



REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

September 14-17, 2015 | Budva

In cooperation with:



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and European Integration
of Montenegro



The Aspen Institute Germany wishes sincerely to thank the German Federal Foreign Office for its sponsorship of the Aspen Southeast Europe Program 2015 through the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.

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 "Regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans" on September 14-17, 2015, Budva.

The Aspen Institute's role is limited to that of an organizer and convener. Aspen takes no institutional position on policy issues and has no affiliation with the U.S. or German governments. All statements of fact and expressions of opinion contained in all Aspen publications are the sole responsibility of the author or authors.

For further information about The Aspen Institute, please write

Aspen Institute Deutschland e.V.,
Friedrichstraße 60, 10117 Berlin,
Federal Republic of Germany

or call at

+49 30 80 48 90 0.

Visit our website at

www.aspeninstitute.de

*Copyright © 2015 by
The Aspen Institute Deutschland e.V.*

All rights reserved. This report may not be reproduced in whole or in part, in any form (beyond that copying permitted by Sections 107 and 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law and excerpts by reviewers for the public press), without the express, prior, written consent of the publisher.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE ASPEN IDEA	05
AGENDA AND PARTICIPANTS	06
PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES	11
SESSION I: THE STATE OF REGIONAL COOPERATION AND REMAINING CHALLENGES	22
1. Vedran Džihic Civil Society in the Framework of the Berlin Process: Game Changer or More of the Same?	22
2. Jelica Minić The State of Regional Cooperation and Remaining Challenges	25
3. Aleksandar Andrija Pejović The State of Regional Cooperation and Remaining Challenges	32
4. Senada Šelo Šabić Fostering Reforms in the Western Balkans – Fighting Corruption as an Important Milestone	36
5. Dane Taleski Civil Society Forum at the Vienna Summit: Between High Expectations and Modest Achievements	40
SESSION II: REGIONAL SECURITY COOPERATION	45
6. Vesna Bojčić-Dželilović Taking Responsibility for Regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans Seriously: What is at Stake?	45
7. Sidita Kushi Combating a Shared Menace: Terrorism as a Security and Social Threat in the Western Balkans and Beyond	50
8. Ioannis Michaletos Regional Security Cooperation in Southeast Europe	57
9. Florian Qehaja Uneven Regional Security Cooperation: Lessons Learned and Next Steps	67
SESSION III: REGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION, ENERGY SECURITY, AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT	71
10. Jens Bastian Regional Economic Cooperation and Energy Security in South East Europe	71
11. Blerim Reka The Energy Security Challenges of the Western Balkans: TAP vs. Turkish Stream	76
APPENDICES	81
Acronyms Used	81

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, Paepke dreamed of “a place where the human spirit can flourish.”

Paepke 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 Paepke 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, Paepke 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.

Monday, September 14, 2015

Arrival of participants during the day

Accommodation: Avala Resort & Villas, Mediteranska, Budva, Montenegro

- 19:30** Departure to Welcome Dinner from the Hotel Lobby
- 20:00** **Welcome Dinner at the invitation of Ambassador Aleksandar Andrija Pejović, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Chief Negotiator for Montenegro's Accession to the EU**
Venue: Budva Citadel

Tuesday, September 15, 2015

Conference Room: Lobby Bar Area

- 09:00 – 09:30** **Welcoming remarks and opening of the conference**
Rüdiger Lentz, *Executive Director, Aspen Institute Germany*
Ambassador Aleksandar Andrija Pejović
Dr. Ernst Reichel, *Special Envoy for South Eastern Europe, Turkey and the EFTA States, German Federal Foreign Office*

- 09:30 – 11:00** **Session I:
The state of regional cooperation and remaining challenges**

Regional dialog and cooperation in the Western Balkans has substantially improved over the past years. The EU-mediated dialog between Belgrade and Pristina has made an important contribution to this. Ministers of the Western Balkans Six regularly meet in different fora and the German government's Western Balkans summit in August 2014 seems to have boosted regional cooperation further. However, difficulties remain. What is the current state of regional cooperation? What are the main challenges to further deepen regional cooperation? To what extent does reconciliation remain an issue requiring increased regional attention? What are the consequences of the 'regatta principle' of the EU enlargement process for regional cooperation?

Moderator: Anja Quiring

Introductions: Vedran Džihic: *Civil Society in the Framework of the Berlin Process - Game changer or more of the same?*
Jelica Minić: *The State of Regional Cooperation and Remaining Challenges*
Senada Šelo Šabić: *Fostering Reforms in the Western Balkans – Fighting Corruption as an Important Milestone*
Dane Taleski: *Civil Society Forum at the Vienna Summit: Between High Expectations and Modest Achievements*

11:00 – 11:30	Coffee break
11:30 – 12:30	Briefing I: The state of regional cooperation and remaining challenges Ambassador Aleksandar Andrija Pejović
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 15:30	Session II: Regional security cooperation <p>In today’s Europe, most security threats require regional or international cooperation. Threats like drug trafficking, human trafficking, illegal migration, or terrorism can only be met through security cooperation. What is the current state of security cooperation in the Western Balkans? What are the main security challenges in the region? What should be the key priorities of increased security cooperation? How can cooperation in the fight against organized crime be improved? What is the impact of illegal migration in the Western Balkans and how can governments further cooperate to meet the challenges of illegal migration? How big is the threat posed by terrorism and foreign fighters in the countries of the region? How can the threats be reduced efficiently? What role does the EU and its member states play? What are the fields that require further cooperation between the Western Balkans and the EU?</p> <p>Moderator: Prof. Dr. Eckart D. Stratenschulte</p> <p>Introductions: Vesna Bojičić-Dželilović: <i>Taking Responsibility for Regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans Seriously: What is at Stake?</i> Sidita Kushi: <i>Combating a Shared Menace: Terrorism as a Security and Social Threat in the Western Balkans and Beyond</i> Ioannis Michaletos: <i>Regional Security Cooperation in South-east Europe</i> Florian Qehaja: <i>Uneven Regional Security Cooperation: Lessons Learned and Next Steps</i></p>
15:30 – 16:30	Briefing II: Regional security cooperation with Minister of Interior Affairs of Montenegro Raško Konjević
17:00	Departure to Cetinje
17:45	Guided Tour through King Nikola’s Palace
19:30	Traditional Montenegrin Dinner at Restaurant Belveder

Wednesday, September 16, 2015**09:00 – 11:30****Session III:****Regional economic cooperation, energy security, and infrastructure development**

Regional economic cooperation and closer cooperation in the fields of energy security and infrastructure development have been very high on the political agendas in the Western Balkans as well as the EU and its member states. The “Berlin Process” seems to have boosted regional processes and a first agreement on a core transport network has been reached. However, challenges remain. Economic growth in countries of the region remains limited while unemployment continues to be very high. What role can deeper economic integration play in the economic development process of the Western Balkan countries? What are the risks and benefits? What are the next steps that should be taken regionally? What role can the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and its South East Europe 2020 Strategy play in fostering regional economic integration and development? What role does energy security play for economic development? What are the main obstacles preventing countries from developing the energy infrastructure needed? How important is cooperation between the SEE countries in the field of energy? Are the plans of an integrated energy market in SEE anchored by the EU being implemented efficiently and how does this affect the security of regional energy supplies? Is there a need for further regional and supra-regional approaches and agreements to promote greater energy security in the region? Do underdeveloped transport and communication networks constitute an additional obstacle to regional economic development? In which areas of regional infrastructure is improvement most needed? What are the steps that need to be taken next? How can more political will for regional integration be developed? Is there a need to de-politize regional cooperation? Is there a need for an even stronger EU involvement?

Moderator: Edith Harxhi

Introductions: Jens Bastian: *Regional Economic Cooperation and Energy Security in South East Europe*
Blerim Reka: *The Energy Security Challenges of the Western Balkans: TAP vs. Turkish Stream*Expert Opinion: Dirk Buschle, *Deputy Director, Energy Community Secretariat***11:30 – 12:00**

Coffee break

12:00 – 13:00**Briefing III: Regional economic cooperation, energy security, and infrastructure development
with Minister of Economy Vladimir Kavarić (tbc)****13:30 – 14:30**

Lunch

15:00 Departure to Kotor

16:00 – 16:45 **Guided tour through the old Town of Kotor**

16:45 – 20:00 **Boat trip at the invitation of Ambassador Gudrun Steinacker and Ambassador Margaret Ann Uyehara**

16:45 – 17:30 Sailing to Our Lady of the Rocks

17:30 – 18:15 Tour on Our Lady of the Rocks

18:15 – 18:55 Sailing to Tivat

18:55 – 19:25 Tour of Porto Montenegro

19:25 – 20:00 Sailing to Tavern Conte

20:00 Dinner at Tavern Conte

Thursday, September 17, 2015

Departure of participants during the day

Abazović, Dritan	Reichel, Ernst
Barbullushi, Odeta	Reka, Blerim
Barchmann, Achim	Samofalov, Konstantin
Bastian, Jens	Sattler, Johann
Bojičić-Dželilović, Vesna	Selimi, Petrit
Buschle, Dirk	Šelo-Šabić, Senada
Campbell, Ian	Šepić, Senad
Džihic, Vedran	Šljivančanin, Velimir
Harxhi, Edith	Steinacker, Gudrun Elisabeth
Ilazi, Ramadan	Stratenschulte, Eckart D.
Jovićević, Marina	Tahiri, Edita
Kapetanović, Amer	Taleski, Dane
Kiprijanovska, Dragana	Tolksdorf, Helge
Klemenc, Jelka	Trišić-Babić, Ana
Kushi, Sidita	Turbedar, Erhan
Makraduli, Jani	Uyehara, Margaret Ann
Michaletos, Ioannis	
Minić, Jelica	
Mitrović, Vladana	The Aspen Institute Germany
Moore, Jonathan	Esch, Valeska Senior Program Officer
Ninčić, Roksanda	Jackson, David Rapporteur
Pejović, Aleksandar Andrija	Kempf, Carina Program Assistant
Qehaja, Florian	Lentz, Rüdiger Executive Director
Quiring, Anja	
Radović, Snežana	

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 Reformic Action). He speaks English and Albanian.

Odeta Barbullushi



Ms. Odeta Barbullushi is Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Albania. She was born in Shkodra on June 16, 1979. She obtained the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) from the University of Birmingham, Great Britain in 2010 in Russian Studies and Eastern European/International Relations. She holds an M.A. in Contemporary European Studies from the University of Sussex and an M.A. 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 worked from 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.

Achim Barchmann



After leaving school, Achim Barchmann did a commercial apprenticeship in the retail sector and then for the Federal Defense Administration. While working, he attended evening classes leading, in 1985, to the Abitur (higher-education entrance qualification). Mr. Barchmann went on to study at the Social Academy in Dortmund. From April 1987, he served as a trade union secretary for the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) in the branches of Hamburg, Hildesheim and Oldenburg. He has been active in the trade union movement in the Helmstedt, Wolfsburg and Braunschweig region since November 1991. Mr. Barchmann worked at the Wolfsburg office with responsibility for the Gifhorn and Helmstedt branches. After serving as DGB county chairman for over ten years, he was elected chairman of the South-East Lower Saxony regional branch in 2007. Mr. Barchmann has been a member of the Union of Workers in Commerce, Banking and Insurance (HBV), now part of the United Services Union (ver.di) since 1971; of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) since 1979; and of the National Association for Workers’ Welfare (AWO) since 2004. He has been a member of the German Bundestag since 2009. There, he is member and Deputy Chair of the Committee on the Affairs of the European Union. He also is a member of the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Development. Furthermore, Mr. Barchmann is a member and Deputy Chair of the Delegation to the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly. He is married and has two grown-up daughters.

Jens Bastian



Dr. Jens Bastian currently works as an independent economic analyst and financial sector consultant for Southeast Europe. From September 2011 to September 2013 he was appointed by the European Commission as a member of the Task Force for Greece in Athens, Greece. He had operational responsibility as a Policy Officer in project assistance management for asset privatization, financial sector developments, foreign direct investment and Greek-German bilateral economic relations. His previous professional experience includes working for the European Agency for Reconstruction, Thessaloniki, Greece, Alpha Bank in Athens, Greece, as well as academic affiliations with St. Antony's College, Oxford, U.K., Nuffield College, Oxford and the London School of Economics, London, U.K. Jens Bastian received his Ph.D. from the European University Institute in Florence, Italy.

Vesna Bojičić-Dželilović

Dr. Bojičić-Dželilović is Associate Professorial Research Fellow at the Human Security and Civil Society Research Unit, Department of International Development, and an associate fellow of the South East Europe Research Unit at the European Institute, at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Her main areas of research are political economy of conflict and post-conflict reconstruction, postcommunist economic transition, political economy of policy making, decentralization, and regional development. She has published academic and policy papers on these topics with a focus on South East Europe. Recent publications include two coedited books: *Public Policy Making in the Western Balkans: Case Studies of Selected Economic and Social Policy Reforms* by Springer (2015), and *Civil Society and Transitions in the Balkans* by Palgrave (2014), and articles in the *Journal of Social Justice*; *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*; *Security Dialogue*, and *East European Politics*. She has participated in a number of large collaborative research projects funded by the European Commission, UK Department of International Development, Agence Française de Développement, UNDP, Mac Arthur Foundation, and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, and acted as an academic expert to the UNDP, World Bank, and European Commission. She is currently working on three projects focusing on governance, economic development and security in conflict affected places, and the role of the European Union in peacebuilding operations.

Dirk Buschle



Dirk Buschle has been Legal Counsel of the Energy Community Secretariat since 2007 and its Deputy Director since 2011. Prior to his current position, he was Head of Cabinet of the President of the Court of Justice of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in Luxembourg. Dirk Buschle graduated from Constance University, Germany, and earned his Ph.D. at St. Gallen University in Switzerland. He is Deputy Director of that University's Institute for European and International Business Law. He has widely published in different areas of European Law, speaks regularly at conferences, and has lectured at Universities of Reykjavik, Constance, and St. Gallen as visiting professor. He co-chairs the annual St. Gallen International Energy Forum as well as the Vienna Energy Law Forum.

Ian Campbell

Ian Campbell is the Deputy Director of the Office of South Central European Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. In his position he coordinates U.S. policy for the Western Balkans. A diplomat for 20 years, Ian has served in diverse postings including Egypt, Iraq, Barbados, Serbia, Jordan and Kazakhstan. Prior to his government service, Ian worked at The Brookings Institution, a Washington-based think tank. A native of Los Angeles, Ian is a graduate of the American University in Washington, DC and the University of California at Santa Barbara. He is married and has two children.

Vedran Džihic



Dr. Vedran Džihic is currently Senior Researcher at oiiip – Austrian Institute for International Affairs, Co-Director of Center for Advanced Studies, South East Europe, and Senior Lecturer at the Institute for Political Sciences, University of Vienna. He has been Austrian Marshall Plan Fellow and is currently non-resident Senior Fellow at the Center for Transatlantic Relations, School of Advanced International Studies, John Hopkins University, Washington D.C.. Džihic teaches M.A. courses at the M.A. Human Rights and the M.A. Balkan-Studies at the University in Vienna. Džihic is member of BIEPAG (Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group) as well as member of the Expert Group for the Preparation of Civil Society Forum within the Berlin process. Vedran Džihic is author of 4 monographs and editor/co-editor of further 14 edited volumes/books. He is also author of numerous book chapters, scholarly articles (in journals like *Nationalities Papers*, *East European Politics and Society*, *Southeastern Europa*, *JEMIE*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, *L'Europe en formation*, *Südosteuropa*, *Foreign Policy in Dialogue*, etc), policy papers and op-eds on various topics. He has been invited to more than 200 conferences and talks in the USA, China, Austria, Germany, Sweden, Estonia, Turkey, Switzerland, France, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Slovakia, Rumania, Bulgaria, and Belgium. Džihic is regularly contributing to international media. In 2012, he co-edited two books in cooperation with Brookings Institutions Press and Center for Transatlantic Relations, SAIS, Washington D.C.: "Unfinished Business. The Western Balkans and the International Community", together with Dan Hamilton,

and “Looming Shadows. Migration and Integration at a Time of Upheaval. European and American Perspectives”, together with Thomas Schmidinger. For full list of publications please see the website of the Austrian Institute for International Affairs (www.oii.ac.at). Džihic received his M.A. and Ph.D. with honors from the University of Vienna.

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 M.A. in Political Science, International and European Law, and English Language and Literature with a focus on security politics, the European Union, 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).

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 Ph.D. 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.

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.

David Jackson



David Jackson is a Ph.D. candidate at the Berlin Graduate School for Transnational Studies and is based at the Social Science Research Center Berlin. His dissertation, for which he received a scholarship from the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung, deals with the emergence of clientelism in Kosovo under conditions of internationally-led state-building. David Jackson’s further research interests include EU external relations, governance in areas of limited statehood, and ethnic and race relations. He has worked for a development NGO in Jordan, for the World Health Organization in Geneva as an external analyst, and at the Cabinet Office of the British Prime Minister in London. David Jackson holds a B.A. in Modern History and Politics from the University of Oxford and a Master of Public Policy from the Hertie School of Governance. He currently lives in Berlin.

Marina Jovičević

Dr. Marina Jovičević graduated from the Faculty of Philology at the University of Belgrade in the Department for English language and literature in 1995. She completed her master studies at the Department for librarianship and information at the same Faculty in 2003. She got her Ph.D. „Regional and European cooperation – the model of Nordic countries cooperation” from the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Belgrade in 2014. She worked as a teacher of English language from 1994-1995, and from 1996-2002 as a researcher at the Institute for Scientific Information at the Military Medical Academy in Belgrade. She joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of FR Yugoslavia (later Republic of Serbia) in 2002. As a career diplomat, she worked at the Department for OSCE and Council of Europe, Embassy in Denmark (2 years as a *Charge d’Affaires a.i.*), until 2007. Early in 2008 she was appointed as director of the Department for Regional Initiatives, while in May 2009 she was appointed Assistant Minister for European Union. She was a member of the Council for European Integration of the Republic of Serbia, and national coordinator for Central-European Initiative, South-East European Cooperation Process as well as for Regional Cooperation Council. From 2011-2014 she was posted as consul-general of the Republic of Serbia to Montenegro, Herceg Novi, and as of February 2014 as coordinator at the Sector for EU. Since February 2014, she has been working in the Sector for the European Union, first as a coordinator, and from March 2015, as an Acting Assistant Minister for European Union, at the rank of ambassador. She has been a lecturer at the Diplomatic Academy of Serbian MFA on European integration. She is a member of Governmental working group for expert editing of translations of EU *acquis*. In March 2015, the Government of the Republic of Serbia appointed her as deputy head of the negotiation group 31 for foreign, security and defence policy. Dr. Marina Jovičević published several academic and scientific articles. Her first monograph “Cooperation model of Nordic countries” has been published by “Sluzbeni glasnik” in 2014. Moreover, she attended numerous courses and seminars from fields of international affairs and human rights. She is married and a mother of three children. Speaks English fluently and has a knowledge of German.

Amer Kapetanović

Amer Kapetanović is currently Assistant Minister for Bilateral Relations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Previously he served *inter alia* as Head of the European Department, Policy Planning Chief, and Minister-Counselor at the Embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Germany. Prior to joining the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mr. Kapetanović was a journalist working with domestic and international media. Mr. Kapetanović is the President of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Film Fund and a founding member and member of the Steering Board of the foreign policy think-tank “Foreign Policy Initiative” in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Dragana Kiprijanovska

Dragana Kiprijanovska was born on September 10, 1985 in Skopje, Macedonia. She graduated from the University “Ss.Cyril and Methodius”, Faculty of Law “Iustinianus Primus”, Skopje with a Bachelor of Law (2004-2008) and a Master of Science (M.Sc.) in Criminal Law (2011). She then enrolled in Ph.D. studies at the Faculty of Law “Iustinianus Primus”, where she is appointed as Junior Research and Teaching Assistant in the Department of Criminal Law. In 2012-2013, she spent five months as a Ph.D. researcher at the Faculty of Law, University of Ljubljana. In 2011, she was the University Visiting Fellow at the Lomonosov Moscow State University, Faculty of Law. In 2009, she spent six months as a legal counselor in the Office of the Minister of education and science. In July 2014, she was appointed as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Her field of expertise covers comparative criminal law, international law on human rights, economic (criminal) law, and medical law with particular focus on patient rights, liability of health care professionals and mental disability rights, corporate crime, cyber crime, and corruption. Dragana Kiprijanovska is the author and coauthor of one book for university education (“Medical Criminal Law”), coeditor of one book (Civil and political rights and freedoms – Street Law, USAID), author of 3 publications, compilation of texts in Economic criminal law for university (master) studies (co-author) and over 30 scientific papers published in international and national journals.

Jelka Klemenc

Joined DCAF in 2010 as Project Officer, and became Project Manager responsible for the DCAF Border Security Programme and the Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe in 2012. She has professional background in EU Justice and Home Affairs, EU JHA External Dimension, and SEE regional security cooperation. As Senior Advisor at the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Slovenia she participated at the level of CATS and COSI Committees in the work of the Council of the EU between 2007-2012. She had also participated in several EU and multilateral initiatives targeting SEE internal security cooperation, and acted as member of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2008. She co-authored the 2014 Gap Analysis Report on Regional Cooperation in Migration Management and Fight against Serious and Organised Crime. She speaks Slovenian, Croatian, English, German, French, and Italian. She holds an M.A. degree in International Affairs from the Elliott School of International Affairs, GWU, Washington, D.C. (2007) and is currently a Ph.D candidate in Security Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana.

Sidita Kushi

Sidita Kushi is a doctoral candidate and academic instructor in Political Science at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts specializing in International Relations and Comparative Politics. She also holds a master's degree in Political Science and Public Policy and a bachelor's degree in Economics and International Studies. Her research projects focus on contemporary security challenges within Eastern Europe and international political economic dynamics as they influence post-conflict rebuilding. Currently, Sidita is researching the role of identity and interests in motivating humanitarian military interventions in the Balkans and beyond – through quantitative modeling and institutionally funded field research. Sidita is a frequent contributor to *Atlantic Community*, an open think tank on transatlantic relations. She is also an active researcher in her field, publishing a range of articles on Albanian-Serbian relations, NATO's future in Europe, the emerging threat of terrorism in the Balkans, transatlantic political identities, and more.

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 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 U.S.. He was 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-Brücke and a founding member of the German American Business Council (GABC) in Washington.

Jani Makraduli

Jani Makraduli was born on March 28, 1965 in Bitola, Macedonia. He graduated at the University Sts. Cyril and Methodius in 1989 with a B.S. in Electro technical engineering. In 1994 he became Master of Computer Science. From 1990 until 2008 he was junior and senior assistant at the Electro technical faculty in the Computer Science department. He was a Member of Parliament of 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 the 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 seven 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.

Ioannis Michaletos

Ioannis Michaletos is an associate of the Institute for Defense & Security Analysis (ISDA) in Greece. He is a political and security consultant for the IHS Jane's Information Group and a Southeast European analyst for the European Oil & Gas Monitor, European Energy Review, and the Natural Gas Europe, media sources. He conducts research for the Balkanalysis regional media service and for the World Security Network Foundation, in addition to ad hoc research projects for Think Tanks in Greece, Romania, U.S., Serbia, UK, and Italy. He regularly appears in international media and fora commenting on security and political developments. His main interests are the research and analysis of asymmetrical security threats in South-eastern Europe (organized crime networks, illegal immigration smuggling, terrorism and extremism) regional political developments, as well as, energy-related developments (energy infrastructure and networks, investments, energy security, and regional energy policies). His experience includes consultancy projects for security research organizations and corporations, focused mainly on the Balkans, Greece and the transnational illicit markets.

Jelica Minić

Dr. Jelica Minić is the President and one of the founders of the Forum for International relations of the European Movement in Serbia. She has a research and policy making background in the European integration affairs and regional cooperation. She was the Deputy Secretary General and Head of the Expert Pool of the Regional Cooperation Council, in Sarajevo (2008-2013) and had high management positions in the state administration (Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, 2000-2004), NGO (Secretary General of the European Movement in Serbia, 1994-2000) and academia (1971-2000). She started her career in the Internal Politics Desk of the TV Belgrade, and continued in the Institute for International Politics and Economy, Centre for Strategic Studies, Institute of Economic Sciences, European Movement in Serbia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Serbia and Montenegro, and Regional Cooperation Council. Her most relevant publications and analysis are on Serbian and Western Balkans' relations with the European Union and prospects for European integration, political and economic aspects of regional cooperation, SMEs development, role of civil society, NGO-government relations etc. She published a great number of articles, essays, book chapters, and conference papers and was the editor of several books and reviews. She was the lead author and editor of the UNDP *Serbia Human Development Report 2008 – Regional Cooperation*.

Vladana Mitrović

Vladana Mitrović started working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European integration of Montenegro on May 1, 2012. She works in the Directorate for European affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration. Vladana is a graduate of International Affairs. She is in charge of monitoring the implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement for the area of trade, industry, customs, taxation, and cooperation with other candidate countries, and also as a deputy secretary for the Commission for the European integration. She is secretary of the Working Groups for negotiation chapters 16 – Taxation, 20 – Enterprise and Industrial policy and 33 – Financial and Budgetary provisions.

Jonathan Moore

Ambassador Moore is Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, where he was also an advisor for several months in 1996. A U.S. Senior Foreign Service Officer with the rank of Minister-Counselor, he has spent over 10 years of a 25-year career working in the Balkans and on Balkan issues. His previous assignments include work at the U.S. Embassies in Yugoslavia and Lithuania, service as Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassies in Namibia, Belarus, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and 16 months as U.S. Chargé d'Affaires in Belarus. He has also served as the deputy director for Russian affairs at the State Department, as a fellow in the Policy Office of the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, as a fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, and as the State Department's Balkan director. Ambassador Moore has received awards from the State Department and American Foreign Service Association, and has been decorated by the Presidents of Lithuania (twice) and Albania.

Roksanda Ninčić

Ambassador Roksanda Ninčić was appointed State Secretary on November 24, 2014. Prior to this position, she served as Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Multilateral Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia from November 2012. From May 2006 to November 2012 she served as Head of the Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union in Brussels. Prior to this, she served as Head of the Mission of Serbia and Montenegro to the European Union in Brussels from August 2005 to May 2006. Roksanda Ninčić was Chief of Cabinet to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia and Montenegro in Belgrade from 2004 to 2005. She was Political Adviser in charge of Security Council Affairs in the Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the United Nations in New York from 2001 to 2004. From 1990 to 2001 she worked as an analyst at *Vreme weekly*. Prior to this she was a correspondent of *Borba daily newspaper* from 1987 to 1990. Roksanda Ninčić studied at the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Belgrade. She speaks fluent English and has working knowledge of French. She is married and has two children.

Aleksandar Andrija Pejović

Ambassador Pejović is the State Secretary for European Integration, Chief Negotiator for Negotiations on the Accession of Montenegro to the European Union (since December 2011), as well as the National Coordinator for the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance. In the last years (since March 2010) he has been Ambassador – Head of the Mission of Montenegro to the EU and (since October 2010) the permanent representative – Ambassador of Montenegro to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in Hague. Prior to his appointment as the Ambassador to the EU, he was Director of the Directorate for the European Union in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro for three years. Furthermore, he was a member of various government-working bodies in the process of European integration, and coordinated the preparation of answers to the EC Questionnaire – Political Criteria and Chapter 31 – Foreign, Security and Defense Policy. He has been working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2000. He performed duties in several departments within the Ministry – multilateral affairs (UN and regional cooperation), bilateral affairs (neighboring countries and Western Europe), and the EU. He worked in the Office for Cooperation between Montenegro and Slovenia in Ljubljana, as well as in the Embassy of Serbia and Montenegro in Skopje, where he also performed the duty of national representative to the Regional Centre for Migrations, Asylum and Refugees. He was national coordinator for Montenegrin chairmanship of the Adriatic Ionian Initiative, coordinator for chairmanship of the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative, and deputy national coordinator for the fight against human trafficking. Prior to his employment in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro, he had worked as professor in the Grammar School in Herceg Novi for three years and a half. He speaks several languages, among which English, Italian, French, Slovenian, and Macedonian. In his free time, he is engaged in writing and sculpting. He is the author of several specialist papers on international relations and geopolitics, as well as of one novel *Amabor*.

Florian Qehaja

Florian Qehaja is the Executive Director of Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS). He also serves as Kosovo Team Leader of the Centre for Integrity in the Defense Sector (CIDS) of the Norwegian Ministry of Defense. Florian is author of several scientific publications in the security field; as well as author/co-author of local, international publications regarding the field of security, rule of law and regional cooperation. Further, he is an international consultant cooperating with leading international governmental and non-governmental organizations. He is frequently invited by the Western Balkans media to comment on security affairs. Florian Qehaja is holder of prestigious scholarships such as OSI/Chevening and Fulbright. He is concluding his Ph.D. studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences (Department of Security Studies), University of Ljubljana. His Ph.D. research is “Local ownership and security sector development in Kosovo.” Moreover, he has graduated at the University of Sussex (United Kingdom) in Contemporary European Studies (M.A.) and has obtained a B.A. in Law at the University of Prishtina. He is married and has a son.

Anja Quiring

Since September 2007 Ms. Quiring has been working as Regional Director South Eastern Europe at the Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations. After finishing her Political Science Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin in December 2003, she started her professional career at the Consultant Flemming & Partner in January 2004 and joined Axel Springer Russia in July 2006, where she worked in Moscow as New Business Development Manager.

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.

Ernst Reichel



Dr. Ernst Reichel is currently Envoy for Southeast Europe, Turkey and the EFTA-States at the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin. Prior to this position he served as Head of Division 209/Western Balkans. A career diplomat, Dr. Reichel joined the German Foreign Service in 1988, serving *inter alia* in New York at the German mission to the United Nations, as Deputy Head of the Division for EU-Policy and as Deputy Chief of Cabinet for the NATO Secretary General. Most recently, Dr. Reichel served as Head of Division for Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and Eastern Partnership. Before entering the Foreign Service, Ambassador Reichel studied law and received a doctoral degree from the University of Bonn. He was born in Lagos, Nigeria.

Blerim Reka



Professor Dr. Blerim Reka has been Vice-Rector for International Relations at the South East European University (SEEU) since 2014. Prior he worked as Vice-Rector for Research at the SEEU for four years. From 2006 to 2010 Blerim served as Macedonian Ambassador to the EU in Brussels. His academic work brought him to Harvard University and to the University of Southern California, where he held the position of a Fulbright senior fellow. He taught numerous classes at different Universities and oversaw a wide range of research projects as a researcher as well as the director of these projects. Blerim is the author of 18 books and participated in numerous international conferences. Besides, Blerim worked for more than six years in the diplomacy and lobby area. From 1999 to 2006 Blerim gained different positions in various international organizations, at the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and as a Legal Expert for Kosovo in the fields of legal expertise, legal consultancy and drafting. Prior, Blerim worked for the Civil Society/NGO Sector for several years. He was, for example, the founder and editor of the *Euro-Atlantic Review* and the *Kosova Law Review*. Blerim has also worked for the radio, television, and newspapers. He gained his Ph.D. in International Public Law from the University of Pristina and the University of Graz. He holds a Master of Civil and Economic Law and a Bachelor in Law.

