Opportunities for women and men in Parliament and the Club of Deputies represent the mechanisms for the implementation

and local levels[5]. Also, in February 2013, Parliament approved the 2013-2020 Strategy on Gender Equality[6] as a continuation of the previous strategy. The new strategy provides the framework and sets out the basic steps and specific guidance for the full achievement of gender equality, through the undertaking of short-term and medium-term actions that will be implemented through operational programs.

Under the framework of MLSP, an operational plan was prepared for the implementation of an efficient system for achieving gender equality through functional mechanisms for harmonization and measurement of indicators on progress in gender equality.[7]

The results[8] showed that the recognition of the role of women in policy-making is changing in a positive direction and the opening of political parties and greater involvement of women in the executive bodies of parties and activities towards the adaptation of professional and family life have had a positive impact (Annual report, 2014: 6).

The effect of the strategy remains to be seen in the upcoming parliamentary elections in June 2016 and other election cycles.

4. What are the chances of gender equality regarding distrust and political disengagement of society?

The level of women's involvement in the decision making processes and especially politics is dependent on multiple factors, from the traditional distribution of household activities to societal gender stereotypes that push women out of public spaces and result in a lack of free time to engage in decision making (Risteska, Lazarevski, Mickovska-Raleva, 2012: 67). The biggest obstacles to the growth of women's political participation

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of gender mainstreaming in the highest representative body of policy and decision making.

[5] Gender mechanisms in local governance within the institutions consist of the following structures: Committees for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men (within the councils of local government, composed of councillors for a period of 4 years) and Coordinators for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (civil servants, employees of the local government unit).

[6] Official Journal of the Republic of Macedonia Nr.07-1001/1, 2013

[7] Operating Plan provides defined time activities, changes in legal regulations and other activities, reporting the results of the institutions involved, obligations and duties of the competent institutions, research and measurement of results and budget plan. *For more see:* National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2013-2016, MLSP operational plan 2015 for implementation of strategy for gender equality 2013-2020, March 2015.

[8] According to analysis by the Department for Equal Opportunities in the MLSP, 2013 local elections for municipal adviser had won seats by 30% women, which means and increase in the participation of women by 2.8% compared to the previous composition of municipal councils. Compared with previous elections for local government, when there was no woman elected for mayor of the total of 85 municipalities, while in the 2013 elections women had gained 4 positions of mayor (or 4.9%) in the municipalities of Kisela Voda, Tetovo, Gradsko and Bogdanci.

are not legal, but cultural and behavioral, as the continuation of rigid gender roles and stereotypes hinder women in their career choices.[9] Gender stereotypes continue to be present in society, so further measures to combat discrimination against women, especially in rural areas, Roma women etc.[10] are still necessary.

There are several areas, which require attention regarding the political participation of women:

- Increased awareness among women as voters through information campaigns (eg. for Albanian women to understand the importance of the fact that the vote is free and independent; that Roma women must be registered on the voting list; that women should be among the observers during the election process);

- Design of educational programs and the opening of centers that will prepare women for political careers and provide training for women candidates to learn about the legislative process, such as drafting legislation and voting;

- Media coverage of women as successful leaders (Greenberg, McDonald, 2000: 18-19).

Empowering women in the public sphere is a long process that cannot succeed without creating a positive climate in society. In an environment dominated by traditional patriarchal values, it is assumed that legal measures cannot have effect. For example, commissions for equal opportunities have not been established in all municipalities, while in those where they are established they have not performed any activities. Therefore, it is necessary to work on a long-term plan to eliminate gender stereotypes and prejudices in textbooks at all levels of education (UNDP, 2009: 4).

5. How does the organization of political parties affect women's political participation?

In the past years of independence in the country, political parties have changed attitudes towards issues related to the engagement of women in the political process (Stojanovic-Djordjevic, 2016: 31). Nevertheless, their programs have not taken into account gender interests. Neutral gender policies which were offered political parties have not had an impact on changing the status of women in society, while commitments to gender equality in political parties' programs have been largely de-

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[9] The Macedonian labor market puts women at disadvantage; they receive lower salaries and are generally employed in lower-paid professions. A significant number of women work on traditional female work such as housekeeping, cleaning, childcare and care of elderly people.

[10] Commission staff working document the FYR of Macedonia Report 2015, Brussels, 10.11.2015, p.59

clarative, as they do not recognize gender-specific needs in their programs.

There are several key factors that hinder gender equality in politics:

- Political parties discriminate against women within the party, as they include only those women who are proven professionals, employees and have a high level of education on the electoral list, while this does not happen to men;

- Gender equality is still seen as an issue of 'women' (men in general, are not included in the reforms; they do not appear in commissions for gender equality in local and national level).