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.

Johann Sattler



Dr. Johann Sattler has been Head of the Western Balkans Directorate at the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2013. Prior to this position, Sattler worked as Publisher for Axel Springer Russia (2011-2013) and CEO of WAZ Media Group Russia (2008-2011). He started his diplomatic career in the Human Rights Department of the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1996, with subsequent postings as Political Officer at the European Union Monitoring Mission in Sarajevo (1997-1998), as Member of the Cabinet of the EU Special Representative for South Eastern Europe with the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (1999-2002), as First Councilor for Political Affairs at the Austrian Embassy in Washington, D.C. (2002-2006), and as Deputy Head of the Office of the Secretary General in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2006-2008). Sattler holds a Diploma in Political Science and Slavic languages from Innsbruck University, a Postgraduate Diploma in Advanced International Studies from the Diplomatic Academy Vienna, and a Ph.D. in Political Sciences from Vienna University.

Petrit Selimi

Petrit Selimi was appointed Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo in June 2011. Before joining the MFA, Mr. Selimi was a candidate for an MP seat for the PDK at the 2010 National Elections. Prior to this, he worked from 2006 to 2010 as a private Public Relations and political risk consultant, providing advice for companies and institutions such as IPKO, Telenor ASA, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the RWE AG, Raiffeisen Investment, Lazard, etc. From 2005-2006 Mr. Selimi was one of the founders and the first Executive Director of the Express, an independent daily published in Pristina. He joined the Express after working as communications and media advisor initially for IPKO.org (2000-2003) and then for the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (2003-2004). Mr. Selimi was active as children's and youth rights activist, being one of the founders of Postpessimists, the first network of youth NGO's in former Yugoslavia (1992-1998). They won a UN Peace and Tolerance Award. He has in recent years served on the Board of Directors of Soros Foundation in Kosovo, and Martti Ahtisaari's Balkan Children and Youth Foundation. He is fluent in Albanian, English, Norwegian and Serbian. Mr. Selimi has a B.A. in Social Anthropology from University of Oslo, and is graduating as MSc in Media and Communications from the London School of Economics, as a recipient of Chevening Scholarship. (Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo).

Senada Šelo Šabić

Senada Šelo Šabić works as a scientific associate in the Institute for Development and International Relations in Zagreb. Her research interests include Croatian foreign policy, Southeast Europe, EU enlargement, development cooperation and migration. Senada holds a Ph.D. in political science from the European University Institute in Florence (2003) and has earned two Masters degrees – in international relations from the University of Zagreb (1999) and in peace studies the University of Notre Dame, USA (1996). She is editor-in-chief of the *Croatian International Relations Review* and teaches at the University of Zagreb.

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.

Velimir Sljivacanin

Velimir Sljivacanin has been actively engaged in EU affairs since July 2008. He used to work in the Secretariat for European Integration from July 2008 to June 2009, in the Ministry for European Integration from June 2009 to December 2010, and he has been working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European integration of Montenegro since January 2011. He is a Bachelor of Political Science. Sljivacanin is in charge of following the implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement for the area of agriculture and fisheries. He is also secretary of the Working Groups for negotiation chapters 11 – Agriculture and rural development and 13 – Fisheries.

Gudrun Elisabeth Steinacker


Gudrun Steinacker was born in Düsseldorf on January 3, 1951. In 1975 she graduated in history and social sciences after studying in Munich and Munster. 1976/7 she spent as a graduate student in Belgrade with a scholarship of the German Academic Exchange Service. In 1978 she entered the German Diplomatic Service, where she served between 1982 and 1995 in the Permanent Mission to the UN in New York, at the Consulate General in Zagreb, in the Permanent Mission to CoE in Strasbourg, and at the Embassy in Oslo. From 1975 to 1999 she worked in the cultural department of the Federal Foreign Ministry with short assignments with the OSCE in Bosnia and as a member of the Kosovo Verification Mission. From 2000 to 2002 she was seconded to the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna. After posts in the German Embassies in Moscow and Sofia she became in 2009 Consul General in Nowosibirsk and in 2011 German Ambassador in Skopje. Since July 2004 she has been Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany in Podgorica. Since 2014 she has been a member of the board of the South East Europa Association in Germany.

Eckart D. Stratenschulte


Professor Dr. Eckart D. Stratenschulte is the Director of the European Academy Berlin, EAB. EAB is a non-party institution in civil society, in which seminars, conferences, and symposia on European topics are planned and held. After reading sociology, political science, and German studies, he received a diploma (equivalent to M.A. degree) in sociology, State qualifications (in German studies and political science) for teachers at secondary school, as well as concluding his studies with a Ph.D. ("Dr. phil.") from Marburg University. Eckart Stratenschulte moved to Berlin in 1978, becoming initially a lecturer and then, from 1982 onwards, Managing Director of the Institute for Inter-European Studies. In 1989 he took up a post as Head of Unit for press and publication matters in the Berlin Senatskanzlei (Governing Mayor's Office), until 1993, when he was appointed to his present position. Eckart Stratenschulte has been lecturing since 1999 in political sciences at the Free University of Berlin, where he was appointed as honorary professor in 2005. In seminars he held over the past years he has addressed questions of EU enlargement, Neighbourhood Policy, as well as Differentiated Integration in the EU. Eckart Stratenschulte is a member of the executive board of the Arbeitskreis Europäische Integration, the Association of European Studies specialists in Germany, and has published (as author or editor) numerous articles and several books on European issues. In addition, he is the author of a series of teaching units for use in schools.

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 post-graduate 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.

Dane Taleski


Dane Taleski received his Ph.D. in Political Science (Magna Cum Laude) from the Central European University in Budapest. His research interests include post-conflict democratization, transformation of rebel groups, political parties, ethnic politics and Europeanization. His latest article, "Regulating Party Politics in the Western Balkans: On the Legal Sources of Party System Development in Macedonia" (co-authored with Fernando Casal Bértoa), is published in *Democratization*, and he has co-edited a research study titled "Monitoring Regional Cooperation in South East Europe" (FES: Berlin, 2013). Dane was member of the executive board of the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (2009-2013). He is a member of the Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group (BiEPAG), member of Transformation Thinkers platform (supported by Bertelsmann Foundation and GIZ), and member of the working group "Regional Security in South East Europe" (PfP Consortium of Defence Academics and Security Studies Institutes). In 2014, he won a Civil Society Scholar Award from Open Society Institute in New York.

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 was Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina from 2007 to April 2015. 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.

Erhan Turbedar

Erhan Turbedar was born in Kosovo in 1975. Turbedar received his Bachelor's degree from the Gazi University in Ankara. He wrote his master's thesis at the same university on the economic transformation process in South East Europe (SEE) and received his Doctor's degree for a thesis on transportation policies in the SEE countries. Dr. Turbedar has been conducting academic studies on SEE in different think-tanks in Turkey for 14 years and currently works as a Senior Political Advisor at the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). The history of the Balkans, the Political Economy of the Balkans and contemporary Balkan Politics are among the subjects that Dr. Turbedar teaches at universities in Turkey.

Margaret Ann Uyehara

Margaret Ann Uyehara was confirmed by the Senate to be the U.S. Ambassador to Montenegro in December 2014. A career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, Ms. Uyehara has three decades of experience managing Department of State staff and resources. Ms. Uyehara most recently served as Executive Director of the Bureaus of European and Eurasian Affairs and International Organization Affairs in the Department of State. Previous tours have included Austria, Germany, Ukraine, Indonesia, Japan, Philippines, United Kingdom and Mali. Ms. Uyehara is a native of Berea, Ohio. She earned a B.A. in Political Science at Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan in 1981 and studied at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. She speaks German, French, Ukrainian and Japanese. Ms. Uyehara and her husband, Foreign Service Officer Michael Uyehara, have five children.

CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE BERLIN PROCESS: GAME CHANGER OR MORE OF THE SAME?

Dr. Vedran Džihic
Research Fellow and Lecturer
Institute for Political Science/International Politics at the
University of Vienna
Vienna

Civil society plays a key role as a democratic corrective force in all societies that undergo a transition from an authoritarian regime to a liberal democracy. It aims to help develop and sustainably embed a democratic political culture, thus preventing countries from lapsing back into authoritarian rule. Against this background, it is easier to understand why so much – and generally too much – is expected of civil society as a cure for all. In order to get a realistic picture of civil society, its role and potential as well as its limitations – especially in the Balkans – it is first of all essential to move away from over-simplified images of civil society as a panacea. Particularly over the past few years, we have witnessed more and more disillusionment with democracy in several post-socialist countries. Authoritarian tendencies in governing structures and in society are becoming ever stronger and considerably more visible: the path that leads to a stable democratic setup is long; it comes with setbacks and crises and is by no means linear.

What role does civil society play in the Balkans? Research into civil society shows us that in areas with weak or dysfunctional forms of government, where issues of sovereignty and imminent problems such as unemployment, poor social conditions and poverty prevail, civil society takes a back seat. In the Balkans, the nationalistic madness of the 1990s dealt the final blow to the citizens' civic self-identity. This final blow was all the more tragic as in Yugoslavian state socialism, the phenomenon of "citizenship" was merely derived from its affiliation with the notionally Marxist working class that prevailed at that time. During the second half of the 20th century, it was hard to find a critical understanding of citizenship anywhere in the Balkans, and – if it did exist at all – it was only within confined urban spaces. An integral part of this was the ex-Yugoslavian popular culture, whose development was on a par with the American and European trends of the 1970s and 1980s and which served as an important civil and cultural "window to the world" for the peoples of Southeast Europe. Regrettably, the nationalistic madness of the 1990s heavily poisoned even these positive narratives and trends.

In the Balkans, evidence also suggests that the mere existence of an NGO on paper is not synonymous with a functioning civil society. The explosive growth in the number of NGOs after the wars and the resulting "NGO-ization" of civil societies created an "NGO dog-eat-dog world". The battles for the resources of the increasingly professionalized NGOs and its elites were by no means fought in a "civil society" fashion. In this professionalized NGO universe, civil society embedded itself into a pseudo-normal or banal parallel world, in the midst of a deep crisis afflicting these societies. The lack of tangible results, however, directly damaged the im-

age of the NGO-dominated civil society in the eyes of the wider public. As disillusionment with democracy and a post-democratic depression has taken hold across the Balkans over the past few years, a certain civil-society monotony emerged as an integral part of this democratic depression.

The past few years, however, have seen a new dimension and a new quality. The social protests, most of which we witnessed recently, are the most important development of democratic politics in the region in the past two decades. Part of the process of growing up and emancipation of civil societies in the Balkans is the action taken by the citizens of many states in the region, who are vociferously telling irresponsible politicians that they will no longer tolerate political injustices, taking to the streets to protest against elite-dominated and corrupt, yet seemingly democratic regimes, exposing problems and those responsible for them, and trying to combat them. The political establishment, however, is fighting back against these new social movements with all its might. There are plenty of role models for authoritarian rulers, such as Putin or Erdogan, who only know the force of repression, the police and the deeply symbolic water cannons. When Gruevski allowed the police to use force against the protesters in Macedonia, this was nothing less than an authoritarian reaction to a movement whose criticism had attacked the heart of the regime. The events in Bosnia in 2014 or Skopje in 2015 are just the beginning of a process of critically questioning and challenging bad politics in the Balkans, which can ultimately lead to more freedom and a better life in the region.

Support from the outside will have a decisive impact on the success of these new movements. Instead of viewing the protests as a potential source of insecurity and destabilization of the region, the EU should, therefore, adopt an attitude of acceptance towards the social protest movements and “grassroots” civil society and view them as new actors, who should be listened to and supported. The fact that one central focus of the Western Balkans Summit in Vienna was dedicated to civil society is undoubtedly also a direct consequence of the protests in Bosnia and Macedonia. It is already a commonplace view that an active and accepted civil society is essential to ensuring the success of democratic politics in the long term. As a first step, the summit in Vienna primarily aimed at establishing civil society actors and their viewpoints as a normal and natural part of all future EU activities in the region.

How was the Western Balkans Conference in Vienna organized and what happened during it? The ambitious goal of bringing civil society and official governments in productive dialogue, while at the same time making concrete recommendations for the improvement of the situation in the countries, proved to be a rather chal-

lenging one.¹ The Expert Group assembled by Erste Stiftung in Vienna made a decision earlier in 2015 to organize a series of debates of civil society representatives in the region prior to the Summit. Three topics were selected (creation of jobs and prosperity, building a culture of regional cooperation, and freedom of expression) and debated by civil society representatives in regional workshops in Tirana, Belgrade, and Sarajevo during May and June 2015. As a result the representatives of civil society produced a set of recommendations in each of three areas, which were also presented at the Summit in front of assembled officials of both the Western Balkans’ countries and EU representatives.² The recommendations were formulated in a quite general manner, listing all the necessary reform areas as well as steps that need to be taken in order to improve the situation in the societies. The content and the substance of the recommendations proved once again that civil society in the region is not short of excellent ideas but is rather facing a difficult challenge of how to communicate, operationalize, and implement them in a political environment partly hostile to civil society. Being aware of this fact the decision was made to organize a set of workshops during the Summit in Vienna (August 26) to work further on operationalizing the recommendations and defining the process between Vienna and Paris 2016 in order to enable civil society not only to formulate concrete demands but to put them on the agenda of governments and the EU. The workshop in Vienna proved to be a very fundamental pillar of the process as 50 representatives of the civil society were able to develop a number of concrete proposals and ideas on how to carry the process further and ensure that civil society becomes an integral part of all reform processes in the region. Right now, in the follow up process to Vienna, several organizations and foundations (Erste Stiftung, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Balkan Fund for Democracy, Regional Cooperation Council) have expressed an interest to support the initiative and ensure the implementation of ideas that have been developed so far.

Another aspect of the Vienna Summit was a prominent public debate with government officials from the region and the EU and representatives of civil society from the Western Balkans. Here, moderated by Ivan Vejvoda, five politicians (Edi Rama, Aleksandar Vučić, Johannes Hahn, Igor Lukšić, and Igor Crnadak) engaged in a debate with six representatives of civil society (Ardian Hackaj, Director of the public policy platform Shtetiweb at the Cooperation and Development Institute, Albania, Meliha Bajramović, Coordinator of Plenum Zenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Faik Ispahiu, Director and

¹ For all information regarding the civil society aspect of the Berlin process and particularly the Vienna Conference see the webpage <http://www.erstestiftung.org/civil-society-forum/>.

² Comprehensive list of all recommendations can also be found at the webpage of the Civil Society Forum <http://www.erstestiftung.org/civil-society-forum/>.

Executive Producer of the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network and Internews Kosova, Dona Kosturnova, Executive Director of the Youth Educational Forum, Macedonia, Dejan Milovac, Director of the Center for Investigations and Deputy Director of MANS, Montenegro, and Aleksandar Simurđić, Secretary General of the European Movement, Local Council Novi Sad, Serbia). As high the expectations and hopes for a new kind of dialog between government officials and civil society were, they were largely disappointed. Two prime ministers dominated the debate, with civil society representatives and an open debate with the public coming far to short. The debate ended with a long monologue of Aleksandar Vučić, thus putting the civil society in the background and symbolically restoring the rather authoritarian hierarchy within the societies of the Western Balkans.

To sum it up, if there is an urgent goal for the civil society in the region in general and within the framework of the Civil Society Forum and Berlin Process in particular, than this is above all to clearly communicate to governments and many an authoritarian ruler in the region that their success will, above all, be measured in terms of their attitudes towards a civil society that is slowly becoming more confident and organized. Realistically speaking, nobody expects the politicians from the region to – upon return to their countries – start a completely new politics towards the civil society. We will continue seeing a lot of declarative support for civil society while at the same time effectively neglecting demands of the civil society. We will continue to witness attempts to control media and to portray those that are taking their demands to the streets as violent groups of extremists. The soft and even hard repression against protest movements will remain a tool in the hand of authorities to control the situation and ensure that their power positions are not endangered. In any case, it is up to civil society itself to constantly remind the politicians in the region that there is someone out there able and brave to question them and their policies and to be a democratic corrective. If the EU within the Berlin process could find a new policy towards the civil society in the region, in which the civil society is not just a nice rhetorical decoration in political speeches but a crucial partner in all efforts of democratizing and “Europeanizing” the region, a huge step forward would be taken.

THE STATE OF REGIONAL COOPERATION AND REMAINING CHALLENGES

Dr. Jelica Minić
President and Co-Founder
Forum for International Relations
European Movement in Serbia
Belgrade

Setting the scene

The news from the Balkans over the past few months has occurred at a vertiginous speed – most of them have been bad: Greece’s long-term crisis increasingly resembling squaring the circle; Turkey’s problems of internal polarization and spillover of the crisis and the conflicts in its immediate vicinity; Bulgaria’s and Romania’s difficulties with internal reforms that have mostly been frozen since the two states joined the EU; internal tensions and border issues between Slovenia and Croatia; as well as Transnistria’s constant shadow over Moldova’s efforts to persist on further approximation to the EU – this is the regional scene framing the developments in the Western Balkans, a region marking the dark anniversaries of its recent war history. Major bilateral tensions among Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Croatia, and Serbia accompanied the commemoration of the 20th anniversaries of mass war crimes by the Bosnian Serb armed forces in Srebrenica and the mass forced expulsion of Serbs from Croatia during operation “Storm” – the anniversaries of the greatest genocide and ethnic cleansing in Europe since World War II.

To this should be added the recent border dispute between BiH and Montenegro over Sutorina; internal political conflicts in Macedonia that have opened space for terrorist activities, halted thanks to the mediation of Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn; the stoning of Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić at the Srebrenica commemoration, followed by the visit of BiH’s tripartite Presidency to Belgrade, with a common message that, despite all the recent incidents, the leaders of the two states must work towards reconciliation by engaging in joint specific projects bringing prosperity to their citizens; and finally, under pressure from the international community, the end to the prolonged obstruction in the Parliament of Kosovo to the establishment of a war crimes court and the implementation of specific points of the Brussels Agreement between Kosovo and Serbia with a view to normalizing their relations.

Add to this chronology of bad messages the previous announcements by Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama spelling out the intent to proceed with the creation of a Greater Albania, accompanied by an incident at the first soccer game between Serbia and Albania in Belgrade. Tensions were subsequently buffered by a sort of vision building meetings between Rama and Vučić, focusing on building infrastructure connections, economic cooperation, and mechanisms to bring together youth of the two countries.

The Balkan region is full of unsettled bilateral issues. Serbia alone has a long list of more than 30 open issues¹ with all its neighbors and the process of solving them has been slow, not solely the fault of Serbia. But, they reappear whenever tensions in the region rise.

In addition to this political turbulence, the majority of Southeastern Europe (SEE) countries have serious and similar economic problems: high external debt and trade and payments deficit, slow and insufficient structural changes and high unemployment, a great income gap compared to the EU average, and endemic corruption. They all together represent an underdeveloped periphery of Europe. The region had gone through a period of growth and recovery in the decade preceding the global financial crisis, but was hit hard by it, partly due to its heavy dependence on the EU market. Thus, signs of recovery in the EU have been accompanied by some positive economic developments in the region as well, but this should not obscure the real danger that the Greek scenario in different modalities could be repeated across the region.

On top of all these problems, several countries in the region, as a transit route to EU countries, are exposed to a massive influx of refugees from Africa and the Middle East. Since there is no sufficiently comprehensive policy in the EU to solve this problem on a more permanent basis, the region is largely left on its own with all the risks that mass movement and concentration of refugees from vulnerable regions carries.

Beneath all these events there is a regional belt, albeit not always starkly visible, that holds together these actors of the ever-simmering Balkan scene – a kind of “safety net” – consisting of a great number of regional initiatives through which the countries of the region have, in spite of everything, been consistently building effective multilateral mechanisms facilitating the resolution of bilateral problems and crises. This multilateral framework allows for the identification of common interests in many areas, at several levels (from local to national), and rallies a broad range of social actors (from state administrations to civil society organizations), creating a fragile joint tissue of the region.

A short chronology of cooperation

Regional cooperation in the Balkans received a visible, widely-promoted political impetus shortly after the conclusion of the Dayton Accords in 1995, when the EU launched its regional approach to relations with the

newly-created states in the territory of the former Yugoslavia².

However, this important external incentive had a precedent that came from the region itself – the South East European Cooperation Process (SEEC), which was initiated by Bulgaria, in 1996³. The objectives of this initiative were initially aimed primarily at creating a climate of trust, good neighborly relations and stability in the region. This initiative is an original form of cooperation and a genuine voice of the region. It was initiated by the countries of the region, not from the outside, as other initiatives that followed shortly after⁴. Initially, it has not been formally or informally supported by any organization or country outside the region.

This initiative has revived the political will of the countries in the region to cooperate with each other, which had earlier been manifested in the conferences of Foreign Ministers of the Balkan countries⁵, even before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the end of Europe’s division into blocs. The scope of identified issues of common interest was very broad already in these early attempts to establish multilateral mechanisms of cooperation in the Balkans⁶.

The EU made the next step in creating a more consolidated framework for regional cooperation after the end of the Kosovo conflict in 1999, when it launched the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP)⁷, as a specific mode of its enlargement policy towards the Western Balkans. Under the SAP, the countries in the region can advance towards EU membership provided they meet all the set requirements (the Copenhagen criteria). The main objectives of this process include the stabilization of the region and the establishment of free trade both within it and with the EU. Regional cooperation thus formally became one of the pillars of conditionality

¹ With former Yugoslav republics these are largely issues of borders, displaced and missing persons, property issues, use of water resources, trans-boundary pollution, etc. With Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria the issues are mainly minority rights, water management, cross-border pollution etc.

² The Regional Approach was established in 1997, in the wake of the 1995 Dayton Agreement (signed the same year in Paris) to provide the policy framework for bilateral relations between the EU and the Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro at that time).

³ Founding members: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia (at that time with Montenegro as the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) and Turkey. Croatia joined in 2005, Moldova in 2006, Montenegro in 2007, Slovenia in 2010, and Kosovo has got a special status of participant invited by the Chairmanship in Office in 2014.

⁴ The Stability Pact, Southeast European Cooperative Initiative or the Stabilisation and Association Process.

⁵ Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Turkey and Yugoslavia.

⁶ Trade, transport, cross-border cooperation, industry, tourism, banking, energy, science and technology, agriculture, water resources management, telecommunications, environment, health care, culture, sport and information. In 1991, in Bucharest, there was even a meeting of parliamentary committees for international relations of the six Balkan countries. See: D.Lopandić and J.Kronja, *Regional Initiatives and Multilateral Cooperation in the Balkans*, European Movement in Serbia, Belgrade, 2011, p.56.

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/policy/glossary/terms/sap_en.htm

for the Western Balkans. Association Agreements and the following Accession Agreements entail the obligation of regional cooperation and good neighborly relations for each signatory country in the region. Their regional cooperation has been continuously monitored and the results achieved are an important criterion for assessing their annual progress towards the EU.

The Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe⁸, also launched in 1999, complemented the SAP and established specific key regional structures constituting the sectoral backbone of the whole complex and comprehensive regional cooperation mechanism⁹.

It can be concluded that external incentives coincided with indigenous regional initiatives articulating the needs and interests of the SEE countries. At first, they operated in parallel and were uncoordinated, and since 2008, they have acted together, in a carefully structured manner through the establishment of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)¹⁰ as the operational body of the SEECP and the successor to the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. The process of establishing regional cooperation in SEE enjoyed widespread support in the initial phase of operation of the Stability Pact – not only of the EU, the U.S. and Canada, but Russia and Japan as well. The circle of extra-regional partners and sources of support narrowed with the establishment of the Regional Cooperation Council, which was to ensure the transfer of responsibility for further cooperation from the international community to the countries of the region.

The EU remained a key source of support for regional cooperation in SEE, primarily for the Western Balkans as the main target group. Contrary to the initial idea that the EU financing of the activities of the RCC would be gradually reduced from the original one-third share of the total budget of the organization, its financial support significantly increased. One reason is the global economic crisis that heavily struck most of the countries in the region and prevented them from increasing their contributions, and the other, more important one, is the assessment that the RCC demonstrated the capacity to successfully fulfill its mandate¹¹.

The RCC has further managed to successfully coordinate and structure the activities of numerous regional initiatives and organizations formed in all the areas initially defined as RCC priorities¹². In 2013, after the RCC adopted its South East Europe (SEE) 2020 Strategy – *Jobs and Prosperity in a European Perspective* – the structure of the priority areas of action was partly remodeled and the RCC continued to work at three levels¹³.

It took almost 20 years before regional activities began focusing on improving living conditions in the region, competitiveness and development, closely following the vision of the EU Strategy Europe 2020. It was a great achievement to get to the shared vision of the SEE economies to create up to one million new jobs by 2020, increase total regional trade turnover by more than double from 94 to 210 billion Euro, raise the region's GDP per capita from present-day 36% to 44% of the EU average, and add 300,000 highly qualified people to the workforce¹⁴. Peace, stability and security remained high on the agenda, alongside the reconciliation process, which was expected to be an important outcome of all previously listed aspirations.

It should be noted that the flourishing of regional cooperation in the SEE happened in two stages. The first one was in the 2000-2007 period, mostly with the help and support of the Stability Pact for SEE¹⁵. The second wave started in 2008, when the region assumed much greater responsibility for its development through the establishment of the RCC. The gradual transformation of the RCC into the hub of regional cooperation, a mechanism for registering, monitoring and evaluating, and subsequently coordinating and harmonizing dispersed activities of numerous regional players, including better donor coordination and streamlining, has without any doubt played a role in the expansion of multilateral collaboration in SEE. In addition to all the described activities, the RCC also played the role of an incubator for new regional initiatives, in areas in which needs were identified but mechanisms of cooperation had not existed¹⁶.

⁸ Members: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia. Observer: Ukraine. Supporting partners: Japan, Norway, Russia, Turkey, Switzerland, the United States, European Union member states and numerous international organizations. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stability_Pact_for_South_Eastern_Europe.

⁹ CEFTA 2006, Energy Community Treaty for South East Europe (ECT), Investment Committee for South East Europe (SEEIC), South East Europe Transport Observatory (SEETO), etc.

¹⁰ For participants of the RCC see <http://www.rcc.int/pages/14/structure>

¹¹ To enhance regional cooperation, support political, economic, social and institutional reforms in SEE countries and their European and Euro-Atlantic integration, and contribute to better donor coordination in the region.

¹² Economic and social development, energy and infrastructure, justice and home affairs, security cooperation, building human capital and the cross-cutting issues, such as parliamentary cooperation, gender, etc.

¹³ The first level, related to the implementation of the SEE2020 strategy, comprised all the previous priority areas except defense cooperation and greater part of the JHA portfolio, which were addressed at the second level as areas of key importance for the security and stability in the region in order to make possible any other regional activity including the SEE2020. Cross-cutting issues like parliamentary cooperation, gender, cooperation with civil society became the third level of operations fulfilling the mandate of the RCC.

¹⁴ <http://www.rcc.int/pages/62/south-east-europe-2020-strategy>.

¹⁵ The role of Austrian politician Dr. Erhard Busek should be underlined as the *spiritus movens* of that process.

¹⁶ Such as the RCC Task Force on Culture and Society, Social Agenda 2020, the Western Balkans Research and Innovation Strategy Exercise – WISE, working groups on environment and justice etc. <http://www.rcc.int/pages/87/annual-report-on-regional-cooperation-in-south-east-europe-2014-2015>.

The second wave coincided with the outbreak of the international financial and economic crisis, which heavily affected the region's main economic partner, the EU, and consequently the region as well. On the one hand, the available resources for supporting important projects in Europe and the world were reduced. However, in many areas of common interest the region itself took the initiative and demonstrated the will and capacity to identify common problems and articulate possible regional solutions that attracted support.

The current state of regional cooperation

More than 50 regional organizations, initiatives, task forces and other structures (RCC, CEFTA, SEEIC, ECT, etc.) emerged over the past 15 years. There are thousands of donor-funded regional projects in a multitude of areas, spanning from trade, investment, rural development and scientific cooperation to security and police cooperation. They imply broad participation of the public (parliaments, ministries, agencies, etc.) and private sectors, as well as civil society organizations. Important international organizations (IFIs, OECD, UNDP, ILO, etc.) as well as regional and other think tanks (TEPAV, LSE, WIIW¹⁷ etc.) have been involved in their implementation.

Besides security, stability and reconciliation, which remain the key precondition and desired final outcome of cooperation, the main focus has shifted to the new priorities: institutional strengthening and good governance, competitive economies in the global marketplace, integrated infrastructure development and building knowledge-based societies. We have in recent years witnessed continuous strengthening of functional and sectoral cooperation in the region, contributing to the improvement of multilateral political relations, and improving, albeit oscillating, bilateral political relations. The intensity of regional activities can be qualified as impressive¹⁸.

¹⁷ Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV), the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (WIIW), the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

¹⁸ An indicative sample of the recent regional meetings in the Western Balkans/South East Europe:

- Western Balkans Summit Vienna 2015, as the second conference of the Berlin Process, Vienna, Aug 26-27, 2015.
- Regional Business Conference, Mostar, July 6, 2015.
- The third meeting of Southeast European leaders as part of the Brdo-Brijuni Process, Budva, June 8, 2015.
- The South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) Summit, Tirana, May 26, 2015.
- Foreign Ministers of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP), Tirana, May 22, 2015.
- Regional Cooperation Council Annual Meeting, Tirana, May 22, 2015.
- The inaugural meeting of the Regional Working Group on Environment, Podgorica, May 14, 2015.
- Sarajevo Business Forum, May 13, 2015.
- Regional Cooperation Day, Brussels, May 6, 2015.

The region is now not only appropriately represented in different international and regional fora as an emerging entity, but its agenda is also more effectively communicated to the national administrations and other target groups (business, civil society, etc.). The development of institutional capacities at both the national and regional levels has also contributed to the fulfillment of EU accession-related obligations.

Regional initiatives have facilitated access to various European programs and contributed to the programming of the IPA Multi-Beneficiary Program (IPA MB) through the participation of their experts in IPA MB working groups and coordination meetings. Therefore, they play an important role in the process of European integration of the region not only as consultative bodies, but also increasingly as implementing agencies for the accession-related programs and projects.

The global economic crisis and the contraction of external markets brought to the fore the considerable expansion capacity of regional trade, particularly within the CEFTA framework. Yet, achievements of regional cooperation were limited as the resources and capacities were modest and political will has periodically been constrained by latent or open bilateral tensions.

Regional consultative and monitoring mechanisms have been created in many areas of cooperation (trade, investment, JHA, etc.), providing additional benchmarks for measuring progress along the path towards the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the Western Balkans. Even the most sensitive security institutions in the countries of the region have been motivated to establish close cooperation, including common strategic planning and monitoring.

The bottom-up approach has been gaining ground by strengthening the role and capacity for regional cooperation of the local authorities, business communities, professional organizations, academia, non-governmental organizations, trade unions and media. The coherence and complementarities of the main regional processes, mechanisms and networks have increased despite the involvement of a broader range of stakeholders.

EU accession prospects are not the only factor underlying the establishment and development of regional cooperation. Authentic regional interests have emerged

- Combating Shadow Economy: A Necessity for Investments in SEE, Sarajevo, April 28, 2015.
- Regional Programmes in Culture and Creative Industries, Durres, April 28-29, 2015.
- The Third Meeting of the South East Europe (SEE) Tourism Expert Group (TEG), Belgrade, April 21-22, 2015.
- Meeting of Western Balkan 6 Prime Ministers on Priority Investments, Brussels, April 24, 2015.
- Ministerial Conference on Justice and Home Affairs, Budva, April 17, 2015.

and been recognized. The characteristics of these interests and those upholding them differ from one field of cooperation to another. Economic and some other forms of cooperation, such as in science, culture and, sport, among civil society organizations and local communities, have all developed in their own right, without too much intervention on the part of state institutions. With increasing frequency, however, it is the governments that stand firmly behind key projects on regulating the regional market, infrastructure, energy, and transport. Here, the EU has stimulated and assisted the emergence of institutions of cooperation¹⁹. New bodies of interest are being set up with a view to ensuring the long-term sustainability of multilateral cooperation.

Reconciliation remains an issue requiring constant attention

Of course, the Srebrenica and the “Storm” anniversaries caused major upheavals in the region, especially in the relations between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and between Serbia and Croatia. The first impression was that we returned to the starting point – the end of conflicts, with high emotions and animosities. Details of marking these anniversaries were this time often insulting to the victims. It seemed that twenty years of efforts by many political leaders, civil society, youths, women, war crimes courts, foreign donors and peace organizations to help overcome the consequences of war and facilitate the normalization of relations in the region have failed. But the analysis that followed after the emotions quieted down and heads cooled indicates that all the previous efforts had not been in vain. The only concern is related to the impact of these earthquakes and suitability of previous forms through which the process of reconciliation had been taking place.

War crimes courts are still operating and even new ones are being established (Kosovo). RECOM²⁰ is still collecting facts on war crimes and governments generally do not interfere or obstruct its work. The Igman Initiative continues rallying politicians, parliamentarians, representatives of local authorities, NGOs, and international organizations round various forms of regional cooperation and reconciliation in BiH, Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia, searching for formulas for longer-term cooperation, such as the Nordic Council.

During the greatest outbursts of nationalist feelings, the Croatian retail chain “Idea” officially opened new stores in Belgrade; popular Serbian singers performing in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia were welcomed by standing ovations; in downtown Belgrade, a Croatian jazz trio was playing popular music in a street cafe;

film, music, and theater festivals brought together artists from the neighboring countries; people could buy books from the neighboring countries in their local bookstores; goods have continued crossing borders; Serbs vacationed in Croatia (but the expelled ones did not go back) and life went on. One Croatian commentator²¹ called on regional politicians not to reconcile people in the region, just not to disturb those who wanted to cooperate.

Serbian Prime Minister Vučić offered a new formula of “aggressive reconciliation”, as a Belgrade commentator dubbed his proposal of a joint Memorial Day for all the victims of Yugoslav wars²². His proposal has been rejected so far; all the victims should be recognized and documented before an initiative like this one can be accepted.

Although the expectations are focused on the triangle Serbia-BiH-Croatia as well as Serbia-Kosovo, it seems that the axis of the new dynamism in regional reconciliation will go along the Belgrade-Tirana line. So far this axis appears the most promising. After a major earthquake, tranquility is always greeted with relief, and people continue to circulate ever more easily within regional borders.

Consequences of the EU enlargement Process ‘regatta principle’ on regional cooperation

The “regatta” accession of the Western Balkan countries to the EU is merit based. Countries fulfilling the membership approach to eventual requirements and able to prove they are ready to join the club should be admitted. It can also be perceived as an impetus to the competitive race for accession that is expected to spur reforms in the countries concerned. The recent announcement by the European Commission that Brussels plans to change the methodology of assessing achievements in its annual progress reports on the Western Balkan countries is very indicative in that respect. “The new methodology will be more precise, evaluating achievements of governments in key areas on a five-point scale. It will provide an objective comparison is the country prepared and to what degree of competition between governments, so that each country can see where it is compared to the region. We hope this will spur reforms”²³.

¹⁹ See footnote 9.

²⁰ RECOM, the regional commission to determine the number of victims of the wars in the former Yugoslavia, rallies over 1800 civil society organizations and individuals from all states created after dissolution of the former Yugoslavia.

²¹ Zlatko Crnčec, “Political Reconciliation in the Balkans is Unnecessary”, *Novi List*, Rijeka, as quoted by Belgrade daily *Danas*, August 13, 2015.

²² Zoran Panović, “Delirium in Livno”, daily *Danas*, August 15-16, 2015.

²³ EC official David Hudson, as quoted in a report on BIRN Conference: Media Freedom Being Rolled Back in Balkans“, *BIRN*, June 12 2015, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/birn-conference-media-freedom-being-rolled-back-in-balkans>.

However, there are warnings that the slowing down of the accession talks and exclusion of several Western Balkan countries from this phase of the enlargement process might lead to further divisions in the Western Balkans²⁴. An author of a paper published in *Foreign Affairs* has already divided the countries by their level of stability and implicitly difficulties with the state building process – and singled out BiH, Macedonia, and Kosovo as sources of instability in the region²⁵. However, if developments in the EU lead to in-depth restructuring and a three-tier EU, Western Balkan countries will remain together regardless of their achievements in the accession process in the short or mid-term²⁶.

The main challenges to further deepen regional cooperation

The main challenges to furthering regional cooperation are intra- and extra-regional; political and sectoral; structural and technical; short term and long term. All of them combined demonstrate the complexity of regional cooperation in the Western Balkans and SEE.

In general, regional cooperation is moving forward. The Western Balkans is the driving force of regional cooperation with the highest density of networks, links, and activities in this part of the wider region²⁷. Changes envisaged in the Southeast European Cooperation Process (SEECP) aimed at strengthening this initiative will also influence both political and sectoral cooperation in the region via the changing balance between the wider SEE framework and the Western Balkans (greater stress on the pan-Balkan initiatives in the area of infrastructure,

energy, parliamentary cooperation, business, security cooperation).

On the other hand, developments within the EU and the further evolution of the EU enlargement policy have great impact on regional cooperation. The new European Commission sent a negative message about the future perspectives of EU enlargement in 2014, when it said that no further enlargement would take place in the next five years. Changes in the portfolio of the Directorate General in charge of enlargement were also a manifestation of “enlargement fatigue” (signaling that the Commission’s task in the next five-year mandate was not enlargement but “enlargement negotiations”). Simultaneously, the EU has evidently taken a more demanding approach to the enlargement process: “The EU has set the bar higher than in previous enlargements. Its ongoing internal challenges resulted in less dedication to the region (mixed accession signals, small incentives)... Moreover, the enlargement environment is more disintegrated than ever with diverse paces of integration both in the EU and the Western Balkans. There is a different negotiation technique required in comparison with the earlier times (more chapters, interim benchmarks, equilibrium clause, and additional emphasis on economic criteria)”²⁸.

Of course, the region is also affected by changes on the broader international stage – the economic and financial crisis, with its social consequences, conflicts in the neighboring regions and the refugee crisis, as well as the changing power balance.

The political will of the main players of regional cooperation is essential. However, the region is facing persistent domestic obstacles on this road: internal disagreements; slow and partial reforms; fragile democratic institutions and poor governance; endemic corruption; and, above all, frequent ethnic turmoil. Lack of appropriate institutional, human, and financial capacities to support political willingness means that commitments are not always coupled with the tools needed to reach the objectives agreed at the political level. There are also problems of intra-governmental coordination within SEE administrations, fragmentation, lack of coordination of numerous activities at the regional level and, above all, physical barriers to better communication in the region (transport and communications infrastructure, for example).

Therefore, there is a need to address regional cooperation in a more strategic manner, and to increase the relevance and effectiveness of the regional initiatives themselves. That was the main purpose of the develop-

²⁴ Knut Fleckenstein, “Continuing on-going accession negotiations without opening additional negotiations during the next five years entails a clear risk of dividing the Western Balkans even further. The countries would be divided into those that have already started accession negotiations and those that are relegated behind and that, independently from their reform efforts, would have to wait for at least five more years before reaching the same stage of the EU accession process”. *Proposals for a S&D position towards the Western Balkans and their ‘European perspective’*, European Parliament, December 2014.

²⁵ Edward P. Joseph, “The Balkans, Interrupted”, *Foreign Affairs*, May 10, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/southeastern-europe/2015-05-10/balkans-interrupted>.

²⁶ Cornelius Adebahr, “Finally, discussion about a possible British exit from the EU will trigger a debate about a three-tier EU, with political union in the eurozone, a bigger single market group comprising the United Kingdom and possibly Turkey (as well as the Western Balkans one day), and a broader union of democracy and the rule of law based on membership in the Council of Europe – and therefore including Ukraine and the countries of the South Caucasus. Europe still needs more integration, but at different levels”. In “Judy Dempsey Asks: Is Now the Time for More European Integration?”, *Carnegie Europe*, July 15, 2015, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=60714>.

²⁷ In the overview of 47 regional cooperation initiatives in the South East Europe, the average membership for the Western Balkan countries is 46, comparing with 25 for Bulgaria and Romania or 17 for Slovenia and Turkey. *Serbia and Kosovo: European Perspectives and Practicalities*, European Movement in Serbia, Belgrade, 2014, pp.167-175.

²⁸ *European integration of the Western Balkans – can the Visegrad Group countries serve as role models?*, ed. Jelica Minić, European Movement in Serbia, 2015, <http://www.emins.org/uploads/useruploads/forum-it/02-PA-V4Studija.pdf>.

ment and adoption of the SEE 2020 Strategy²⁹. The intensification of regional cooperation in the Western Balkans should be supported by all means and the most viable and efficient regional initiatives should be provided with adequate financial support.

Long term development of regional cooperation is closely linked with the further evolution of the existing regional structures, primarily the RCC and SEECP, but CEFTA, the Energy Community for SEE, et al as well. It also substantially depends on the EU enlargement policy including new initiatives such as the Berlin Process³⁰, or other formats recently launched to enhance EU cooperation with the six Western Balkan states (WB6)³¹.

Above all, it is crucial how deeply certain measures undertaken to interlink regional players will take root and to establish a long lasting structure of interests capable of holding the region together.

²⁹ <http://www.rcc.int/files/user/docs/reports/SEE2020-Strategy.pdf>.

³⁰ <http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/EN/Pressemitteilungen/BPA/2014/2014-08-28-balkan.html>, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2014_Conference_of_Western_Balkan_States_Berlin.

³¹ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-481_en.htm.

THE STATE OF REGIONAL COOPERATION AND THE REMAINING CHALLENGES

Ambassador Aleksandar Andrija Pejović
Secretary of State for European Integration
Chief Negotiator
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration
Montenegro

How far along the road have Western Balkans truly travelled since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of Yugoslavia twenty five years ago in restoring their European values and approaching what is inevitably the common perspective of integration for the region? This is yet again a topical issue, especially after the ghosts of the past have been awoken over the past months, ghosts that again are proving wrong those who advocated that the Western Balkans will steadily walk towards EU membership and giving wind to those skeptics of future Balkan progress. Or have they never been put to sleep? Or, are they the same ghosts that haunt the Europeans over the approach to migrants and asylum policy? At the same time, recent efforts to cooperate more closely on infrastructure have contained more dialog where it never existed; while, arrangements for the border agreements have given ground to the optimistic expectations that things are accelerating towards ever more cooperation and stability. These two processes go hand in hand, creating contrasting feelings about the Balkans.

To the skeptics, and Brussels is full of those, there is one main question that comes to their mind – do we as the region stay firm on our pro-European path or are we constantly being distracted by our, historically speaking, recent past? Unfortunately, but naturally, the answer is only to some extent positive. The atrocities of the Balkans war must never be forgotten. And this is why a stable regional cooperation under the EU mechanisms will not fully prevail unless supported by sincere reconciliation and the assumption of guilt by each. This brings to attention another fact that at times may be lost from the horizon: the foreign policy of the countries of the region is painted by the same colors – we are all defined by the fate of our neighbors because none of us is an island. Therefore, reconciliation, respect, forgiveness, and open-heartedness represent the core infrastructure of regional relations and our future cooperation under the EU umbrella. In this context, it is especially important to note its interconnection with the enhancement of the existing institutional frameworks and their real capacity to underpin it.

However, as the reconciliation remains the matter to be treated in the course of time and cherished as a question with deeply human dimensions, the endeavors that have been made by the Balkans together with its European partners to strengthen the dialog during the previous years should not be forgotten.

The Thessaloniki Ministerial Conference of May 8, 2014¹ reconfirmed the unequivocal commitment of the EU to the European perspective of the Western Balkans region, in line with the 2003 Thessaloniki EU-Western

¹ www.gr2014.eu

Balkans Summit documents². It also stressed regional cooperation and good-neighborly relations as the significant components that need to be further enhanced, especially through the aligned development of the regional infrastructure.

Chancellor Angela Merkel further reinforced the idea in August 2014 in Berlin by clearly showing an interest of the EU and the Member States to further pursue the enlargement to the Western Balkans as well as regional cooperation. It proved to be a political message of huge importance and potential. The key step towards deepening the political and economic integration of the region was recognized by capitals Europe-wide, but also throughout the region.

From the regional perspective, the improvement of infrastructure in the Balkans is not only the matter of improving the connectivity, communication or development. It is also very important for the good security policy. Feebly developed transport and trade connections result in weak economic cooperation. Restoration of cross-border ties through new corridors and routes requires significant investment, at a cost way beyond the financial capacities of the Balkan economies. This is why European political will is important and this is why future Balkan development plans should be based along the lines of the recent Vienna meeting of our Prime Ministers. It gives the region a chance to deepen political and economic integration, creating conditions for easier transition to the common market of the EU, the effective pursuit of the four freedoms, and lastly thus making an economically stronger, more secure and safer area at the southern flank of the continent. It is also an opportunity to discuss the issues of migration, both from the Western Balkans and through it and a chance for the Prime Ministers to discuss the issues that are also on the table of the European Councils.

Speaking of infrastructure, meetings of Heads of the states, Prime Ministers and Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Economy in Budva, Belgrade, Pristina and Brussels in the year between Berlin and Vienna show that the region and the EU have recognized this and that they all tend to see this part of Europe better connected, economically strengthened, governed by the rule of law and attractive for further foreign investments.

Hand in hand with the priorities of the Union, the region should underpin its sustained growth over the medium-term by focusing on the energy supply and the development priorities of interconnection transmission energy networks. For example, Montenegro is determined to see to the construction of the underwater energy cable with Italy, construction of new inter-connection lines to connect Montenegrin power system with Bosnian

and/or Serbian, expansion of the Pljevlja power plant, and the future plans on connections to TAP through the Ionian Adriatic Gas Pipeline. These are the projects of regional character that better unite the countries in pursuing their common interests than loads of declarations or agreements.

Regional cooperation relies to a great extent on bilateral economic relations. The foreign trade statistics speak of the interdependency of countries in the region. According to the Montenegrin Statistical Office, the foreign trade exchange data for 2013 imply that the highest foreign trade exchange was noted with the CEFTA signatories and the EU. In export, main foreign trade exchange partners were individually: Serbia (€133.5 million), Croatia (€59.5 million), Slovenia (€36 million), and import: Serbia (€505.9 million) and Greece (€149.8 million)³.

Foreign policy priorities of all the countries in the region include good neighborly relations as the cornerstone of the integration processes and determine the conduct of regional cooperation. A number of initiatives in the region in the last years have proven to be a good framework for fostering bilateral cooperation, as well as the grounds for maintaining stability and promotion of close neighborly relations. The question that regularly pops up is whether forty-something regional initiatives and organizations in the Balkans are really needed. Is the money spent on so many of them really used to the good of the region and whether there should be more streamlining and efficiency in the whole process of cooperation? Can any of them address the most topical issue of illegal migrations, readmission, and asylum? These are the questions to which the capitals of the Western Balkans together with Brussels should pay more attention and devote more energy in trying to revive the mechanisms of collaboration.

For example, let us take the issue of Multi-country Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). With representatives of the EU on board, this mechanism should provide a framework for looking into the needs and plans of the countries and the region. What the countries of the region miss is the feeling that they are being asked how the EU grants are distributed among the regional and international organizations. At a number of times one could hear complaints by the governments in the region that they had no idea about certain activities of why certain areas are deemed more important than the other ones. There is a missing link in the overall story of proposing projects and overseeing their implementation – and regional organizations have not been able to fill the gap and perform as a binding link in-between the two.

² http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/76201.pdf.

³ www.monstat.org.

A lot has been done in the past two decades but the region still needs to focus on the enhancement of regional cooperation, both bilaterally and through the multilateral fora. Having mentioned this, the Balkans certainly has a broad platform to do so and to continue to work through the initiatives that stand at its disposal, using as well the micro-strategies such as Adriatic Ionian Initiative and Danube Initiative, which narrow down cooperation to the area of the specific, mutual interests. Strengthening security in the Adriatic area as well as intensifying cooperation among countries of the region can be further pursued through the platform provided by the Adriatic Ionian Macro-region. Both by continuing the political dialog and multilateral cooperation under this format will ensure further enhancement of transport, maritime affairs, fisheries, education, science, and development of small and medium-sized enterprises. Exchange of innovations and the best practices in the broader region could be guaranteed by the implementation of the Danube Strategy, as well as the joint action in the area of environment protection, energy connectivity, mobility, promotion of tourism and culture.

Integration processes offer the possibility to further develop national mechanisms operating in the rule of law area and to jointly enable the Western Balkans to make progress and fulfill European standards. The intensive communication in international and regional planning has been achieved in the area of fighting organized crime. Through safe communication channels (Interpol, Europol, Selec), which the region is a part of now, the information related to police investigations are efficiently exchanged with a view to suppressing all forms of crime. In the context of regional cooperation, the importance of mechanisms such as the Convention on South East Europe police cooperation must be noted. There should be ever more cooperation at the international and regional level and further realize the successful international endeavors of the police.

Police actions that have been undertaken with the Western Balkans countries and international partners that resulted in resolving the severe criminal offences in the area of organized crime have significant effects, as revealed by the measurable results in this area. This is noted due to the fact that after setting the adequate legislative framework in the area of the rule of law, a good track record in the area of fighting the organized crime will be essential.

Nowadays, Europe is facing maybe the worst migration crisis so far. In respect to this challenge, joint solutions are needed, not only among the EU countries, but much broader, in entire Europe. On our part, the region must invest its efforts to align with the EU *acquis* in the area of border security management. The countries of the region should concentrate on developing their national Schengen Action plans in order to be prepared to take responsibility for securing the external frontiers of the

EU once they become members. But the real challenge is for the Balkans to stay calm and help the people transiting on the Balkan routes to the EU. This is no just a test for European solidarity, but also a test for the Balkans to show its capacities in catching smugglers and traffickers and assisting the ones in need.

The EU umbrella provides multiple possibilities for generations to come. The investment in knowledge will benefit individuals, organizations, but also the whole societies and at the same time provide prosperity and social inclusion in the region and the EU. The programs such as Erasmus+ provide the opportunity for young people to go beyond their own borders and acquire new knowledge. The dialogue was successfully held at the conference 'Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Youth in Action' (RAY) held in Vienna in May this year to foster further development of the youth policy⁴. But the young can have an opportunity to find jobs and pursue their careers in the region only if it manages to improve its economy and offer more employment, better standards and a brighter future.

It takes understanding that none of the processes are unrelated. Economic growth as well as good governance within the public administration may not be achieved aside of reforms in the rule of law, just as the rule of law cannot be further strengthened without economic progress. To some extent the Balkans can round up our individual progresses at homes, but tomorrow, as the members of the Union and equal players in the common market, the region must make an additional effort.

We have all been recently reminded, on the occasion of marking hundred years since the Great War that such tragic events warn of the need for a responsible attitude towards ourselves, towards our neighbors, and towards Europe. It is best defended by a hard work, democratic and economic development, equality, and a respect for the rights and freedoms of its citizens.

One is certain, it takes more than just a will to make this happen. We can be certain that both the political and the entire intellectual elite in the region do not lack it. It does need assistance from its European partners, especially as the path to the Union becomes steeper and harder to climb. Ideally, as the region moves towards the same goal, better connectivity and cooperation should help at every move.

The Western Balkan countries must take their reform agenda more seriously, when it comes to both political and economic criteria for the EU membership. This is the precondition of any success. Along the lines of the mentioned initiatives, regional cooperation has to be

⁴ <https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/european-training-calendar/training/ray-triangular-summit-international-youth-work-and-mobility-research-evidence-for-policy-and-practice.4873/>.

upgraded to reflect the current challenges and opportunities. In dealing with its priorities – and these are maintaining stability, pursuing economic development through ensuring transport and energy connectivity, regulating migration flows and creation of societies based on growth and knowledge – the region, together with its European Union partners, has to be creative, well-focused, diligent, and adaptive. This is the only way forward to guarantee success and a better life for its citizens.

FOSTERING REFORMS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS – FIGHTING CORRUPTION AS AN IMPORTANT MILESTONE

Dr. Senada Šelo Šabić
Institute for Development and International Relations
Zagreb

It is a standard line that European integration of the remaining six countries of the Western Balkans (WB), namely Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia, is the key challenge, a crucial framework for conducting reforms which would make these countries eligible candidates for European Union (EU) membership while at the same time building them up as functioning, stable and prosperous nation-states.

However, the path from this starting point is in no way easy as the experience from the last two decades shows. All these countries are associated with the EU through the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP), a specially designed instrument for the WB countries to facilitate their reform processes and bring them closer to the EU. The criticism that this is the framework that will keep the region permanently at the European doorstep proved invalid once Croatia, a former participant in the SAP, joined the EU in 2013. This has been the best proof that there is a membership perspective for the remaining countries, providing they meet the necessary conditions.

A new kind of criticism which says that the fulfillment of membership criteria is a more daunting task now than it was for Croatia, and certainly much more cumbersome than it was for the 2004 and 2007 enlargements, while at the same time the six current and potential candidates are much weaker states, has some resonance but does not alter the basic premise – only with full adherence to EU-required conditions would they be able to join the EU.

We can argue if this is the right approach, but it is the one from which the EU and its member states seem not to show a sign of possible deviation. Coupled with the ongoing crises in the EU and its neighborhood, the insistence on strict fulfillment of the *acquis* and a few additional conditions appears to be a common policy for member states in dealing with any further enlargement. Even members who are traditionally pro-enlargement and those who resist ‘deepening’ of the Union, would not at the present moment act as sponsors of enlargement that allows for exemptions from the conditionality.

Yet, as said, these are rather weak states – underperforming economically, institutionally frail, struggling to overcome the onerous legacy of the wars in the 1990s. Unemployment, in particular of the youth, corruption, deindustrialization, poor social services, and limited media freedoms contribute to the mood of depression and fatalism. Young generations dream of leaving these countries in search of a better future and many have put their dreams in action. The emigration, and brain drain accompanying it, has been pervasive in the region in the

last years. The most recent data shows that every fourth young person would leave BiH in an instant if there was a chance and 40% of the youth would like to settle somewhere else for an extended period of time¹. The situation is similar in other WB states.²

With all this in mind, the EU is making attempts to re-invigorate the reform processes in the region by offering substantial financial assistance to improve the economic and political governance. The region of the Western Balkans is surrounded by EU member states and despite aversion to further enlargement in a number of member states, integrating six new members with a total population of less than 19 million people, a number of whom already have EU citizenship, would not be an impossible task on the condition they are reformed to be able to perform as EU member states.

The two issues are here at play – one is the ultimate willingness of the countries in the region to genuinely pursue reforms and step up their efforts, the second is unequivocal demonstration of the will of the EU to assist them in this process.

In a recent publication of the ECFR (European Council on Foreign Relations), the authors ask whether the EU is losing this region?³ From the perspective of many EU officials, this seems as an unfair question, a reference also to the statement of the High Representative Federica Mogherini made at the meeting at which this report was produced.⁴ However, the criticism of the experts is that the EU focuses on the process rather than substance. The fear is that this could result in the Western Balkans falling into a kind of ‘strategic limbo’, neither in, neither out, a playing ground for actors competing with the EU, not sufficiently developed or democratized to resist the lure of authoritarianism, revamped nationalism, and all other forms of anti-liberalism in politics and economy.⁵

The Berlin process as an antidote

Better economic conditions along with strengthening the democratic rule of law would counter such tendencies. The Berlin process, a 5-year process named after

the capital of the country that took the initiative, should bring the desired incentive.

It focuses on a regional approach, i.e. seeks to strengthen links among the countries and in doing so induce them to cooperate instead of pursuing separate and often antagonistic agendas. The format takes place through infrastructure projects, primarily transport and energy networks, but also education, vocational training, and support to civil society. The Vienna meeting, the second one in the Berlin process, which took place on August 27, 2015 resulted in the EU commitment of 200 million euros of grants in addition to 400 million euros which will be secured through loans by financial institutions. Six transport infrastructure investment projects and four in the area of energy were agreed in Vienna.⁶

These are, indeed, good news. The hope is that this will create a positive climate which would propel leaders of WB countries to commit to reforms and to have the opportunity to see economic growth and job creation through these investments, a focus which adds to the insistence on upholding democratic freedoms and concern about minority rights, which the EU has been mostly associated with in the region. If there is an increasing economic benefit through closer partnership with the EU, the EU can be certain to generate more supporters for the reform processes. Yet, a word of caution is necessary here.

EU leaders present in Vienna commended progress made in the EU-facilitated Belgrade-Pristina dialog and the signing of the border agreements between Montenegro and BiH, and Montenegro and Kosovo. These are excellent pieces of news. Unresolved bilateral issues burden the relations between states and create in general the sense of a region being locked into a web of insolvable issues. Breakthroughs are possible; they should be acknowledged and further encouraged.

The EU’s facilitation of such processes is all fine for the time being. In the end, however, we wait to see leaders in the region making the initiative and settling outstanding issues by themselves, reaching out for support only in a case of impasse or a serious breach of trust. To reach this level of committed, responsible, and reliable leadership, the EU and engaged member states should do more in the meantime.

It requires no new summits, no new financial transfers, no new institutions, and no additional manpower. There is one policy which can have multiple, positive effects in terms of strengthening good governance, building institutions, reinforcing democratic standards, instigating

¹ FENA (Federal News Agency BiH), ‘Purivatra: svaki četvrti mladi čovjek napustio bi BiH’ [Purivatra: every fourth young person would leave BiH], 30 August 2015 at http://www.fena.ba/public2/NewsPrint.aspx?news_id=FSA1469727.

² See also Vlasta Ilišin *et al.*, ‘Youth in a time of crisis’, First IDIZ-Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Youth Survey, Zagreb, 2013 at http://www.fes.hr/E-books/pdf/YOUTH_IN_A_TIME_OF_CRISIS.pdf.

³ Francisco de Borja Lasheras and Vessela Tcherneva, ‘Is the EU losing the Western Balkans? What local experts think’, European Council on Foreign Relations, 5 August 2015, at http://www.ecfr.eu/article/is_the_eu_losing_the_western_balkans_what_local_experts_think3093.

⁴ Sofia Platform, the European Council on Foreign Relations, 29 July 2015, at <http://sofiaplatform.org/2015-2/>.

⁵ See the ECFR report.

⁶ The ‘Final Declaration of the Chair of the Western Balkans Summit’, 27 August 2015, Vienna at http://www.bmeia.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Zentrale/Aussenpolitik/Chairman_s_Conclusions_Western_Balkans_Summit.pdf.

hope among citizens that change is possible and underpinning the sense of ownership of their countries and of their destinies. This is the fight against corruption. Successive polls systematically show that a high percentage of citizens in every WB state view corruption as one of most difficult problems in their societies. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime conducted a research funded by the European Commission and found that the largest worry for citizens in the Western Balkans is unemployment, followed by poverty but corruption comes at a worrying third place.⁷ Transparency International (TI) successively reports on high levels of perception of corruption in all the countries in the region. In its recommendations writing on BiH in 2014, TI states that political will is a crucial first step to reducing corruption. Yet, officials seem to lack the genuine will to tackle it.⁸

Failure to address the gravity of citizens' concerns concerning corruption could undermine positive initiatives or, at least, to slow them down. It is encouraging to see that the EU maintains momentum and keeps the process of enlargement alive with respect to the WB. It is also not fair to expect that the Union shows more concern for worries of citizens in the region than do their respective governments. Yet, if it is seriously committed to seeing WB countries become members one day, the EU can and should demonstrate more political will on its own side to see the fight against corruption handled with determination and without reservation.

This does not imply that member states send their own judges, interfere in judicial proceedings or in any other way take direct responsibility, yet, they can and should do it indirectly – through official statements, training of judges, support to investigative journalists and linking specific assistance to progress in the fight against corruption.

In general, all these countries have established the necessary institutions and adopted legislations designed to reduce corruption in their societies. The main challenge now is to put these into practice. The EU will not have a partner among a number of leaders in the region, except declaratively. This should not be a reason to shy away. After all, the EU is acting in its own best faith and bestowing its own principles.

The long-term view with intermediary steps

The economic reform process, investments in infrastructure projects, boosting of trade and accelerating of exports are crucial and indispensable. A robust economy is the nerve of resilient societies. Investments that could be made through IPA II (1 billion euros for the period 2014-2020) and through other financial instruments could create a momentum for positive breakthroughs in the region. What must not be forgotten, though, is that this region has hardly suffered from profound financial deprivation. Earlier humanitarian aid and post-war reconstruction assistance, however, were given with fewer conditions attached. In some cases it bred comfortable irresponsibility on the part of ruling elites. Changing this mentality is a long-term process.

The new generation of leaders is the hope for the future. Investments in education and student mobility should facilitate further development of these countries. That the EU and the participating states from the region agreed to work strategically in the direction of improving education and assisting student mobility within the region and the EU is a very, very positive sign. Education, in the long run, is the determinant of success. Most young people in the region do not travel. One study in BiH found that over 50 per cent of young people never travelled abroad. Their in-country mobility is also low.⁹ How can regional cooperation become vibrant and durable if people do not meet? It is not enough for politicians to meet – students, businesses, activists also need to meet each other.

It is encouraging to see that there is now a clear recognition of the quintessence importance of education for development of economy and democracy in WB states (globally, I would say). Informed, open-minded and tolerant generations are more difficult to manipulate. Education in a competitive but fair and friendly environment instills values that are later reflected in every other aspect of a person's life. Meeting fellow students from neighboring countries is the most effective way to build links, dispel fear, confront prejudice, and foster reconciliation.

Excellence in research and education is the best insurance against mediocre, second-rate, closed societies, which do not create new wealth and from which the brightest leave as soon as they can. Through IPA II, special grants, bilateral donations – investment in youth and education pays off in multiple ways.