Apart from that, political parties must find appropriate measures for the promotion of women in their structure to increase intra-party democracy, transparency, accountability, and legitimacy. Political parties must assess the skills, capacities and merits of their political candidates and should not only apply these criteria to eliminate women from political processes.[11]

Political parties, in the context of their activities, should work to improve women's political participation through:

- Implementation of women's equal participation and representation within the party, the administrative and official positions in key political structures (e.g., mayors, deputies, ministers, directors etc.).

- Inclusion of mechanisms for improving women's participation in political programs, such as: providing the necessary human, financial and material support;

- Capacity building of women through specific programs and strategies for improving confidence for women to get involved with public affairs.

6. What role do female voters play?

In Macedonia, young women tend to follow political news less than young men. While just over half of young men rarely or never follow politics, this is the case for 70% of young women. On the other hand, one in every four young men constantly or regularly follows political news compared to only 14% of young women (Korunovska & Maleska, 2011). Women are less likely to follow political events (Kostavska, Mickovska & Nikolovski, 2009) or participate in civic initiatives (Korunovska & Ilikj, 2015).

In Macedonia women exert the right to vote, although in practice there are some deviations, such as:

- *Family voting* is a practice that should be prevented. Although most women think that nobody has the right to use their right to vote, there are those who believe that their male family members may vote for them.

- *Lack of autonomy through voting.* Women, before the vote, usually consult with their father in law, husband or brother and in the end will vote as they were told or independently.

- *Non-participation in elections.* Several factors combined affect voting rights, such as: tradition, lack of interest in voting, non-belief that things can be changed by a vote, low level of education among women and the impossibility of exercising the right to vote.

Most of the women in Macedonia do not participate in public life. That is, they are not members and do not volunteer for an organization that represents their involvement in public social life. Of those participating, most are members of political parties, then NGOs, religious organizations and trade unions.

Conclusion and recommendations

Women remain significantly underrepresented in Macedonian political life. The country's democratic journey is characterized by low levels of women's representation in political parties, on electoral lists and in decision-making bodies.

It is recommended that in the future the state needs to:

- strengthen gender equality policies, institutional frameworks and should allocate sufficient financial resources to improve efficiency;

- introduce gender specific measures in institutions where they do not exist (especially in government, parliament and diplomatic service);

- review the legal basis of 30% to 50% of the quota for women's participation in all decision-making positions;

- introduce of special measures (quotas) for decision-making bodies at all levels and in all organizational structures of political parties;

- review recruitment procedures for positions in the electoral list to identify discriminatory practices and to ensure that women are selected according to criteria equal to men;

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[11] 2nd Roundtable on Political Party Funding and Women's Participation in Political Life, Tbilisi,12.03.2013, p.3

- hold campaigns to promote women leaders and encourage more young women to get involved in politics and create and support measures for encouraging such participation;

- develop a regular monitoring plan for the implementation of gender equality policies, etc.

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Appendix

Women elected in parliamentary election							
Before quotas						After quotas	
1990-1994	1994-1998	1998-2002	2002-2006	2006-2008	2008-2011	2011-2014	2014-2016
4 %	3.3%	7.5%	17.5%	27.5%	28.3%	27.6%	34%
Women in municipality election[1]							
		1996	2000	2005	2009	2013	
Women mayors		-	2.4%	3.5%	-	4.7%	
Women councillors		6.2%	8.4%	22.4%	26.7%	30.2%	

Source: http://women.uclg.org/2013/06/women-in-politics.html

[12] The percentage of women in the municipality has a great disparity from one municipality to another. Namely, in 3 municipalities the percentage of women is more than 41%; in 25 municipalities the participation of women is more than 30%; in 32 municipalities' participation of women ranges from 20-30% and in 25 municipalities the percentage of women is under 20%.

ACRONYMS USED

AfD	Alternative for Germany
BDI	Democratic Union for Integration
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BTI	Bertelsmann Transformation Index
DPA	Democratic Party of Albanians
DUI	Democratic Union for Integration
EU	European Union
EPC	European Policy Centre
FB	Facebook
FOI	Freedom of Information
FPÖ	Freedom Party of Austria
GDN-SEE	Global Development Network Southeast Europe
HDZ	Croatian Democratic Union
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
LSDM	League of Social Democrats of Macedonia
MLSP	Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Macedonia
MP	Member of Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NLA	National Liberation Army
OFA	Ohrid Framework Agreement
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
ÖVP	Austrian People's Party
ÖVP-SPÖ	Austrian People's Party – Social Democratic Party of Austria
PBS	Public Broadcasting System
PDP	Party for Democratic Prosperity
RS	Republika Srpska
SBiH	Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina
SDA	Party of Democratic Action
SDP	Social Democratic Party of BiH
SDS	Serb Democratic Party
SNS	Slovakian National Party
SNSD	Alliance of Independent Social Democrats
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
US	United States
VMRO	Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization
VMRO-DPMNE	Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party of Macedonian National Unity

DEMOCRATIZATION OF POLITICAL PROCESSES AND OVERCOMING POLITICAL-IDEOLOGICAL POLARIZATION