⁷ UNODC, 'Corruption in the western Balkans', 2011 at http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/corruption/Western_balkans_corruption_report_2011_web.pdf. The same results were reported in a poll conducted in Serbia, Blic online, 'Šta najviše muči građane Srbije' [What is the biggest worry of citizens in Serbia], 2012, <http://www.blic.rs/Vesti/Drustvo/333888/Sta-na-jvise-muci-gradjane-Srbije>.

⁸ Transparency International, Overview, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2014, https://www.transparency.org/country/#BIH_DataResearch.

⁹ Buka portal, 'Mladi u BiH: nisu pasivni, većina pokušava da pronade posao' [Youth in BiH: not passive, the majority is trying to find a job], 30 August 2015, interview with a spokesperson of the Institute for Youth Development KULT, at <http://www.6yka.com/novost/88157/-mladi-u-bih-nisu-pasivni-vecina-pokusava-da-pronade-posao>.

If education is a long-term goal, and economic growth via infrastructure investments and other instruments a middle-term one, tackling corruption can start tomorrow. All that is required is already in place. It *just* needs to be put in motion. Corruption in higher education is reported to be significant in the Balkans.¹⁰ “The effect of this corruption has had a debilitating effect on these institutions. It decreases the quality of education, creates inequality among current and enrolling students, damages the credibility of universities, erodes motivation, and detaches students from the institutions serving them.”¹¹ Tackling corruption in higher education can be a sensible beginning.

¹⁰ See 'Regionalno istraživanje na percepcija za korupcija vo visoko obrazovanie' [Regional research on perception of corruption in higher education] published by Youth Educational Forum, Skopje in 2013 as a result of the research conducted by the Anti-Corruption Student Network in South East Europe. Report in Macedonian available at <http://www.mof.mk/mofmk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Mof-brosura-regionalno-istrazivanje-za-web1.pdf>

¹¹ Dona Kosturanova, 'For Students in the Balkans, an Education in Corruption', 19 March 2015 at <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/world-s-most-corrupt-university-system>.

CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM AT THE VIENNA SUMMIT: BETWEEN HIGH EXPECTATIONS AND MODEST ACHIEVEMENTS

Dr. Dane Taleski
Skopje

The Western Balkan Summit took place on August 27, 2015 in Vienna. It brought together the Prime Ministers, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministers of Economy of the Western Balkan countries together with the President and Members of the European Commission, Presidents of International Financial Institutions, and the Prime Ministers of several EU countries and other high level officials. This was the continuation of the ‘Berlin process’, initiated by Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, in 2014. The idea of the summit is to sustain the Western Balkans’ EU integration momentum and to improve regional co-operation.

The main topics discussed between the heads of states at the Vienna summit were ‘infrastructure and connectivity’, ‘regional cooperation’, ‘youth’, and the ‘refugee challenge’.¹ The huge influx of refugees came abruptly on the agenda as a pressing policy concern and a prime time media headline. It overshadowed the other issues, but failed to yield concrete and joint policies or plans of actions. The political leaders agreed on projects that were prepared before hand, for example several infrastructure projects, and to establish a regional youth exchange system based on the German-French youth office. One day before the meeting between the heads of state, a civil society forum was organized, where civil society representatives from the Western Balkan countries had the chance to interact with the political leaders. This was an interesting novelty in the framework of the Western Balkan Summit. Most of the political leaders from the Western Balkan countries are not used to talking to civil society at eye level; on contrary, in Montenegro, Serbia, and Macedonia, civil society representatives have come under governments’ pressure.²

To some extent, the foreign press was disappointed in the outcomes of the summit. For example, newspapers in Germany pointed out that the political leaders managed to agree on infrastructure projects worth 600 million Euros, but that the region, faced with huge waves of refugees, was suffering from degradation of democracy and economic deterioration.³ The foreign press did

¹ For more detailed information about the background and outcomes of the summit see the Federal Ministry for European Integration and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria: <http://www.bmeia.gv.at/en/european-foreign-policy/foreign-policy/western-balkans-summit-vienna-2015/>.

² For more see Florian Bieber, “Small steps and (not so) great expectations. Notes from the Vienna Summit”, Balkans in Europe Policy Blog, 28.08.2015 (available at <http://www.suedosteuropa.uni-graz.at/biepag/node/168>).

³ For more see DeutscheWelle, “Самитот во Виена – скромни резултати, лажна хармонија” [Vienna Summit – modest results, false harmony], 28.08.2015 (available at <http://www.dw.com/mk/%D1%81%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%82-%D0%B2%D0%BE-%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D1%81%D0%BA%D1%80%>

not give great attention to the civil society forum. The same goes for most of the media outlets in the region. But the media did not fail to cover the football match between politicians from the Western Balkans and the EU, which the latter lost.

On the other hand, some of the media in the region reported that civil society representatives, in the framework of the summit, called the political leaders to secure greater freedom of expression and independence of media, and greater involvement of civil society in Euro-Atlantic integration processes.⁴

What was the Civil Society Forum?

The Civil Society Forum was a joint initiative of the Erste Foundation, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES), and the Karl Renner Institute, in close cooperation with the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria. It was also supported by the European Fund for the Balkans (EFB), the Balkan Investigative Research Network (BIRN), and the Balkan in Europe Policy Advisory Group (BiEPAG).

These organizations structured and facilitated the inclusion of the civil society at the Vienna summit. In the first instance, in cooperation with the Austrian ministry, three issues were outlined in which civil society representatives could provide their input. The three issues were regional cooperation, freedom of expression and media freedoms, and jobs and prosperity. The next step was taken up by BiEPAG members, who produced three analytical papers covering the main issues in the three areas. The papers were presented to civil society representatives and served as frameworks for discussion. Three separate workshops were organized where numerous civil society representatives were invited to discuss the issues and give their input. For example, FES organized a workshop on jobs and prosperity in Tirana, EFB organized a workshop about regional cooper-

ation in Belgrade, and BIRN organized a workshop about freedom of expression and media freedoms in Sarajevo.

Following the workshops' discussions, several recommendations were developed concerning regional cooperation, freedom of expression and media freedoms, and jobs and prosperity. Civil society representatives identified ways in which they can contribute in overcoming the existing challenges in these areas. Also, they gave recommendations how to overcome some of the remaining issues, such as: dealing with the past, improving regional cooperation, building networks and partnerships, protection of journalists, freedom of media, and opening new jobs. Civil society organizations vouched to support and/or to monitor the policy implementation, and offered further policy advises. Civil society representatives offered to contribute to policies and strategies that strengthen regional cooperation on social development issues and to contribute toward the development of the institutional and legal environment for civil society on regional level.

In the past, civil society representatives in many occasions took initiatives to improve the work of the public institutions. The civil society in the Western Balkans has demonstrated that it has the capacity to improve the quality of public services and to compliment the delivery of public goods and services. This has been done through advising public institutions with policy research and expert analysis, but also through helping and supporting the citizens with volunteering and humanitarian actions.

In addition to the recommendations in the three areas, BiEPAG members prepared a policy brief on existing bilateral disputes that impede EU integration and suggested possible ways to overcome them.⁵ The open issues between the countries range from unresolved border and political disputes to issues of statehood and national identities, and minority rights. Besides having the potential to block the EU path of individual countries, these issues pose a security concern in the region. The key recommendations were for Western Balkan governments to sign a joint declaration in which they would commit not to use bilateral disputes to block individual countries' accession negotiations; to initiate an annual review of the state of bilateral disputes within the Berlin process; to facilitate mediation where bilateral efforts fail to yield results, and to create a common framework for the resolution of border disputes.

There was an inclusive and consultative process to provide a comprehensive and structured contribution of

D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%BD%D0%B8-%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B7%D1%83%D0%BB%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B8-%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B6%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D1%85%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0/a-18679589?maca=maz-rss-maz-pol_makedonija_timek-4727-xml-mrss).

⁴ For more see BIRN, "Граѓанските активисти бараат проширена улога во иднината на Балканот" [Civil activists demand greater role in the future of the Balkans], 28.08.2015 (available at [⁵ For more see Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group \(BiEPAG\), "Removing Obstacles to EU Accession: Bilateral disputes in the Western Balkans", *Policy Brief*, August, 2015 \(available at <http://balkanfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/BIEPAG-Policy-brief-web.pdf>\).](http://prizma.birn.eu.com/%D0%BC%D0%BA/%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%B8/%D0%B3%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%93%D0%B0%D0%BD%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8-%D0%B0%D0%BA%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8-%D0%B1%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B0%D1%82-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%88%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D1%83%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B3%D0%B0-%D0%B2%D0%BE-%D0%B8%D0%B4%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B1%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%82).</p>
</div>
<div data-bbox=)

civil society to the Vienna summit. One of the underlining ideas was that civil society, building on its credibility, honesty, and integrity, can enrich the policy making process. The recommendations and the bilateral disputes policy brief gave direct proposal for the policy making process. Civil society representatives were invited to Vienna to further discuss their policy contribution and if possible to make the policy recommendations more direct and operational. Also, they were invited to discuss among themselves the future content and perspectives of the Western Balkan summit, to consider possibilities how the framework of civil society involvement could be organized or even potentially institutionalized in future, and to plan their future involvement on the national level after the summit, and to brainstorm about potential contributions until the next summit, which is supposed to take place in Paris.

There were different expectations for the Civil Society Forum. There were some high expectations, not shared by many though, that the Forum can make the first step toward chaining the policy-making paradigm in the Western Balkan countries, i.e. to turn it from a centralized and not transparent process into an inclusive and participatory policy-making. Other expectations were more realistic and pointed out that it is already an achievement to have the civil society present at the summit, and that a sufficient outcome would be to decrease the tensions and hostilities between civil society and politicians on the national levels. The realistic demand was to change the mode of interaction and to open new avenues for increased cooperation.

Civil society representatives had several interactions with the political leaders during the summit. On the one hand, a public debate between political leaders and civil society representatives was organized, but it did not meet all of the expectations, as Vedran Džihic points out in his paper. The politicians took most of the time to express their views and promote their policies, rather than to engage in constructive dialog with the representatives of the civil society. However, some of the participants in the debate felt optimistic afterward. For them the debate was an important step toward “building awareness for the role of the civil society” and “for recognizing the role and the voice” of the civil society.⁶

⁶ For more see DeutscheWelle, “Костуранова: Форумот во Виена е пример за признавање на улогата на граѓанското општество” [Kosturanova: Forum in Vienna is an example that the role of civic society is recognized], 28.08.2015 (available at [The politicians should receive credit for taking part in a discussion with civil society representatives. Although, the debate showed that political leaders and civil society representatives need to find a common voice and were unable to exchange opinions on equal footing.](http://www.dw.com/mk/%D0%BA%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D1%83%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B0-%D1%84%D0%BE%D1%80%D1%83%D0%BC%D0%BE%D1%82-%D0%B2%D0%BE-%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B5-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%BC%D0%B5%D1%80-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%9A%D0%B5-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D1%83%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B3%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B3%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%93%D0%B0%D0%BD%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%BE-%D0%BE%D0%BF%D1%88%D1%82%D0%B5%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%BE/a-18678680?maca=maz-rss-maz-pol_makedonija_timemk-4727-xml-mrss).</p>
</div>
<div data-bbox=)

On the other hand, Ana Petrusheva, editor at Balkan Investigative Research Network (BIRN), presented the recommendations to the political leaders and sent them a clear message that the civil society is there to stay, it should be seen as a partner and not as a foe, and that civil society extends a helpful hand to the politicians. Using a sport jargon, since sport activities were an important symbolic element at the summit, Ana told the politicians: “now, the ball is in your court”. She pointed out that it is up to the politicians to decide to what extent civil society will be included in policy-making in the future. If there is a lack of political will to accept the outlined recommendations and if there is lack of political and financial support to implement them, then the efforts of the civil society to improve things will continue to be marginalized.

What did the Forum achieve?

The Western Balkans Foreign Ministers in Vienna signed a joint declaration, “Declaration on Bilateral Issues”, committing themselves not to obstruct their neighbors’ progress in EU integration. The declaration was drafted by BiEPAG members and was an integral part of the aforementioned policy brief. This is a clear acknowledgment for the BiEPAG experts and for the impact that their policy brief made.⁷ However, it remains to be seen whether the politicians will take the declaration seriously and obey their commitments in the future. In 2016, an assessment in Paris will show the real effects.

It was beneficial for the civil society representatives to have the three consultative workshops and also to further discuss the issues in Vienna. This contributed toward empowering civil society in the region and enhancing the networking capacities. It also helped to create a common understanding of the problems, to point out the similarities and differences, and to craft possible policies and strategies that could be picked up in the future. For the civil society it was another step forward in improving regional cooperation and strengthening a common regional identity; notwithstanding that civil

⁷ For more see European Fund for the Balkans, “Joint Declaration Adopted by Western Balkans Foreign Ministers in Vienna – Countries Will Not Obstruct Neighbors’ Progress in EU Integrations”, 27.08.2015 (available at <http://balkanfund.org/2015/08/joint-declaration-adopted-by-western-balkans-governments-representatives-in-vienna-countries-will-not-obstruct-neighbours-progress-in-eu-integrations/>).

society is already more advanced in both of those aspects than politicians in the Western Balkan region.

The Civil Society Forum undoubtedly helped to improve networking on the regional level; even though, there are several regional forums, some overlapping with each other and others competing with each other, where civil society representatives interact. But unlike the existing ones, which tend to focus on a single issue or structured around one policy area, the Civil Society Forum in Vienna brought together a wide diversity of organizations and civil society activists. It was a challenge to create a common ground and to agree on common arguments, but at the same time the diversity was a strength because it reflected the existing diversities in the respective societies.

During the summit the civil society was empowered *vis-à-vis* the political leaders. Preceding the public discussion between the political leaders and civil society representatives, there was a presentation of grass-root organizations from all of the Western Balkan countries. Doraja Eberle, Chairperson of the Advisory board of Erste Foundation, and Ulrike Lunacek, Vice President of the European Parliament, announced the representatives of the grass-root organizations dealing with human rights, women, children, and trafficked persons. The presentation of their work was a strong reminder for all present, including political leaders from the region, that the work of grass-root organizations is very important. Grass-root activist had a chance to send direct messages to the political leaders. For example, Larisa Susa from Plenum Gracanica, from Bosnia and Herzegovina, got a loud round of applause when she said to the politicians: “we tell you what to do and you do it!” In essence, it was a clear and strong demand for an inclusive and participatory policy-making in all of the countries. It remains to be seen whether the politicians, who were carefully listening, will supply.

The Forum could possibly plant the seeds for civil society caucuses or pressure groups on a national level. There were discussions from civil society representatives from individual countries that they should continue their meetings and discussions on the national level, and to monitor the policies and actions of their respective governments in regards to commitments made during the Vienna summit. Civil society representatives felt obliged to continue with their involvement and to contribute in sustaining the momentum that was built up by the Western Balkan summit. It is an early sign that the Forum could potentially increase the capacities of civil society; however, it remains to be seen whether the representatives will actually follow-up on their new found enthusiasm.

What remains to be done in future?

The direct outcomes of the Civil Society Forum were quite modest. However, the same can be said about the

outcomes of the Western Balkan Summit. The outcomes of the summit, at least in this assessment, were more important for empowering the civil society, increasing its networking potential, and building its capacities. Besides the signing of the joint declaration, whose implementation is to be seen in future, the civil society did not make a stronger policy impact. It remains to be seen whether the actions and policy-making practices of politicians on the national level will be amenable to their short experience during the summit.

On the other hand, politicians from Western Balkan countries did not discover civil society for the first time in Vienna. Some have a practice of cooperation with civil society, others have a practice of formal consultations, and there are also some who see civil society as political adversaries. In future, hopefully, all of the political leaders will be on the same page and be open for cooperation with civil society members.

It would be beneficial if civil society groups present in Vienna from the same countries remained as a national level caucus. They can then follow up on the commitments that their governments made in Vienna, monitor the work of the governments, and prepare a report about it. Their research should be based on clear benchmarks. If the reports follow a similar structure and are comparable, that is to say that if the governments can be evaluated under a common framework, then the results can provide incentives for the governments to perform better. The reports could potentially improve regional cooperation because they would share policy recommendations and offer exchange of best practices. However, such reports would need to avoid overlaps with EU progress reports they would need to be accepted positively by the governments.

It is important to change the mode of interaction between politicians and civil society members, from having adversary relations to having closer cooperation. This would be helpful for the improvement of democracy and would increase the potential for development of the individual countries. Therefore, it is crucial to have another civil society forum in 2016 in Paris. It should be announced as early as possible and prepared in due time. It would send a strong message to political leaders that civil society is an integral element of the process. That the civil society inclusion was not a one-time event concocted for the Western Balkan Summit in Vienna, but that civil society has a functional and important role in an inclusive and participatory policy-making process.

Also, the civil society component should be preserved in Paris because it enriches the policy-making agenda. The discussions between the political leaders, at least in Berlin and Vienna, were focused on building physical inter-connectivity, such as road and energy infrastructure. And these issues are the foundations for the future development of the region and for improving regional cooperation. On the other hand, civil society brings

forth a social development agenda that is also important for the development of the region and for improving regional cooperation, for example issues like education, culture, mobility, and youth exchange. The two agendas are complimentary and not mutually exclusive, as the relations between a government and civil society should be. A government is better suited to take the lead in building roads and energy infrastructure, and civil society can play a stronger role in pushing forward issues from the social development agenda. If civil society is not included in Paris, then the risk is to marginalize the social development agenda, which can be counter-productive for the improvement of regional cooperation in the Western Balkans.

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS SERIOUSLY: WHAT IS AT STAKE?

Dr. Vesna Bojičić-Dželilović
Associate Professorial Research Fellow
Civil Society and Human Security Research Unit,
European Institute at the London School of Economics and
Political Science (LSE)
London

Some 20 years since regional cooperation in the Western Balkans emerged as a prominent policy and academic issue, local actors' responsibility to drive this process forward has moved to the focus of the official discourse. The argument made is that local stakeholders ought to be in the driving seat to fulfill regional cooperation potential and to complement national-level policy processes and outlooks in addressing the development and security challenges before the individual countries and the region as a whole (Minic 2014; Prifti 2013).

The main purpose of my intervention is to discuss the implications of this shift in emphasis towards local actors' responsibility for the prospects of regional cooperation. It does so through a critical reflection on a number of issues pertaining to regional cooperation in relation to the changing security context in the region shaped by a confluence of economic underdevelopment, weak governance, increased religious radicalization, and pressures of illegal immigration. I suggest that the dominant perspective on regional cooperation in the Western Balkans, which has focused on rebuilding relations to address past legacies, has been inward looking and so far ignored the links to the transnational security threats manifested in this region. Commitment and capacity of all stakeholders remain a constraint in exercising responsibility for forward-looking regional cooperation that would effectively address those threats.

Regional cooperation in the Western Balkans: a case of an inward looking agenda?

Born in the late 1990s out of a need to pacify the post-Yugoslav space, and for much of the time steered by the external fiat, the process of regional cooperation has over time acquired a status of a distinct policy area, supported by an ever more elaborate institutional architecture. The academic and policy literature on regional cooperation in the Western Balkans has been preoccupied with two themes. One concerns the process of regional cooperation as such whereby volumes are dedicated to reviewing its various forms, actors, and institutional schemas (Lopandic 2001; Delevic 2007; Uvalic 2000). This evolution has been amply documented, and it remains at the forefront of the Western Balkans regional cooperation debates, most explicitly in the debates about the role of the Regional Cooperation Council (Minic 2013). The other main theme deals with various aspects of the relationship between regional cooperation and European integration processes in the Western Balkans. These two processes are intrinsically connected in so far as in the post-war Balkans, regional cooperation has been established as formal condition for the European integration process. It has since benefited from a deployment of various institutional mechanisms developed explicitly to facilitate the coupling of region-

al cooperation and European integration processes. A lively and enduring scholarly debate around the issues of congruence – and specifically complementarity between regional cooperation and European integration in the Western Balkans – is being continuously reinvigorated by the changes in their respective modalities (Bechev 2012; Kronja and Lopandic 2012; Anastasakis and Bojičić-Dželilović 2002).

These two themes, namely regional cooperation in the Western Balkans and its relation with the European Union integration process, are rarely discussed in complete separation. Rather, they combine variously in investigations that include – sometimes explicitly, and sometimes on the margins – the question of how successful the regional cooperation process has been in the Western Balkans as it has evolved over the last 20 years. The main rationale behind this initiative, spearheaded by the European Union institutions in response to the wars of Yugoslavia's succession, was to facilitate reconciliation among the populations of the successor states to the Former Yugoslavia (Petrušević and Blondel 2012, Marazopulos 2013). The understanding was that by supporting and promoting various forms of regional cooperation to address common and regional problems associated with the recent past – most directly armed conflicts in the region – it would be possible to bridge the ensuing separation and antagonism among local communities. And it would encourage tolerance, solidarity and trust building, the very values and principles embodied in the European Union itself as the driving force behind the regional cooperation agenda. This mutually reinforcing dynamics of regional cooperation and European integration are expected to contribute to stabilization and regional security, and by extension to the region's (and the European Union's) capability to respond to transnational security threats including those associated with organized crime, Islamic radicalization, and illegal immigration, which as of late have been a source of significant concern.

Conceptually, reconciliation is at the core of a purported virtuous cycle of regional cooperation and European integration and is therefore a preeminent issue in any assessment of the progress and prospects of regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. Expert opinions converge in arguing that 20 years since the end of the Bosnia-Herzegovina war, reconciliation has failed to take strong roots across the countries and various constituencies in the Western Balkans (Mehler 2012; Kostovicova 2013). A number of events in 2015 seem to corroborate this view, prompting some commentators to claim that inter-state relations across the Western Balkans are at their lowest in a long time with the local leaders' rhetoric erringly reminiscent of early 1990s (Dedić, 2015). In the summer of 2015, relations between Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina took a stumble over the Srebrenica genocide issue, culminating in the incident during Serbia's prime minister's presence at the Srebrenica commemoration event. Croatia's remembrance celebration

of the operation 'Oluja' (Storm), and the decision by the Vukovar municipal authority to remove the Cyrillic script from the public signposts flared up relations with Serbia. Tensions in Kosovo-Serbia relations rose over Serbia's initiative to block Kosovo's application to UNESCO and INTERPOL membership, and between Serbia and Albania over Serbia's Prime Minister's remark in response to the football game incident. Furthermore, to add to this catalogue of unsettling political developments in the broader region with their roots in the legacies of the past, the relations between Croatia and Slovenia were soured by the Piran bay arbitration scandal (Dedic, *ibid*). Throughout the year, a number of equally concerning incidents of violence against ethnic and religious minorities have been registered across the region. The case capturing perhaps most potently a still fragile state of reconciliation in the region – both among the political elites as well as the general public – has been the Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić's ill received initiative, launched after the Srebrenica incident, for a region-wide commemoration day for all the war victims in the region.

The question of the metrics used for gauging progress in Western Balkan regional cooperation is beyond the scope of the paper. Progress in various domains of regional cooperation and increased institutionalization in some is a solid testimony that much has changed for the better in this respect. The process of regional cooperation focused on rebuilding the relations to help the countries deal with the legacies of the past manifested in unresolved issues related to state building, economic underdevelopment, and population displacement, has ultimately rested on the commitment and political will of the region's elites. Thus, impressive regional cooperation on infrastructure alongside a flurry of activities to connect and engage relevant actors and mobilize requisite resources demonstrates awareness of the local elites of the importance of regional cooperation, including the role of reconciliation, manifested for example in the acts of public apology by prominent political figures for the atrocities committed by their countrymen in the wars of the 1990s.

Moving forward with the responsibility agenda in the framework of regional cooperation, the question however remains how to turn this achievement to further reconciliation goals. The limitations of the functional/rational approach to regional cooperation in producing a 'reconciliation dividend' in a context of the nation state building in the Western Balkans have been acknowledged (Marazopulos 2013; Monastiriotis 2012). In reality, despite remarkable achievement in opening multiple paths for cooperation in the Western Balkans, regional cooperation has still not taken prominent place in the local parties' programmatic agendas (Minić 2014; Monastiritos *ibid*). This gives grounds to question the strength of local commitment to deepening regional ties, a process that is expected to follow as the responsibility for developing regional cooperation further shifts

to the local actors. Further uncertainty surrounds the plausibility that the existing framework for regional cooperation uncoupled from the European integration process would work towards sustained and effective regional cooperation.

Thus reconciliation remains an important concern in answering those questions. If anything, the aforementioned events of 2015 suggest that in fact the reconciliation objective remains subjected to the local political agendas and the instrumental use of ethnic identity politics in dealing with past legacies. This is an important missing part in accounting for the failure of functional cooperation to produce a 'reconciliation dividend'. This aspect tends to be on the margins in much of mainstream scholarship on regional cooperation and European integration, but deserves attention in the context of discussions about the responsibility of local actors for regional cooperation. I suggest that the regional elites' instrumental use of ethnic identity politics has not only adversely affected the reconciliation process in the Western Balkans, but has turned it into an issue with potentially broader security implications in the face of growing religious radicalization, increased organized crime activity, and pressures of illegal immigration in the region. Failure to make strides on the reconciliation front on the account of national politics focused on status and other similar high level political issues, has inadvertently played into the hands of other actors, such as those linked to radical ideologies, whose increasing presence particularly in some parts of the region, threatens to deepen the divide among various groups and communities. The ethnic dimension of the incident in Srebrenica this summer and the terrorist group inside FYR Macedonia earlier this year demonstrate this new dynamic in which it is no longer possible to separate internal and external dimensions of security. Thus, recognizing, understanding, and addressing effectively the complexity of the reconciliation process in relation to security issues is of particular importance from the perspective of shifting responsibility for regional cooperation to the local actors, and the expectations regarding prospects of developing regional responses to emerging security challenges.

Regional cooperation, reconciliation, and broader security challenges

The academic and policy debates on reconciliation in the framework of regional cooperation in the Western Balkans tend to bring to the fore issues of transitional justice on the grounds that doing justice to the victims of war crimes committed during the 1990s is fundamental to the region's democratic transition and peace consolidation (Obradović-Wochnik 2013; Kostovicova 2013). This view of reconciliation carries particular weight because it emphasizes the need for active participation by the regional political elites to make this process meaningful, and hence the elites' responsibility for its outcomes. Much less attention has been devoted to

other, seemingly somewhat less politically-charged aspects of reconciliation concerned with everyday experiences of the citizens living in this region. This is despite its intimate links to transitional justice, since official politics and discourse in general, and on transitional justice in particular, directly shape reconciliation outcomes by impacting peoples' everyday life experiences of inter-ethnic relations. Reconciliation in this meaning is essential for restoring the everyday sense of normality in people's lives, which serves as a platform for overcoming the destructive legacy of past wars, not least in a form of damaged relations among different ethnic and religious communities. Reconciliation is promoted by constructive daily encounters among individuals, communities as well as between the citizens and their states. It is inseparable from how people experience security at the individual level, which in the Western Balkans continues to be foremost defined in terms of protection of ethnic identity, in other words as 'ethnic security' (Bojičić-Dželilović 2015; Beha and Visoka 2013). That this is the case is a telling sign of reconciliation failure.

Approaching security as an institutionally, discursively and socially constituted practice (Bubant 2005) is a useful way to understand what people and communities perceive as a source of insecurity in their day to day lives, and how they respond to it. I have elaborated it elsewhere using Bosnia-Herzegovina as an example (Bojičić-Dželilović *ibid.*). The pernicious effects of the three way dynamics between dysfunctional institutions, elite discourse framed in terms of ethnic identity politics, and everyday experience of various forms of deprivation, which combined make people susceptible to ethnic identity politics, are in their most striking form present in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also in Kosovo, FYR Macedonia, and Serbia. We see the consequences of subscribing to 'ethnic security' (as opposed to the security provided by a law governed state) in persistent ethnic distance among the communities in the region, despite intensification in various forms of regional cooperation.

Thus, in the context of weak governance, economic hardship, inadequate welfare provisions, and general sense of public disillusionment, by instrumentally using ethnic identity politics, regional political elites have been engaged in actively producing insecurity at the individual and ethnic group level through symbolic, institutional, and discursive means. Public discourse in the Western Balkans remains ethnically segregated (Vesnić-Alujević 2012) and thus has bearing on individual perceptions of inter-ethnic relations. What is said, on what occasion and in what place, and the framing of the message, matters to how people internalize issues at stake. It is ominous that those issues of particular relevance for reconciliation, namely human rights, social inclusion, and culture have been notable for their lack of support in the regional cooperation framework, which can be attributed ultimately to instrumental use of identity politics (Minić 2014). It also reflects a prob-

lem of ‘differentiated citizenship’ operating across the region whereby underneath formal human right provisions, in reality some groups are more equal than the others (Krasniqi 2015). Everyday experience matters in terms of the receptiveness of ethnically segregated discourse. Problems of weak governance permeated by systemic corruption reinforce the experience of discrimination in access to jobs, healthcare, education, housing, and other aspects of daily life, which according to numerous polls most concern ordinary people in the Western Balkans; the incidence of discrimination is often perceived as ethnically motivated. Combined, these interlocking dynamics are at the core of individual insecurity and preference for ‘ethnic security’. In turn, the persistence of ethnic tensions underwrites fragile social fabric in the Balkans and the reconciliation process.

This problem, which is central to the process of reconciliation, has over the years acquired a new dynamic through a growing presence of other actors and agendas, foremost in the shape of radical religious groups. The presence of religious groups has grown over the last twenty years or so. They have been recruiting followers among local populations, particularly youth, through a combination of religious indoctrination, financial and other incentives, thus compensating for dysfunctional institutions, economic failures and building new community bonds. This largely imperceptible process is changing the daily experience of security in many parts of the region and feeding into ethnic stereotypes. Corruption among the top-level public office and its links to organized crime is another illustration of how what is routinely referred to as an external threat to the national and regional security, has become integral to local societal dynamics. The lack of recognition of a particular manifestation of security threats of this kind in the Western Balkans, and the role played by the local elites’ instrumental use of identity politics, is a concerning thought when assessing the capability to effectively address those threats.

The challenge of taking responsibility for regional cooperation seriously

In this paper, the focus on the link between regional cooperation and reconciliation is motivated by three considerations: i) a series of recent events highlighting that reconciliation remains a problem; ii) a shift from local ownership to local actors’ responsibility for regional cooperation; iii) and the problems that the EU itself has in dealing with some of the emerging transnational security threats. This makes it an opportune moment to reassess regional cooperation and its changing role against a changing security context. The main goal was to demonstrate that the instrumental use of identity politics in dealing with past legacies has been detrimental to reconciliation and, given the changing security context, the prospects for furthering reconciliation through regional cooperation may be even slimmer than hitherto. This point has been argued by drawing attention to the

peoples’ lived experience of security in relation to reconciliation, which helps to better understand a continuing appeal of ethnically segregated discourse, and thus general public attitudes to regional cooperation, which is an aspect overshadowed by the elite-centered discourse.

Looking ahead, through the lens of responsibility of local actors for driving regional cooperation in the way that would facilitate reconciliation, there are various challenges and constraints. Those concern foremost competing priorities and inadequate financial, institutional, and other resources to support the implementation of the SEE 2020 agenda. SEE 2020 as a framework provides the key strategic direction for regional cooperation aligned with local priorities, but requires concerted effort and support of different constituencies. In light of the discussion in this paper, the role of regional elites is pivotal. The responsibility for driving the regional cooperation agenda in support of reconciliation has to be taken in full recognition of the gravity of the problem in the changing security context in which the boundary between external/internal security has become blurred and in full recognition that the EU itself is struggling to respond effectively to those threats. Among other actors whose role has to become more prominent in supporting the new direction in regional cooperation are various transnational alliances that deal with issues that concern people the most – insecure livelihoods and access to welfare, education, and justice. There is a huge space for cross border citizen initiatives working on these issues which would complement the activity of those actors – national and transnational – working in the areas of governance, transparency, and accountability.

Bibliography

- Anastasakis, O. and Bojičić-Dželilović, V. 2002. *Balkan regional cooperation and European Integration*, London: London School of Economics.
- Bechev, D. 2004. *Between enlargement and CFSP: The EU and the Western Balkans*, London School of Economics.
- Bechev, D. 2012. *The periphery of the periphery: The Western Balkans and the Euro crisis*, Council of Foreign Relations.
- Beha, A. and Visoka, G. 2010. Human security as ‘ethnic security’ in Kosovo. *Human Security Perspectives*, 7:1. pp. 83-101.
- Bojičić-Dželilović, V. 2015. The politics, practice and paradox of ethnic security; in *Bosnia-Herzegovina. Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*. 4:1.

- Bubant, N. 2005. Vernacular security: The politics of feeling safe in global, national and local worlds. *Security Dialogue*. 36:3. pp.275-296.
- Dedić, M. 2015. Region u političkim okrsajima (Region in political fight), *Slobodna Bosna* 20.8.2015.
- Delević, M. 2007. Regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. Paris: Institute for Security Studies, *Challot Paer* 104.
- Koneska, C. 2007/8. Regional identity: The missing element in Western Balkan security cooperation. *Western Balkan Security Observer*, Issue 7-8: pp. 82-89.
- Kostovicova, D. 2013. Civil society and reconciliation in the western Balkans: Great expectations?. In Prifti (ed).
- Krasniqi, G. 2015. Equal citizenship, uneven communities: Differentiated and hierarchical citizenship in Kosovo. *Ethnopolitics* 14:2: pp.197-217.
- Kronja, J and Lopandić, D. 2012. Regional cooperation in Southeast Europe and the European integration process- searching for necessary complementarities, Belgrade: European Movement- Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.
- Lopandić, D. 2001. Regional Initiatives in South Eastern Europe, Belgrade: European Movement in Serbia.
- Mehler, D. 2012. Understanding normative gaps in transitional justice: The Serbian discourse on Srebrenica Declaration. *Journal of Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues*, 11: 4. pp.127-156.
- Marazopoulos, C. 2013. Constructing the Western Balkans: Understanding European Commission's regional approach from a constructivist perspective, PhD Thesis University of Bath.
- Minić, J. 2012. Self- assessment report on the implementation of the RCC strategy and work progress 2011-2013. Sarajevo: RCC.
- Minić, J. 2013. The dynamics and context of regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. *International Issues and Slovak foreign policy affairs*. Vol XXII:4. Pp.21-38.
- Minić, J. at all. 2014. Regionalna saradnja na Blkanu: Kako dalje? (Regional cooperation in the Balkans: What next?). Belgrade: European Movement.
- Monastiriotis, V. 2008. Regional Cooperation and the need for a Balkan Development Strategy. London: London School of Economics, *GreeSE Paper* No 10.
- Obradović-Wochnik, J. 2013. The role of the ICTY in promoting reconciliation. In Prifti (ed).
- Perry, V. 2009. A survey of reconciliation processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The gap between the people and politics. In Quinn, J.R. (ed) *Reconciliation(s): Transitional justice in postconflict societies*. Montreal: McGill University Press.
- Petrusević, A. and Blondel, C. 2012. Introduction: Reconciliation in the western Balkans: New perspectives and priorities, *Journal of Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues*, 11: 4, pp 1-6.
- Prifti, E. (ed). *The European future of the Western Balkans*, Paris: European Institute for Security Studies.
- Uvalic, M. 2000. Regional Cooperation in SEE. ESRC Working Paper 17/01.
- Vesnić-Alujeva, L. 2012. European integration of the Western Balkans: From reconciliation to European future, Brussels: Centre for European Studies.

COMBATING A SHARED MENACE: TERRORISM AS A SECURITY AND SOCIAL THREAT IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND BEYOND

Sidita Kushi¹
Doctoral candidate
Department of Political Science at Northeastern University
Boston, MA

The Balkan Peninsula is no longer a primary hazard for Western Europe and the United States (U.S.) – at least not in comparison to the state of affairs in the 1990s. But with its corrupt, volatile institutions, bleak economic prospects, and still-inflamed ethnic and nationalist narratives, the Balkan region remains especially vulnerable to instabilities and security threats (see respectively, Lilyanova 2015, Uvalić 2014, Kushi 2014). International terrorism and its calls for global recruits is a particularly worrisome trend for Western Balkan societies, still healing from decades of violence and lacking strong security infrastructure to expose developing threats (Woehrel 2008a).

In this article, I first highlight some of the dominant changes within Western Balkan societies that have arisen in the post-conflict era and in tandem with new international security threats. The most significant of these transitions is an increase in domestic-bred religious extremism and militarism, in lieu of the past's foreign fighter worries (see, for example, Maroevic and Williams 2005). Although the trend is relatively small in comparison to its linked global phenomenon, it holds unique repercussions within the Balkans – especially as it relates to possibilities of political misuse and exaggeration for nationalist, anti-minority agendas. Moreover, growing ideological extremism or mere perceptions of extremism may reawaken civil conflicts between antagonistic populations, which have relied on a long tradition of religious moderates to contain instability.

Given the geographic position and historical legacy of the Balkans, any such regional threats could cascade across Europe and the transatlantic sphere. Destabilized Balkan societies could also encourage the inflow of more militant recruits into the heart of Europe and the Middle East, fermenting an atmosphere conducive to global terrorist networks. Hence, it is imperative that the European Union (EU) and its transatlantic partner, the U.S., continue to invest in the socio-economic potential of the Western Balkans so as to curb potential nefarious influences from within and abroad.

Most importantly, however, the West, in defending against shared contemporary security risks, must begin to reshape its political narratives of the Western Balkans to one of unity and inclusion, instead of one that fosters a “civilized us versus uncivilized them” mentality. Alienating the Balkans from Western influence is a primary tool of terrorist recruitment, and Europe should never be complicit in fostering such sentiments. Additionally, analysts, politicians, and citizens alike should remember that in the Balkans, terrorism is a label often thrust upon vilified political opponents and minority ethnic groups – and acts as a political smokescreen for

¹ DRAFT – Please do not cite without the author's permission.

other domestic issues.² Thus, while cautioning against exaggerations and politicizations, I conclude with recommendations for a unified transatlantic response toward global terrorism – being careful not to brand the Western Balkans neither as a secular safe haven nor as a barbaric arena of Islamic terrorism.

Mapping the threats

When discussing security risks stemming from fundamentalist-driven terrorism in the Western Balkans, it is important to recognize that the Balkans does not exist in isolation. Terrorism is a global menace, which increased by 61 percent during the 2012-2013 period, primarily due to the Syrian civil war beginning in 2011 (Institute for Economics and Peace 2014). Five countries – Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Syria – suffered 80 percent of terrorist fatalities in 2013, with more than 6,000 people dying in Iraq alone. The West, measured via the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, only experienced five percent of all terrorist fatalities since 2000, but this group also suffered from some of the deadliest attacks, according to the Institute for Economics and Peace (2014) report.

In general, the Western Balkans is still quite secular and religiously tolerant in social composition, with surveys showing that less than half of Balkan Muslims and only 15 percent of Albanian Muslims see religion as central to their lives. Hence, conservative Islam is not very popular among the large Muslim populations of the region and neither are radical, militant ideologies linked with extremist Islamist fringes (Likmeta 2012). In other words, the Balkans does not stand at the epicenter of the global extremist-driven terrorism threat, yet its geopolitical context and socio-economic dynamics make it a vulnerable and politically charged case. The Western Balkan region possesses all three main factors most conducive to terrorist activity, as determined by the Institute for Economics and Peace (2014): 1. high social hostilities between ethnic and religious groups, 2. the existence of state-sponsored violence and human rights abuses, and 3. high levels of violence, especially organized crime. As a legacy of the bloody wars and ethnic cleansing campaigns of the 1990s, the relationship between Muslims and Christian Orthodox citizens in Serbia, Bosnia, and Kosovo remain uncertain, characterized by protests and vandalism of places of worship by opposing groups (see Naimark and Case 2003, b92 2014a). Contemporary ethnic relations between Serbs, Croats, Albanians, Macedonians, Bosnians, and Monte-

negrins also tend to mimic the hostilities of religious divides and past conflicts, while organized crime is practically a daily defining feature of life (Lilyanova 2015).

Religious radicalism has grown since the fall of Yugoslavia and the collapse of Albania's communist regime, bolstering any lingering social hostilities. The opening of the secular societies to international actors prompted an influx of radical activists, theologians, and militants – seeking to spread their ideologies onto new soil (Woehrel 2008a). Today, still feeding off widespread socio-economic desperation, radical imams, who completed their religious studies in Arab nations and receive funding from these same countries, recruit from the poorest of the population, especially vulnerable youth (Poggioli 2010). As a telling pattern, the vast majority of the leaders of the Balkan militant Islamic movement, such as Nedžad Balkan, Bilal Bosnić and Kosovo clerics Zekerija Qazimi and Lulzima Qabashi, received their education in the Middle East, where they accepted ideologies very distant from moderate Balkan Islam (Bardos 2014a).

Unfortunately, the international context of rising ideological extremism, civil wars across the Middle East, and resentments against Western policies are beginning to slowly erode the region's secular, moderate foundations. The internet has also made it easier for radical groups to recruit Balkan natives, grooming them from afar (Ninković 2013). For instance, before the conflict in Syria began in 2011, fewer than a dozen natives from the Western Balkans had joined in foreign fighter missions. In contrast, by June 2014, 218-654 Balkan natives were fighting alongside Islamic militants in Syria. These fighters come from Bosnia (50-330 fighters), Kosovo (80-150), Albania (50-90), Macedonia (6-12), and Serbia (30-70) (Holman 2014).

In the next sections, I offer specific cases of this changing regional dynamic, speculating as to its main origins. Second, I introduce a brief framework from which to propose potential solutions. Finally, I suggest several pathways in which the EU and the U.S. can begin to curb the influence of religious extremism so as to minimize the threat of terrorism in the Western Balkans and in the transatlantic sphere.

From foreign fighters to domestic recruits

The countries of the Western Balkans have always possessed high ethnic and religious heterogeneity within small geographic confines, with large (typically secular) Muslim populations existing for centuries. But the violent intrastate campaigns and subsequent international interventions of the post-Yugoslavian era and “multi-

² One recent example of this phenomenon can be found in the range of narratives the Macedonian government has employed to distract from its corrupt practices – with the Kumanovo attack still a source of speculation between true ethnic terrorist motives and government-concocted distraction. These narratives typically serve to vilify ethnic minorities under the label of terrorism. See Tumanovska and Coalson (2015) and Jordanovska (2015).

cultural” state-building efforts have acted to politicize religious and ethnic identities across the Balkans.³

Beginning in Bosnia, for example, the intrastate violence of the 1990s attracted the attention of hundreds of foreign fighters from across the Arab world, who heeded the religious divisions that the international community had exposed as an explanation of the mass violence between Orthodox Serbs, Muslim Bosnians, and Catholic Croats (Hedges 1992, Woehrel 2008b). Although many of these mujaheddin were driven out after the war, about 700 to 1,000 of them remained and received citizenship – spurring Western concerns about foreign Islamic radicals creating cells of security-evading “white al Qaeda” from within the Balkans and into Western Europe (Maroevic and Williams 2005, Woehrel 2008a).

This fear was not limited to post-conflict Bosnia, but also encompassed the following crises in Kosovo. Yet excluding inflammatory Serbian and Russian claims about the existence of an al Qaeda presence in Muslim-majority Kosovo, there seemed little Western cause for concern (Centre for Peace in the Balkans 2004). While radical Islamic organizations attempted to recruit among the Kosovar population during the 1990s and beyond, they had limited success in an atmosphere of Western admiration (Woehrel 2008a). At this point, then, Western actors did not seriously consider the risk of native-Balkan bred terrorism as it seemed highly improbable that intrastate conflict between ethnic and religious groups would transform into an international terrorist campaign. Moreover, the foreign fighters within Bosnia were beginning to dissipate in the post-conflict era.

But with increasing monetary investments from Islamic organizations over the years, suspicions grew. Just from 1992 to 2001, Saudi Arabia alone spent about \$500 million in mosque-building projects in Bosnia – with many projects suspected to be fronts for al Qaeda (Woehrel 2008a, Weinberg 2014). The post-war institutional vacuum and the subsequent division of Bosnian territory and institutions along ethnic lines further aided the proselytization of Wahhabi ideology and the politicization of religious identity. Yet even after the September 11 terrorist attack, Western actors still focused on ways in which the Balkan region could facilitate foreign terrorist activity, with its black markets, weak regulations, and insecure borders – not on the potential of native radicalizations (Woehrel 2008a, 2008b).

The following years, however, signaled a gradual change in social terrain. Incentivized by generous Arab funding opportunities and discouraged by previously

glorified Western initiatives, more Balkan clerics began to train in the Middle East, becoming immersed in more radical forms of Islam. The year 2005 brought about a thwarted plot by a Bosnian Islamist groups to bomb the British Embassy in Sarajevo and another discovered plan in Croatia to bomb the papal funeral (Maroevic and Williams 2005). Consequently, by the next year, the U.S. State Department warned that the decentralization of the Bosnian state made it an especially vulnerable target for terrorist plots and recruitment (Woehrel 2008a). The threat of so called “lone wolf” terrorists, who could strike individually and at any time, began to take hold.

Measuring the damage: Low numbers, but significant trends

In a brief sum, over the past decade, militant Islamists, native to the Balkans, have planned and attempted a range of violent plots, including but not limited to: the 2002 attack on the U.S. Embassy in Vienna; the 2007 Fort Dix bomb plot; the 2009 New York City subway attack plot; the 2011 attack on the U.S. Embassy in Sarajevo; the 2012 murder of two U.S. servicemen at Frankfurt Airport; and the first Balkan suicide bomb attack in Baghdad in 2014 (Bardos 2014b). Most recently, in Bosnia, a gunman attacked a police station in Zvornik, killing an officer and injuring two others (BBC News 2015). This event prompted the quick arrest of over ten people suspected of terrorist activity (Voice of America 2015). In Kosovo, five men were also recently arrested on suspicion of trying to poison Prishtina’s water supply. The plan is thought to be inspired by ISIS propaganda videos urging Muslims to poison the unbelievers’ water and food supplies (Lyman 2015).

ISIS is now specifically targeting the region in their video campaigns for ‘jihadist glory against the non-believing West’ and its supposed puppet regimes across the Balkans (Gordon Meek 2015). In general, radical elements target poor, rural communities in the Western Balkans. Sometimes, they even pay parents in the beginning phases of regular mosque visits and ideological transformation (Orzechowska 2014).

This propaganda, coupled with gradual social immersion efforts, is having some effect, as a recent report found that in 2013 and 2014 in Bosnia alone, 156 Bosnian men and 36 women travelled to Syria, taking with them 25 children (Azinović and Jusić 2015). Even worse, earlier in the year, Bosnian authorities estimated that up to 1,000 people from the country were thought to be fighting with ISIS (Banco 2014). Reports also reveal the weaknesses of the Bosnian state in combating this small but existing threat. With twenty-two police agencies operating in the country with overlapping jurisdictions, the lack of coordination between agencies on security issues is to be expected. But it is still shocking that Bosnia lacks a single consolidated database on potential domestic threats (Borger 2015).

³ For a detailed analysis of how the wars and interventions of the 1990s deconstructed the Balkans along hyper-enforced ethnic and religious lines, in the name of multiculturalism, see Campbell (1998).

These threats have not been lacking across the Balkans as a whole. In the past year, the State Investigation and Protection Agency in Damascus detained sixteen people accused of financing and recruiting Bosnians to fight in Syria and Iraq. This November, Bosnia also detained eleven people suspected of terrorist acts (World Bulletin 2014).

Aside from the recent water-poisoning arrests, five citizens of Kosovo were indicted on terrorism charges for fighting in Syria most recently (Reuters 2015a). In the last year, the small nation also arrested over fifty-five Islamists along with nine imams and indicted 32 suspected terrorists this May alone (Hajdari 2015b, News24 2014, Bytyci 2014). According to various estimates, there are currently between 200 to 300 Kosovars in Syria (Mejer 2014, Hajdari 2015b). On a per capita basis, Kosovo has the most militants of any European nation, and due to its unstable institutions, economic troubles, and unfavorable ethnic relations, it is perceived as one of the more vulnerable Balkan nations for extremist activities (Institute for Economics and Peace 2014, McDonagh 2014).

Dogmatic Islamic pockets are also visible among Albanians in Macedonia, where Saudi Arabian theologians have been active for years. As with other regions of the Balkans, these actors take over parts of civil society through charitable and educational work among the poorest of society – often providing better social goods than inefficient, bickering state apparatuses (Bugajski 2015). Hailed as an example of this creeping dynamic intermixed with nationalist agendas, in May, an alleged terrorist incident took place in the city of Kumanovo in which eight police and fourteen Albanian terrorists, supposedly from Kosovo, were killed (Tumanovska and Coalson 2015). In the aftermath of this attack, Macedonian police arrested nine people out of the sought 36 believed to have fought alongside Islamist insurgents in Iraq and Syria (Reuters 2015b). Macedonia faces particularly high probabilities of terrorist threat politicizations for the sake of government distractions and reactivated ethnic politics.

Serbia faces rising risks as well, even though it lacks large Muslim populations. Serbian citizens have not been impervious to ISIS recruitment calls, with over 100 of them thought to be fighting in the Middle East (b92 2014b). In addition, Serbia faces unique concerns about its Orthodox Christian citizens joining the fight in Ukraine, siding with the pro-Russian rebels (Jackson 2014, DW 2014). Furthermore, the dangers in Serbia lie in the division of both ethnicities and religious affiliations. Most likely, these divisions are ripe breeding ground for sensationalist declarations of Islamic extremism and exaggerations of threats stemming from Bosnian and Albanian populations.

As with the rest of the Western world, the Balkans is now too experiencing the vulnerabilities that come

along with a more open society – with one of them being the rise in public terrorist attempts and recruitment campaigns. It, thus, needs to invest in better systems and infrastructure to eradicate the gradual threat of domestic extremism that is exporting itself across the Mediterranean and into Europe. In the Balkans, even small threats of religiously motivated terrorism can alter important social dynamics, and contemporary patterns of extremism signal worrisome changes in Balkan nations' cultural landscape. One can sense a subtle transformation from a unique, Balkan form of Islam, which has allowed the inhabitants of the peninsula a shot at coexistence, to an imported radicalism that allows little room for multi-religious societies. Perhaps the most worrisome prospect is that hostile Balkan ethnic groups and governments may use threats of terrorism, whether real or constructed, to project other violent political/nationalist agendas.

Preventing a joint threat – creating unified political narratives

All actors aiming to reduce the risk of fundamentalist-driven terrorism in the Balkans must be cautious in their approaches – as they can indirectly contribute to the exaggeration or politicization of threats. Even the most well-intentioned Western actors often fall prey to sensationalist commentaries that automatically correlate Muslim identities with radicalism in a region that remains overwhelmingly pro-West. But isolating the large Muslim communities across the Balkans is also counterproductive and aids the terrorists' cause. Many scholars, indeed, claim that it was the neglect and isolation of rural communities by international governments and organizations that made it easier for Middle Eastern charity organizations and Islamic groups to gain credibility over Balkan governing elites within the past decade (Hajdari 2015a).

Western attention to the Balkans has been waning in the past years. The U.S. has lessened its commitments to the region as the Middle East took foreign policy precedence, while NATO-led peacekeeping forces in Bosnia and Kosovo have been reduced over the decades – with SFOR's Bosnia mission concluding in 2004 (Woehrel 2008b). The EU is now the main regional player, attempting a range of state-building, security-maximizing, economy-boosting initiatives in collaboration with Balkan counterparts.

For the most part, Balkan governments have been eager to coordinate with the EU on security issues. They continue to work with the U.S. and the EU to arrest terrorist suspects, shut down non-governmental organizations linked with terrorist activity, and freeze financial assets of suspected terrorists. Since December 2004, the Albanian government has frozen the assets of main organizations (Taibah, International Revival of Islamic Heritage Society, Al Haramain, and Global Relief Foundation) and many individuals identified by the United Nations

as suspected of supporting extremist groups (Woehrel 2008a). In this past year, Bosnia has passed a law that sentences convicted Islamists and recruiters to up to 10 years in prison (Weinberg 2014). Kosovo and Serbia are also bolstering their anti-terrorism laws, with the Kosovo government prohibiting citizens from fighting in foreign wars (Hajdari 2015b, News24 2014, Bytyci 2014).

But pure legal maneuvers and rash arrests are not long-term solutions to the threat of terrorist recruitment in the Balkans. Instead of turning Muslim communities into the enemy or the convenient political “other,” domestic and international actors must craft narratives of solidarity that pit both the West and the Balkan’s moderate Muslim communities against the global forces of religious extremism and militarism. After all, ISIS recruitments and Islamic militarism are threats shared by European, U.S., and Balkan societies alike.

The only way that ISIS and other Islamic militant factions could win over enough Balkan Muslims so as to pose a significant regional threat into the future is to turn these Muslims against the West. In places like Kosovo and Bosnia, this is a very difficult feat, as citizens still remain immensely grateful for NATO’s interventions in the 1990s and for supporting Kosovo’s independence from Serbia. So instead, extremist groups will try to turn the West against Muslims, mainly by provoking governments and international actors into frantic, divisive actions. If extremist factions succeed in making the EU, the U.S., and pro-Western Balkan governments perceive all devout Muslims in the region as potential terrorists, they will inevitably win. States will begin indiscriminate hunts and arrests in Muslim-majority communities and the EU will fail to address its own creeping Islamophobia.

If, however, domestic authorities and international actors are careful not to over-react to terrorist threats and activities, one of the biggest strategies of terrorist groups will fail. Better yet, if domestic, EU, and U.S. authorities explicitly craft joint policy initiatives, anti-terrorism taskforces, and security infrastructures, the message of unity may overtake past messages of religious division, Western vs. non-Western dichotomies, and “us” vs. “them” mentalities that have long characterized Western policies within the Balkans. It is one thing for the EU and U.S. to throw more highly-regulated or even flexible funding at the Balkans, but it is another to view the region as an equal partner and planner of European security. Aside from preventing a small, but emerging threat of terrorism, this narrative may also be ideal for other forms of cooperation, such as much needed economic initiatives between fraught Balkan nations and their transatlantic partners. The more the EU and U.S. do to convince the Balkans that it, too, belongs in Europe, through unified social, economic, and security measures, the safer all actors will be from extremist takeover in the long-run.

References

Azinović, V. and Jusić, M., 2015. The lure of the Syrian war: the foreign fighters’ Bosnian contingent. *Atlantic Initiative*. Available from: <http://atlanticinitiative.org/project-activities-nato-debates/491-new-atlantic-initiative-research-the-lure-of-the-syrian-war-the-foreign-fighters-bosnian-contingent.html> [Accessed 11 August 2015].

Banco, E., 2014. Why the Balkans are becoming the transit point for foreign ISIS militants. *International Business Times* [online], 17 December. Available from: <http://www.ibtimes.com/why-balkans-are-becoming-transit-point-foreign-isis-militants-1761464> [Accessed 10 August 2015].

Bardos, G.N., 2014a. Al Qaeda’s Balkan ties: the Bosnian Connections – an ACD exclusive. *American Center for Democracy* [online], 22 August. Available from: <http://acdemocracy.org/al-qaedas-balkan-ties-the-bosnian-connections-to-the-world-trade-center-attacks-an-acd-exclusive/> [Accessed 12 October 2014].

Bardos, G.N., 2014b. Jihad in the Balkans: the next generation. *World Affairs Journal* [online], September/October. Available from: <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/jihad-balkans-next-generation> [Accessed 11 August 2015].

BBC News, 2015. Bosnia: gunman ‘kills officer in Zvornik police station’. *BBC News*, 27 April. Available from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32491026> [Accessed 11 August 2015].

Borger, J., 2015. Isis targets vulnerable Bosnia for recruitment and attack. *The Guardian*, 25 June Available from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/25/isis-targets-vulnerable-bosnia-for-recruitment-and-attack> [Accessed 11 August 2015].

Bugajski, J., 2015. Balkan terrorist threats. *Center for European Policy Analysis* [online], 8 May. Available from: <http://cepa.org/content/balkans-terrorist-threats> [3 August 2015].

Bytyqi, F., 2014. Kosovo imams arrested in push to stop fighters going to Syria, Iraq. *Reuters*, 17 September. Available from <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/09/17/uk-kosovo-islamist-arrests-idUKKBN0HC0NJ20140917> Accessed 10 August 2015].

b92, 2014a. Serb monastery vandalized with ISIS, KLA graffiti. *b92*, 13 October. Available from: http://www.b92.net/eng/news/crimes.php?yyyy=2014&mm=10&dd=13&nav_id=91875 [Accessed 7 March 2015].

b92, 2014b. FM: Serbia supports fight against terrorism. *b92*, 3 December. Available from: <http://www.b92.net>

net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2014&mm=12&dd=03&nav_id=92450 [Accessed 7 March 2015].

Campbell, D., 1998. *National deconstruction: violence, identity, and justice in Bosnia*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. Centre for Peace in the Balkans, 2004. Al Qaeda 'active in Kosovo' claim Serbs. *Centre for Peace in the Balkans* [online], 2 February. Available from: <http://www.balkanpeace.org/index.php?index=article&articleid=8971> [Accessed 14 May 2015].

DW, 2014. Serbian mercenaries fighting in eastern Ukraine. *DW*, 14 August. Available from: <http://www.dw.com/en/serbian-mercenaries-fighting-in-eastern-ukraine/a-17855479> [Accessed 8 May 2014].

Gordon Meek, J., 2015. ISIS aims new recruitment video at Balkan Muslims. *ABC News* [online], 5 June. Available from: <http://abcnews.go.com/International/isis-aims-recruitment-video-balkan-muslims/story?id=31554167> [accessed 5 June 2015].

Hajdari, U., 2015a. Islamic extremism 'imported' to Kosovo, report says. *Balkan Insight*, 15 April. Available from: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/islamic-extremism-a-foreign-import-in-kosovo-says-report> [Accessed 5 June 2015].

Hajdari, U., 2015b. Kosovo indicts 32 suspected Islamist terrorists. *Balkan Insight*, 8 May. Available from: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/32-indicted-for-terrorism-in-kosovo> [Accessed 3 June 2015].

Hedges, C., 1992. Muslims from afar joining 'holy war' in Bosnia. *New York Times* [online], 5 December. Available from: <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/12/05/world/muslims-from-afar-joining-holy-war-in-bosnia.html> [Accessed 10 August 2015].

Holman, T., 2014. Foreign fighters from the Western Balkans in Syria. *Combating Terrorism Center: West Point* [online], 30 June. Available from: <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/foreign-fighters-from-the-western-balkans-in-syria> [Accessed 7 August 2015].

Jackson, P., 2014. Ukraine war pulls in foreign fighters. *BBC News*, 1 September. Available from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-28951324> [Accessed 7 August 2015].

Jordanovska, I., 2015. How low can he go? *Balkanist* [online], 10 May. Available from: <http://balkanist.net/op-ed-how-low-can-he-go/> [Accessed 10 May 2015].

Institute for Economics and Peace, 2014. *Global terrorism index*. Available from: [http://www.visionofhumanity.org/sites/default/files/Global Terrorism Index Report 2014_0.pdf](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/sites/default/files/Global%20Terrorism%20Index%20Report%202014_0.pdf) [Accessed 8 August 2015].

Kushi, S., 2014. Ancient discontent between Serbs and Albanians – why real and imagined stories matter today. *Transconflict* [online], 10 December. Available from: <http://www.transconflict.com/2014/12/ancient-discontent-between-serbs-and-albanians-why-real-and-imagined-stories-matter-today-112/> [Accessed 6 May 2015].

Likmeta, B., 2012. Survey shows Balkans Muslims remain secular. *Balkan Insight* [online], 17 August. Available from: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/balkans-muslims-more-secular-than-their-peers> [Accessed 10 August 2015].

Lilyanova, V., 2015. Corruption – still a major problem in several Western Balkan countries. *European Parliamentary Research Service*. Available from: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/557025/EPRS_BRI\(2015\)557025_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/557025/EPRS_BRI(2015)557025_EN.pdf) [Accessed 10 August 2015].

Lyman, R., 2015. Kosovo charges five people in plot to poison water. *New York Times* [online], 12 July. Available from: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/13/world/europe/kosovo-charges-5-people-in-plot-to-poison-water.html?_r=0 [Accessed 11 August 2015].

Maroevic, R. and Williams, D., 2005. Terrorist cells find foothold in Balkans. *Washington Post*, 1 December. Available from: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/11/30/AR2005113002098.html> [Accessed 3 March 2015].

McDonagh, M., 2014. Letter from Kosovo: disarray in the heart of the Balkans. *New Statesman*, 27 November. Available from: <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2014/11/letter-kosovo-disarray-heart-balkans> [Accessed 10 August 2015].

Mejer, J., 2014. Divided Kosovo. *New Eastern Europe* [online], 9 December. Available from: <http://www.neweasterneurope.eu/articles-and-commentary/1417-divided-kosovo> [Accessed 3 March 2015].

Naimark, N.M. and Case, H., ed., 2003. *Yugoslavia and its historians: understanding the Balkan wars of the 1990s*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

News24, 2014. Balkan launch fight against jihadist recruitment. *News24*, 30 September. Available from: <http://m.news24.com/news24/World/News/Balkans-launch-fight-against-jihadist-recruitment-20140930-3> [Accessed 10 August 2015].

Ninković, V., 2013. From Youtube to jihad – Balkan volunteers in Syria. *Transconflict* [online], 18 July. Available from: <http://www.transconflict.com/2013/07/from-youtube-to-jihad-balkan-volunteers-in-syria-187> [Accessed 8 August 2015].

Orzechowska, I., 2014. The hidden growth of Islamic extremism in Kosovo. *New Eastern Europe* [online], 22 August. Available from: <http://www.neweasterneurope.eu/articles-and-commentary/1301-the-hidden-growth-of-islamic-extremism-in-kosovo> [Accessed 10 August 2015].

Poggioli, S., 2010. Radical Islam uses Balkan poor to wield influence. *NPR* [online], 25 October. Available from: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=130801242> [Accessed 8 May 2015].

Reuters, 2015a. Five indicted in Kosovo on terrorism charges. *Reuters* [online], 26 January. Available from: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/01/26/us-kosovo-indictments-syria-idUSKBN0KZ1XD20150126> [Accessed 8 May 2015].

Reuters, 2015b. Macedonian police arrest nine for involvement in Syria and Iraq. *Reuters*, 6 August. Available from: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/08/06/uk-macedonia-islamic-state-arrests-idUKKCN0QB1OQ20150806> [Accessed 10 August 2015].

Tumanovska, M. and Coalson R., 2015. Government's claims about Macedonia terrorist group met skeptically. *Radio Free Europe* [online], 10 August. Available from: <http://www.rferl.org/content/macedonia-government-claims-of-terrorist-group-met-with-skepticism/27101370.html> [Accessed 10 August 2015].

Uvalić, M., 2014. Structural weaknesses of the Western Balkan economies. *Centre for Southeast European Studies: Balkans in Europe Policy Blog* [online], 25 September. Available from: <http://www.suedosteuropa.uni-graz.at/biepag/node/92> [Accessed 8 August 2015].

Voice of America, 2015. Bosnia arrests 12 linked to Islamic State. *Voice of America*, 15 May. Available from: <http://www.voanews.com/content/bosnia-islamic-state-arrests/2768693.html> [Accessed 10 August 2015].

Weinberg, A., 2014. ISIS in Iraq, Syria recruiting foreign fighters from Balkans. *ABC News* [online], 22 October. Available from: <http://abcnews.go.com/International/isis-iraq-syria-recruiting-foreign-fighters-balkans/story?id=26358320> [Accessed 8 May 2015].

Woehrel, S., 2008a. Islamic terrorism and the Balkans. *United States Congressional Research Service*, 15 January. Available from: <https://file.wikileaks.org/file/crs/RL33012.pdf> [Accessed 10 March 2015].

Woehrel, S., 2008b. Future of the Balkans and US policy concerns. *United States Congressional Research Service*, 22 May. Available from: <https://file.wikileaks.org/file/crs/RL32136.pdf> [Accessed 10 March 2015].

World Bulletin, 2014. Bosnia: 11 detained on terrorism charges. *World Bulletin* [online], 13 November. Available from: <http://www.worldbulletin.net/todays-news/148306/bosnia-11-detained-on-terrorism-charges> [Accessed 10 August 2015].

REGIONAL SECURITY COOPERATION IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

Ioannis Michaletos
Independent Analyst
Athens

*“If one does not know to which port one is sailing, no
wind is favorable”*

Lucius Annaeus Seneca

Southeast Europe is facing a number of challenges, some of which can be described as chronic ones and others that have come into attention more recently, but constitute urgent circumstances that affect not only the region, but also the wider European security architecture. In the first category one could list the powerful transnational organized crime networks that operate in or within the Balkans, and various extremist groups of ethnic, ideological or religious foundation.

The recent challenges include primarily the vast and seemingly uncontrollable illegal immigration and refugee movement from Asia/Africa into the EU via the Balkan route and the alarming problem of the returnee Jihadists from the Middle Eastern battlefields, along with “Islamic State-Daesh” affiliates for which all credible information at hand point out that they are preparing attacks on European soil.

Judging from the above and from the fact that a significant part of the region, it’s Western Balkan one, is still not included in EU structures, the issue of regional security cooperation comes forward as a theme of importance for combatting the aforementioned challenges. In that sense it could be firstly pointed out that important steps have been taken already in this direction and the glass is already half-full rather than half-empty. What is needed though are agility, speediness, and alertness in order to keep pace with the changing security environment.

Security cooperation structures

The institutional bodies that have been created in the region so far have mainly centered upon the collaboration of national police forces. Organized crime constitutes a major challenge and police organizations are on the frontline of combatting it. The following structures are operational:

South East European Law Enforcement Center (SELEC)¹

This intergovernmental body, composed of all South East European countries via their liaison officers in the headquarters based in Bucharest, has been successfully developing a common crime prevention policy, especially on the vital theme of the trans-border organized illicit markets. It is also combined with the South East European Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG), which couples the police with the judicial regional sectors, fostering cooperation, promoting lessons learned and proposing joint actions.

¹ Official website of SELEC: <http://www.selec.org/>.

Nevertheless it should be noted that the organization is mostly centered in its conception and organization into developing strategic policies rather than implementing tactical ones, which in plain words means that it does not have the capacity to combat everyday crime; instead, the focus is on setting the framework of cooperation and in times assisting in breaking up particular organized crime networks with investigation material already been gathered by local police forces. Amongst the ambitions of its directorship is to have a “Balkan Interpol”, an aim which may well be accomplished in the future.

*Southeast Europe Police Chiefs Association (SEPCA)*²

It is a high-level intergovernmental standing forum that encompasses most of South East European countries police Chiefs, with the notable exceptions of those of Greece and Turkey. This organization, which is based in Sofia, is still in a developing mode, with aim to become an international organization, since it is essentially an association until now. The purpose is to network, link up and exchange practices between chiefs of police forces, a strategic need nowadays. Nevertheless there are no operational or tactical responsibilities embedded within this entity.

*The Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI)*³

This organization which is part of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe framework is encompassing all Western Balkan countries and acts as a policy support instrument for collaboration in a variety of migration issues, including the security one of border control. It is based in Skopje and it is a strategic entity, certainly not dealing with tactical operations.

*Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)*⁴

The council is an organization operating within the wider issue of regional cooperation, including the security sphere of justice and home affairs issues. Its member states are from all regional countries and it is based in Sarajevo. It also deals from a strategic perspective and has not been involved in operations of any kind.

*Police Cooperation Convention for South East Europe*⁵

This is another high-level and strategic forum that aims to network and increase collaboration in the police sphere, especially in the policy-implementation sense. It includes all countries of the region bar Turkey and Greece but with the inclusion of Austria and Hungary, and with strong focus on Western Balkans. It also pro-

vides seminar type education and it is based in Ljubljana.

A first outline that could be made is that intergovernmental security cooperation in terms of institutions framework is heavily centered in networking and from a strategic point of view, with little use of tactical operations. To all the above one should include the organizations of FRONTEX, UNODC, NATO, OSCE, Europol and other EU's bodies which foster in their own terms cooperation between Balkan countries in the security spectrum, either via collective work or mostly via bilateral or trilateral temporarily cooperation.

A significant work is being done in fact by informal cooperation, which stems from cooperation between individual countries and for specific tasks. For instance Greek and Albanian police have since the late 90's established a strong rapport for issues of organized crime. A latest high-level meeting took place in late May 2015⁶ in the city of Ioannina between the heads of police of the two countries with an agenda stretching from border control, illegal immigration, Jihadist movements tracking, and organized crime.

Due to the extent of this “non-institutional, non-formal” security cooperation, the following clusters and classifications will be provided based on the theme of the cooperation and the countries involved, including military structures. Five countries and with whom they are paired will be presented, all of these already parts of the EU (Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, and Slovenia) with some notes on the rest⁷.

Greece:

- Greece-Albania (high on police cooperation, low on intelligence, low on military)
- Greece-FYROM (medium on police cooperation – low on intelligence, low on military)
- Greece-Bulgaria (high on police cooperation, medium on intelligence, high on military)
- Greece-Romania (medium on police cooperation, medium on intelligence, low on military)
- Greece-Serbia (medium on police cooperation, medium on intelligence, medium on military)
- Greece-Croatia (medium on police cooperation, low on intelligence, low on military)

² Official website of SEPCA: <http://www.sepca-see.eu/>.

³ Official website of MARRI: <http://www.marri-rc.org/>.

⁴ Official website of RCC: <http://www.rcc.int/>.

⁵ Official website of PCCSE: <http://www.pccseecretariat.si/>.

⁶ Greek weekly newspaper “Proto Thema” detailing on the meeting: <http://www.protothema.gr/greece/article/480344/suskepsi-korufista-ioannina-gia-tin-eglimatikotita/>.

⁷ Part of an ongoing research and seminar-based matrix on security cooperation in the Balkans by the author and the “Institute for Security & Defense Analysis” (www.i-sda.eu) in Athens-Greece.

- Greece-Turkey (medium on police cooperation, low on intelligence, low on military)
- Greece-Montenegro (medium on police cooperation, low on intelligence, high on military)
- Greece-Bosnia (low on police cooperation, low on intelligence, low on military)
- Greece Kosovo (low on police cooperation, low on intelligence, low on military)
- Greece-Slovenia (medium in police cooperation, medium in intelligence, low on military)

Bulgaria:

- Bulgaria-Albania (medium on police cooperation, medium on intelligence, low on military)
- Bulgaria-FYROM (high on police cooperation, low on intelligence, low on military)
- Bulgaria-Romania (high on police cooperation, medium on intelligence, high on military)
- Bulgaria-Serbia (medium on police cooperation, low on intelligence, low on military)
- Bulgaria-Turkey (high on police cooperation, medium on intelligence, low on military)
- Bulgaria-Kosovo (medium on police cooperation, low on intelligence, low on military)
- Bulgaria-Croatia (medium on police cooperation, low on intelligence, low on military)
- Bulgaria – Montenegro (low on police cooperation, low on intelligence, low on military)
- Bulgaria-Bosnia (medium on police cooperation, low on intelligence one, low on military)
- Bulgaria-Slovenia (medium on police cooperation, low on intelligence one, low on military)

Romania:

- Romania-Serbia (high on police cooperation, medium on intelligence, low on military)
- Romania-Albania (high on police cooperation, medium on intelligence, medium on military)
- Romania-Kosovo (medium on police cooperation, medium on intelligence, low on military)

- Romania-FYROM (medium on police cooperation, medium on intelligence, low on military)
- Romania-Bosnia (medium on police cooperation, medium on intelligence, low on military)
- Romania-Montenegro (medium on police cooperation, medium on intelligence, low on military)
- Romania-Croatia (medium on police cooperation, medium on intelligence, medium on military)
- Romania-Slovenia (medium on police cooperation, medium on intelligence, medium on military)

Croatia:

- Croatia-Bosnia (high on police cooperation, medium on intelligence, medium on military)
- Croatia-Serbia (medium on police cooperation, low on intelligence, low on military)
- Croatia-Montenegro (high on police cooperation, medium on intelligence, high on military)
- Croatia-Albania (high on police cooperation, medium on intelligence, medium on military)
- Croatia-Slovenia (high on police cooperation, high on intelligence, high on military)
- Croatia-FYROM (medium on police cooperation, medium on intelligence, low on military)

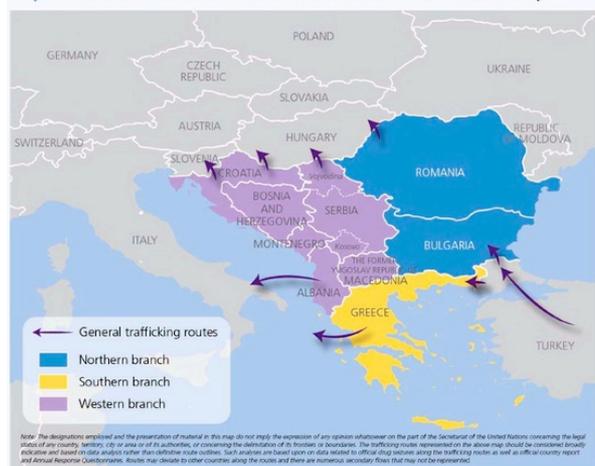
Slovenia:

- Slovenia-Bosnia (high on police cooperation, medium on intelligence, low on military)
- Slovenia-Montenegro (high on police cooperation, medium on intelligence, high on military)
- Slovenia-Albania (medium on police cooperation, medium on intelligence, medium on military)
- Slovenia-FYROM (high on police cooperation, medium on intelligence, medium on military)

To all the aforementioned, it should be noted that Serbia has steady/strong links with Bosnia (Republika Srpska), FYROM, Montenegro, Albania with Kosovo and Montenegro while Turkey enjoys the cooperation with Bosnia, Albania, and Kosovo. It should be noted that this is a rough depiction that is subject to the influence of outside influences and the wider ever-changing geopolitical landscape. The basic outline remains though.

Challenges ahead and pressing responsibilities

Map 2: Identified branches of the Balkan route of heroin in South-Eastern Europe



Source: Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) data, supplemented by national government reports and other official reports

Image: Huffingtonpost.com

First of all the issue of organized crime networks in South East Europe is a perennial one, which is actually the foundation for most of the ongoing regional cooperation.

Nowadays, the region continues to be a major producer of hashish in Europe with exports directed mostly to the EU markets⁸. Major producing areas are south Albania, south Greece, Bosnia, Kosovo and FYROM. Further cocaine imports from South America continue to be directed in Adriatic ports⁹, while the heroin route originating from Afghanistan is reaching the EU either from the land route of Turkey-Balkans¹⁰ or via sea interconnections from Greek or Adriatic ports¹¹.

Moreover, arms contraband supplying ongoing conflicts in the MENA region is being conducted both from the Adriatic shores and the Black Sea, with the inclusion of numerous shipping companies and intermediaries¹².

Human trafficking is a major source of revenue for organized crime networks and heavily influenced by their cooperation with ex-Soviet state “Mafias”, whilst contraband of tobacco, counterfeit products have a major hub for the rest of Europe in the Balkans and form a wider international cooperation network that encompasses regions of East Asia, MENA states and Ukraine¹³. Apart from the local organized crime syndicates in South East Europe the following ethnic ones also operate either on a permanent basis or through ad hoc consultations: Colombian, Mexican, Italian, Georgian, Russian, Israeli, Ukrainian, Moldovan, Armenian, Turkish, Chinese, Pakistani, Nigerian, Eritrean, Iranian, Afghani, Polish, Lebanese, and Vietnamese. In addition, multiple loose networks composed by members of various ethnicities are involved in all kinds of organized illicit action, with strong preference in using the region for money laundering purposes.

It has to be noted that in some instances the security situation seems to be deteriorating and in a strategic level. For example after a series of crackdowns against the Georgian “Thieves in Law” groups in Spain¹⁴, there are credible information and analysis that points out that the new headquarters of the so-called “Georgian Mafia” are now based in the city of Thessaloniki¹⁵. Moreover the Chinese Triads have gradually but steadily build formidable foundation for their operations in Belgrade, Istanbul and Athens. A rather recent entrance in the spectrum of security challenges, are the “Motorcycle” gangs¹⁶, which add up to the linkage between the American and Canadian organized crime scene and the Balkan one.

⁸ “New Developments in European Drug Market”, by European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Addiction, 27/05/2014, Web: <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/topics/pods/cannabis-markets-developments>.

⁹ “Serious & Organized Crime Threat Assessment of Montenegro”, Police Directorate of Montenegro, Public Version, 14/02/2014, Pages 26-27.

¹⁰ “Narcotic Superhighways: The Top 5 Routes for Drug Trafficking”, Organized Crime & Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), 22/02/2013, Web: <https://www.occrp.org/en/component/content/article?id=1843:narcotic-superhighways-the-top-5-routes-for-drug-trafficking>.

¹¹ “Greece on crossroads of international heroin trade”, Kathimerini weekly paper, 24/06/2014, Web: <http://www.ekathimerini.com/160976/article/ekathimerini/community/greece-on-crossroads-of-international-heroin-trade>.

¹² “The Balkan arms trade: a growing threat, or growing peace?”, Insight on Conflict, 15/02/2015, Web: <http://www.insightonconflict.org/2015/04/balkan-arms-trade-threat-or-peace/> & “The Odessa Network”, Global Initiative (<http://www.c4ads.org/>), 20/09/2013, Web: <http://www.globalinitiative.net/download/arms-trafficking/>

arms(2)/C4ads - The Odessa Network Mapping facilitators of Russian and Ukrainian Arms Transfers - Sept 2013.pdf.

¹³ “Tobacco Smuggling in Greece: An Overview”, Balkananalysis.com, 11/08/2014. Web: <http://www.balkananalysis.com/greece/2014/08/11/tobacco-smuggling-in-greece-an-overview/> & “Les milliards perdus du trafic de cigarettes”, Slate France, 13/07/2015, Web: <http://www.slate.fr/story/103809/europe-milliards-perdus-traffic-cigarettes>.

¹⁴ “Police arrest 69 in ‘Georgian mafia’ raids”, Independent Newspaper, 16/03/2010, Web: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/police-arrest-69-in-georgian-mafia-raids-1921844.html>.

¹⁵ Unofficial Information by leading Greek security officers as of early 2015.

¹⁶ “The Threat of Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs in South East Europe”, EUROPOL, Threat Notice, (002-2010).



Image: FRONTEX

As if all the above were not enough to cause serious strain to the local police and security forces, new severe challenges have been evolving quickly. A massive outflow of refugees from the ongoing Syrian and Iraqi wars, coupled with the wider instability in the MENA region, has seen a movement of populations that is paralyzing the border control in countries such as Greece, FYROM, and Serbia.

Since early to mid-2015, approximately 800 people per day were entering Greece via the Aegean sea route from Turkey, 70% of them Syrians with the rest being nationals of Afghanistan, Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan, and Iraq. The majority of those then continued their journey towards the final destinations (i.e. North-West Europe) using the Balkan land route from Gevgelija-Kumanovo-Presevo-Nis-Belgrade-Hungary, or by-routes from Greece-Albania-Montenegro-Croatia or Greece-Bulgaria-Romania-Hungary¹⁷. Additional numbers estimated at 100 people per day on average would use the land route from Turkey to Bulgaria and in some cases routes by sea from the same countries. Also immigrants are being sent directly from rather distant ports of Turkey, such as Mersin, via old commercial ships carrying up to 1,000 people to Western Greece, Southern Italy and Albania. In many cases those ships are being used as “mother vessels” that would unload plastic boats and dispersing numerous smaller groups of passengers, many of those dying in the process. A smaller but increasing route is the one from Egypt/Libya towards the Balkans via the use of old fishing vessels carrying up to

300 people, most of them ending up in Southern and Western Greece¹⁸, with cases also in the Adriatic coasts.

The Jihadist issue, which has gained extensive publicity in the European press, is another hard issue for the regional security and intelligence forces¹⁹. The countries of the Balkans with a special focus on Kosovo, Serbia, Albania, and Bosnia have already sent a great number of Jihadist fighters in proportion to their population²⁰, whilst there is already an established infrastructure of extremists, especially in central Bosnia that can facilitate an easier flow to the rest of the EU²¹, rather than any other “entrance point” (i.e. Spain, South of Italy, or Visegrad countries). In addition, the existence of strong criminal groups that have been mentioned previously and the massive immigration flow are factors that add to these hypotheses. In response, local governments have been alerted and drafted new legislation, along with arresting hundreds of suspects and potential facilitators²².

More alarmingly the Jihadist-inclined networks in the Balkans, and those in the Western region, are inter-linked strongly and for a number of years with their “counterparts in Vienna and Milano (most of those carrying EU passports and having sleeper—thus undetected—cells), while a formidable “Hawala transaction system” has been established with main hubs in Sarajevo, Istanbul, Athens, Kosovo, and Skopje²³. Thus conventional tools such as economic intelligence, infiltration, and surveillance cannot provide effective results.

Lastly the sheer number of suspected people involved for all the aforementioned do not enable conventional police work to be done. For example a trail and thorough surveillance of a suspect on a 24/7 basis requires minimum a group of 10 officers and of course significant expenses if the numbers on an annual basis adds to a few thousand suspects. A French former high-ranking intelligence officer in a recent forum in Greece, noted that the ISIS infiltration into Europe cannot be dealt with traditional police methodology, such as the one described above, due to the huge number of suspects and the ability of the terrorist network to conduct recruitment on a constant basis from a distance using the so-

¹⁷ “Annual Risk Analysis”, FRONTEX, April 2015, Pages 47-49 Web: http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Annual_Risk_Analysis_2015.pdf & “The Illegal Immigration in Greece in 2015: A Strategic Overview”, Balkanalysis.com, 25/03/2015, Web: <http://www.balkanalysis.com/greece/2015/03/25/the-illegal-immigration-industry-in-greece-in-2015-a-strategic-overview/>.

¹⁸ Various reports mainly from the Greek-sourced media along with multiple credible information provided by Greek and Italian Coast Guard and police officers.

¹⁹ “EU and Balkan countries ‘tackling jihadism together’”, Deutsche Welle, 21/03/2015, Web: <http://www.dw.com/en/eu-and-balkan-countries-tackling-jihadism-together/a-18330960>.

²⁰ “Mercenaries, Extremists Become Major Balkans Export”, Radio Fre Europe, 15/08/2014, Web: <http://www.rferl.org/content/mercenaries-extremists-become-major-balkans-export/26532364.html>.

²¹ “Bosnia: The cradle of modern jihadism?”, BBC, 02/07/2015, Web: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33345618>.

²² “Sarajevo’s struggles to contain jihadism”, Deutsche Welle, 21/03/2015, Web: <http://www.dw.com/en/sarajevos-struggles-to-contain-jihadism/a-18331506>.

²³ Information provided by various high-level police and Security officers from Greece, France, USA on the subject.

cial media or agitating ready-to-be-made “Lone wolves”²⁴.

The lack of sophisticated technological tools of South East European Police forces compared to their counterparts in northern Europe and long-term underfunding further add to the deficiencies.



Image: Die Welt Newspaper

On the other side, a brighter one, the pressing issues mentioned and especially the Jihadist one has led to an increased cooperation between the countries affected in the Balkans, and their partners abroad. More specifically the U.S., UK, France, Germany, and Italy have boosted their assistance to local forces by providing information, training and equipment. Furthermore, an effective “behind the scenes” collaboration in exchanging vital suspect lists and data to solve the quiz of suspected Jihadists has been slowly developing amongst Balkan countries, without any fanfare but in a quite effective manner.

There have been a number of successes whether in the Greek-Albanian border, the Greek-Turkish one, or the Bosnian-Serbian one that have been kept of the limelight but are considered being very positive for the overall protection of the European security. Also the experience and operational capabilities for many Balkan security forces is being bolstered by having to deal with such stressful responsibilities and new cadres of officers have been steadily becoming experienced in a wide array of serious and international security threats, hence building the foundations for a more effective security sector policy in the future.

It can be said that for the short-term and for the next 12-18 months attention by most states will be directed into ensuring that the Balkan road will not be used for the infiltration of Jihadists into Europe, while on the mid- and long-term organized crime surfaces as the main challenge, one which is also directly related to societal

norms and political corruption, thus tackling it is a long-term and painstaking process.

The refugee and illegal immigration issue is one that involves actors and circumstances that all beyond the capacities of all regional countries to counteract. In such a case, the support of the rest of the EU countries plus all MENA partner states is needed, which is another complicated procedure that will have to involve political will and endurance, otherwise it will not be able to be dealt with.

Searching for stronger cooperation

First of all bearing in mind the state of affairs in South East Europe, not only from a security perspective, but also from a whole range of social, political and geopolitical entanglements, every approach towards stronger cooperation should take into consideration a step-by-step procedure that of course needs time and patience to fully mature.

Secondly, the security cooperation should be implemented both from top-down and bottom-up, and include not only governmental and formal designs but also request the involvement of the citizens and all various stakeholders.

Regarding the formal sector, new structures aimed at tackling the deficit of tactical operations in terms of combating perils such as organized crime and Jihadism should be implemented. As a basis already existing local-based organizations such as SELEC or those heavily involved in the region such as FRONTEX and Europol could set up mobile, permanent standing and multi-Balkan task forces that would operate on specialized missions.

The above entities could also open up to the societies not only for promoting their work but also for raising awareness and coupling that with the vision of cooperation.

The support of the EU in that respect is crucial not only in financial terms, but most importantly in providing the necessary know-how, technological infrastructure, and securing the viability of these pan-Balkan structures, having already great experience from similar structures and best practices in the rest of Europe. Of all course all the above could be included in a type of an international status organization that deals with the region in terms of security.

Furthermore, the police forces of the Balkan countries should consider establishing common databases, accessible through secure channels, along with the creation of steering committees on rotation that would set up security agendas in common problems and directly inform member state’s ministers in charge requesting for action.

²⁴ “6th Executive Security Seminar: The World in 2015: New Threats & Aspects of Regional Stability and Security”, December 2014, Athens-Greece

In terms of strategic and high-level approach, a permanent annual forum on rotation in the Balkans countries that would include heads of police, intelligence, interior ministries and other security functions could become an ideal platform for the exchange of opinions and networking in a discreet way. Similar platforms could emerge also for middle and lower ranks, but in all cases concrete agendas to be discussed should always have to be agreed upon and the aim of these forums should be result-oriented.

Every country in South East Europe has achieved different level of specializations in terms of security experience, for instance Greece on illegal immigration, Bosnia in radical Islamism, Montenegro in Trans-Atlantic cocaine trading, Turkey in heroin trafficking, and so and so forth. Therefore the capacity of each security structure of every country to add its own expertise and gain from the rest of the parties constitutes an interesting opportunity for the future establishment of standing groups that will implement seminar and research projects.

There are already well-established groups of such nature mainly to be found in the academic environment such as the “Standing Groups” of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR). With adaptation, similar models of collaboration and exchange of information, along with trust building is feasible nowadays in South East Europe.

In a more tactical level and as far as imminent threats, such as the one of Jihadism, are concerned there is a need for swift action and agility by the local forces. That means increased and thorough international cooperation with non-Balkan countries which have more capacities or knowledge on the subject, as well as, local partnerships in border control, exchange of suspect lists, procurement of new technological tools, and combat of facilitators which in most cases are linked to entities that are being financed by MENA region radicals, some often of strong international influence. In that sense political will is paramount to securing the region from a terrorist spill over.

At that point it should be noted that the threat being faced cannot be countered by the regional countries alone. Strong support by the EU and NATO is needed, which in turn requires further political strength which also includes the adoption of an all-round policy that can be summoned as “No interaction with terrorists and/or facilitators, even if that may fulfill secondary policy strategies of a country”. Otherwise there is no light at the end of the tunnel that international terrorism of such kind could be dealt with, since it feeds itself, amongst other things, by the brinkmanship of international powers and the ability of terrorist handlers of placing themselves often in between, thus gaining indirectly but vitally a chance to inflict damages to all sides at the end of the day.

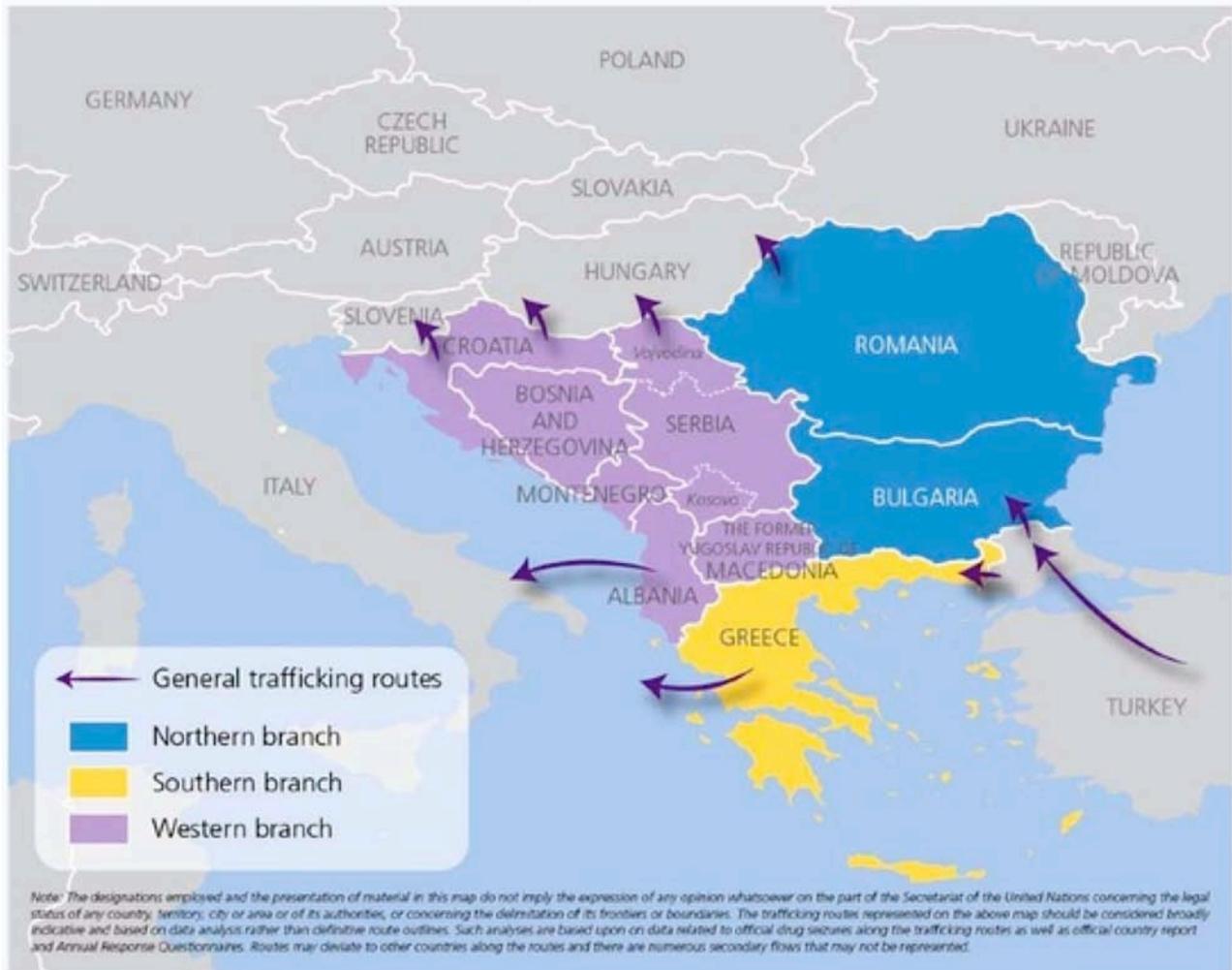
Finally, but not least in importance, civil society can, enhance regional security cooperation through raising awareness, research, and exposure. The direction therefore in that sector would be to further induce civil society stakeholders to remain active and introduce new ones, all under the prism of collective interregional work. Public forums, use of social media, and lobbying are all methods that have been tested successfully in the past and could be further strengthened in the future.

In lieu of a conclusion

Regional security cooperation in South East Europe has already emerged, but it is rather loose, slow-growing and rather weak in terms of public perception and acceptance. In addition a myriad of geopolitical consideration and inter-ethnic differences hamper its evolution. In all terms political initiatives would prove to be the key points for igniting a thorough collaboration, since the state security mechanisms in all countries are by default rigid, conservative and have set priorities. Thus, the first and foremost for achieving such aims is for politicians to set a direction and strive for it, mobilizing thus the entire mechanisms to move forward.

What is needed is not many but actually few from each country that will set the pace for others to follow. If villains internationally as well as regionally, are already able to have formed strong cooperation, then its high time for the country security representatives themselves to take the initiative and counteract them, setting up a good example for generations to follow.

Appendix

Map 2: Identified branches of the Balkan route of heroin in South-Eastern Europe


Source: Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) data, supplemented by national government reports and other official reports

Image: Huffingtonpost.com



Image: Frontex

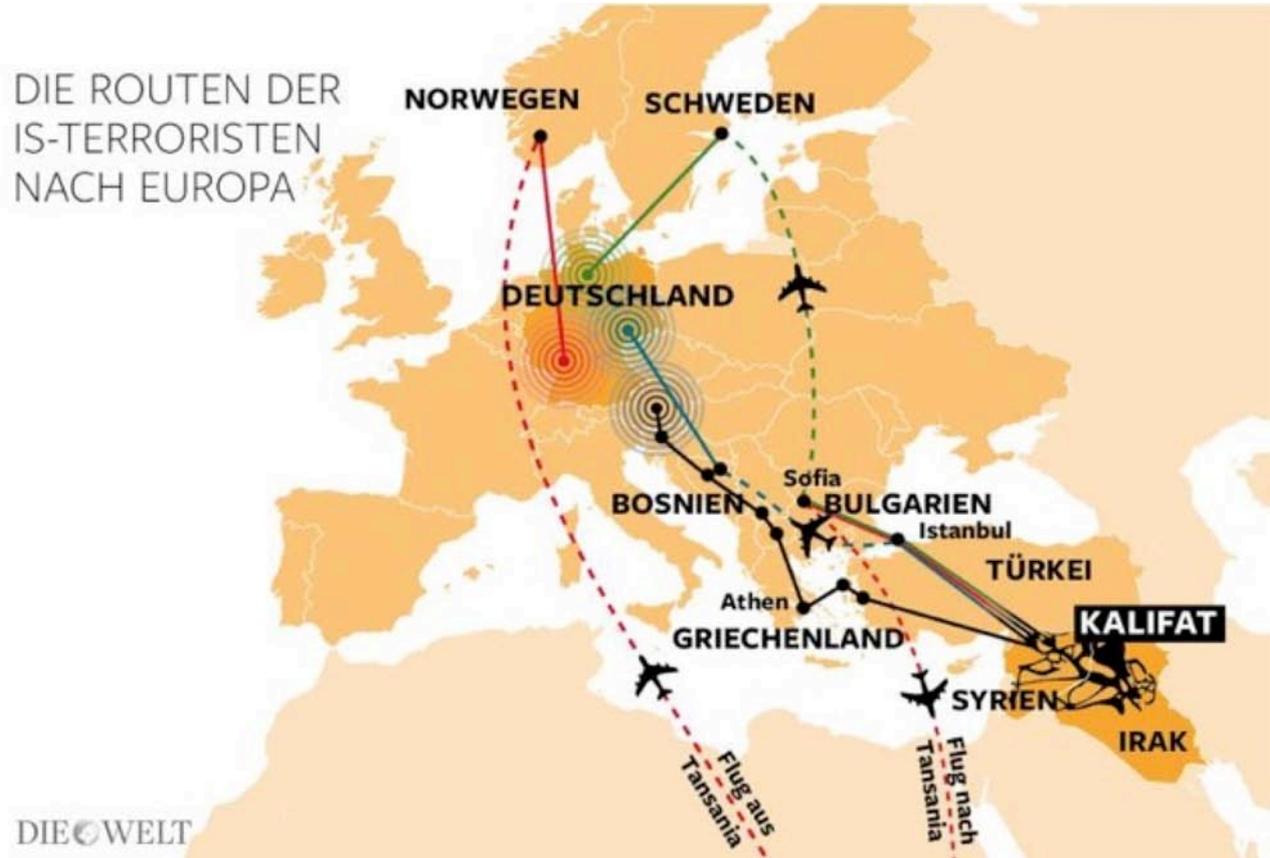


Image: Die Welt Newspaper

UNEVEN REGIONAL SECURITY COOPERATION: LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

Florian Qehaja
Executive Director
Kosovar Centre for Security Studies
Pristina

Introduction

International and regional security cooperation represents one of the most challenging cooperation frameworks. It is particularly difficult for transitioning post-conflict regions to meet these security requirements, though security cooperation remains a difficult exercise even in more developed regions of Europe as well. In many ways, regional security cooperation in the Western Balkans can be seen as a success story due to the international requirements on the region. Starting from scratch, such significant progress has set the precedence for a continued, progress-oriented trajectory; however, more work is necessary in order to successfully reach cohesive and consistent cooperation. Certainly, the full extent of successful implementation will only be realized when such reforms can be viewed from a need-based cooperation perspective rather than that of imposed cooperation.

Regarding attempts to internalize regional security cooperation, it is necessary to greatly reduce the tendency of selective cooperation based on language, trust, and a shared past. Understandably, these elements cannot be ultimately bypassed because they genuinely represent the will and the sovereign right of the countries to decide freely on the partners and level of cooperation. However, it is important to recognize the potential consequences of this divisive cooperation, possibly leading to the creation of “blocks” or “sub-blocks” of countries maintaining cooperation solely based on the preferences of a few. Such behavior may promote the reinvention of “Yugosphere” or “Albanosphere” and thereby the stagnation of progress in the region.

The largest portion of uncompleted security cooperation in the Western Balkans is in Kosovo. This lack of progress reflects an “elephant in the room” that cannot be overlooked. Kosovo’s exclusion from regional security initiatives is a classic example of deliberate selective cooperation, which is rooted in politics rather than security assessments. This leads to disjointed progress across the region, particularly when it comes to the prevailing narrative referring to organized crime deriving from Kosovo, while at the same time preventing its institutions from cooperation through regional security initiatives or bilateral arrangements. The consequences of limited success are noted not only in Kosovo but in the entire region.

This paper is based on the extensive work of the author in identifying the regional security cooperation in the Western Balkans. The paper reflects the data gathered through a number of research projects to which the author directly contributed. The first part of the paper explains the regional security cooperation as a success of the international community. The second part highlights the issues of language and trust representing key elements in security cooperation. The final part briefly out-

lines the case of Kosovo and its difficulties to access regional security initiatives due to the political positioning of some regional countries.

Shifting “externally-driven” cooperation into “necessary norm”

Regional security cooperation, at minimum, should be imagined in the context of regional multilateral relations, as the future success of security cooperation relies heavily on a unified effort from nations across the Western Balkans. Regional security cooperation implies the creation of a political region of the Western Balkans, which includes all former federal units of Yugoslavia, minus Slovenia, plus Albania. The cooperation is often applied in the wider context of Southeast Europe (SEE), which includes all former Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria, Rumania, Greece, Turkey, and often Moldova as well.

In the context of the Western Balkans, regional security cooperation reflects a rather externally driven project. The cooperation did not derive “organically” from the countries of the region themselves but as a condition for the possibility of membership in the European Union (EU), NATO, and other international organizations. The externally driven regional security cooperation does not diminish the final goal of maintaining cooperation for the greater good and shared benefits. The cooperation is mainly intended to target the statutory security actors that retain the coercive means of use of forces such as: armed forces, police, intelligence, judiciary, emergency services, and other related institutions. By bringing these actors together, it is possible to ensure that cooperation is being introduced across the institutions.

Regional security cooperation should normally also encourage cooperation between independent professionals, be it academics or civil society actors in the field of security. By doing so, administrations could claim a more independent approach to cooperation as opposed to an elitist project that lacks the support of the people.¹ This argument rests within the broader framework of security communities. The concept of communities was first proposed by Carl Deutsch in the late ‘50s, who explained the need for security cooperation in the Western European context.² It was similarly applied in other post-conflict areas such as the Western Balkans. While the primary intention was to ensure measurable results in the state-related institutions, it was equally important to facilitate platforms and discussions between these

groups of professionals.³ Utilizing these groups strengthened the integrity of Western European cooperation, lessening the burdens of politics and distrust.

The regional security cooperation should gradually turn from an “externally-imposed condition” to a norm that has to be internalized in the cooperation between the major security actors in the region. While cooperation is being advanced up to a normal and frequent level of exchange and communication, it remains selective and applicable only within the scope of the interest and preferences of the countries and political elites currently involved in discussions. Specifically, it appears that security cooperation is more developed in the northern sub-region of the Western Balkans and less in the southern part of the region.

Re-defining “Yugosphere” and the subsequent creation of “Albanosphere”

When focusing solely on security cooperation within the Western Balkans, one has in mind two main prerogatives of cooperation: language (culture) and heritage. Language plays a major role in all dimensions of cooperation, particularly in the security sector. Language can even determine the likelihood of partnerships due to the selection of “preferred” actors of cooperation – i.e those speaking the same or similar language(s). With the exception of Albania and Kosovo, Western Balkan nations speak southern Slavic languages, which are officially different languages, yet carry various similarities.⁴

The language barrier has steered professionals in choosing their most preferred partners – meaning their homologue police or military officer. In a regional study measuring police officer tendencies and regional cooperation, we have found that these preferred partners greatly impact regional relations. For example, a Montenegrin police officer would rather communicate and cooperate with his/her Serbian or Bosnian counterpart than his/her Albanian or Kosovar counterpart.⁵ The same has been found from the other side; for example, a Kosovar police officer would rather communicate and cooperate with his/her Albanian counterpart.⁶ Further research and analysis indicates that this sort of preference stems from the language advantage.⁷

¹ Hansen Annika (2008) Local ownership in Peace Operation. in Do-nais Timothy. Local ownership and security sector reform.

² Deutsch, Karl W. et al. (1957). Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience.

³ For example, in the context of Western Balkans, we have created a consortium of think tanks entitled “From conflict zone to security communities.” There was one think tank per country.

⁴ A distinct difference is with a Macedonian language, which is fairly different – though easily understandable – in the former Yugoslav setting.

⁵ Interviews as part of the joint consortium: “From Conflict Zone to Security Community”.

⁶ Bekaj Armend and Florian Qehaja (Upcoming). Caught in quagmire: Kosovo Police Profession. in Ejduš Filip (2015) Security Communities in the Western Balkans.

⁷ Ibid.

Even so, the question may arise: *to what extent does language matter in regional security cooperation?* A culture's language(s) is a distinct element of its affiliation to that community, and it certainly considers the other community to be proximate to the language with which its respective police officer identifies. However, one should not see language as an obstacle; rather, as a facilitator to communication and exchange. When reviewing cases of the EU, police cooperation is perhaps more present among for example German police officers and Austrian police officers. The same is between, for example, Czech and Slovak police officers. On the other hand, it is not a major obstacle, for example, for the Hungarians to cooperate with Czechs, Slovaks, and Poles within the Visegrad platforms, regardless of the distinctly different languages between the three.

However, in the context of the Western Balkans, language preference may be an element that may reflect a hidden intention of exclusion. In the best scenario, the language argument may be an unintended consequence of exclusion. In the worst scenario, it represents the hidden narrative that is rooted in the political and socio-cultural reasoning. Trust is also very important in the context of security cooperation. It directly affects the main mechanism of the security cooperation: the exchange of information.

The language, trust and therefore ultimate preference is also linked to heritage. In this case, it is certain that more cooperation between, for example, Macedonian, Serbian, Montenegrin, and Bosnian police officers is carried out due to the shared past of the former Yugoslav security system; hence, the "Yugosphere"⁸ in security cooperation reflects a positive knowledge-sharing platform, but it is applied selectively to the countries sharing the same heritage. This unintentionally leads to the creation of the so-called "Albanosphere", which maintains unlimited bilateral cooperation between Albania and Kosovo. The arguments for this cooperation are the same as above, but from the opposite socio-cultural perspective.

This situation can be explained from practical examples. To illustrate, although there are reports of certain types of smuggling being conducted from Albania or Kosovo, there might be less interest to cooperate with, for example, the Macedonian police officers because they would rather cooperate with their Serbian counterparts. In a number of police raids in Macedonia during 2015, there were clear official reports indicating links between these groups and some groups in Kosovo (and perhaps Albania).⁹ Even so, the reporting suggested that there were frequent communications between Serbian and Macedonian police officers and politicians instead

of official communication with Kosovo or Albanian police. The asymmetric cooperation reflects a discrepancy between risk assessment and the preferences in regional security cooperation efforts.

Consequently, this leads to improved cooperation between Kosovar and Albanian police, which is conducted bilaterally on all levels. According to a former senior officer of the Kosovo Police, it is "no secret that the communications between both police services are excellent."¹⁰ According to him, this cooperation is not always needed at the level that exists; the fact that joint border patrols and traffic patrols have been introduced may reflect a reaction to the absence of similar, if not the same level of cooperation with other countries in the region.

One may not argue that there is a reciprocal lack of communication between, for example, Albanian Police and Serbian Police. The meetings and exchanges are done as part of regional security initiatives, but there is no substantial and/or practical cooperation between the two countries. The communication is done solely to fulfill a formal requirement of arranging contacts and potential exchange as part of the overall efforts in "ticking the box" that the cooperation is taking place with no intentions to deepen it. The limited interest of police cooperation is also reflected among the public opinion in both countries, which showed that respondents in Albania and Serbia express little interest that their security institutions cooperate.¹¹

Overall, the regional security cooperation is comparatively more advanced than it was in early 2000s, but it has created groups of preferred countries and professionals which reflect preferences of language, culture and shared past. Such policies do not unite and align security cooperation within the framework of risk and threat assessment. In fact, it occasionally echoes deliberate exclusion due to political or cultural reasoning.

Kosovo's exclusion as the "elephant in the room"

Kosovo continues to face major challenges in joining regional security initiatives. It therefore represents one of the largest unresolved puzzles of the overall jigsaw of regional security cooperation. Its regional prospects are being openly hindered by the proactive position of the Serbian Government to block Kosovo's membership in regional security cooperation. Periodically, this act of blocking Kosovo from this institution is done also by Bosnia and Herzegovina – which, like Serbia, does not recognize Kosovo's independence – further complicating regional security cooperation. This "blocking" pattern is purely based on the political position each of the two countries has taken by not recognizing the state-

⁸ For more please see <http://www.economist.com/node/14258861>.

⁹ For more please see <http://www.independent.mk/articles/17316/Kumanovo+Clashes+Macedonian+Prime+Minister+Visits+Injured+Policemen>.

¹⁰ Interview with former senior police officer of Kosovo Police (October 21st, 2014).

¹¹ SRF, Public Opinion Survey, 2013.

hood of Kosovo. In doing so, the authority of the security providers in Kosovo is also not being acknowledged.¹² This pattern is applied albeit an agreement reached between the Governments of Kosovo and Serbia in Brussels, allowing Kosovo's membership in regional initiatives – including security initiatives – by a designation that does not prejudice its political status.¹³ As a result, the agreement nominally satisfied the primary positioning of both parties, but it had a clear goal of completing the jigsaw of cooperation by including Kosovo in the regional framework.

It is both irresponsible to hear arguments referring to crimes or other problems originating and taking place throughout Kosovo without a clear understanding of its exclusion from regional security cooperation. In diplomatic terms, this has been framed as a paradoxical attitude damaging the prospects of regional security cooperation. Out of approximately 40 regional security initiatives from SEE, Kosovo has successfully managed to gain full membership to the following: Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), Centre for Security Cooperation (RACVIAC) and Migration, Asylum and Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI).¹⁴ The participation of Kosovo in the programs of these initiatives is limited and largely unclear. Kosovo's membership has also been blocked in other notable regional initiatives such as the Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre (SELEC), Adriatic Charter, and Police Cooperation Convention.¹⁵ Along the regional security cooperation, there is a prevailing narrative that openly underscores diplomatic lobbying against Kosovo's membership in INTERPOL.¹⁶ This narrative reflects the hidden political intention of Serbia to challenge any attempt for fostering entirely the regional security cooperation.

Conclusion

Western Balkans reflects a partially successful story in applying a regional security cooperation framework. It was unimaginable just a few years ago that cooperation could reach an extent that the barriers of the past are no longer the primary obstacle. However, it is uncontested that this nominal success should be attributed to the international community which introduced so called "sticks" and "carrots" in order to impose concrete regional security cooperation as part of the ambition to join international organizations, namely EU and NATO. In other words, the cooperation could not be reached at the existing level in lieu of the role of international

community. This, on the other hand, raises the need for consistency in cooperation, which can be reached once it is widely considered as a necessary norm and therefore internalized into the work of all security institutions.

On the other hand, the prevailing obstacles to security cooperation have to do with the "natural" alignment of some countries to conduct cooperation and communication out of preferences. The preferences are found to be either language or trust based, which at least unintentionally excludes partnership with some countries. Should cooperation continue at the existing format, it may easily position countries into two spheres of preferences: the invention of "Yugosphere" and creation of "Albanosphere". While cultural preferences should normally not be viewed as an obstacle but rather a facilitator of cooperation, it appears that in the context of the Western Balkans these choices may reflect a hidden preference of some countries to justify the lack of willingness to apply cooperation equally throughout the region.

Last but not least, the continued obstructions to Kosovo's membership in security cooperation are against the spirit of regional collaboration. Political positioning is being put ahead of security cooperation, but cooperation has proven to be unavoidable in light of common security risks and challenges, which recognize no borders. The last puzzle of cooperation, at least nominally, will not be completed until Kosovo's inclusion in the overall regional security framework and international security organizations.

¹² Qehaja Florian. 2014. Kosovo-Serbia. Carrying out normalisation and implementation.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Emini Donika. 2014. Inclusion or Exclusion? Minorities in the Security Sector in Post-Independent Kosovo.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Speech of Serbian Foreign Minister openly calling upon the countries to reject Kosovo's bid to INTERPOL http://www.tanjug.rs/full-view_en.aspx?izb=195174.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND ENERGY SECURITY IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

Dr. Jens Bastian
Independent Financial Sector Analyst & Economic Consultant
Athens

I.

Since the onset of the global economic crisis of 2008-09 countries in Southeast Europe have sought to overcome the protracted recession. They have experienced that the economic recovery is a work in progress. Moreover, the implementation and performance of internationally mandated structural reforms lag [far] behind the immediate social and political costs.

Within Southeast Europe the region of the Western Balkans continues to be a depressed economic region. Employment is scarce and unemployment remains high. But the surprising, or frightening fact is that the issue of unemployment is politically irrelevant when it comes to general elections.

For many observers and citizens in the region the economic narrative formulated by international creditors has so far failed to deliver the promised goods. As the *EBRD* observed in its *2013 Transition Report*, there is a real danger of reform reversals gaining ground in various transition countries of SEE in which the London-based Bank operates. Add to this observation the fact that both Bulgaria and Romania, despite being members of the EU since 2007, continue to be subject to the annual *Co-operation and Verification Mechanism* by the European Commission (EC).

II.

In my view the focus of this panel on ‘*Regional Economic Cooperation*’ sums up correctly what needs to be done and how to frame the challenges ahead for the region of SEE, in particular the Balkans. Policy makers in the Balkans are gradually coming to the understanding that presenting the different countries as one *region* and one *economy* is the way forward. Establishing a critical mass is nowhere more apparent than in the willingness to seek mutual cooperation in the energy security sector (e.g. pipeline construction, transmission of liquefied gas, utilization of hydro power).

But other sectors also have competitive advantages if and when the idea of pooling resources further gains ground. I am particularly thinking of the regional potential to position the Balkans as an agricultural provider, a tourist destination, transport infrastructure coordinator, and an educational hub (most importantly as an IT hub).

Having said that, we should nevertheless acknowledge that regional economic cooperation is high on the policy prescription agenda of European institutions and international creditors. But I doubt that it is really a driver of economic development domestically in the region.

III.

The most promising and complex example of regional cooperation on the ground in SEE is taking place in the energy sector.

The *TAP* and *Turkish Stream* pipeline projects are major public-private investment consortia in regional energy cooperation. But they are also competing projects with different geo-political interests and regional implications. Both Russia and the United States are using these competing energy projects to shape countries' economic and geopolitical orientation.

The countries directly involved in these diverse initiatives include Russia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, Serbia, Greece, Macedonia, Albania, Hungary, and Italy. The pipeline projects are the largest joint venture investments in SEE.

The Moscow-backed pipeline project *Turkish Stream* would bring natural gas across the Black Sea to Turkey and the rest of Europe. The project is hosted by the Russian state-controlled energy giant *Gazprom*, carrying Russian gas to Europe and bypassing pipelines that run through Ukraine. *Turkish Stream* replaces an earlier Russian initiative for a pipeline to Europe called *South Stream*. The latter project was abandoned by Russia in late 2014 because of European Union rules that would have made the project unpalatable to Moscow by requiring *Gazprom* to share the pipeline with other suppliers.

But for *Turkish Stream* to move forward various bilateral agreements have to be reached and signed. Given that Turkey currently only has a caretaker government following the inconclusive June 2015 parliamentary elections, the flagship bilateral agreement with Russia cannot be signed and ratified. In short, unresolved politics in Ankara is interfering in the operational execution of the project. Thus, any as long as Turkey and Russia have still not agreed on the Turkish part of the proposed pipeline, any subsequent *Gazprom* deal with Greece would be meaningless.

By contrast, the United States is encouraging various countries in the region to subscribe to the *Trans-Adriatic Pipeline* (TAP) project. This Western-backed initiative would transfer natural gas supplies from the Caspian Sea in Azerbaijan to Italy and onward to other European destinations. Critically, the project excludes Russia.

The dueling sales pitches by the U.S. and Russia regarding regional energy cooperation are reminiscent of Cold War struggles and the attempt to nudge individual countries into one's own camp. To illustrate, the U.S. is intent on addressing Greece's geopolitical value as a NATO outpost at the southern tip of the Balkans and as an important gateway for energy transmission from

Central Asia. Regional energy cooperation is thus becoming a geopolitical tug of war, defining from whom Europe can satisfy its energy supply needs.

IV.

Cross border energy networks in SEE are an essential factor to regional economic development. This political objective is shared by all stakeholders in the region. But the financial capacity of participating countries to deliver remains limited and fragile.

This joint involvement will require major investment resources in the energy security and distribution networks of individual countries. It is obvious that most countries in the region cannot shoulder the required levels of up-front funding for such investment. Third-party institutional investment facilitation therefore remains a key driver forward. The *EIB* is the largest international financial institution investing in the region (roughly €29 billion through 2014).

The *EBRD* is a major equity investor and a facilitator of (micro finance) lending programs for SMEs that continue to face major problems to access liquidity from domestic banks. Hence, maximizing financial synergies from multilateral institutions such as the *EIB*, *EBRD*, World Bank and IPA of the EC remains paramount and a work in progress.

However, the private sector must be part of this financial engagement. Identifying private financial resources for investment remains a major challenge for the countries in the region. The formative role played by Greece in the 1990s until 2008 will not come back any time soon. Other countries have gradually – and somewhat hesitantly – stepped into the void left by Athens, most importantly Turkey and increasingly China.

V.

Regional economic cooperation and investment capacity in SEE cannot be separated from the medium-term perspectives of EU enlargement. The enlargement issue remains on the agenda. But that is more the result of developments in Ukraine than any proactive engagement on the part of Brussels towards Ankara, Podgorica, or Belgrade.

The decreasing impact of the enlargement agenda in Brussels is most prominently reflected in the EC President Jean-Claude Juncker's statement from June 2014 that “no further enlargement will take place over the next five years”.

But the countries currently in the process of accession negotiations – Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey – also face a major challenge in defining their own strategic priorities: These accession countries and other candi-

date countries cannot know at present what kind of EU they could be joining in the future. Will the UK still be a member then? Part of the answer was found following the outcome of the general elections in Britain and the commitment of Prime Minister David Cameron to hold a referendum on British E.U. membership in the course of 2016. In addition, will Greece still be a member of the eurozone also impacts on the definition of EU membership? I will say more about Greece and the linkage to SEE in a moment.

VI.

For different reasons, Germany and Turkey continue to maintain a focus on the Balkans. Both countries are prepared to take initiatives supporting regional cooperation and invest political capital towards its implementation. Germany is mainly doing this through high-level diplomatic investment, e.g. when Berlin staged in August 2014 the first-ever meeting of *all* the government leaders, including ministers of foreign affairs, economy and finance ministers from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia.

The 'Berlin Process' now has momentum leading to the follow-up meeting in Vienna in August 2015. At a time when EU enlargement fatigue is growing across the continent, the Berlin initiative served to underline that the German government has not forgotten the aspirations and challenges of the six countries from the region that continue to seek a "European perspective". Berlin is prepared to spend additional diplomatic capital and financial resources with regard to specific policy challenges within and between countries of SEE. This concerns most prominently advancing the German-Polish initiative focused on a *European energy union*, comprising current EU members, candidate and accession countries.

VII.

The role of Turkey in the region is becoming ever more important and substantial. As a diplomatic facilitator, a regional investor and trading partner, Turkey is proactively involved in Bosnia Herzegovina (e.g. banking, airline), Montenegro (e.g. Port of Bar), Serbia, Albania, and Kosovo (e.g. road infrastructure). Bilateral free trade agreements exist with varying countries of the region and Turkey. But this involvement is highly unbalanced. No Balkan country ranks among the top 10 trading partners of Turkey.

However, it is important to distinguish between private-led Turkish investment and trade relations in the region and government-sponsored initiatives. While the commercial focus of the former is self-evident, the strategic and religious objectives of the latter have repeatedly

called into question the motives of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's initiatives.

The *Turkish Stream* pipeline project currently being discussed between Ankara and Moscow will only reinforce the notion that Turkey is in the process of becoming a major transit country for the whole of the south of Europe, and possibly even beyond.

VIII.

Coming from Athens and looking at the political economy of SEE, I need to make a reference to recent Greek developments and the challenges these pose for the banking sectors in neighboring countries. The issue of 'Grexit' or 'Greekaccident' is currently high on the agenda of Euro area crisis management.

But it is also a challenge that requires immediate attention by finance ministries and central bank authorities in Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, and Turkey. The domestic credit systems of these countries are adversely influenced by the transmission channel of Greek banks' subsidiaries. The exposure of these subsidiaries to Greek sovereign debt, T-bill issuance, deposit [outflow] dynamics, inter-bank funding channels and NPL formation is such that minimizing the danger of contagion must be a Plan B scenario that central bank governors in neighboring countries are currently contemplating/implementing. Greek banks' subsidiaries in neighboring countries have a branch network totaling 2,500 units and employ roughly 40,000 people, with a large market share in Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Albania.

Since Greek banks are also under the restructuring obligation of the European Commission to reduce their foreign subsidiary network, the banking landscape in neighboring countries will change. We can already observe this process with regard to *Finanzbank* in Turkey (NBG) and the withdrawal of *Eurobank* from Poland and *Alpha Bank* from Ukraine, respectively.

Concerns in the western policy community that the on going Greek-Russian energy flirt could evolve into an energy alliance are rather far-fetched in my view. In the event of *Grexit*, it is doubtful that the proposed *Turkish Stream* gas pipeline across the Black Sea will be routed through Greece. In particular Russia would be seeking more reliable partners and more sustainable transportation routes. In short, using energy as a political tool to blackmail eurozone countries is not an option worth testing in practice.

IX.

In terms of political economy, my two biggest concerns for the region is that stagnation in the Euro area continues to pull neighboring countries in SEE down with it.

Hardest hit are countries in the region that have strong trade ties and financial sector linkages/interdependency with Greece and Cyprus. Turkey on its own cannot do the heavy lifting in terms of follow-up investment and spear heading bilateral trade relations. Equally, the economies in SEE risk being caught between an imploding Russia and a stagnating Europe. The dependency of the Russian economy on energy exports as its core budgetary revenue strikes a precarious balance.

Every candidate country engaged in or preparing for accession negotiations with the E.C. has to develop a strategy on how it plans to maneuver between Brussels and Russia in the near future. This implies that the Commission in Brussels will scrutinize every trade agreement, energy contracts and loan agreements with Russia as well as sensitive infrastructure investments.

- Most importantly, Brussels is constantly demanding from the negotiating teams in Serbia and Podgorica to adhere to the existing sanctions regime against Russia, e.g. concerning refraining from exploiting the Russian ban on EU agricultural producers/exporters.
- This compliance requirement also applies to existing EU members as the infringement proceedings against Bulgaria and *Gazprom* illustrates. DG COMP (Internal Market and Services Directorate) is currently investigating how public procurement contracts were awarded to Russian and Bulgarian energy companies.
- One indirect consequence of this investigation was the decision by *OAO Gazprom* to halt work on the *South Stream* pipeline project in December 2014.

X.

Let me conclude with a rather sobering question. It follows from these observations to ask if we have to revisit the underlying assumptions of the economic reform narrative in the region? Put otherwise, is there a need for an entirely different economic agenda or growth paradigm? The following issues require deeper elaboration for the region:

- Is the ability of crisis-hit countries in SEE to make an economic recovery constrained by the emerging deficits and contradictions in the conceptual assumptions of the reform programs mandated by international (lending) institutions?
- Are the lessons learned from the current economic crisis such that they require a root-and-branch re-evaluation of the economic (growth) agenda that countries decide to formulate and implement?
- To what degree is the definition and ownership of the reform process by domestic stakeholders critical in successfully executing a multi-decade transition process?
- What defines economic success today in the region's economies? European officials have been hyping the recovery in some countries of the Western Balkans. While these economies are finally starting to grow again they are hardly creating new jobs.
- But success Western Balkans style means unemployment rates in double digits and real income per capita that is still below pre-crisis levels of 2008/09.
- Are countries in the Balkans stuck in
 - Transition (EBRD);
 - An austerity trap?
 - In a development trap? Low share of exports to GDP.
 - In a reform trap?
 - In a political trap (Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo)?

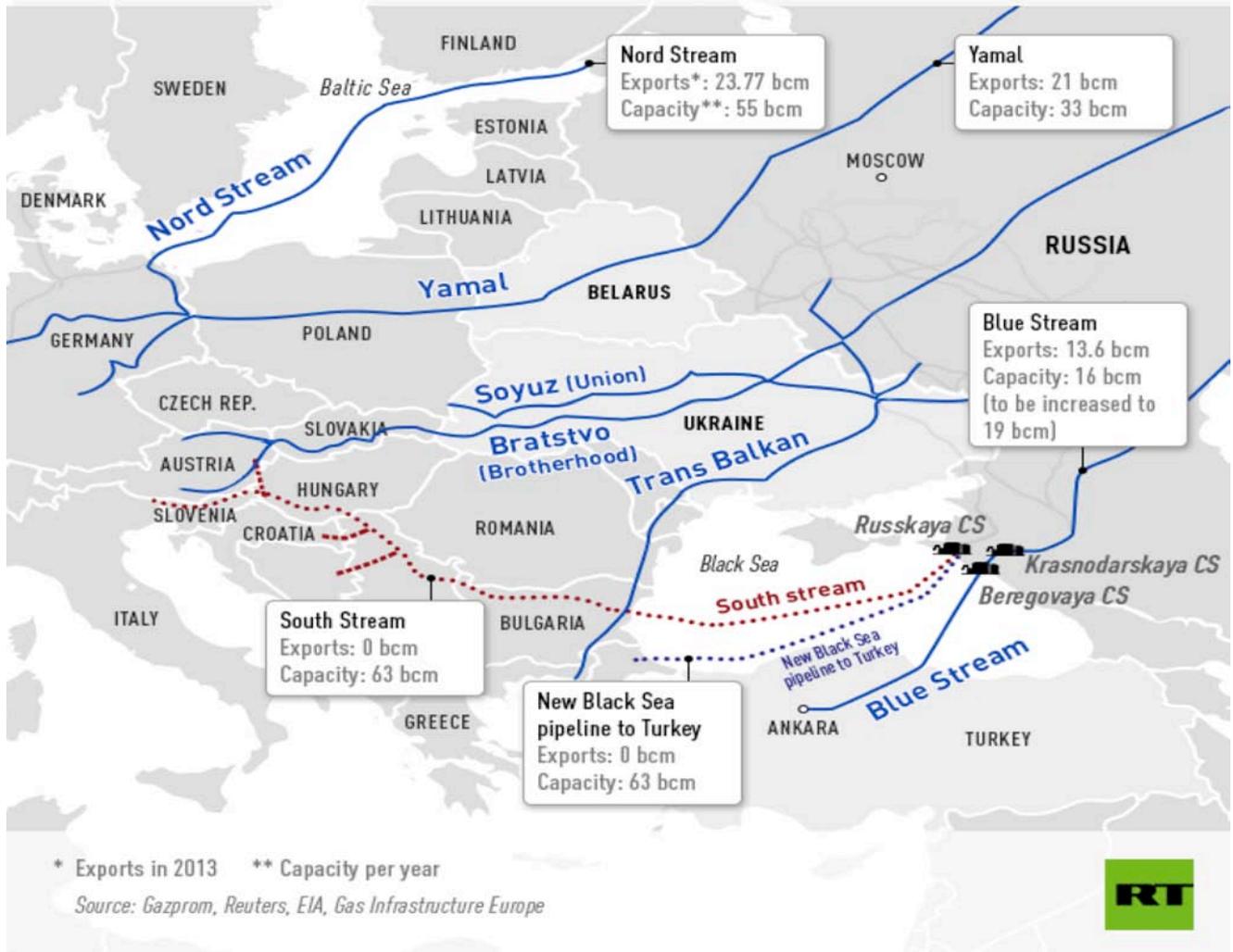
The major economic difference between CEE and SEE:

- CEE economies have succeeded in re-industrialization in specific sectors (e.g. cap manufacturing, logistics, supply chain management).
- FDI arriving in SEE is mainly concentrated in services, banking, telecoms and the retail sector.
- It is currently doubtful if regional economic [energy] cooperation – important in its own right – can bridge the economic gap opening up between and within these regions.

Appendix

Turkey's 'South Stream' and Russian gas

Russia has decided to redirect its 63 billion cubic meter (bcm) pipeline to deliver gas to southern Europe. Instead of constructing the first overland section through Bulgaria, a member of the European Union, the pipeline will instead go through Turkey and onto Greece.



THE ENERGY SECURITY CHALLENGES OF THE WESTERN BALKANS: TAP VS. TURKISH STREAM

Professor Dr. Blerim Reka
Pro-Rector for International Relations
South East European University
Skopje

Introduction: delayed post-communist and post-conflict transition

The European reform of the Balkans is still unfinished. Although geographically located in Europe, geopolitically the region remains the most fragile point of European stability. Twenty-five years after the end of communism and twenty years after the Balkan wars, the countries from this region are still continuing three unconcluded transition processes: from communism to post-communism; from war to peace; and from state to market economies.¹ These states share at least five common features. All have an identical strategic orientation towards EU integration, but share a history of mutual conflict. All countries have a multi-ethnic composition, but weak governance and undeveloped economies.²

This November, the Dayton Peace Agreement for Bosnia and Herzegovina marks its 20th anniversary. This first peace agreement after the Balkan wars was followed by the next four peace agreements: “The Rambouillet” (1999), “The Kumanovo”, (1999); “The Konchul”, (2000); and “The Ohrid Framework Agreement”, (2001). All these peace treaties were reached through international mediation and their biggest achievement was putting an end to the wars in the region. The wars ended, but not the sources of these wars. Peace-building was not followed by democratic and functional state building. European Commission (EC) progress reports continued to express concerns about the lack of progress on: rule of law, fight against corruption and organized crime, independent judiciary, human rights, and free media. The countries of the Western Balkans are far from “threatened states” according to the “Global Peace Index”³, but each country is still affected by internal and external political problems.

Aiming to stabilize the region, the European Union inaugurated the “Process of Stabilization and Association” for the Western Balkans 15 years ago. Through the Stabilization and Association Agreements (SAA), Brussels tried to put conditions on the integration of Balkan states after their stabilization. Even the naming of the region had changed, from “South Eastern Europe” to “Western Balkans”. However, the re-naming failed to bring about the European transformation of the region. Until today, only one of the components of the EU’s strategy has been implemented: stabilization. But

¹ Blerim Reka: “The Geopolitics and the Techniques of EU Enlargement”, Aspect Brussels, 2010.

² With only 0.6% of the GDP of the EU, with unemployment reaching 35-40% and the lowest flow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), the Balkans remains one of the poorest parts of the European continent. During 2009-2013, only 21.8 billion USD were invested by foreign investors in the whole region according to the World Bank; See more: www.nova.mk (04.05.2015, 10:31).

³ They are ranked between 50-55, among 162 countries in the world in 2015; see more: 2015 Annual Report of “Global Peace Index”.

not the second one: association. Only one state: Croatia became EU member (in 2013, after eight years of negotiations). Other Balkan states remained with various statuses vis-a-vis Brussels. Montenegro began membership negotiations in 2013. Macedonia has been waiting ten years for the beginning of these negotiations, Serbia three, and Albania two. Bosnia and Herzegovina has no candidate status yet, and Kosovo is still waiting to sign the SAA, remaining the only country without a visa free regime with the EU.

After 15 years, the integration of the Balkans into the EU was almost forgotten. Although in the last decade (2005-2015), Brussels defended itself with “enlargement fatigue”, the EU is also fatigued: institutionally, and financially, without time to deal with the integration of the region. By the end of the last year, the President of the EC, Jean-Claude Juncker announced another 5 year pause of enlargement – till 2020. EC Commissioner Johannes Hahn reconfirmed the same on May 1, 2015 saying: “no future EU enlargement in the Balkans will happen during this term” because: “the situation in the former Yugoslavia and in other Balkan countries is fragile.” Similar views are evident in EU member states. France is without interest for enlargement. Great Britain has no interest in the EU. Only Germany last year activated a ‘wake-up call’ towards Brussels and the Balkans in order to restart this process.

This economically undeveloped, energy insecure and unintegrated region could pose a security risk for the whole of Europe in the future. The Western Balkans is not just a region of geopolitical battles where old and new Cold War spheres of influence are clashing. Gas pipeline could drive new Balkans geopolitics too. For the Balkans, gas or oil has not only economic and ecological consequences. It challenges also its energy security and its geopolitical position. Two main energy corridors would configure the geopolitical future of the Balkans. One is: “Turkish Stream” (a Russian gas pipeline from Turkey to Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, and Hungary to the EU market); and the other one is the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) (Azerbaijan gas pipeline from Turkey to Greece, Albania, and Italy, thus reaching the EU market).

Energy in the Western Balkans has its geopolitical dimension. By increasing the energy security of the region, European security will be improved, too.

1. Germany’s wake up for Brussels and the Balkans

German Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel understood that the *status quo* of EU enlargement in the Western Balkans could no longer continue. Concrete, serious and convincing action should be undertaken to revive the process. On August 28, 2014, her new initiative brought back to the European agenda the almost forgotten Balkans. The first annual meeting in Berlin last August was followed by one in Vienna this August as regular annual

support conferences for the countries of the region towards their European integration. Following the political nature of the Berlin summit last year, this year’s Vienna summit concentrated on concrete regional energy and infrastructural projects.

The Berlin initiative for the Western Balkans came at a crucial time: a decade after the EU’s greatest enlargement (2004/2007) and a decade of *status quo* in the integration of the Western Balkans. Germany is assuming leadership to push forward the whole process. Chancellor Merkel understood that the promises of the Thessaloniki Agenda (2003) for a “European Perspective” of the Western Balkans would not suffice, unless followed by concrete and credible political actions of the European leadership. This *status quo* approach towards the region was a boomerang for the EU: in Germany, 40% of all asylum seekers came from the Western Balkans⁴.

The region becomes important after recent dramatic developments east and south of the borders of the EU. However, Merkel’s initiative does not mean that enlargement is granted. Neither the criteria will loosen up or will be withdrawn altogether. Her message must be understood as a wake-up call to the EU’s forgetfulness of the region, wherein a century ago, the First World War had erupted and wars in former Yugoslavia had ended only two decades ago. This initiative was precisely what was missing for quite some time: a serious political commitment of the European leadership. In a very crucial time when European stability is threatened by three main challenges: ISIS, the war in eastern Ukraine, and Greece state bankruptcy. Keeping the Balkans in a strategic limbo could open the door other players outside of the EU.⁵

2. “Unfinished Business” in the divided Balkans between new Cold War lines

Since last year, the US has reminded Europeans of their “unfinished business in the Western Balkans” and this

⁴ According to German Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere: “Der Spiegel”, (17 July 2015); According to the Director of BAMF (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) Manfred Schmidt, till August 01, 2015, 94,000 asylum applications from the countries of the Western Balkans were registered in Germany. Germany is facing a massive wave of immigrants and several changes of the law are expected in September 2015 from stopping new immigrants from the region and introducing working papers; to 5 years stop of entering in Germany for those who received negative decision for asylum (According to DW, 08.08.2015; see also: “Shqip”, 09.08.2015, p.5).

⁵ Although Balkans countries have individuals who are fighting for ISIS or for pro-Russian separatist in eastern Ukraine, their governments condemn involvement of their citizens in these wars. On February 24 in Tirana, South East European Cooperation Process (SEEC) issued a “Joint Statement against Terrorism”, and again in Tirana on May 19, 2015 a Strategic Forum against radicals and extremist gathered key Balkans countries as well as U.S. and UE officials. As regards EU sanctions against Russia after the annexation of Crimea, almost all Balkans countries, except Serbia and Macedonia, joined them.

year, through Secretary of State John Kerry, that the Balkans is in the “first firing line”.

Since the escalation of the Ukraine crisis, the ‘Cold War’ fever has affected the Balkans too. East-West division has returned in the region, aligning closely to the division of the sphere of influence of 25 years ago. Three main factors influenced this geopolitical change: world financial crisis (2008); European gas crisis (2009-2010); and Eastern European security crisis (2008-2014).

Since the first post-Cold War involvement of the Russian army (in Georgia, 2008) followed by the annexation of Crimea (2014) and the continued support for separatists in the war in east Ukraine, (2014-15), there are fears that the eastern crisis of 2014 could be spread towards the Balkans.

On November 17, 2014, German Chancellor Merkel, warned about an increasing Russian influence in the Balkans, in particular after Lavrov’s statement against NATO membership of the Balkan countries. During her last visit to Budapest early this year, German Chancellor Merkel criticized the “un-liberal democracy” of Hungary, described as a copy-paste model imported from Russia. Hungary last year signed a 12.5 billion Euro contract with Russia for recovering old nuclear equipment from the Soviet period. On February 01, thousands of citizens in Budapest protested against Hungary’s pro-Russia policy. Hungary remains the key gas gate for the EU market for the Russian gas pipeline “Turkish Stream”, and Turkey its starting point, after the Ankara agreement between Putin and Erdogan on December 01 last year. But by the end of July 2015, the Russian-Turkish negotiations were suspended.⁶ If Turkey cancels its participation in the new Russian gas pipeline, the whole project will be questionable, as happened last year with “South Stream”.

3. Russia-West energy clash in the Western Balkans

The Western Balkans is not just a region of geopolitical clashes. An energy clash could become decisive for the new Balkan geopolitics in the second decade of this century. No: Fukuyama’s “the end of history”; neither Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” could explain the foreign challenges of the region. A gas pipeline would drive the new Balkans geopolitics. The gas has not only economic and ecological consequences for the region. It challenges also its energy security.

After the end of the gas project “Nabucco”⁷, a new gas pipeline TANAP was launched by “The Joint EU-

Azerbaijan Declaration on the Southern Gas Corridor”, (in Baku in 2011)⁸. The crucial part of this corridor is TAP (Trans Adriatic Pipeline)⁹. Of the Balkans countries, Albania constitutes the key transit gas route towards the EU market. The important geopolitical position of Tirana will attract neighboring countries to be linked in TAP. The possibility of Macedonia to be linked with a branch from TAP was discussed this year by the Ministers of Economy of Albania and Macedonia¹⁰. Macedonia participated too in a ceremony in Kars (Turkey) of launching construction of TANAP.¹¹ In parallel, Macedonia is keeping its links with the Russian gas pipeline “Turkish Stream”, participating in its consortium meeting together with Russia, Hungary, Turkey, Serbia, and Greece, (Budapest, 7 April 2015).

Greece could play an energy game too: keeping its promises towards Russia to be transit for Russian gas as a part of “Turkish Stream”; but also staying a transit for Azerbaijan gas within TAP.¹² In June 2015, U.S. Secretary for Energy tried to convince Greece to sign TAP instead of Turkish Stream. But a few days later in St. Petersburg, the ministers of energy of Russia (Aleksandar Novak) and of Greece (Panajotis Lafazanis) signed on June 19, 2015 the memorandum for construction of Turkish Stream in Greek territory.¹³

So Greece and Albania would increase their geopolitical position through its energy transit status. Apart from this Russia-Greece energy agreement on “Turkish

⁸ By which project a 3.500 km gas pipeline TANAP will provide Turkey with the gas from Shah Deniz in the Caspian Sea (Azerbaijan) through Georgia to Turkey and through Turkey through TAP to the EU market. This gas pipeline will be connected with Greece, Albania, and Italy to the EU as a part of TAP. Around 25% of the construction for this southern gas corridor is completed and the first gas to Europe will be delivered between 2018-2020. The total costs of the project are estimated around 55 billion USD.

⁹ On July 03, 2015, the construction work for TAP started in Albania in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Azerbaijan gas company SOCAR signed in December 2014. The first funds of 1.1 million Euros for this project was approved by the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF). Through TAP, Albania will become the key stream of the southern energy corridor, having in mind that 209 km of this pipeline (870 km) would pass through its territory. It will start from the Turkish-Greek border, continue to Albania and through the Adriatic Sea into Italy to the EU market. Construction works in Albania started and are expected to be finalized by 2018, and the Albanian economy will receive 1.1 billion Euros investment. Based on the analysis of Oxford University, “in the next three years the Albanian GDP will be increased by 160 million Euros per year”. (See: “Mapo”, “Panorama” (03.07-22.07.2015); see also: Ditmir Bushati: “Nyja Energji- Siguri në Evropën Juglindore”, (“Shqip”, 02.08.2015, p. 9).

¹⁰ Tirana, 9 February 2015

¹¹ 17 March 2015

¹² Greece will try to maximize financially its geopolitical position and it is expected to ask for more money for transit fees. Especially because 478 km of TAP will go through Greek territory.

¹³ “Greece, Russia: Leaders Sign Agreement on Turkish Stream”, (TASS, 19 June 2015). According to this agreement, a project of 2 billion Euros will be funded by Russia’s VEB bank and by a Greek company. It is expected that construction work will start in 2016 and finished in 2019.

⁶ “Russia, Turkey: Turkish Stream Negotiations Suspended”, (Haberturk; Trend; Reuters; 31 July 2015, 08:17 GMT).

⁷ A gas pipeline supported by the west in order to prevent Russian gas pipeline in the EU market.

Stream”, the Albanian-Greece energy partnership within TAP could be challenged by their un-resolved bilateral territorial disputes over the Ionian Sea.¹⁴ In the beginning of July this year, two Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Ditmir Bushati (Albania) and Nikos Kotzias (Greece) in Tirana attempted to overcome this bilateral problem.

Besides TAP, another alternative for the Balkans countries to release from Russian gas dependence could be U.S. shale gas and the use of LNG through the Croatian base Krk at the Adriatic Sea. After convincing Croatia last year to be oriented towards LNG (instead of using natural gas), the USA is now trying to convince Serbia (dependent on Russian energy)¹⁵ to use LG via Croatia; or Azerbaijan gas through the southern corridor TAP. Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić in the beginning of June 2015 declared the “need for diversification of energy sources”, which means that other alternatives than “Turkish Stream” would be considered too.

It is expected that the EU and the USA would not allow the realization of “Turkish Stream” in the Balkans, as last year they did not allow “South Stream”. In March 2015, the EU declared the energy deal of Hungary and Russia of 12,5 billion Euros illegal and decided against an energy monopoly position in the EU energy market. On July 20, 2015, the EU Council accepted the “Action Plan for Energy Diplomacy”, according to which the diversification of energy sources will be the key EU energy policy in the future. According to this new EU energy strategy, which is in line with the “European Security Strategy” (2014), “a diplomatic support will be given for southern gas corridor”.

4. Interdependence of Energy and Route Corridors in the Balkans

Balkans countries are not disputing only about energy, but also about the primacy over route corridors. Energy and route corridors are linked and interdependent too. Together with energy lines, the route lines in the region will gain importance. The region remains at the crossroads between Europe and Asia, Central Europe and Africa, and between Middle East and Far East. Of ten pan-European corridors, six go through the Balkans. In particular two of them, 8 and 10, are of the key geostrategic importance as main transitional axes to the Mediterranean Sea.¹⁶

These route corridors are linked with railway and energy corridors, too. Pan-European corridors affect not only EU geostrategic interests, but also the national interests of the Balkan countries. They will influence energy corridors, too. Each country is trying to prove that “its corridor” is of key importance in order to get finance from Brussels through TEN-T (Trans European Transport Network). Six EU member states¹⁷ and six non-EU countries¹⁸ (two of which are NATO members) are involved in this Balkans corridor “battle”, protecting their own national interests and their economy.

Currently, Hungary, Serbia, and Greece keep a pro-Russian orientation. Macedonia is trying to resist becoming the last chain of that vertical strategic axis between Budapest-Athens. Greece could ignore Italy and Albania, as well as Bulgaria (who are for “corridor 8”) and opt for “corridor 10”. In that case, Italy would lose a ground connection with the Balkans and Turkey as well as Bulgaria, which would be left out from that geostrategic axis. If so, Greece will neglect the historical road “Via Egnatia”, which many centuries ago was in the same direction like today’s “corridor 8”¹⁹, and in a way a link towards the “silk road”.²⁰ In addition, the EBRD is supporting the next route corridor project in the Balkans: “Ionian-Adriatic Highway”, from Albania to Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia. Based on commitments made at the “Berlin Summit”²¹, EU Commissioner Hahn at the Pristina Ministerial Conference “Western Balkans 6”²² promised 130 million Euros for regional infrastructure. During the Vienna Summit²³, the countries from the region were expected to present concrete energy, route, and railway projects.²⁴

проекти на Балканите”, (Геополитика & Геостратегия, София, бр. 4/2015, стр.40; ISSN 1312-4579).

¹⁷ Italy, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece.

¹⁸ Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania, and Turkey.

¹⁹ Connecting the Adriatic Sea and the Middle East through Istanbul started from: today Italy to the Albanian port Durres, continuing to today: Macedonia, Greece, and Turkey.

²⁰ Recently, the “silk road” is becoming again globally important after plans of China to build “Trans-Euro-Asian railway” of 13,000 km, connecting China with Europe (40 billion USD). What is important for the Balkans about this new China railway is that Istanbul will be again be a key crossroad – together with Moscow.

²¹ Berlin, August 28, 2014

²² Prishtina, March 25, 2015

²³ Vienna, August 27, 2015; In the Vienna Summit: EU- Western Balkans (27th August 2015) the following energy, route or rail way projects will be discussed: Bosnanski Shamac-Doboj-Sarajevo-Mostar-Bijaca; (BiH-Croatia); Podujevo-Nis, (Kosovo-Serbia); Durres-Tirana-Elbasan-Struga-Tetovo-Skopje-Deve Bair (Albania-Macedonia-Bulgaria); Batrovci-Beograd-Nis-Skopje-Bogorodica (Croatia-Serbia-Macedonia-Greece); Subotica-Novı Sad-Beograd-Nis-Gradina, (Hungary-Serbia-Bulgaria); Debeli Brijeg-Bar (Montenegro); Podgorica-Durres-Fier-Tepelene-Qafe Bote (Montenegro-Albania-Greece); Gradishka-Banja Luka-Lasva-Travnik, (Croatia-BiH); Beograd-Podgorica-Bar (Serbia-Montenegro); Lezhe-Prishtina-Doljevac-Nis (Albania-Kosovo-Serbia). At least five priority projects are expected to be financed by EU in the Vienna Summit: South-North Corridor (part of Highway Ion-Adriatic) of 865 million E; East-West Corridor (part of Corridor 8) of 400 million E; Railway Bajze-Tirana of 182 million E; Railway Durres-

¹⁴ Greece was marked as “its” oil/gas zone: Yoini: 5; and Albania defended it as part of its territorial integrity. A bilateral agreement between Albania and Greece (signed in April 2008), was declared “unconstitutional” in the same year by the Constitutional Court of Albania, because Albania had to give its territorial waters to Greece. The same position is being kept by the current Government of Albania, which rejected that agreement.

¹⁵ Around 80% of Serbian natural gas demand is covered by Russia.

¹⁶ More about Balkans corridors see: Блерим Пека: “Геополитическите исмерениа на транспортните и енергиини

Even in such a micro area like the Balkans, there is a clash on macro-road corridors, which includes big players like the USA, China, and Russia, and rising regional powers such as Turkey. Three pan-European corridors (4, 8, and 10) also include Turkey – the biggest regional power, key energy transit route, and the second biggest army in NATO.

These two main route corridors are very much linked with two key energy corridors: TAP and “Turkish Stream”. Their interdependence could divide the Balkans into two parts: Adriatic Balkans (Albania, Montenegro, and Macedonia) linked with TAP and Route Corridor 8; and Continental Balkans (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Greece), linked with “Turkish Stream” and route corridor 10.

One of the crucial factors of Balkans political security and its economic stability is energy security. The Western Balkans need a common energy market. Since 1998, in order to avoid these energy and route clashes and attract foreign direct investment for a common regional market, several regional initiatives were launched. The main objective of all these regional initiatives was to overcome mutual and multiple border regimes and six different tax and customs instruments in such divided markets.

One of the first initiatives was “Balkans Area of Free Trade Agreement” (BAFTA, 1998) as an area of free trade in the Balkans.²⁵ Then, after the war in Kosovo “The Stability Pact for SEE” was launched in 1999, and later in 2005: CEFTA. In 2012 in Tirana the “Balkans Benelux/AGREEI” was launched, and finally in 2013 in Podgorica the model of “WB 6+”.²⁶

Lin-Pogradec (connecting Albania-Macedonia-Bulgaria); Railway Durres-Vlora.

²⁴ Expectations are that the highway Prishtina-Skopje will be finalized by 2017; at this time the highway Belgrade-Gevgelija is also expected to be completed; and the railway Durres-Skopje in 2020.

²⁵ This was my project presented for the first time in the international conference: Balkan Forum, Paris, 27.11.1998, and later published in many research journals. Project BAFTA, was presented in my speech: “The Europeanization of the Balkans; or the Balkanization of the Europe” in the round table of the “Balkan Forum” (Paris, 27-30th of November, 1998); Then as a project, BAFTA, was presented in my paper: “New geopolitical realities and the European and regional integration of Kosovo” presented in the conference of RINVEST Institute, (Prishtina, 1-2nd of March, 1999); Then the project was published in the special edition/book of the conference: “The economical-social development of the Albanian Economists, (Tirana, 25-26 November 1999); This project was then presented in some other international conferences, such as: “Kosovo-Ajourdhui” (Paris, 26-28 of June, 2000); in the conference of Foreign & Commonwealth Office: “South East Europe- Joining the European Mainstream”, (London July the 7th, 2000); Finally, the project was further developed and published in a up-dated version in: “Euro-Atlantic Review”, Vol. I, No. 1/2002, pp: 9-12.

²⁶ On September 17, 2013, Montenegrin Foreign Minister Igor Lukšić presented an initiative to form the so-called Western Balkans Six, their Parliamentary Assembly, “and a joint Balkan police.” The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro has submitted the initiative as “a working document.” Lukšić earlier initiated “a new concept of regional cooperation in the Western Balkans” that would

The common idea of all these initiatives is the creation of a common market in the Western Balkans, with formal political borders of the states of this region as parts of a free trade area and a regional market. The EBRD is discussing with the countries of the region the establishment of a regional common market.

Free regional market together with a regional energy market and regional infrastructural projects would increase economic growth, political stability, and the geopolitical importance of the region. In the Western Balkans, energy and security are interdependent. Energy has its geopolitical dimension. By increasing the energy security of the region, European security will be enhanced.

include: Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This project was discussed at the end of September 2013, in New York, as they gathered for the session of the UN General Assembly. The document envisages the establishment of a regional center to fight corruption and organized crime. According to the working paper, members of the “Western Balkans Six” would make efforts to simplify the crossing of national borders within the area comprising their territory to the extent of abolishing passports as a necessary travel document, “while maintaining a high level of border security.” The most important initiatives and projects that would be agreed by prime ministers and foreign ministers would be handled by coordinators selected from among prominent experts in the subject area, the document proposes. In 2013 the initiative has received the support of experts from the cabinet of former Commissioner for Enlargement Stefan Fule.

ACRONYMS USED

AGREEI	Action Group for Regional Economic and European Integration
BAFTA	Balkans Area of Free Trade Agreement
BiEPAG	Balkan in Europe Policy Advisory Group
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BIRN	Balkan Investigative Research Network
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CEFTA	Central European Free Trade Agreement
EBRD	European Bank of Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Commission
ECFR	European Council on Foreign Relations
ECPR	European Consortium for Political Research
ECT	Energy Community Treaty for South East Europe
EFB	European Fund for the Balkans
EIB	European Investment Bank
EU	European Union
EULEX	European Union Rule of Law Mission
Europol	European Union's law enforcement agency
FDI	Foreign direct investment
FENA	Federal News Agency BiH
FES	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
FRONTEX	European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union
FYR	Former Yugoslav Republic
FYROM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
ILO	International Labor Organization
INTERPOL	International Police Organization
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
JHA	Justice and Home Affairs
LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
LSE	London School of Economics
MANS	New Style Management and Labor (Open Mind Management Consulting)
MARRI	Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative
MENA	Middle East & North Africa
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NBG	National Bank of Greece
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
RACVIAC	Centre for Security Cooperation
RAY	Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Youth in Action
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RECOM	Regional Truth and Reconciliation Commission for the former Yugoslavia
SAA	Stabilization and Association Agreement
SAP	Stabilization and Association Process
SEE	Southeastern Europe
SEECF	South-East European Cooperation Process
SEEIC	Investment Committee for South East Europe
SEEPAG	Southeast European Prosecutors Advisory Group
SEETO	Southeast Europe Transport Observatory
SELEC	Southeast European Law Enforcement Center

SEPCA	Southeast Europe Police Chiefs Association
TANAP	The Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline
TAP	Trans Adriatic Pipeline
TEG	Tourism Expert Group
TEN-T	Trans-European Transport Networks
TEPAV	The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey
TI	Transparency International
UK	United Kingdom
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
US	United States of America
WB	Western Balkans
WB6	Western Balkan Six
WIIW	The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies

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. Aspen Germany does this by convening decision-makers and experts from politics, business, academia, media, culture, and civil society in three programs, the Leadership Program, Policy Program and Public Program.

The Aspen Institute is an international non-profit organization that fosters enlightened leadership, the appreciation of timeless ideas and values, and open minded dialog on contemporary issues. The Aspen Institute USA was founded in 1950. The institute and its international partners seek to promote the pursuit of common ground and deeper understanding in a non-partisan and non-ideological setting. Aside from “The Aspen Institute”, there are nine independent Aspen Institutes in France, Italy, Czech Republic, Romania, Spain, Japan, India, Mexico, and Germany.

Leadership Program – The Aspen Seminar

The Aspen Seminar is an exceptional Leadership-Program focused on ‘value-based leadership’. With its 60-year tradition in the U.S., it is the most prestigious trademark of the Aspen Institute and the secret behind its success. It embodies the Aspen philosophy by promoting values-based leadership among decision makers from all over the world through offering them a platform for an open and critical discourse on fundamental philosophical questions of human existence.

In this unique seminar, away from the hectic everyday life, in an inspiring natural environment, executives have the opportunity to critically discuss classical and modern philosophical body of thought. The seminar program consists of sessions organized around six themes: Human Nature, Individual Rights and Liberty, Property and Productivity, Equality and Social Welfare. Excerpts of various classical and modern texts about universal values written by important thinkers shape the foundation for reflection and dialog on the fundamental questions of our present and future: What are the current challenges our society has to meet? How will your organization as well as you yourself have to adjust to these challenges and which humanistic values are relevant in this process?

Policy Program

Aspen Policy Programs openly address current policy challenges. In closed-door conferences and seminars on complex political and social developments, decision makers analyze common challenges in confidence and develop viable solutions. Kickoff presentations by international experts set the ground for focused debates with policy makers in search for an international consensus among politicians, diplomats, and experts from academia, business, and media. In the course of discussions, constructive suggestions and policy recommendations are developed and later on published.

The Aspen Institute Germany has had a focus on the developments in Southeast Europe since the early 1990s. In cooperation with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Aspen’s former Executive Director David Anderson initiated the International Commission on the Balkans in 1995 under the leadership of former Belgian Prime Minister Leo Tindemans, which in 1996 published the report “Unfinished Peace”, an analysis of the causes of the Balkan conflicts and an independent assessment of the European, American, and UN responses. This high-level international commission was followed by a young leaders study group on the future of the Balkans as well as several other events with a focus on this region.

Since 2008, one of the Policy Program’s key focus has again been on the countries of former Yugoslavia and Albania, the so-called Western Balkans. In its closed-door meetings, the Aspen Institute Germany facilitates an open and honest high-level exchange between former conflict parties in support of regional cooperation and dialog and the region’s agenda of Euro-Atlantic integration including the transformation processes this entails. The goal of this exchange is to openly address achievements and progress as well as remaining problems and conflict issues between decision-makers of the region. In pursuit of this goal, the Aspen Institute Germany’s Southeast Europe Program has two different formats, the Aspen Southeast Europe Foreign Ministers’ Conferences and the so-called Sub-cabinet Meetings.

Public Program

The Aspen Institute Germany’s Public Program addresses a broader invited public. It serves as a forum for discourse, where new ideas can be discussed in a fruitful environment of interested and informed individuals. The central theme of the Public Program is values-based leadership, the mission of the Institute. Thus, it is discussed how leaders can deal with the political and economic challenges of our time and how they are currently being dealt with.

The Public Program consists of three different formats. The first one is the Aspen Forum, a series of evening events for a small public of no more than 50 guests. They are invited to listen to the ideas of a guest speaker in a familiar and exclusive interview situation or brief lecture. Some of these events are hosted in cooperation with Deutschlandradio Kultur. While Deutschlandradio Kultur broadcasts the first part of the event, the second part is an intimate off-the-record discussion with our guests only. The second format is the Aspen Brown Bag Lunch series, aiming at constructive dialog on current political, economic and social issues. Two to four experts provide short input statements before the discussion is opened to 20-30 selected guests. Finally, the Public Program includes major events such as the annual summer party, the President’s Night in 2012, or the celebration of 40 Years Aspen Germany in 2014.



REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS
