



NATO Foundation
Defense College

BALKAN NETWORKS AND STABILITY

CONNECTING CO-OPERATIVE
AND HUMAN SECURITY

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Balkan Networks and Stability
Connecting co-operative and human security
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NDCF Conference "Balkan Networks and Stability - Connecting co-operative and human security"





Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Sofia, Bulgaria



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AMBASSADOR ALESSANDRO MINUTO-RIZZO
President NDCF

FOREWORD

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to this international conference on the Balkans. I thank you very much for your interest and I warmly thank the speakers and the chairmen of the sessions, who have accepted our invitation and came here from many countries.

Our Foundation has always considered the Balkans to be a priority. This is the second important conference on the subject and others will follow together with new dedicated projects.

There are very good reasons to be interested in this region. The first and more obvious is geography: the region is so close to us that all capitals are at no more than two hours' flight from Rome. But what is more important is the relevance of the Balkans from a political, economic and social point of view. They are important for our entire continent and beyond. To be honest, there is a feeling that in the last few years this relevance has been overlooked because of the emergence of threats and challenges in other parts of the world.

We believe however that time has come to devote more attention to the region with the purpose to give real support to overcome internal and external challenges. This conference has been organized in order to provide a good analysis of the root causes of the problems and to anticipate concrete lines of action. To have a dedicated yearly Summit is symbolic but is not sufficient.

The Atlantic Alliance has been an active actor and continues to keep an open-door policy; Montenegro is a good case in point and the country is going through the process of accession. Cooperation and interaction with the European Union are of the utmost importance. The two organizations have worked well together in the past and it is imperative that they continue to do so. Integration in the European mainstream should remain the final objective for all the countries of the Balkans.

We have carefully chosen the subjects of the four sessions trying to enlarge the horizon to the crucial issues. The first one addresses the overall political situation

and is chaired by Alessandro Politi, Director of the NATO Defense College Foundation. The second session looks at the external actors who have a stake in the region and is chaired by Ambassador Benoit d'Aboville. On the second day, we will discuss the important issue of illegal networks and criminal trafficking. That panel will be chaired by Sorin Ducaru, Assistant Secretary General of NATO for Emerging Challenges. Zoran Jolewsky, Minister of Defense (of FYROM) in Skopje will chair the last one concerning the overall path towards integration.

The final remarks will be made by the Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the Italian Government Vincenzo Amendola, who is responsible for the Balkan area.

I will end by saying that the NATO Defense College Foundation has the ambition to develop a deep strategic analysis on outstanding issues coming out from the political reality. Issues that are of special interest to the Euro-Atlantic community. In doing so, we draw from a large network of countries and an extended international expertise starting with the NATO Defense College itself. I think that, more than ever, we are in demand for a clever analysis of facts and an intelligent interpretation of strategic trends. In scientific freedom and respect for different opinions.



FRANTIŠEK MIČÁNEK
Dean, NATO Defense College, Rome

WELCOME REMARKS

I must say it's always a challenge to be the second speaker because what I have on my list here it has been almost completed by Ambassador Minuto-Rizzo. So, I will try to explain why the NATO Defense College see the Balkans as very important region.

Normally, we discuss very well-known threats using the 360° degrees' approach of NATO: we start from the east with Russia and its assertive approach to European security, then we go to the south and mostly we are concerned with radical extremism and uncontrolled migration; when we go north, (and that's the topic put again together with the high north), we shouldn't forget internal frictions we have inside, not only NATO, but also European Union and other organizations.

You have noticed, for example, as the growing nationalism is pushing national interests toward a not good co-operation and to a diminishing cohesion, in some areas. That's the issue we should be aware of, because when we speak about these threats we focus on the Balkans in a daily-life projection. We see, for example, the roads for migrants who find in the region the gateway to Europe; we see how Russia pushes its interests to some national policies' countries. I think we are totally right when we connect some organizations, active in the Balkans, with extremism and, more specifically, with the Islamic State. That's the way how we should see an approach to the Balkan in whole.

That's why my institution, the NATO Defense College, was so pleased to support this initiative together with our "sister organization", the NATO Defense College Foundation, with the Central European Initiative and with the Balkan Trust for Democracy.

We are really pleased that the title of the conference is "*Co-operative and human security*" because we see clear connection: on the one hand, co-operative security is a core task for NATO which was set as a strategic concept in 2010; on the other hand, human security is a cross cutting phenomenon, addressing everything from economic prosperity, technology, environment issue and social justice (just

to report some examples). So, anything we do as NATO must be part of what we called “comprehensive approach”, and you know that NATO it’s not, today, the best suited organization for comprehensive approach because we master the military, we master kind the diplomacy and political issue and the rest is dedicated to European Union, to International Organization, or to Non-Governmental Organization.

Today, the NATO Defense College is properly represented by the Head of Research Division, as well as the Head of the Middle East Faculty, so we can see connection between research, outreach, partnership all over the Balkan area.

Ladies and Gentlemen, to cut the long story short, let me wish you a great and successful conference, with many positive and minds’ stimulating reports and presentation; and for those who are not Italian, let me wish to enjoy your stay in Rome.



VALERIO CARTOCCI
NDCF Analyst

BACKGROUND PAPER

The Balkan region, broadly considered, is a key element for the stability of the entire continent and beyond. Reality seems to be contradictory; several economic, cultural and political factors determine a context of cooperation but often also of coldness. The legacy of a 25 years' period of deep transformations and changes has seen various phases and is not easy to explain. The present situation looks fragile after the economic crisis, a refugee shock, a loss of international visibility accompanied by the emergence of other priorities.

The end of the cold war entailed a complete revolution of the balances in the region. The transition from a centralized political system to a democratic and pluralistic environment happened incredibly quickly leaving inevitably several issues unresolved. Issues of borders, nationalities, alliances, and interaction with international institutions have influenced the relationship among countries and their position towards external actors.

On the one hand, many in the region invested their resources in the transition towards a democratic and liberal system. This complex and often chaotic process caused several problems and unbalances to be dealt with, but marked an overall positive advance.

During this process the region seemed to have an unambiguous point of reference in what was called the western world, starting with the "open door" policy of the Atlantic Alliance and the European integration process.

On the other hand, it is not to be forgotten that a relevant part of the Balkans had remained involved in catastrophic conflicts involving parts of former Yugoslavia.

Today we seem to be in a situation not yet stabilized and ambiguities remain: a fragile statehood in some cases, the presence of minorities, the difficult control of the borders, the presence of organized crime organizations, and lately the danger of a terrorist presence are all threats to the stability of the region.

The recent phenomenon of the Balkan route of migrants that crossed various

countries has put at risk already fragile regional balances both at the internal and at the international level. The illegal border crossing on the Western Balkans route rose from 3.090 persons in 2009 to 764.038 in 2015 and 122.779 in 2016 (FRON-TEX data).

While the numbers are undoubtedly very impressive, the reaction by the countries involved highlighted a lack of collaboration and solidarity ; each one managing the crisis independently and often following national interests.

Together with the migration crisis, the unsolved problems related to regional fragmentation and uncompleted reforms remain there. With a combination of traditional weaknesses and new threats, like the diffusion of criminal networks dealing with illegal trafficking and smuggling of persons, drugs, and weapons.

A determined and coordinated effort is therefore required in order to defeat permanently this state of affairs.

A new threat jeopardizing the security of the region is the possible diffusion of jihadist radicalism. In the last months, a growing number of foreign fighters was identified, especially in Bosnia - Herzegovina and Kosovo. The fight against the potential spread of terrorism in the Balkans is a demanding challenge for the region that must be supported from the international community , friendly institutions and concerned governments.

In order to face this kind of complexity, a regional network is essential, above all to increase democratic resilience and regional coordination. The interaction with international institutions like UN, NATO, EU and OSCE is fundamental.

The EU has regularly updated negotiations with Serbia, Bosnia - Herzegovina, Kosovo, FYROM, Montenegro in view of an increased integration and future membership. At the same time, NATO countries are completing the ratification process for the access of Montenegro, while continuing talks with Bosnia- Herzegovina and FYROM (where the name issue remains unsolved)

The objective of integration into the European mainstream and the Atlantic Alliance must be pursued and carried on at every level and we must be supportive of this effort.

This why the NATO Defense College Foundation has a special focus on the Balkans: because we strongly believe in this cause and we think that a good reading of facts and a clever analysis of causes can be a valid support in finding the good solutions.

Session 1

BALKAN POLITICS ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE



Traditional handcrafted copper coffee pots in souvenir shops in Sarajevo





YANNIS ALEXIS ZEPOS

HOW ARE THE DIFFERENT COUNTRIES LIKELY TO EVOLVE INTERNALLY IN THE REGION?

The Balkans correspond to a region but is also to a concept, a pejorative concept which has given birth to other negative definitions, such as “*Balkanization*”. This pejorative perception is a challenge to Europe and “*Europeanness*”, as it goes against all those ideals and principles embedded in the European project which is inherently anti-nationalist and progressive.

The countries of Western Balkans are facing several serious challenges. Most of these challenges require a strong commitment from their leaders, also against persistent stereotypes and ancient hatred which are latent and often not combatable. For example, national institutions, including the judiciary, are often highly politicized; democratic parties regularly face challenges such as boycott by parliamentary opposition. In addition, the process of state and institutions building, reform and integration, are incomplete, and often have to be conducted in parallel with sensitive interethnic relations, fighting organized crime and corruption, working to increase judicial independence, encourage media freedom and reforming public administration.

Moreover, legacies of the conflicts in the 1990s entails issues that still affect some bilateral relations concerning borders, war crimes, prosecution and missing and displaced persons. Further efforts are also needed to ensure good neighbourly relations.

The Western Balkans had to cope with the large populations’ flaws of the recent refugees and migration crises. Also, in common with the rest of Europe, the countries of the Western Balkans must address the threat of growing extremism, radicalization and returning foreign fighters.

1. Bosnia and Herzegovina:

Implementing state level decisions at the entity level remains a challenge for the country. All levels of government in the country face long and demanding programme of reforms required by the continued progress on the path to the EU

membership, and an independent judiciary remains a cornerstone of this reforms. The implementation of these much-needed reforms will require all of the available political commitment, good will and unity of purpose.

2. Serbia

Serbia is making considerable contribution to UN and EU operations deploying arm forces on multinational operations that are based on resolutions of the UN Security Council. The popular perception of Euro-Atlantic institutions in Serbia is still overwhelmingly negative. At the same time, Russia is making efforts to increase its influence in Serbia, using political messages and media tools and through economical and “emotional” ties. The continuation of the process of implementing the agreements, reached within the EU facilitated dialogue, for the normalization of the relations between Belgrade and Pristina is important.

3. Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)

FYROM should ensure good neighbourly relations with other countries of the region. It should also continue making efforts to build a truly functioning multi-ethnic society. Moreover, the country had been taken further away from core transatlantic values such as rule of law, media freedom, judicial independence and democratic dialogue.

4. Kosovo

The political situation remains fragile. The country is facing a challenging socio-economic and demographic situation that has produced protests and motivates people to leave Kosovo because of economic reasons. Social unrest remains a significant factor together with the development of extremism and radicalization. The phenomenon of foreign fighters remains a potential security concern. Following the decision by President Thaçi to transform Kosovo Security Force into a regular army with heavy weaponry, NATO has warned the country about potential consequences that could scale back its cooperation with the security services.

All in all, continued and additional actions are needed to encourage the long-term development of conditions for security and stability in the Western Balkans. Further work is needed to ensure that the whole region continues to develop in terms of security, stability and cooperation, with no parts of Western Balkans left behind.

European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the countries of the region advances democratic values’ reforms, ensure the respect of the rule of law and provides a path to stability and strengthening collective security.

However, in the case of Western Balkans, integration is seen by many as an introduction to Europe rather than as a return to EU.



IVAN VEJVODA

STATES WITH LESS CONSOLIDATED STATEHOOD IN THE AREA

Let me start up by saying that we all had the illusion that the “transition to democracy” after 1989 was going to be faster and deeper than it transpires to be. There is no need to read Alexis de Tocqueville’s several works on the *Ancien Regime et la Revolution* to know that the old regime lives for a very long time within the new regime; thus, the birth of institutions, the consolidation of democracy, the rule of law and the values that lead to a society where freedom of speech and association and human rights are enshrined, namely the checks and balances, takes much longer than one would like to. Our citizens would have liked this transition to be much faster, but we see that the winds of the past are sometimes stronger.

This is happening in a very difficult global economic situation characterized by weak growth, at least since 2008, where the rate of unemployment, of youth in particular, is so high and where we are confronted with the double challenge, both of the brain-drain of our future young experts, - who are leaving looking for a better lives and professions outside of the area - and a very dramatic demographic decline in most of our countries.

It is within this situation that are elected leaders who are trying to keep themselves accountable and responsible once elected but they are confronted with the multiple challenges with which Europe itself is being buffeted; those internal of populists from left and right who want to contest the society we are living in, and from the outside, namely Russia.

As you may recall, the Russian Foreign Minister, at the Munich Security Conference just two months ago in February, pleaded for a “post-western world”. I don’t think he could have been clearer than that. So, for us I believe, if we share the values of democracy, then it is about the defense of the liberal democratic order in Europe, in the US, but also in this region that could contribute in resisting the “sirens call” of a social conservatism or of a regression to something that is moronically called “illiberal democracy”.

The Global Strategy of the European Union that has recently appeared, pre-

sented by High Representative of the EU Federica Mogherini, has a key concept: *resilience*. This is not an innovative concept. It comes from metallurgy and talks about metals that can be bent so as not to break. We have had resilience in the Balkans historically being buffeted by imperial forces throughout our history; our societies have bent so as not to break and our cultures, religions and languages have survived. Thus, I think we have a depth of that particular human force, apart from human security. This is not anything one should only be proud of, but it helps in times of difficulties. At the same time, the European Union is looking to implement the global strategy. Now, it is a question how does one make resilience both internal and external within our societies, how do we strengthen that, but also, externally, how do we make our states resilient to the challenges coming from the outside.

There is a lot of talk these days that these countries are more “*stabilocracies*” rather than democracies. A few years ago, the Financial Times reported: “we are living in financial times”. These days we are living in geopolitical times. So, it behooves the countries and societies themselves to work more on their democracy as the external supporters, the EU and the US, are more interested in stability in the region and turn a blind eye to some of the issues mentioned such as the media freedom or to the fact that the judiciaries are not up to speed in the dynamic of their reform processes.

It is in the interest of the European Union that this region remains stable and able to resist the penetration of Russian hybrid war and other techniques through the various media outlets such as *Sputnik* and *RT*; through the financing of parties that are close to them and usually send their representatives to Crimea. I would say that these forces are still a minority within our countries: if you look at the last Serbian parliamentary election this year they amount to about 13% of the votes, whereas the rest of the members of parliament are turned toward a pro-European course.

In the case of NATO there is opposition in Serbia to join it, but in terms of European integration, there is still strong support. What I mean for strong support is not a North Korean type, of 99%. I am talking about a support around 43-44%. I call it a very healthy support. The Under-Secretary of State at Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy, Vincenzo Amendola, reported this percentage to be in line with the European support standards. At least, there are some convergences in public opinion polls. I say it is healthy because people do follow everything that is going on in the EU: they know the troubles and in terms of the country of the former Yugoslavia, that are seven today, since the late 1960s, through the *Gastarbeiter*¹ phenomenon, there have been contacts throughout the 1970s, 80s and 90s and

1 The term is German for “*guest worker*”. It refers to foreign or migrant workers, particularly those who had moved to West Germany (BRD) mainly in the 1950s, 60s and early 70s, seeking work as part of a formal guest worker programme

everyone had family members in France, in Sweden, in Germany, in Austria. So people are fully aware and they still want to join and I submit to you that if we had a referendum, on Sunday we would have a majority of people that would vote to join the European Union.

Why? Because people know there is a little more security, a little more certainty and a little more prosperity within the European Union than outside of it.

Nobody neglects or disregards the challenges at hand, nobody is diminishing the kind of problems the European Union is confronting itself, and yet people know that it is better to be member of the club that still has half a billion people than to stay alone in a country of 7 million people..

There is loose talk about this region being the periphery of Europe. No! It's not the periphery, it's the inner courtyard. We in this region are surrounded by European Union and NATO members, and I would add also that during the migration and refugee crises of a couple of years ago, these countries were *de facto* members of the European Union because they were constantly at the decision-making table collaborating with the key countries, such as Germany and others, in resolving what was called "the Balkan route". Without them there would not have been a solution, and when you talk to the leaders of the region, they were in constant contact with Brussels and with the key capitals. By many first hand accounts there was clear and constant collaboration among all these countries along the route, demonstrating the kind of European responsible behaviour that is expected and desired from countries who wish to join the Union.

It is important to add that there is lot more regional cooperation than meets the eye in the press. Regional cooperation is the good news. There is much more cooperation between the youth, between cultural institutions, let's not talk about sport; people are going backward and forward. People of negotiating teams to join the European Union are constantly talking to each other: people from Serbia calling up their colleagues in Zagreb asking: "how did you solve this particular issue on this chapter?"; or calling up their colleagues in Montenegro.

Finally, civil society is a key component in terms of resilience and checks and balances. I would like to say that we see this civic energy and I will take the example of Belgrade where there was a massive protest on the issue of *Savamala*², when some buildings had been illegally destroyed. People, citizens, civil society simply decided to take a stand on what were egregious violations of law.

All in all, again, the burden of change of democratic transformation, of enshrining the rule of law is with the countries themselves they need to double down on democratic reform, which in turn makes them eligible for EU membership.

But they also need support and help and that is the principle of solidarity, and

2 *Savamala* is an urban neighbourhood of Belgrade, the capital of Serbia. It is located in Belgrade's municipalities of Savski Venac and Stari Grad. In April 2016 a controversy started about buildings that were suddenly demolished over night in Savamala. It is believed that this happened in order to make space for an Arabian-financed project on the Belgrade Waterfront.

that's why the European Union exists. If the commitment that was heard from the last council of the European Union, in March, that reiterates that the Thessaloniki Promise of 2003³ is kept and that it has not been abandoned at any moment in the 16 years, despite what is called *enlargement fatigue*, then I think we are on track. Yes, much longer than we all expected but there is nothing easy in life and nothing was given ever on a silver plate in terms of democracy. This was always fought by the citizens themselves and it is part of the learning process of democracies in this region.

³ At the Thessaloniki summit in 2003, the European Council declared that "the future of the Balkans is within the European Union."



ANGELINA EICHHORST

THE BALKANS NEED A SYSTEMIC VISION BY EUROPE

Today, I will go deep in how we concur from Brussels on the Balkans. There are, indeed, new elements coming up over these 20 years of EU support for the region, basically because the world has changed.

I was meant to be talking to you about the systemic vision of the European Union for the region, but you know this vision; you know *Thessaloniki*¹; you know the enlargement policies. Enlargement has been there since 1958. It is the best foreign policy success we have had in the EU and it will continue to be.

Despite the fact is real known, President Junker said at the beginning of this Commission: “no more enlargement.” That was technically correct, because none of the Western Balkans six were and are today ready to join us tomorrow, but politically it had a mature impact and it has been discussed during lot of forums where we constantly listed all the elements we would like to see in the Western Balkans.

We know we have to fight corruption, we have to go for transparency, accountability, justice, we have to fight impunity, we have to make sure politically, socially and economically everything is fine, no multi-inter-ethnic conflict any longer. We know that. We have all the tools at hand; we have all the money available, we already spent 20/30 billion of euros in the region over the past ten years. Of course, people want to know where has the money gone and where are the benefits for the citizens, and this is where we are focusing on now. Very much goes to the Western Balkans and our neighbourhood. That is today the point: unemployment was mentioned – I was in Sarajevo yesterday and we discussed why 60% of young people in Bosnia Herzegovina have no job, and how come after all these years of intervention and support we have all done collectively, with many institutions, that it is not still resolved. That is where we should focus.

We are all concerned by a security perspective on the Western Balkans, and it

1 Eu-Western Balkans Summit, Thessaloniki, 21 June 2003.

has brought us again to refocus. The European Council, in March, for the first time after 16 years, reconfirmed unequivocal support from the European perspective to the region. We need to continue to capture within the member states. There is big support to the Western Balkans; even a higher percentage of European support than within the EU, and that is what we need to capture. Unfortunately, in the public domain a lot of space is left for others to come in, with different view-points, different role models; others who protect power in a very different way. We have not enough projected powers, confidence and ability to influence.

I assisted Federica Mogherini in the EU facilitated *Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue*², replacing Fernando Gentilini. I could see our leverage and influence: it is very powerful but behind closed doors. There is where we can move and work, but today citizens want us to be open out, discuss every step of dialogue, put every step in a referendum and make sure that everybody must say in it. Then, you lose the point where you thought to be able to influence. I don't say we have lost the dialogue, but it will continue and will also to give right results. Today it is about meeting the needs of citizens, visibly, be present, be out there – not just in the Embassies of the Member States of the EU and of the United States and all others, but at the community level. If we want to address radicalization, organized crime and all the issues we have mentioned and we know well, we have to help and give support at local community level, and that, frankly, is still an area where has not been done enough. I don't say we Europeans have to do it, but, at least, we should make sure to work together supporting local mechanisms and staying focused on the path to European integration and enlargement, with all actors on the ground: UN, EU, United States, NATO and all those I have not mentioned.

You cannot change geography, you cannot change history; Western Balkans are part of Europe and they will be part of European Union.

We must focus on two core elements: security first, with all the new series of actions, ideas and concrete measures which did not exist six months ago. Today this will be implemented, but there are also new actions to occupy the public domain, without leaving the space to others, where we need to work and get the message out. Definitely this will be the focus, not only of Ms Mogherini, but also of head of

2 The aim of the EU facilitated dialogue for the normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina is to promote cooperation between the two sides, help them achieve progress on the path to Europe and improve the lives of the people. After she took over her post in November 2014, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission Federica Mogherini announced that she will personally facilitate the high-level dialogue. She is backed in her work by all Member States. The high-level dialogue is also supported by the work of experts in the tri-partite implementation working groups.

The high-level dialogue is building on the work of a dialogue initially facilitated by the EEAS Councillor Robert Cooper on senior officials' level (in the period from March 2011 to March 2012) and the high-level dialogue facilitated by the former High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission Catherine Ashton (from October 2012 to October 2014). The dialogue was launched following the adoption of the UN General Assembly Resolution 64/298 (2010). In this spirit the EU also continues to work closely with other international stakeholders.

states of European government, and if we do not implement this within the next two years, we actually risk losing the attraction we still have and the high level support of EU within the region.

Let me share some thoughts with you on our work in the Western Balkans. The basis of our vision and subsequent strategy is embedded in Thessaloniki 2003. Enlargement has been there since 1958 when the Treaty of Rome came into effect. It has been the most successful foreign policy element we have had in the EU and will continue to be so.

President Juncker has been often quoted on statements indicating there will be no enlargement during the current Commission. Whilst this is technically a reality, because none of the Western Balkans six were and are today ready to join us tomorrow, politically it had a major impact and it has been discussed in many *fora* and at many occasions. The good news for this audience is that the work on integrating the Western Balkans has not stopped, it is tangible and showing progress on a daily basis even though our partners in the Western Balkans believe the accession process is too slow.

All know the priorities: fight corruption, put forward transparency, accountability, justice, fight impunity, ensure politically, socially and economically inclusive and diverse societies are being built, together, and no more wars erupt over inter-ethnic difference. This is the most important achievement of the enlargement policy so far: no more wars, no more violent conflict.

For the Western Balkans, the EU and the Member States have all the tools at hand: financial support has been substantial, between 20-30 billion of euros have been spent in the region over the past ten years. Results of this support are not always visible and citizens rightly ask where is the EU? Unemployment was mentioned by the previous speaker – I was in Sarajevo yesterday and we discussed why 60% of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina have no job, and how come after all these years of collective intervention and support, the intense work with many institutions and people, it is not still resolved. That is where we should focus.

Today, the citizens in Europe's major concern is security and this brings us also to a re-focus on the Balkans. Migration is another concern that has played rightly or wrongly a major role in election campaigns. The European Council of Heads of State and Government, in March, for the first time after 16 years, reconfirmed unequivocal support for the European perspective for the region.

There is also still a tremendous support for the EU and EU integration in the Western Balkans; even a higher percentage of support for the EU than within the EU. Unfortunately, in the public domain a lot of space is left for others to come in, with different view-points, different role models, often a negative 'anti' agenda with no positive alternatives instead, there are others who project power in a very different way. We have not done enough to project our own power, our confidence and our ability to influence for the good.

I assist EU HRVP Federica Mogherini in the EU facilitated Belgrade-Pristina Di-

dialogue, replacing Fernando Gentilini who was at this forum some years ago. I can clearly see our leverage and influence: it is most powerful when players seek an atmosphere of trust and real conversations, when they seek encouragement to move forward on sometimes very sensitive questions. This is where we move and work. Citizens rightly ask for transparency and accountability and we always ask our partners to explain better what the EU is doing – also on the Dialogue – what they are doing together with the EU and make citizens in their part of the world feel part of it. Today's politics is about meeting needs of citizens, visibly, be present, be out there, show you care, lead by example – and the same goes for diplomats, not just in the Embassies of the Member States of the EU, the United States and all others, but at the community, societal level.

If we want to address radicalisation, organised crime and all the issues we have mentioned today, we have to pay sincere attention and give tangible practical support at local community level, and that, frankly, is still an area where not enough has been done.

I don't say we Europeans have to do it, but, at least, we should make sure to work together supporting local mechanisms and staying clearly focused on the path to European integration and enlargement, with all actors on the ground: EU, EU Member States, US, NATO, OSCE and all who share common values and principles.

We cannot change our geography, we cannot change our history; Western Balkans are part of Europe and they will be part of European Union.

We must focus on two core elements: be united and efficient on security and defence; we have worked on a number of activities, ideas and concrete measures which did not exist six – nine months ago. The second element is an energised more active public diplomacy, not leaving the space to others, where we need to work and get our message out, understood, embedded and applied.

If we do not join up within the next two years, we risk losing the people of the region, the attraction we still have in the region and the good level of support for the EU. We can simply not allow this to happen.



SAVO KENTERA

DEMOCRACY IS EXPOSED TO OLD AND NEW RISKS IN THE AREA

I had a feeling that the western countries somehow manage to forget the Balkans in the past ten years and now is back in the focus. In that respect is always good to have such conferences and to talk about the Balkans as the region that was, through history, in the focus of all major countries.

Talking about Montenegro and NATO, I would like to thank all NATO countries for supporting us in the previous time and for ratifying the protocol on accession to NATO. Basically, thanks for letting us be part of NATO, not because we like to be there, not because they think they need another country but because we deserve that and we proved in the past ten years, since the independence, that we can be reliable partner to all 28 countries.

It was not easy, for Montenegro and for the region, to talk about NATO, to strive toward it. It was not easy because of historical circumstances, because of some percent of population which was, and still is, against NATO; because of the bombing in 1999 when Montenegro was member of state union of Serbia and Montenegro, because of the Russian influence. We had a number of obstacles that we still have, and I believe we will continue to face some of those even as a member of NATO. Here, I think primarily on obstacles brought by some countries, especially Russia, which would try to do everything in their power to destabilize Montenegro and other countries in the region. This to show everybody that those countries which want to become a member of NATO or EU, are still not ready because of their instability.

We had a number of examples in Montenegro, in the past ten years, when Russia tried with concrete means to prevent us to become a member of NATO. The latest example was on the 16th of October last year, during the parliamentary election – the most visible example – when they tried, through some political parties and very concrete measures, to influence those elections and destabilize the country. Fortunately, they failed and, as a result, we had a very concrete special prosecutor role press charges quite soon, against the leaders of some political parties

in Montenegro and against some Russian citizens. Those kinds of attempts were orchestrated by the Russian intelligence services and everybody who is dealing with security issues knows very well. From time to time, we have to face reality trying to recognise who are the real partners and who are the partners only on the paper – I am talking about the *Partnership for Peace*¹ programme where Russia is a member too.

There has been a huge disinformation campaign in the latest period, especially in the past two years, not only in Montenegro but in the region as well, through Russian media and social network. Everything had been done to show that Montenegro, and maybe some other countries later on, were not ready to become members of NATO and EU. We managed to show everybody that our country is stable, democratic and, for us NATO and EU mean changing the values. We are not becoming members just because this represents better standards or because of security reasons; for Montenegro it means, for the very first time, that we are changing the whole system of values and we are moving toward the West.

This is something the current generation doesn't realize but, I believe, the next generation will when they will see the actual effects of being NATO and EU members. In that respect, we cannot talk about the security and the stability of the region until all Balkans' countries become members of NATO and of the EU. It represents a "must" for those countries who are still not on a side, including those who proclaimed neutrality as their political goal. What does neutrality mean today? Which countries are neutral today? Sincerely, I don't recognize a single country in traditional terms of neutrality.

I really think that there is only one future for Bosnia, Macedonia and Serbia: first NATO and then EU if we want to speak about the stability and the prosperity of this region.

1 The Partnership for Peace (PfP) is a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) program aimed at creating trust between NATO and other states in Europe and the former Soviet Union; 21 states are members.

Session 2

THE REGION AND ITS NEAR ACTORS



Portrait of a musician from Balkan, Macedonian style, wearing a fez hat and tapan drum





AHMET EVRİM

DOES IT EXIST, A TURKISH VIEW OF THE BALKAN PROBLEM? WHICH KIND OF AVENUES?

I take this question concerning the “Turkish view” of the Balkans to mean Ankara’s policy toward Western Balkans. It is not a simple question to answer. Given the surprisingly wide ranging changes that Turkey’s foreign policy has undergone over the past decade or more, it has become difficult to pin down what the government’s priorities may be with respect to some specific country, region, or international organization. Some of the new departures, let me confess, have been as mystifying to me as they have been to a variety of international observers such as the members of the present company.

To what extent does the current Turkish policy towards the Balkans represent continuity and to what extent does it represent a radical departure from the past? Has the Turkish perspective on the region changed radically as a result of major new developments, for example, in Europe as well as the region? Before attempting to speculate on the current situation, I would like to take a step back and briefly approach the question within the framework of its historical context with a view to bringing Ankara’s present policies into sharper focus.

Turkey certainly has long history of close involvement in the Balkans, predating the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. The westward migration of Turkish and Turcoman tribal groups and heterodox dervishes had resulted in a few settlements in Thrace even before the establishment of the Ottoman principality in 1299. After 1354, when the Ottoman forces crossed the Dardanelles and captured Gallipoli, Turks began occupying parts of Thrace and Bulgaria. In 1402, the capital was moved from Bursa (Brusa) to Edirne (Adrianople), signalling the Ottomans’ intention to become a European power. A century later Ottoman rule had been consolidated in the Balkans and the Turks had reached the gates of Vienna to compete with the Habsburgs for “world domination.”¹ In the process, Ottoman

1 Kaya Şahin, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleyman: Narrating the Sixteenth-Century Ottoman World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

affinity with South-eastern Europe deepened, so much so that the Balkans came to be considered as the heartland of the empire. The Ottoman state's European vocation was further reinforced by Mehmet II, whose mother, according to several historians,² was Serbian. After the conquest of Constantinople, Mehmet II and his successors considered themselves to be heirs to the Roman emperors. The Turks' attachment to the Balkans stood in sharp contrast to the resentment of the Turkish occupation by the peoples of the Balkans who would remember the long years of the "the Turkish yoke" as the darkest period of their history. In keeping with the Ottoman principles of statecraft, however, during this period, a significant number of Christians were incorporated into the ruling classes of the empire. Phanariot Greek elites, for example, were put in charge of the Ottoman state's diplomatic correspondence while many of the young Serbian boys drafted into the military corps and converted to Islam were given a chance to be promoted to the highest offices of the empire, becoming governors, pashas, and even grand viziers.

The Balkans remained important for the Ottomans up to the very end. They continued to assign a higher status to the Balkan provinces than other parts of the empire and, throughout the nineteenth century, to put greater emphasis on the defence of these provinces that increasingly came under the threat of Russia. Independence movements across the region fuelled by rising nationalism posed even a more serious threat than Russia to the stability of the Balkan provinces. It was not a coincidence that most of the Ottoman reformers of the nineteenth century who were searching for ways to save the empire from its looming demise were actually from the Balkans. The empire's total collapse, it can be argued, came with the loss of its Balkan provinces.

It is not surprising that the founder of the modern Turkish republic and most of his companions who formed the early republic's leadership were from the Balkans. Despite a deep sense of loss and bitter feelings of betrayal (particularly in the conduct of the Balkan wars of 1912-13), Turkey's interest in that continued unabated until the German occupation of Greece and Bulgaria's alliance with the axis powers during World War II. Earlier, for example, Turkey had been an instrumental partner in setting up the Balkan Entente of 1934 to guarantee the territorial integrity of the signatory states. The descent of the iron curtain after the war not only sealed off the Balkans from Turkey as well as Greece but also marked the end of a long era throughout which the Balkans had been associated with Turkey's European orientation.

Turkey was once again drawn into an active role in the Balkans following the breakup of Yugoslavia. In addition to participating since 1995 in all NATO-led operations in the Balkans, such as IFOR, SFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina, KFOR

2 Mehmet Tezcan and Asiye Bayındır, "Aristocratic Women and their Relationships to Nestorianism in the 13th-Century Chingizid Empire," in Li Tang and Dietmar W. Winkler, eds., *From the Oxus River to the Chinese Shores: Studies in East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia* (Vienna and Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2013), p. 308.

in Kosovo, and several operations in Macedonia, it has successfully implemented mediation efforts in western Balkans. For well over a decade since it began fully participating in peace keeping efforts in the region, its objectives appeared to be identical with those of the EU, although its approach to mediation differed from that of its European allies. That difference – mainly Turkey’s softer approach emphasizing confidence building to achieve mutual recognition among conflicting parties rather than insisting in a heavy-handed way that each of those states adopt institutions that would conform to the EU norms – appeared to account for the success of Ankara’s mediation efforts³.

In the meantime, Turkey’s effectiveness as a regional soft power and its contribution to peace had attracted much international praise with the adoption of Mr. Davutoğlu’s “Zero Problems with Neighbours” policy. Turkey’s role in the Balkans thus appeared to provide yet another evidence of its responsible behaviour internationally by promoting peaceful relations with its neighbours. Mr. Davutoğlu, who had long served as the government’s chief foreign policy advisor got a chance to pursue his so-called “neo-Ottomanist” vision with greater vigour after he had been appointed foreign minister in 2009. His doctrine of strategic depth called for Turkey’s deeper involvement not only in its neighbourhood but globally as well as in all international organizations⁴. His argument that Turkey, by virtue of its Ottoman past, had a greater understanding of and better means for cultural communication with its neighbours was largely welcomed by the world community, particularly by the US and EU, in the belief that Turkey could more effectively and more convincingly project the West’s policies than other members of the Western alliance⁵.

A few years later, however, Ankara’s rhetoric began diverging from that of its Western allies. Ankara “gradually ceased to make references to values such as human rights and international governance, but instead increasingly came to emphasize its historical legacy and ‘ownership’ in the region.”⁶ As I said in an earlier conference on the Western Balkans, organized by the NATO Defense College Foundation in Rome, Turkish assistance to Bosnia had come to be chiefly directed “to the exclusive benefit of the Bosnian Muslim population. These resources have gone, in large part, to the reconstruction and renovation of Ottoman heritage buildings”⁷ or to the construction of religious buildings.

3 Ahmet O. Evin and Emre Hatipoglu, “Convergence or Divergence: EU and Turkish Foreign Policy over the Last Decade,” in Peter Balasz, ed., *A European Union with 36 Members?* (Budapest: CEU Center for EU Enlargement Studies, 2014), p. 188.

4 Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007,” *Insight Turkey* 10 (no.1: „2008): 76-96.

5 For a concise English summary of Davutoğlu’s “Strategic Depth” doctrine, see Alexander Murinson, “The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy,” *Middle eastern Studies* 42 (no. 6: 2006).

6 Ahmet O. Evin and Emre Hatipoglu, “Convergence or Divergence,” p.189.

7 Ahmet Evin, “Factor and Dilemma,” in *The Futures of Integration: Western Balkans* (Rome: NATO Defense College Foundation, 2014), pp. 128-29.

Today Turkey's divergence from the EU norms has become all too conspicuous as has its glaring differences with the U.S. policies in the Middle East. For some time now Ankara has placed overriding emphasis on supporting Sunni states and actors throughout the Middle East regardless of how those actors related to its transatlantic allies.

Does this shift of policy signal Mr. Davutoğlu's dream of achieving an influential global role for Turkey over? Or are there other forms of engagement that Turkey's "strategic depth" could facilitate?

I can offer you but one example of how Turkey maintains its networks of communication in Western Balkans, based on my own recent experience. I discovered the nature of Turkey's engagement with Macedonia last fall when I was invited by a German Foundation to speak in Skopje, where I shared the podium with a German colleague, a Russia expert, to discuss Russian and Turkish involvement in the Balkans. In the afternoon, I was taken for a sightseeing tour of Skopje. At first we walked through the new city which has a Disneyland atmosphere with faceless but imposing new structures and new facades superimposed on buildings only a few decades old. The new city was a testament to wilful destruction of cultural heritage, the like of which cannot be seen anywhere else in the European continent. Then I was taken to the old town, where a different kind of surprise was waiting for me. At the centre of the old town a kind of folksy festival was in progress, with young men and women dancing in local costumes, food stands distributing free snacks and soft drinks. It was the so-called *Ashura* festival, an important day of remembrance for heterodox (Shi'a) Muslims⁸. I was even more surprised to read in the posters decorating the square that the event had been organized and funded by the municipality of Bursa, an AKP-governed⁹ municipality that was reaching out to the Muslim community of Macedonia. Since AKP policies are directed, as noted, towards bolstering Sunni Islam, the question of why an AKP municipality would organize and fund a Shi'a festival puzzled me, especially since the support by the same municipality of a similar Alevi¹⁰ festival in Turkey would be inconceivable.

Nevertheless, this example clearly demonstrates the kind of communication networks that AKP keeps alive and effectively utilizes at the municipal and NGO levels to enhance Muslim solidarity not only domestically but beyond the country's borders. Such networks provide an effective means for maintaining and even

8 *Ashura* is a kind of pudding that is eaten on the 10th of Muharram, the day of remembrance commemorating the martyrdom of Hussain, grandson of Muhammad at the Battle of Karbala in 61 AH. The Battle of Karbala resulted in the division of Sunni and Shi'a Islam.

9 The Justice and Development Party.

10 Alevism is a syncretic, heterodox form of Islam, following Shia, Sufi, Sunni and local traditions, whose adherents follow the mystical teachings of Ali, the fourth caliph, his descendants the Twelve Imams, and the 13th century Alevi saint Haji Bektash Veli, also claimed to be a descendant. Alevis are found primarily in Turkey among ethnic Turks and Kurds, and constitute between 20-25 percent of the population.

enhancing Turkey's influence in the region, albeit among the more traditionalist and observant Muslim communities only.

Let me address, briefly, two questions posed in this context. The first one is the extent to which Turkish government would be likely to use its Balkan networks as a means for promoting its own interests in the region at the expense of the EU's influence. In a recent outburst against the Dutch for allegedly curtailing rights to free speech in Holland of some of the senior members of his party, Mr Erdoğan laid blame on the government of the Netherlands for being responsible for the Srebrenica massacre. His accusations brought the relations between Turkey and the Netherlands to a breaking point. European observers were quick to associate Mr Erdoğan's unsparing condemnation of the Dutch political leadership with his election campaign tactics of raising tensions to mobilize popular support. The only difference in this case, it seemed, was the use of the same tactics in the context of foreign relations to gain increased popular support domestically. The international context that allowed him to demonstrate a strong determination "to stand up to the Europeans' arrogant ways," moreover, could have been even more advantageous for garnering popular support among his constituency than targeting merely domestic adversaries. The ancillary question of whether such a sharp denunciation of the Netherlands (to be followed by one of Germany) was in any way associated a hidden agenda of reorienting Turkey away from Europe has remained unaddressed.

At the moment domestic considerations seem to have priority in Turkey's political agenda, given that two successive parliamentary elections and a constitutional referendum have taken place in a span of less than two years, not to mention a highly disruptive coup attempt. In addition, wars on several fronts in Syria and Iraq continued to pose grave threats to Turkey in terms of overall security, border safety, and the movement of terrorists into the country from those war zones; Ankara, moreover, had been forced to deal with a difficult set of adversarial actors, ranging from Russia and Iran on one side to the U.S. and its coalition partners including the UK, France and Germany, on the other, none of whose priorities coincided with those of Turkey. In short, serious challenges facing Turkey have superseded its earlier ambitions of becoming an effective regional soft power. Under the circumstances, it is unlikely that Turkey will consider investing any diplomatic capital to try to influence the overall policy orientation of the Western Balkans in the same way Russia has been attempting to do with respect to some countries of the region. It will be realistic, however, to expect Ankara to use the communication and solidarity networks it has established among the Muslim population to its advantage in terms of increasing its cultural influence and market opportunities in the region.

The second question concerns the so-called rapprochement with Russia and how it would affect Ankara's policy toward the Balkans. Cooperating with one another, Russia and Turkey, it was feared, could exert a seriously destabilizing

pressure on the Balkans, by means; for example, of convincing at least some of the Western Balkan states to give up their pursuit of EU membership. Many observers considered such a scenario to be a realistic one, given the EU's neglect of the region due to its preoccupation, since the Euro crisis, with its internal problems, and given the resulting widespread frustration in the region with the EU.

Russian and Turkish interference in Western Balkans has come to be seen as an imminent threat, so much so that an eminent intellectual such as Ivan Krastev has recently made an urgent appeal to the EU and U.S. to seriously engage the Balkans before it was too late¹¹. There are, however, some highly regarded analysts who have argued to the contrary that the people of the region saw their future in the EU regardless of how hard Russia and Turkey might try to project their views by means of evoking their historical and cultural ties to the region and regardless of how much patience the people of the region might have lost on account of the empty rhetoric issuing forth from Brussels. No one, commented one observer, wished to emigrate to Ankara or Moscow instead of western Europe.

Given the wide range of assessments in respect to the challenges facing the region and given the significant transformation in Turkey's policy toward the western Balkans, I would like to conclude my commentary by emphasizing three points:

First, Russia and Turkey are not likely to enter into close cooperation in the Balkans because they have different priorities in the region. Russia's old ties to the Slavic communities in the Balkans, and Turkey's new engagement to build ties to a Muslim constituency there, point in radically different directions. Elsewhere, Russia's and Turkey's policies stand in sharp contrast to one another in respect to many critical issues, such as Iran's role in Syria and Iraq, the Syrian conundrum and the Assad regime, the Russian occupation of Crimea and the fate of the Tatar community there, to give a few examples from the region. The so-called rapprochement between Russia and Turkey is far too exaggerated; Mr. Putin appears to have gradually formulated a *modus operandi* to revitalize economic relations with Turkey for Moscow's benefit. Moreover, Moscow can be said to derive satisfaction from the unease it causes to the Western alliance by its energy cooperation and defence hardware provision agreements with a NATO member.

Second, Turkey alone is not likely to influence the geopolitics of Western Balkans in a significant way because of the reasons noted. Also, Turkey, at present, commands diminished resources at its disposal on account of repeated elections as well as its stalled growth rate. Furthermore, Ankara appears to be no longer interested in championing norms of good governance and pursuing mediation efforts in its neighbourhood. As a consequence, its level of diplomatic engagement in the region is not likely to increase. Turkey's potential to disrupt the Balkans is much too exaggerated, as are the apprehensions that it might wilfully attempt to do so.

11 Ivan Krastev, "EU Goes Back to the Future in the Balkans," *Financial Times*, March 15, 2017.

Third, however, the danger of destabilization in Western Balkans cannot be taken lightly or dismissed. It takes a great deal of willpower, commitment, and political and economic leverage to achieve and sustain stability. In the Balkans stability remains fragile on account of ethnic and cultural differences, strong nationalist currents that have made indelible marks in the collective memory of different communities, uneven distribution of resources across the region, and sharp divergences in the levels of economic and institutional development among the states of the region. Appeals from different quarters to specific constituencies within the region (such as those made by Russia and Turkey to build on their historical and cultural affinity with particular ethnic and confessional groups) carries the danger of detracting from a sense of regional coherence that has eluded the Balkans in the first place. I would take very little effort to derail stability.



TOMASZ ORŁOWSKI

POLAND AND THE WESTERN BALKANS

I will start with the answer to two questions put by our chairman Benoit d'Aboville: were we too optimistic? Are we investing enough in Balkans?

It is obvious, if we invest enough we could feel optimistic but this is not the real situation.

I have noted that many countries felt the enlargement *fatigue* on May 1st 2004. It was precisely in that moment, when our countries arrived to the Union as new members of the family, a mistake made by the current member states was to not invite their own populations to feel together with optimism the fact that we were able as Union to enlarge, and now we are paying a price for it. Enlargement for us has three dimensions:

First of all, we know how important is the possibility of transformation of economic and social structure of the country for being modern, even modest, but well organized. It is important as a message for our friends from Balkans. Secondly, our feeling is that enlargement as a process is not only our possibility to arrange the stability of origin, but to offer to Europe some new future; it is quite hard but it is important. Thirdly, we want to consider Western Balkans as a challenge but as an opportunity. This opportunity for Poland, being a country quite distant from Balkans, it is not only dedicated to this origin but to the future of Europe we are still shaping.

It is not for deciding tomorrow or even next year, what will be the future to the eastern partnership countries, but at least to keep some open door of European Union for the future could provide some stability in eastern neighbourhood of Europe. In this sense, for us, to fulfil the promise of European Union to enlarge to Balkans; it is not a proposal in itself, but it is a politics for the future.

To be too optimistic, certainly when the President of European Commission declared during his mandate of five years that the enlargement will not continue and will not have a next stage; it was a great political mistake and this had consequences. Our credibility, is now not fully accepted in the region. When our minister was

unable to adopt, the strong declaration about the future of Balkans, it was a political mistake and we considered it a negative political signal. The fact that in 2015 the enlargement package was not published it was another mistake. As you see, we have a series of mistakes made by the European Commission.

Therefore, to listen to the High Commissioner Federica Mogherini, after her visit to the region, that the Balkans can easily become one of the chessboards where the big power games can be played, it is for us a very alarming and, at the same time, realistic opinion. Of course, we are determined to prevent this scenario. For this reason, we are considering we need the real cooperation with the region, not only at the European level, but even through bilateral means.

We are still, and we are not the country geographically connected to the Balkans, the second provider of Kosovo force in military terms. We are now the first provider of police force in Kosovo. It means that Poland has not to have the lessons from other countries. In this sense, we are proposing to have a more positive approach toward the Balkans, not saying just that Balkans are our concern for the future. If we wish to play a role, like the High Commissioner Federica Mogherini said, in Europe, in global politics, we have to start with something. Balkans will be the best lesson for Europeans to show that we are able to prevent crises, we are able to manage our neighbourhood, we are able to show the interest of our political model.

On the contrary, we will open the door to different geopolitical and socio-economic models from other countries. It could be Russia, it could be Turkey, it could be some Muslim Arab countries. In any case, it will not be Europe, and if we are unable to propose a package for the stability in the security terms, economic development and good neighbourhoods, we will be unable to propose a stronger common foreign security policy.



HAAKON BLANKENBORG

OVER THE HORIZON EXTERNAL ACTORS: CHINA AND US

My approach will not be analytical. I will rather present some observations on the two actors, and misuse the opportunity to make some comments on the current affairs in the Balkans. US and China are both newcomers in the Balkans, compared with the other actors on the agenda. China the most recent to arrive. In the Balkan capitals the representatives from some of the major external actors are from time to time called “the Governors”. They refer to what they perceive as an attitude of moral and political superiority. They feel treated more like clients than partners. The EU is a complicated factor also in this respect. EU has a in a contractual relation with all countries. EU institutions are tasked to supervise these “contracts”. Hence the EU is a special case, only partial external.

CHINA

China is visible on the ground, invisible in the public debate. It has created its own mechanism, or platform for the cooperation with the Central and Eastern European countries. The 16+1 mechanism was created in 2012. It coordinates all major institutions in China. Under the 16+1 umbrella there are a number of bilateral initiatives. Serbia is a “steel friend” said president Xi Jinping during president Nikolic recent visit, and promised a 14 mill Euro donation to Serbia. For Mr Nikolic it was “a holiday and a day to remember” when Xi Jinping visited Serbia last year. A day to remember not only for him but for the city of Smederevo and all the workers at the Zelezara steel mill, according to president Nicolic. The Chinese firm He Steel Group had just acquired the steel mill (April 18), which the Serbian government had bought it from US Steel for one dollar. The Chinese pledged to invest in the factory. The first Chinese investment in a major Serbian company. Railways are under construction. A bridge over Danube is completed. China has recently become one of the largest FDI investors in Albania. In April 2016 Banker’s Petroleum, the Canada-based oil company and one of the biggest

foreign investors in Albania, was acquired by the Chinese oil and gas exploration company Geo-Jade Petroleum. From the Baltic to the Black Sea and the Adriatic, from Tallinn to Tirana and Sofia, China has created its space for its designated operational mechanisms. The 16 corridor coincides more or less with the eastern members of the EU and NATO plus the candidate and potential candidates to EU. Some would say the corridor between east and west in Europe. For the investment hungry, non EU countries in the Western Balkans the Chinese funding is irresistible. Let it be investments in infrastructure, acquisition of industrial companies, greenfield investments or credits and grants. China is perceived to be a neutral investor when tensions run high between Russia and the west. At the same time China is perceived as a reliable and predictable business partner, which can open new market opportunities. While the EU have relatively slow processes of project preparation, and other institutional obstacles, China is often able to present an attractive alternative with its offer of streamlined approval processes, state-backed financing, and speedy implementation. EU suspects the Chinese not always to observe the Unions regulations. On the ground this EU objections may be perceived negatively. EU as an obstacle to investments and jobs. Regardless of the fact that the EU and the member countries are far more important than China.

For China the Western Balkans can be seen as an additional bridge into the future EU. They are not yet member, but on their way, all of them, in principle. There are certainly political and geopolitical implications of the Chinese engagement. The selection of the 16 has not been done randomly. Kosovo is not a part of 16+1, hence they do not have direct access to the extra funding. China has not recognised Kosovo and probably don't intend to do so, of pure domestic reasons. Skopje tested the One-China policy at the end of the 90-ies. It had immediate consequences. When Liu Xiaobo was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010 Serbia decided not to attend the ceremony. The decision was Vuk Jeremic'. It all ended up with Sasa Jankovic.

US

"US make us offers we cannot refuse, EU offers we cannot understand"

When Vice President Joe Biden visited Belgrade on August 16, 2016, the Embassy outlined the partnerships with Serbia: Partners in Security, Partners in Development, Partners in Business, Partners in Justice, Partners in Education and Culture. The US is at the same time perceived as the most robust security guarantor and aggressor. It depends on who you ask.

The US has a strong, loud and visible presence in the region. The dissolution of Yugoslavia coincided with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of Soviet Union and the Soviet military block. The Yugoslavia chaos of the early 90-ies, gave us the concept of Western Balkans. The Western Balkans works as a constant reminder of the chaotic 90-ies, a barrier to the longer history of the region, and un-

fortunately, a barrier to strategic initiatives to bring the region forward. The notion “Western Balkans” is strongly interlinked with the largely false, but popular interpretation of Balkan history that the so called Western Balkans has an unbroken history of local wars and animosity between nationalities, ethnicities and religions. The Western Balkans is a stigma as well as a geographical region.

The history of the Balkans, and the so called Western Balkans in particular, has been shaped by the fact that this geographical area is located at the confluence of the historic empires. Wars and conflicts in the Balkans have been rivalry between empires, not local conflicts. The Balkan wars of the 90-ies were homemade though, but they didn't break out because of religious, national or ethnic animosities, they were unscrupulously engineered by local leaders who acted out of pure self-interests. I do not say that the international engagement in the Balkans in the 90-ies did not have geopolitical and other political motives. It certainly had, also for the Americans. After all the Russians were active on the ground and in the background. So were various other actors, among them some with clear jihadist affiliation. For the Americans, as for some other actors it was important to show that they also protected Muslims. Still, my reading is that what emerged was uncoordinated crisis- or rather disaster management rather than a coordinated, strategic engagement. Due to the combination of the notion of a notoriously intractable region and the lack of a comprehensive strategic approach the US and some other countries got entangled in local political micro-management in the region. Fingerspitzengefühl is not an American product. Rather than dreary political processes the preference for quick and visible solutions, combined with loud and equally clear advice, which easily can be misinterpreted as instructions. They interfered not only in what to do, but also who to do what.

Albright “felt like a breath of fresh air had blown through the room,” when she met Milorad Dodik.

The region doesn't need short term, unsustainable solutions. Black and white, good or bad is not a fruitful approach to the region. Some of those who vehemently oppose Montenegro's membership in NATO might be on the payroll of the Russians, but not all of them. What now we see unfolding in Skopje, and what I am afraid will see more of, is not only people taking to the streets because they are on the payroll of the old regime. The current affairs reflect uncertainty and bring back bad memories from the near past.

We do not combat extremism or violence by separating just in good or bad, or by saying that the winner takes it all. Making compromises is a noble art, and a prerequisite for a long term sustainable development. The US is the antidote to Russia, and vice versa. The US divisive and controversial, a symbol of what is good or bad on the global scene, a symbol of a superpower's intervention in a small state, a symbol of globalization, eradicating local traditions. For other the US have been the only guarantor of security and modernization and progress. The military capacity of the US is a factor in itself. More important: They have been ready to use

it. The US have been a significant investor. The US have been a significant donor, not least when it come to liberal values.

It is the combination of all this factors which makes the US to one of the key actors in the region. The EU is of course far more important for the region. It is the EU that counts when it comes to trade, aid and investments. The region is an island i the EU-sea. The sea is not so calm anymore. The role of the EU often goes under the radar or is swept under the carpet or goes under the radar because of it's focus on long term structural changes, bureaucratic approach and lack of military capacity. The EU is outmaneuvered when it come to strategic communication. Not by the US.

The Russians have shown a capability to outmaneuver both the US and the EU in certain parts of the region when it come to visibility and perceived importance not because of trade or aid, not because of military capacity on the ground. The Russians have clever, some would say unscrupulous, informations strategies, and loyal people in key positions. They undermine the credibility of the other, they have a fingerspitzegefühl for local sentiments and give some symbolic assistance. Everything at a low cost. The new US administration have been met by fear hope and uncertainty. Will there be a new beginning or business as usual. With Albania, Croatia and Slovenia in NATO and Montenegro being accepted in a few weeks, the Western Balkans is not anymore an island in a NATO-sea. NATO is in the Western Balkan.

A further expansion of NATO into the WB will be even more controversial than Montenegro. A deeper cooperation between NATO and some of the Non-NATO WB countries will be seen in the light of the geostrategic balance between Russia and the west. Serbia will be the hotspot. A transformation of the KSF into Kosovo Armed Forces might have more long term implications, not only might it lead to increased tension in the area, it might even cement the presence of KFOR and lead to a closer cooperation between Serbia and NATO. One year ago prime minister Vucic declared that Serbia need NATO as an ally to protect the Serbs in Kosovo. This was stated as Serbia ratified the logistics agreement with NATO.

Obviously the president of Kosovo did not initiate the transformation of security reasons. Kosovo have the best security guarantee of any non article V countries. NATO is already there. The initiative was a product of what is an unfinished independence. More interesting is that the Kosovo leadership decided to confront their closest allies, NATO and the US. They probably did, just to show that they can act independently from the the international community and protecting their national self interest. A concession to the nationalist sentiments gaining ground. A trend which can be found all over Europe. So will the US leave the Balkans in its current affairs, will the abandon Camp Bondsteel? Honestly I can only guess, and my guess is that the Balkans will be more and more a European affair, and that a continued american military presence will be less motivated by the state of affairs in the Balkans than the wider geopolitical climate.



YORDAN BOZHILOV

THE ROLE OF RUSSIA ON THE BALKANS

It is clear that Russia plays a role in the Balkans. We have to analyze this role in order to better understand the Russian policies and aspirations on the Balkans. According to Alexander Pivovarenko, an expert from the Russian International Affairs Council, Russia is restoring its presence in Central and South-Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans because, I quote: ‘the region is of traditional, historical, and geostrategic importance for Russia and has a largely benevolent attitude towards it.’ In order to appropriately understand Russia’s role and the consequences of its policies in the Balkans, we need to analyse its interests, strategic goals, and the methods it uses.

On 23 March 2017, speaking in front of officers from the military academy, Sergey Lavrov stated, I quote: ‘We are seeing an overlap of key interests between Russia and the countries from the region on many topics.’ I think that this is the main issue we need to address – whether Russia and the countries from the region share the same key interests and goals.

The Balkan countries have openly stated their aspirations to join the Euro-Atlantic community, and to establish western liberal democratic forms of government. And here we see a clear diversion of interests between those of Russia and the countries from the region. As it is stated in the foreign policy concept of 2016 ‘The Russian Federation maintains its negative perspective towards NATO’s expansion.’ As Russia cannot openly challenge current members, it is doing its best to stall enlargements and maintain the neutrality of the Balkan countries. It is clear that the Balkans and Russia do not share the same strategic orientation and interests.

Of course, this does not preclude them to cooperate in different spheres – political, economic, cultural, and so on but the strategic interests are different.

Today the Balkans are experiencing a wide range of challenges – economic difficulties, risks pertaining to radicalization and terrorism, the migration wave, ethnic and religious tensions, and unresolved regional disputes. This picture is exacerbat-

ed by the EU's difficulties to address vital issues, the Brexit, uncertainties regarding the new US presidency, and the stalling enlargement process of NATO and the EU. The activities of actors like China, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey, make the situation even more complicated.

All this creates a security vacuum in the region, which Russia is exploiting by presenting itself as a security provider to the Balkan countries. Especially to Slavic and Christian Orthodox people. What is more, the Kremlin is trying to present itself as a credible and promising economic and political counterpart for the Balkan countries. Moscow in the last years has encouraged state – and private-owned companies to invest in South East Europe, trying to convert the region into a strategic hub and a preferential entry point to the Western economic area. Russia is trying to create mental landscapes susceptible to political manipulation, using different assets – loans, energy projects, trade and other investments, interfering in EU issues or trying to delay the European integration of the Western Balkans. The Kremlin is creating networks of friendly local NGOs and media. Even the Russian Church is also being used in the political activities through friendly Orthodox Churches.

Russia's actions are not chaotic but rather part of a broader strategic approach and long-term policy towards the region. This vision can be seen in the remarks of the Former Director of the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies Leonid Reshetnikov, who was appointed by Presidential Decree in 2009. He has stated that Russia is obliged to 'return to the Balkans. Primarily as humanitarian actor.' He continues: 'We must actively develop our presence there and work more toughly and purposefully with the leaders of these countries, and through economic leverages force the leaders of the countries to start understanding what we don't like.' *End quote*. He additionally stated that the economic relations with the Balkan countries must be subordinate to political relations. Furthermore, he also criticized the Russian government for not paying enough attention to NGOs in the region and not creating its own information sphere. In a similar manner, Mr. Pivovarneko, from RIAC, has stated that 'Russia's role in the region has long been heavily linked with culture, liberation and civilization. Consequently, while investing in infrastructure, we also have to invest in people, and in relationships with people who see Russia as an alternative force in today's polycentric world.'

All this illustrates Russia's general approach to increase its influence in the Balkan. It is to be emphasized that its policies remain country-specific and allow me to share with you some thoughts on Russia's approach to Bulgaria.

The concept of this approach is described by Sergey Baranov, a popular pro-Kremlin Russian sociologist, in his recently published article. He argues that the stability of current Bulgaria is not in Russia's interests. The country should be taken away from the hands of the West and be returned to the real allies, meaning Russia. Mr. Baranov claims that Bulgaria is a social, economic, and political victim of the EU. The internal destabilization and exiting NATO and the EU is a desired development for Bulgaria.

From this paper, it is clear that Moscow's strategy is to spur anti-Western sentiments and propaganda in Bulgaria. As Bulgaria remains the poorest member of the EU, and corruption continues to fester on all levels, such suggestions are very efficient. The method is simple and straightforward – increasing nationalist hysteria; escalating the frustration of Bulgarian citizens; exploiting the accumulated fatigue from the years of transition; capitalizing on the people's discontent with failed reforms, and so on. Russia is capitalizing on every possible opportunity.

It is clear that the Kremlin is using all possible methods to increase its influence in Bulgaria. The basis for this is the general favorable attitude of the Bulgarian society towards Russia, which is associated as the liberator from Ottoman rule in the common mindset. Even after the annexation of Crimea, Bulgarians continue to uphold a favourable outlook on Russia. A public opinion poll conducted in 2015 found that 50% of Bulgarians continued to hold a positive view of Moscow even after the invasion in Ukraine. It was also found that 61% of Bulgarians opposed the financial sanctions on Russia, while the rest support them. It is also to be emphasized that according to the survey in a hypothetical referendum 63% of Bulgarian citizens would vote in favour of Bulgaria's EU and NATO future, while 33% support the idea of aligning with Russia and the Eurasian Union.

These general positive views on Russia are used in propaganda campaigns and attempts to influence Bulgarian policies. Russia's involvement in the Bulgarian presidential and parliamentary elections in 2016 and 2017 was very clear. According to the Wall Street Journal, a 'messenger' from the Kremlin provided the Bulgaria Socialist Party /which has connections with Russia/ with instructions on how to win the elections – 'by promoting fake news and exaggerated social surveys results of the party's success.' In order to win the pro-Russian vote, one of the major debates during the election campaign became the lifting of sanctions on Russia.

Undoubtedly Russia's involvement in Bulgaria's elections is unprecedented. Moscow has been involved in Bulgaria's political life for many years now but never to such a degree. The Kremlin is clearly trying to enforce its own political agenda and goals on Bulgarian politicians, parties, sociologists, journalist, and oligarchs.

In a recently published paper titled 'Russian Influence in Bulgaria', Dimitar Bechev, a renowned analyst and visiting fellow at the Centre for European Politics at Harvard University, examines Russian influence in Bulgaria as complex and multilayer which is resulting in the division of the Bulgarian nation. This influence is being exercised through economic relations, relations between certain Bulgarian politicians and the Kremlin, ties between political parties and the business to Russia, Russian gas and oil, large infrastructure projects such as South Stream and Nuclear Power Plant Belene, the acquiring of strategic companies with Russian finances, dependency of the army on the import of spare parts, and influence through the media.

Russia has proven very successful in these undertaking through media outlets and internet trolls, part of which are controlled by businessman with personal in-

terests to do business with Russia. Moreover, it is interesting to note that pro-Russian, and anti-EU/NATO articles from these medias are well coordinated and overlap, creating the illusion that many unrelated news-websites have reached the same conclusion. One of the approaches is to use fake news in order to split the public.

For example, last year the pro-Western President of Bulgaria was publicly blamed for inviting to celebrate the independent from Ottoman rule, the Turkish President Erdogan, but not inviting the Russian President Vladimir Putin. This was entirely fabricated: the information was initiated by an unknown small Bulgarian pro-Russian website, republished by Russian media, from where the news was taken by all Bulgarian media. This particular information was denounced by Bulgarian authorities but harm was done. Unfortunately, most of such kind of disinformation and fake news are left unaddressed by officials. And we see this as one of the major problems in the current hybrid warfare that no single institution understands it as their obligation to counter.

Internet trolls are also used to spread Russian propaganda. They are extremely active in social platforms, such as Facebook, share specific news stories from certain websites, and engage in the comment sections. The trolls were especially active prior to the presidential and parliamentary elections in support of Kremlin-favored political parties and candidates. This was unveiled and clearly shown by a group called Clean Internet, who uncover internet trolls' activities.

We should not underestimate the influence of Russia over the national decision-making process. Last year Bulgaria blocked a Romanian initiative aimed at strengthening the Eastern Flank of NATO by establishing a Black sea fleet.

Bulgaria's decision to reject Romania's initiative can be explained mainly through domestic political processes and specific aspects of the relationship with Russia, namely because the dependency on the gas and oil supply and the uneasy situation with the purchased and produced by Russia equipment for a new power plant.

While speaking on Bulgaria, I'm sure that we see a lot of similarities in different countries. And the reason is simple. Russia wants to destroy the unanimity within NATO and EU and by this to block the decision-making process.

Let me conclude by saying that the Balkan region is currently developing.

Which road the region takes will rely on wise politics. Many of the countries from the region are experiencing serious economic and political difficulties. In order to stabilize the region, as well as the individual countries, strengthening democracy, combating corruption, diversification of supplies, economic and social development, EU integration, and overcoming dependencies on Russian imports are essential. Furthermore, all factors that are not in line with this has to be countered.

A clear commitment from the EU and NATO is, therefore, essential in keeping the region on track – including the continuation of open-door policies. The refugee crisis has already demonstrated that the security of Europe is indivisible and an

accelerated accession process is very important for the European security.

Objectively, Russia cannot effectively win the hearts and minds of the people in the Balkans. Nor does it represent an attractive role-model for governance. Moscow also cannot offer attractive economic prospects – especially when compared to the EU. Yet, Russia is very efficiently molding a positive impression of itself that resonates with many people, based on tradition, Orthodox Christianity, history. Russia's influence in the Balkans is proof of the power of sentiments over facts.

It is also important to develop regional cooperation in order to address and cope with current risk and threats. This particular conference is a clear contribution to this. Finally, I would like to inform the distinguished audience that Sofia Security Forum and Konrad Adenauer Foundation initiated a platform for communication and cooperation between NGOs and think tanks from the region.

Session 3

SECURITY VERSUS ILLEGAL NETWORKS AND TRAFFICKING



Abstract composition showing three women dressed in Serbian traditional clothes dancing in folklore





LOUISE SHELLEY

THE BALKAN ROUTE AS REGIONAL CONFLUENCE ZONE FOR TRAFFICKING AND CRIMINAL NETWORKS

Why is organized crime in the Balkans different from what you know in Italy? I would say there are several important differences.

First of all, it is not necessarily family-based organizations. It has more of a network structure than a hierarchical structure. It is also very much linked to illicit trade, not as much to extortion and racketing which is the origin of much mafia activity, and it is also much more linked to the highest level of political power. The story of the mafia, *Cosa Nostra* or *Camorra*, has been of trying to have access to political power but this is not the problem in the Balkans.

(I brought two books with me two books written by someone in the Washington community called *Criminalized Power Structures*, in which there is a chapter on Kosovo, on Bosnia-Herzegovina that shows how the criminal activity goes to the very top of the political structure.)

I also want to quote from some work that Paul Radu did. Every year the OCCRP has a competition. *Time* magazine has the “man of the year”, the OCCRP has the “criminal of the year”. This year I was honoured to be in the selection committee, but the last year let me read you about who won “criminal of the year” (this year was the President of Venezuela). This award was presented in 2015 to Milo Đukanović, who served as President and Prime Minister of Montenegro, from 1991 to 2016. As one of the nominator for the highly competitive award 2015 man of the year in organized crime stated: “Đukanović is the last European dictator as captured his country for his own private interest and turned into a safe heaven for criminals. While he, his family and friends enriched themselves, ordinary people suffered from poverty, injustice and loneliness; those who dared to talk about corruption became his targets. Among the many crimes that merit this distinction, was his major role in cigarettes smuggling for which he was particularly singled out in the award statement.

The distinguished jury of OCCRP concluded that Đukanović and his close associates engaged in the extent of cigarettes smuggling with the Italian *Sacra Co-*

rona Unità, and the *Camorra* current families; he was indicted in Bari, but said his country needed the money and invoked the diplomatic community to get the charges dropped. Furthermore, according to OCCRP, while he claimed to stop the smuggling, OCCRP found an island off the coast financed by his family bank and owned by a good friend, Stanko Subotić, a country business man who was three times incriminated but never convicted of cigarettes smuggling related activities. The island was run by Đukanović head of security and being used to smuggle cigarettes with the same organized crime figures who were previously involved.”

What we see here is our journalists or academics putting together a picture of how this organized crime goes to the top of political structure, and this has being done for other parts of the Balkans¹.

This is something that is very distinctive in the Balkans and comes out of two elements: a socialist system which led to a large illicit and dark shadow economy and a war-based economy. This is not how the mafia and the camorra arose in Italy; they did not come out from conflict situations but from very different historical and political situations.

Why is this phenomenon so pervasive? Because the leadership is involved in many countries.

Also, there is what I would call a very serious problem of citizens complicity. Over 20 years ago, during a conference with UNICRI on sex trafficking in the Balkans, one of the speakers from the local community described how initially was so hard to move after the members of the community who were running the brothels and importing the women. It was hard because the women wanted heirs, they came from other cultures and the members of the community viewed people running the brothels as illustration of community entrepreneurship. That was a level of complexity that I have never heard about previously, when you think about local traffickers as “community entrepreneurship”. Then, some of the husbands started going into the brothels, their wives started getting venereal diseases, the marriages started breaking up and they began to see that there were limits to this community entrepreneurship.

But up until that point, they were ready to accept this, and that explains that for organized crime to survive there has to be a tolerance for it. Today, corruption is higher in this region than in Italy and in many other places in the world that have organized crime. There is a lack of economic alternative for many people, that is why they go into business like running brothels, and with 60% unemployment rate you either work for criminals, you work for illicit traders or you have nothing to live on. There is such a merge, in this world, between licit and illicit; they are sold together, people participate in both of these simultaneously. Therefore, this problem is particularly pervasive. It is cultural, it is corruption, it is the community.

¹ The source is the book *Criminalized Power Structures: The Overlooked Enemies of Peace*, edited by Michael Dziedzic in 2016

What has changed? I'm going to give a few examples.

I related that the first thing that developed in the Balkans in a large-scale basis was sex trafficking. Today sex trafficking is not the defining part of the trade of human beings and it is now migrants smuggling. If you have looked at the statistics released from the recent Europol report on what is happening with organized crime groups in Europe, you will find that they increased phenomenally in the last year. Thousands new groups – they are not large groups, they are small network groups – almost exclusively related to migrants smuggling, people coming across the Mediterranean and from Turkey. Talking about Turkey, there have been major changes in the country, like mass purges of the police, probably a hundred thousand of qualified policemen have been removed.. There is a corridor, there is a new opportunity and the criminal networks have literally doubled from the Balkan area.

The Balkans, after the end of socialist system, were always a source of weapons trafficking and that has not changed. But, if you read some of the briefs on the terrorist attacks in France and Belgium last year, how did they get their weapons? They ordered them online which brings you to how this all goes online, through online brokers in the Balkans. So, they are not just running in an open market now, but they have taken their business, they have gone online and they can ship to western Europe.

In my latest book, which was called *Dirty Entanglements: Corruption, Crime, and Terrorism*, I introduced a case when I was interviewing the Italian prosecutors in Sicily who explained that they pulled aside *Cosa Nostra* that informed them that their business partners, in one particular transaction, were not Albanian criminals but were the KLA².

We are finding today that there is a greater involvement in the region with terrorists. It is much more likely than it was 20 years ago. What we are seeing also is that we are having many more individuals participating in the illicit structure of unemployed youth, economically vulnerable, and it is not just a part of the war-based and conflict-based economy but something that it is more endemic in the society.

We will talk lot more about what to do with it, apart from that, of course, you need to follow the money, focusing on unemployment, on endemic corruption, and the world of organized crime in a conflict situation before it gets as bad as it has become now and so institutionalized.

2 The *Kosovo Liberation Army* (KLA) was an ethnic-Albanian paramilitary organisation that sought the separation of Kosovo from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and Serbia during the 1990s and the eventual creation of a Greater Albania.



GORDANA DELIC

CORRUPTION AND LACK OF ADEQUATE REFORMS AS HUMUS FOR TERRORISM AND ORGANIZED CRIME

I don't have to go in what makes the Balkans corruption and organized crime different than in other areas of our world, but definitely what we can conclude is that the organized crime is a widespread phenomenon all over the Balkans as elsewhere.

In effects, our political instability puts the legal system at risk, threatens social security and it does violate human rights. It represents a serious threat to the societies in the Balkans.

However, I think it would be unfair to say that the Balkan countries are trying to do absolutely anything to combat it. On the contrary, some people would say that, with the help of the International Community, our countries have ratified several agreements such as the *Initiative for Cooperation in South-East Europe*, by setting up the SECI¹ Center for Legal Cooperation, in 1996. We have also ratified a number of other acts such as the *Convention on Police Cooperation* or the *UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and Corruption*, as well as the 2nd additional Protocol to the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters. It is based on these international acts that the Balkan countries are obliged to co-operate closely with each other, to develop joint investigations and to set up joint investigative authorities in order to combat organized crime.

Despite all these acts and obligations, the current practices have proven that state borders and various custom barriers have not really served as an obstacle for co-operation between criminal groups, but rather they have represented an ob-

¹ The *Southeast European Cooperative Initiative*, is a regional initiative initiated by the USA as a support to the implementation of the Dayton Accords with the purpose of developing sustainable economic strategy in the region. SECI is focused on trans-border cooperation programs and projects in the fields of development of infrastructure, trade and traffic issues, security, energy, environment and development of private sector. SECI member states are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Moldova, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Slovenia, Serbia, Turkey and Montenegro.

stacle in the co-operation between institutions of regional countries. Indeed, if we just assume that the Balkans countries today have left and put behind those times when they did not want to cooperate with each other, yet I have to say that we have not really been able to establish effective forms of co-operation in combating organized crime.

The fight against corruption and organized crime in the Balkans should not be seen or understood as responsibility of one state. The success of this fight depends very much on cooperation and exchange between the various national and international stakeholders. Therefore, the establishment of regional co-operation is definitely an imperative and there are attempts to make it functional. It must be developed in compliance with the acts that I mentioned earlier, but it also should include co-operation with relevant organizations such as Interpol, Europol, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, and I would even challenge NATO.

The organized crime in the Balkans adopts, basically, all forms of corruption to infiltrate political, economic and social levels. The weak governance of the Balkans countries coexist, not only coexisted; it is deeply intertwined with corruption and it does create this vicious cycle. It is through corruption that criminal groups generate poverty; in other words, we don't have corruption because we are poor, but we are poor because we have corruption. This corruption determines the misuse of governments' funds and resources by simply diverting them on purpose from sectors that are of vital importance for Balkan countries: health, education and development sectors.

The price of public services, currently in the Balkan countries, is reaching heights that basically for the deprived population makes it no longer affordable. People simply cannot afford to pay for something that they should not even be paying. So, corruption feeds poverty, it generates inequality and creates the loss of trust and confidence in public institutions, resulting, not only in the Balkans but also in Europe and beyond, in an increased social instability leading to violence. Currently we have these pockets of completely impoverished population and these are easy prey for violent extremism and for the radicalization of our own societies.

The question we constantly have is: what should we do?

I would say that if we have learnt something from our recent past is that if interdependence was – and is – a great source of stability, we have also learnt that it is a great source of instability just as well. We need to find ways to turn it back around then make this interdependence being again a greater source of stability than it is of instability, and that goes not only for the Balkan countries but for Europe as well.

Balkans are also a successful case of transatlantic co-operation and I would plea that this co-operation should continue to be present in the Balkans, to finish the unfinished business and to help resist the negative pressure. Indeed, in the Balkans, we not only have this corruption coming from the inside, but we also have various negative influences (Turkey, but also China, Russia and the Middle East). So, the

presence of Trans-Atlantic Community in the Balkans is of vital importance to combat these influences.

There are several illiberal forces that are trying to put the strong foothold in the region. More Europe is essential; the action oriented research and training activities are needed together with the EU and the Trans-Atlantic Community. Support to civil society which is diminishing and it is of vital importance if we want to combat crime and corruption so to make the region a reliable partner for the Trans-Atlantic Community.

Balkan countries also should be at the table together with the EU officials and others to design action plans. For example, we definitely need the revision of security structure and it should be oriented to some sort of civil-military structure, where the society, through civil society, should be part of it.



PAUL RADU

THE REGIONAL ORGANIZED CRIMINAL NETWORKS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON CIVIL SOCIETY. THE WAY AHEAD

It's true that Transatlantic and regional cooperation are very important in combating organized crime, but unfortunately this does not quite happen. At least, it does not happen to an extent that would stop criminals from doing business. There are two more points here: firstly, it is impossible for law enforcement confined to national borders to fight criminals without borders, and secondly, we have a huge problem, nowadays, with the world's financial system and with the banks.

When we started investigating drug trafficking, one of the biggest drug trafficking cases in the Balkans has been the so called Šarić's *gang*, a network of cocaine smugglers that operated all the way from South America to the Balkans and to Western Europe. They actually brought to Italy lot of cocaine via Argentina and Uruguay. At the beginning of the investigation, we contacted the local law enforcement in Serbia, in Belgrade, in Podgorica and in other places. The police was not very co-operative with journalists – which is what happens in the Balkans; then we followed their public moves and work. They were indicting Darko Šarić and some second level criminals in his network but we felt there was something missing.

At that point, this happened in 2010, I went to Buenos Aires and among the things I had to do there, I talked to a judge that was instrumenting the Darko Šarić case for the Argentinian side. He was very happy to share some information with me because, according to him, the case was closed. The Argentinian law enforcement arrested Serbian and other Balkan's criminals in Buenos Aires and in Uruguay, they confiscated tons of drugs and he was happy to share all the files he had. I consulted these files and what I found out was that Darko Šarić was not the most important in the network; there were other people much more important than him. What happened was that Serbians were not touching these people, the EU was not touching these other people, so the law enforcement in a few countries could not see the whole network. We published the story on these criminals that were missing from the police cases in Serbia, among them a person called Rodol-

jub Radulović turned out being in touch with high level politicians in Belgrade, including high level security advisors to the Prime Minister of Serbia.

The Darko Šarić case highlights two important issues: first, there is only national interests when it comes to dealing with organized crime; the American law enforcement, being paid with American experts' money, will defend American interests. If a network affects these interests, they will back up the fight against that network. But, unfortunately, the rest of the network is out there, still operating and affecting other countries. The second is that these structures can reach the highest level of government, not just in the Balkans, but in many other parts of the world.

The fact that there is no real cooperation across borders is one element; the second one is that criminals are co-operating very well across frontiers. The main problem is that criminals are much smarter than law enforcement, because they have access to resources – we are talking about money, lawyers, accountants and very clever people they hire, together with hackers. Try to imagine a law enforcement officer sitting in an office somewhere in Pristina or in Belgrade or elsewhere, trying to match the way of thinking of a criminal that is travelling everywhere, that is active every time, that has contacts all over the place. The fight is very unequal. Organized crime, in fact, does have natural enemies at global level, and we are looking a lot into all sort of treaties concluded between governments and those which are not “officials”.

On top of that, what we have seen with our latest project, published just two weeks ago and called “*The Russian Laundromat*”¹, explains that the world banking system is very weak and criminals are taking advantage from it. In the Russian Laundromat, we documented more than 20 billion US dollars flowing out of Russia, via one bank in Moldova, two banks in Latvia, all the way to the world, including Italy, Slovenia and Serbia. So, 20 billion were sent by core groups of 20 British companies. They did not have beneficial ownership. Some of the biggest banks of the world received these money in their account without knowing who was sending the money; they couldn't have known because the criminals put together systems where beneficial owners were hidden behind proxies, behind poor people residing in small villages in Ukraine, in Moldova or in Russia.

In this case, we interviewed the banks and what they said was that they conducted their due diligence, they saw the companies were in good standings but they couldn't really find out who was owning these companies. They blamed the lack of personnel in their compliance department or blamed the law enforcement that did not inform them about the problem with this money. One particular call from the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation was relevant because the bank said “yes, we had problems with these transfers and this is because there

¹ It's a complex system for laundering more than \$20 billion in Russian money stolen from the government by corrupt politicians or earned through organized crime activity. For more information, please visit the link <https://www.reportingproject.net/therussianlaundromat/>

is not enough cooperation and exchange of information between the public and the private sector”.

Just imagine how much 20 billions with unknown origin could buy. If you look ten years back in time, you would see that the drug cartels from Mexico were using Eastern European banks to launder billions and billions again. In total, they laundered more than 300 billion dollars. So, think what this money can buy and think about small countries like Moldova, Serbia that received this money flows and tried to match these flows against the aids received to increase their security and their borders.

Again, it was an unequal fight and something really must change.



FLORIAN QEHAJA

KOSOVO STUDY CASE: LESSONS TO BE LEARNED IN THE FIGHT AGAINST VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND CRIMINALITY

I will touch upon two of the main security challenges in the Western Balkans: the organized crime and corruption on the one side and, violent extremism on the other.

In principles, these two challenges seem to be different and they look different but they are quite interlinked. We are talking about two types of non-traditional security challenges. One is undermining the economic security while the other one the societal security.

It is interesting enough that, for example, if you have recruiters of ISIS or al-Nusra in the region, one of the narratives that they use is referring to the lack of legitimacy of the public institutions and that politicians are corrupted. Vice versa, you have companies, like we have found in Kosovo, that were doing tax evasion and eventually funding ISIS fighters to go to Syria. Indeed, you see there is a link between these two security challenges.

When we talk about organized crime and corruption, you have to understand that corruption is one of the main element of organised crime and we need to highlight this. Sometimes, the international community is too preoccupied with what we call the “exaggerated stability” to make sure that the elites are happy; unfortunately, the unintended consequences are overshadowing the real problems we have with corruption and organised crime.

As long as we suffer for a limited economic growth, corruption is gathering unlimited resources like, I make just an example, in Kosovo where the public administration represents the main employer, often colluded with the national political parties which lead to the wide spreading of nepotism. This is basically considered one of the main elements of corruption (not only in Kosovo). Then, we have high level of corruption in the procurement and in the tendering procedures, and this has as effects limited budget or limited economic growth. All of these are basically considered to be two of the main security challenges of our society, a society which is not in the position to speak up because of limited alternatives.

In terms of cross borders threats, Kosovo was not affected by the waves of refugees as it was the case of Macedonia and Serbia. However, criminal networks of drug trafficking use Kosovo as transit country, especially through the northern ports, and with the help of illegal cooperation between different groups, drug passes through Serbia and then in the West.

When we talk about religious extremism, we have about between 700 to 900 people that went to fight to Syria and Iraq from Western Balkans. We need to be careful because we are not talking only about people having some sort of combats readiness. We have women who have been following the husbands, we have kids who were born within the conflict. Basically, we must not see it from a classical security perspective. We rather think the problem is societal and not ideological – there is a new wave of ideologies that spread in the Balkans after the conflict which have the agenda to practicing in a way never happened before.

Especially the Salafi movement and the Takfiri movement have been affecting the well-being of the society. After the conflict in the region, the Balkans became open towards the west, it was more than evident that people were endorsing some sort of ideology which is contrary with secular order and traditions. When we talk about personal characteristics of people. – believe me or not – you cannot find a single characteristic that can be observed to all the people who have been subjected to ideologies. There are different personal ego, ideological, economic, societal characteristics, but all of those make a puzzle that attract young people to be subjected to violent extremism.

Suddenly we have some preachers who became more attractive than teachers. So, our question is “why do we have the case of some recruiters who happen to be more attractive than teachers and representatives of the community?” It is clear we have a crisis of institutions and secular order.

When we talk about potential security threats and potential terrorist attacks in the Balkans, we believe that the potential is much lower than in the Western Europe for a number of reasons. One of these reasons is the sense of belonging of radicalised individuals to the community they live – do not forget we are talking about small society. Thus, they would rather decide to make some attacks towards the news enemies, than against their own community. This does not mean we exclude ultimately the option, but we see that the potential is lower comparing to western Europe. However, we noticed that while nobody left Kosovo joining the conflict in Syria over last two years, through the social media have been launched open call to act locally – meaning to spread the ideology and potentially conduct terrorist activities in the country where they live. We think now it is much more complex to deal with the problem of violent extremism than it was few years ago. Actually, we need to admit that there were positive steps in this regard. Sometimes we are bit cynical because while there is a single voice in terms of counter terrorism extremism, there is no single voice in terms of combating corruption and organized crime because politicians are affected, too.

So, there is national unity when it comes to countering problems but it should be seen from a developing perspective, because we believe that our countries and our communities are the more prosperous, the less will be the possibility of recruitment. We are late in terms of prevention and we do not see prevention as detecting the minds of people rather they will eventually conduct terrorist activities, but in terms of investing in the rest of population so they are not subjected to this ideology; it is a much more complex picture than we think and it needs to be seen holistically, not necessarily with the classical counter terrorism means.

What we do in terms of anti-extremism is that we need to have holistic approach rather than policing; we need to have consultative processes between communities and the state authorities. We would need clear prospects – recently, we are burdening the local communities members with lots of workshops and conferences but mayors and the representatives of these community ask whether we could do more for this problem. No air dropping of consultancy, no way of considering this as a market, rather we invited the donors to invest directly in these communities so to decrease the potential of the violent extremism.

Lastly, I would like to say something upon the regional security co-operation because these two issues (corruption and extremism) cannot be handled and tackled without security and cooperation. It is a cross border problem.

First, we need to have in mind that regional security cooperation is in place. However, when it is seen from the Kosovo or Albania perspective, the security cooperation is not as satisfactory as it could be. In the northern parts of Western Balkans, we notices that it is more likely to be a bilateral co-operation in accordance to the linguistic membership. There is no a complete picture of regional security co-operation to tackle with the new security challenges that we have. When we speak particularly about regional security initiative, Kosovo is not part of the former SECI, or now SELEC, and police conventions deal with other security initiatives.

You cannot think of tackling any security challenge as long as there is a black hole in term of regional security cooperation and even bilateral, because we see that there is a very weak bilateral cooperation concerning security aspects. At least, seeing from the Kosovo perspective, there is a very good cooperation with Albania, a quite good cooperation with Montenegro, very limited cooperation with Macedonia and no cooperation with Serbia. We understand the political position of Serbia towards Kosovo but we don't understand the continual rejection to security cooperation.

This lack of cooperation between our countries has been used by criminals and then we have violent extremism operating in Skopje also crossing the border with Kosovo we could not check any evidence of intelligence of cooperation between Kosovo and Macedonia. Although some of the individuals we were assuming they were promoting ISIS ideology have been imprisoned, this is a very small part of the problem's resolution

Session 4

THE PATH TO INTEGRATION



Traditional Balkan Spring Festival costume -detail bells





GORAN SVILANOVIC

THE WAY AHEAD FOR BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA TOWARDS A VIABLE STATE

Imagine you are making real political decision; you are a Prime Minister of one of the EU or NATO member countries. And if you are using the phrase “illiberal forces” listing Russia, China and Turkey – probably the list is longer – if you are in that mindset, the first thing you do is asking “are they the bad guys or are we the bad guys?”. That’s all you decide.

The answer coming from this panel about democracy, it is not only about democracy, but also about geopolitics. It is awful if the position is radicalized because these two things must go together. I highly appreciated the “accession process”, as it is defined by the EU, because it should be a kind of purification process; same goes for the NATO membership because it is a process which helps reform the countries.

We at the Regional Cooperation Council are doing a public opinion survey that is called *Balkan Opinion Barometer* and I will give you some figures to understand what is happening. The most recent survey was carried in November and December 2016. Although there are more than 100 questions, I am personally focused on what people answered to the question “what do you think about your country joining the EU?”. The answer was unison except for Serbia. In all six economies, a huge majority supported the accession while in Serbia the situation is a bit different. Last year, 21% said it was good while 31% said it was bad. In November 2016, according to the last poll, answering at the same question, 21% raised to 26% pro-EU; while 31% remained unchanged. More intriguing is another question: “When is this going to happen?”. There we have 3+3. Last year, in Belgrade, Sarajevo and Skopje, between the 28% and 33% answered never. In November 2016, in Sarajevo and Skopje the percentage remained the same, but in Serbia raised to 38% saying never.

I don’t have a problem, is everything caused by scepticism. The mood can change through strong engagement of the government in a campaign, for example. My problem is that basically we now have one third of population in three out of six

countries who does not believe in the accession. What if they engage to prove that they are right? That is my problem, what I call the self-fulfilling prophecy.

Based on the situation previously described, but also on the situation of the EU, business is usually the policy that is not working. I will try to offer elements or what I see as new policies of the EU incomes to the region.

1) I know it's tricky, but I am actually inviting EU institutions to consider engaging on bilateral disputes in the region. Equally, I have in mind those which bring together non-equals: the EU member countries and non-EU members. When it comes to equals I think we will be able to deal. When it comes to Brussels dialogue, it is one of the best results of the last years, both for the EU and for us in the region. Anyway, I am kindly asking to consider my first point: consider finding a way to engage on issues to bring together non-equals. We are usually believing it is only the name issue, but now we see there is one another coming and, before the end of this year, when the Commission table proposal for Albania to start negotiation, we will see another issue coming.

2) Starting negotiation with everybody. My idea would be that, at least, you do the pre-screening through Chapter 23 and 24 of the Enlargement process, and this is what we are discussing today. This is the way to engage with the region: do the pre-screening, engage the administration because only when you start dealing with these elements, it stops being political narrative and become daily routine of administration.

3) Leverage funding. This is the most difficult idea. Now we have the second biggest contribute leaving the EU to the United Kingdom, so it's almost impossible. No one, probably, will give more money. I will give some figures. I will use my country, Serbia, against Bulgaria. Immediate neighbour, same territory, same population. Serbia will be grateful to the EU because in this financial perspective Serbia would receive 1.5 billion euros from pre-structural funds, while Bulgaria would receive 9 billion from structural funds. When do you think we are going to close this gap? What kind of growth we are going to produce in Serbia? This is reality and Croatia is now in, and we will see in the next years the similar development. Therefore, aware of lack of money, at least consider opening IPA¹ for health and education.

These are my elements of new EU policies and the last is what we do in the Regional Cooperation Council, in close cooperation with the European Commission, and this is what I call "regional economic integration". I am not referring to single market or custom union; regional economic integration might be driven by the notions of removing barriers, liberalize trade in services and then, perhaps, consider single information space when it comes to ICT interoperability (having in mind roaming), to follow the model, among the six, implemented by the EU.

I would even go that far to use the following phrase, consider advanced selective

¹ Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)

pre-membership in certain areas for the Western Balkans. What do I see behind this phrase is do what you are already doing in the field of energy within the energy community. What is it doing in the energy community? That is a transmission of the euro regulation in the non-EU territories. This is what the energy community is doing. Energy may be one area, but why not education, why not security. Why has chapter related to common foreign security policy not being started with Serbia? Then you will have an instrument to ask Serbs “are you there or here?”. But this process has been delayed, and as long it has delayed our country will not get an answer. Therefore, my advice is defining these areas in which you would be able to bring the Balkans in, although not into a membership of the EU, but energy policy, security policy, education, health and many other areas. Why not a full implemented model which is going to be completed in a year in the EU and in several years in the Balkans. This would bring them in because the providers are the same.

I also like to refer to Bosnia Herzegovina. I think the only answer for the country is negotiations.

It is fairly possible to kill the date on agreement. Then, trying to introduce a concept different from the European, Italian, Serbian and German of civil law whose constitution is a book covering everything. We are not going to get that soon in Bosnia but start negotiations. The key problem here is who is sitting at the table to decide for our country. On the other side, we are going to have EU. Then, we must make sure that these guys sitting on our side are aware that whatever they agree in the process of negotiation will have to be put and written in Chapter 35 for Bosnia Herzegovina, which I call “functionality chapter”. In this process of negotiations, they will probably kill some institutions, they will create new one. When, eventually, the EU says that key pre-requisites fit, then they go in Chapter 35 and then the you continue the process. At a certain point, this Chapter will become the constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina; they have produced themselves, it will last ten years.

My last advice is, ten years after the beginning of negotiations would be much better than twenty years ago. Therefore, it could also take fifteen years, but reaching the goal to have Bosnian people writing their constitution (covering all areas of activities). That will be much more of what they have in their hands today.



ARIAN STAROVA

ALBANIA BETWEEN EU AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

1. THE SITUATION OF THE EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATIONS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND RELATED SECURITY CONCERNS

I have been thinking for many years about the obstacles to the Euro-Atlantic integration and about the forces which drive us ahead. I will try to give shape to what I think.

It has been for long a widely accepted expert and general opinion that, for as much as the future of our Western Balkan region could be predicted, it was impossible any longer to think of large armed conflicts similar to the ones of its distant and near past history.

However, very recently, it has been almost generally shared an idea that the Western Balkans might become a renewed source of added security concerns. So a normal question arises: what happened there?

To my opinion, three are the types of problems existing in the Western Balkans, at this time. *First*, they are security and stability problems. *Second*, they are serious problems with the democratic values which lay in the foundations of the democratic societies. *Third*, they are economic problems. And all the three of these problems are interlinked with each other.

As regards the *first group of problems*, I would mention the issues linked with the relations between Serbia and Kosova, relations between Macedonians and Albanians in Macedonia, interethnic relations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, influence of the extra-regional terrorist and other criminal organized networks in the Balkans, existence of residual ethnic mistrust, present political crisis in Albania and Macedonia, over-delay of the Macedonian membership in NATO, slowdown of the European integration processes in the Western Balkans, lack of unity inside the EU countries with regard to the recognition of the Republic of Kosova. We have recently seen how, despite the progress, Serbia and Kosova have repeatedly

exchanged harsh retorts between them, or how insistent are the Bosnian Serbs in cherishing the ideas of an independent republic of their own separate from Bosnia-Herzegovina, or how certain substantial Macedonian political forces play on the Albanian-Macedonian relations which might become such a dangerous issue there, or how influential individual politicians use electoral rhetoric at the expense of the Balkans stability, or how Russia makes hints on the fragile security situation in the Balkans. Nevertheless, I myself belong to those who don't believe there might eventually be a repeated conflict in the Balkans, but this is only my thinking whereas the concerns are already there and beyond.

The *other group of problems* in the Western Balkans relates to the abuse of democratic values and comprises phenomena like corruption and pragmatic misuse of the political power for personal profits, links between politics and the organized crime, lack of the freedom of media, weak or double standard rule of law, illicit trafficking of drugs and human beings, widespread electoral political demagoguery, a certain popular suspicion on democratic societies because of their regional deficiencies, growing indifference towards European integration, etc.

Sometimes, the Western Balkan region makes an impression as if the old communist regimes have been only replaced by political elites who have forgotten that they are elected to come to power, first of all, to serve to their people and their interests. To me, this is very serious as all these weaknesses of the regional democratic societies are so heavily linked with the human security and social unrests. And, here, I refrain myself of going further in elaborating on the possible ideological consequences that might come after other state actors might enter more actively into play in the Balkans region.

A *third group of problems* is the ones having to do with the economy. While the Western Balkans could have been a vast territory of major regional joint projects of Balkan and European countries, it is far behind that. Of course there are a lot of excuses for that, especially after the global financial crisis, but the economic problems going from high unemployment to the fall of the standard of living weigh upon the general situation in the Balkans and on the enthusiasm on the European integration. And where there is an economic need, unfortunately there are always various contenders to try to fill the void. This set of problems and probably other ones make this Balkan situation recall us lessons coming from the Balkans history of the last century which has clearly evidenced of unpredicted or unexpected breaks of peace and security in this region.

I believe, it should be viewed as a strange paradox that the Western Balkans countries export security to distant regions nowadays, while at home they still remain stuck to some security problems mostly linked with their past history at a time when other security threats from outside the region should be its only first priority.

Fortunately, the seeds of a long-term regional cooperation have been already sown in the Western Balkans and they will increasingly bear fruit as these recent

past years have evidenced. The common interests of the peoples in the Balkans seem to be much stronger than the external separatist ones.

2. ALBANIA BETWEEN A POPULAR CROSS-PARTY STRONG POLITICAL WILL AND SLOW PRACTICAL PROGRESS TO ITS EU MEMBERSHIP

How much I would like that my country Albania was already an EU member! However, Albania is an EU candidate country and a NATO member and, it is a tremendous progress in more than twenty years.

There is a strong popular support, political will and determination in Albania which have been, since the democratic changes in the beginning of the years 1990, cross-party political attitudes and which are still there and strong.

However, as the developments of the recent years in my country have shown, it is not at all enough. And, here, Albania has a lot of problems which slow down its progress towards EU.

Among the concrete problems my country faces with regard to the European integration, I would mention some of them which are persisting and pertinent to Albania alone and which I consider very likely to the region, too.

First, material, ideological and moral high corruption in Albania's political elite. Common features of this corruption are the abandonment of the peoples interests, democratic principles and pursuit of financial profits. There are several political individuals who are largely well-known as corrupted, but they not only have remained so far unpunished, but they still hold key positions in policymaking. Unfortunately this involves both wings of the two main political grouping, ruling parties and opposition. This situation brings about popular disillusion and pessimism and makes the people still think of leaving from Albania. One year ago, NATO Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow said that "Our first line of defense is not troops, or heavy weapons, but effective governance: institutions that are ... on the side of the citizen. Every member of the NATO Alliance is committed to our values of freedom, democracy, the rule of law and human rights. We must all continue to invest in those values every day ...".¹

Second, because of this varied corruption in the Albanian political elite, there is also a criminal network of drug cultivation linked with politics. The formula by which this criminality has been organized and carried out in Albania is "allow ten cultivators or traffickers and punish one or two of them allegedly by law" in order that an international impression is shaped via media about a so called uncompromised fight against these criminal activities. For the common Albanians, it is a crystal-clear truth the very fact of the involvement of politics and official authorities in this criminal activity.

¹ Alexander Vershbow, Speech at the Foundation Institute for Strategic Studies, Krakow, 04 March 2016.

Third, there is a very corrupted system of judiciary, in Albania. It has very seriously hindered the foreign investment in the country, over-postponed the process of restitution of the old private properties to the Albanian citizens and manipulated hundreds and thousands of citizen's legal trials. In addition, this corrupted judiciary system has protected the corrupted politicians by forging in this way a covert beneficial alliance between them for a long time. This is the main reason of why the judicial reform in Albania is in a stalemate for many months now and, moreover, has provoked the most recent political crisis in Albania. Behind this political crisis developing now in Albania, there are political individuals from both the ruling parties and the opposition who do not want the judiciary reform as both of them they are corrupted and afraid of a truly reformed justice system, while they all swear to it. The real "fight" behind the scene is between those who want to capture the judiciary and those who want a real judiciary reform who are overwhelmingly supported by the Albanian citizens.

Fourth, lack of free and fair elections. In more than twenty years, there were almost never real free and fair elections in Albania as the OSCE/ODIH reports have periodically shown. It should be taken for granted that this is because of the corruption in the democratic elite of Albania. It also goes without saying that, who want to steal the elections, they never mind the voters' or peoples' interests. It would be an extremely major step forward of Albania would really organize free and fair elections in the coming June 18. But again, there is no trust in the present government which has given much evidence of elections fraud and corruption. The demand of the opposition for a technical government just for organizing elections and pushing forward the judicial reform sounds realistic, but a persisting government rejection could provoke social unrests.

There could be two ways on which the European integration process advances, one based on waiting for Albania to completely meet the EU integration criteria before the EU membership and, the other one, which may consider the EU integration criteria to be met by Albania inside the EU. I think both the ways are equally suitable, but under the current conditions of the recent international developments, the second one would be more realistic. The above mentioned present problems of Albania might serve as hotbed of other political or criminal activities coming from outside Albania and the region and at the same time they have a bad impact on its European integration.

3.ON THE PRESENT FACTORS PRESSURING ON THE WESTERN BALKANS COUNTRIES ON THEIR SECURITY AND COMMITMENT TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

Normally, there are certain actors and factors that play their roles in the Western Balkans general situation.

First, there are some remaining aggressive nationalistic mentalities in all the Bal-

kans countries which influence the various inter-ethnic relations in the Balkan region. It was just this mentality which helped in organizing the “train show” bound for North Mitrovica covered with provocative slogans against Kosova, some months ago, or in constructing some kind of a tiny “Berlin wall” there. Unfortunately, I have a strong impression that the political elites of the region are much more dependent on the old nationalist mentalities than the common peoples. They consider a normal attitude, for example, making use of nationalist slogans during elections, but at the elections there should be, at least two intentions: gaining votes and illuminating the people with new ideas. It is the duty of the political elites not to remain stuck to old paradigms of political action and they must guide and teach the voters with mentalities and ideas of a cooperating region free of negative nationalisms of any kind. The main guiding principle in the relations of ethnically different Balkan nations that “Absolute respect for all our national identities as Western Balkan’s great wealth” is much more preserved by the common citizens of the region. The Balkan peoples have already shown that they are capable of establishing good or even excellent relations in our region. I would like to add that, for as long as the policymaking in our region will not be seen as a mere political competition of ideas, but more as a means of gripping to political power at any cost, this could result in an impediment for our security cooperation and cooperation in general.

Second, as it is already well-known that the international behavior of Russia in violation of the international law and agreements in Moldova, Georgia, Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, has turned it into a possible security risk to the Balkans. Once Russia has adopted a policy of extension of its influence by violating the international law and agreements formerly accepted by it, that political behavior could be repeated in a geopolitical space where its influence and intentions are also clearly witnessed by old and recent historic developments.

In a study on the Black Sea region, it is said: “In fact, Russia seems to have acquired a strategic *place d’armes* for further incursions in its ‘near abroad’, seen this time in a broader sense to include the Balkans, Eastern Mediterranean and the Levant. Available evidence suggests, in addition to threatening the sovereignty of Ukraine, Georgia and Republic of Moldova, an intent to control navigation in the Black Sea maritime space, to protect Russia’s communication lines and energy transportation routes, to intimidate NATO members Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, and to interdict the access of NATO forces to the Black Sea.”²

This behavior of Russia coupled with the so-called “hybrid war” for influence in the Balkans constitutes another impediment to our security cooperation. The accession of Montenegro in NATO will be one “lost battle” for Russia, but the truth seems to be that this ‘hybrid war’ continues and other “invisible battles” are

2 “Why Black Sea Matters”, study by New Strategy Center of Romania and Hudson Institute of USA, p.8.

looming. Russia will try to make use of the recent situation in the EU countries due to the financial constraints, unprecedented immigrant flows, revival of populist movements and its internal problems after Brexit.

Third, another factor may be considered the insufficient attention and action of the European Union to the regional political problems of the Western Balkans. It has been too long a time watching a Western Balkans with lingering problems like those of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Greek-Macedonian dispute over the name of Macedonia, confusing situation in the North of Kosova, full implementation of the Ohrid Agreement, non-recognition of Kosova by five EU countries.

Fourth, under the current political situation in the Western Balkans combined with its poor economies, its fragile stability and security, the phenomenon of Brexit might become a factor influencing badly on the regional social energies devoted to the Euro-Atlantic integrations. Other state actors may try to gain impetus from this difficult situation.

Finally, there are also the international terrorist and extremist networks which make a lot of efforts to influence the Western Balkans as the numbers of foreign fighters of ISIS from this region showed. However and very fortunately, this phenomenon proved to be very short-lived and only motivated by economic reasons and poverty in the Balkans.

4. POSSIBLE ADJUSTMENTS TO THE EURO-ATLANTIC POLICIES ON THE WESTERN BALKANS

In general, maybe, some adjustments to the NATO and EU policy would benefit to the security and integration of the Western Balkans.

An accelerated Euro-Atlantic integration process for all the countries of the Western Balkans would immensely strengthen its stability and security and also boost its cooperative development.

In terms of the Atlantic integration, e.g., this indefinite situation of Macedonia in front of the “open doors of NATO” is incessantly cherishing loose mythical-conspiracy theories on the dissolution of Macedonia, but the least illusion of this serve as motive for re-opening a Pandora Box in the Western Balkans.

Also, the European Union could as well refrain itself from viewing its membership criteria too meticulously just because as we all know from our experience there is no perfect completion of standards or criteria. To my opinion, Brexit phenomenon should serve as a catalyst an acceleration of the European integration of the Western Balkans.

The European Union and the NATO as a political-military alliance could do more by putting it its agendas and dealing with the lingering political problems of the Western Balkans such as the Greek-Macedonian dispute over the name of Macedonia, full implementation of the Ohrid agreement, encouragement of Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Slovakia and Spain to recognize the Republic of Kosova,

pushing hard for an improvement of the inter-ethnic relation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, public condemnation of random nationalist rhetoric, investigation of illegal properties of politicians, etc. so that the EU political pressure is effective and productive.

In the economic field, EU support for regional joint projects must be a first priority as an efficient way of making use of the resources, but also as a way of binding countries tightly together on the basis of complementariness they generate.

I would like to say again in the end that all the problems I mentioned here, can't push the Western Balkans in a war, but they continuously generate loss of time and social energy in a region which has lost so much in its past. It is so important for all these countries to be helped to concentrate on their long-term common interests and become increasingly aware of our common house called European Union. The key-word for this can only be an ever increasing substantial cooperation among them.



BROOKE SMITH-WINDSOR

THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE AND ITS ROLE IN THE REGION

As already been mentioned I don't come from the region but I do come from NATO and the topic of this discussion is the relation between the region and NATO and the path to integration of those two. Therefore, my introduction addresses the question posed for this section: must the answer to the path to integration begin with the youth, particularly within the Balkan region but also within our respective member state?

If we cannot convince the 16 to 24 or 26 years old of the value of their future NATO membership, and we do so through media that they understand, we might as well pack up our bags and go home.

Here, ladies and gentlemen, I would suggest to you we clearly need to do more, much more. Why do I say this? Take Kosovo, for example, where NATO has had a military presence for almost two decades, it is almost 20 years now. I was very surprised, indeed, during a lecture series recently organized in Pristina at the State University, when more than one individual remarked me and I quoted "where have you been?", "where has NATO been to explain to the next generation what NATO is, how it works and what is the value that it brings to its members?". This was the first time for many of those students of political science and international law to have been exposed, not only to NATO officials, but to a discussion about NATO and KFOR. I might add that this came within weeks of high-level visit of the NATO Secretary-General.

We clearly need to do more. More to shape young minds by engaging with universities. Leveraging social media, organizing more models' NATO, for example, in the region and elsewhere. It is simply not enough for senior officials and groups of experts to speak among themselves when often we simply preaching to the converted.

Let's not forget that this is a region where, as we have heard, we have serious competitors to the good news story that is NATO, and is the European Union, the so-called integration narrative. Of course, it has already been mentioned the

counter initiatives proposed by Russia, as well as ISIS and others. So, what should the NATO initiative be about? I will share with you some ideas of what I think should be the core message, for NATO in particular, to the youths of the Balkans.

The *first* message has to be that when it comes to enlargement, NATO has not and never will be the deem other. The message is up to you, is up to your nation, your own free will to decide whether or not you see value in NATO membership, and whether you wish to embark on the path to achieve it. It is your decision, based on the Helsinki Final act, which enables parties to decide on their own free will to join bilateral or multilateral treaties, including the right to be or not to be parties of treaty of alliance. This is a message of free will to leap into the NATO family, as I depicted here, it's not a trivial one. As we have heard, and I too have been to Montenegro, working toward the NATO membership. We have seen that counter narrative saying that there is a deliberate NATO expansion. Strategy has played here, being devised in Brussels and Washington. This is not the case. The free will of nation and peoples to join NATO or not.

Second, when it comes to the value of NATO membership, on top of our list, I would suggest is the often unspoken yet ever important NATO role of pacifier of the denationalization of the defence policymaking.

As we know, NATO's enlargement has dramatically changed political landscape in Europe. It has contributed to the transformation in a Kantian way. Over the course of half a century, European states have created a kind of Kantian postmodern specific union that Emmanuel Kant spoke about. This, in a nut shell, is the idea that democratic states don't fight one another. Perpetual peace, a pacific union is a key message for the people and particularly for the youth of the Balkans.

In other words, a message that even once worst enemies can reconcile to the point where they can take a selfie together. The message is clear and we should hope the same for Albanians and Kosovars and Serbs, for instance.

Third message should be that for former communist state, NATO and EU membership are part of the same Rubik's cube. The Rubik's cube of integration. We have just heard yesterday that NATO membership comes first and we are talking about the former Soviet republics, the Baltic states, former Yugoslav republic. Alliance membership has been the *de facto* pre-requisite for European union membership. Why is this the case? To demonstrate that internal security and stability are in order to pave the way to more complex adoption of the EU *acquis*, and the comprehensive socio-economic integration that European Union entails.

Fourth message the value of mutual collective defense. In colloquial terms, the notion of all for one and one for all. Whether the smallest or the greatest of nations. A simple message but an important one.

Fifth message should be the value of NATO membership as the so-called force multiplier. A force multiplier of a nation foreign-policy, of its identity, and expression of its values and interests at the international stages. In other words, the sum is greater than the individual part. For many member states, NATO membership

forges the opportunity to have a country to tap into a network of connections. I work very closely with Montenegro Prime Minister over the last year and a half, and prior to his departure he has often spoken in this term when it would reflect on Montenegro contribution in Afghanistan, for instance, or indeed the embedding of Montenegro naval personnel in joint forces command in Naples and elsewhere.

The *six* message I would share with you that I think it's important to impart to the youths of the Balkans is that, even if you decide all what's I have spoken about, it is valuable for you andailable for your nation as I think it should be. and even if you achieve The NATO membership, do not forget that the path to integration does not stop there. New and old members alike have ongoing obligations to contribute to NATO's continue adaptation to meet new challenges. In other words, you cannot just be security consumer but you must be security provider as well. That's the deal and it means, in a nutshell, that NATO membership is a journey, it is not a destination.

To sum up, I have shown you six messages that I think we would do well at NATO to read double our efforts to communicate to the youths of the Balkans region on the path to integration. You know there is every indication in my mind that they are hungry to receive it.



DIMITRIJ RUPEL

A DYSFUNCTIONAL BALKAN? IS INTEGRATION AN EFFECTIVE ANTIDOTE AGAINST THE TEMPTATION OF FRAGMENTATION IN THE REGION?

One sunny day in the spring of 1991, a few weeks before the Slovenian declaration of independence, I met here in Rome with the elder statesman Amintore Fanfani. My intention was to persuade Fanfani about the necessity of Slovenian independence, while he expressed concerns about the disintegration – not so much of Yugoslavia, but – of Soviet Union and Socialism in general. He said that every day, he was praying for Gorbachov. In this context, he mentioned that the traditional glue (“colla”) that had kept together Eastern Europe and by default, secured stability of all Europe, was spent, but new glue has not been found. He wondered whether *participation* could become the glue of the future.

Later this year – a year of many anniversaries – exactly one century will separate us from the October revolution of 1917. The product of this revolution, Soviet Union, represented – for a long time - *the wrong kind of integration*. In 1945, the model was transplanted to Socialist Yugoslavia, a country plagued by difficulties from the very beginning in 1918. Integration of societies, nations or states has to make sense. Successful integration is founded on *common values* and *common identities*. Integration needs *binding material*, a “glue” that will not be imposed, but freely and spontaneously embraced by the subjects of integration.

Among the Balkan countries are often mentioned: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Turkey. Recently, a new label was introduced: *Western Balkans*, meaning the components of former Yugoslavia minus Slovenia plus Albania. In any case, the countries mentioned are not at all a homogeneous group: some are members of the EU (Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Romania, Slovenia). These countries (plus Albania and Turkey) are also members of NATO, while only two of them are members of the Eurozone and the Schengen agreement (Greece, Slovenia). It seems that the members of the EU and NATO – compared to the rest of the Balkan countries – are considered to be “on the safe side”, while the rest (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia) look somehow endangered.

The President of the EU Commission Jean-Claude Juncker recently warned the American Vice-President that the U.S. should not praise countries leaving the EU (Brexit): “Do not invite others to leave, because if the EU collapses, you will have another war in the western Balkans. The only possibility for this tortured part of Europe is to have a European perspective. If we leave them to themselves — Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska, Macedonia, Albania, all of these countries — we will have a war again.”

The warning and numerous reports (and also the agenda of this conference) lead to the conclusion that the danger (of war?) is somehow connected with the delayed – or even lack of – integration of the Balkan countries into the Euro-Atlantic associations. The EU and NATO are considered as guarantees of peaceful development. They are considered as reconciliation- or even better, as peaceful-coexistence-projects. They are leaders of movements for peace.

At this point – as far as the Yugoslav crisis is concerned – one remark is necessary. While the EU was successful in dealing with the conflict between Slovenia and the Yugoslav army, later, other agencies, primarily NATO, were necessary to resolve the crises in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Dayton), Croatia, Kosovo and Serbia (Rambouillet). In the end, NATO bombed Belgrade. It seems that the EU was qualified to resolve easier cases, such as Slovenia, while it was incapable to resolve the more complicated ones. The disputed adherence of Slovenia to the group of Balkan countries may have made the job of the EU easier, while the legendary “tinderbox regions” mentioned by Juncker – and historically associated with the Ottoman Empire – produced most serious and tragic situations, and finally demanded substantial armed intervention.

On one hand, we are being warned that the lack of the Euro-Atlantic integration could increase instability for Balkan countries; but on the other hand, we are confronted with challenges to stability – mass migrations and terrorism – within the Euro-Atlantic community itself. The new American President has expressed some skepticism regarding continued American sponsorship of NATO, while Great Britain, another pillar of the Western community, is leaving the EU.

So, it seems that the Euro-Atlantic community lacks resolve to continue its service as a peace-project or, rather, as a general and supreme system of collective security. Some statements and complaints point in the direction of general crisis, while others hint at selective service: some countries will be protected, while others will not. In the Balkan case, the countries like Bosnia, Macedonia and Kosovo should be protected, but they could also be left out. Principle of selection might be applied, if Juncker’s scenario No. 3 (Europe of various speeds) would be implemented.

Let me, for a moment, dwell on the issue of former Yugoslavia. The idea of integration – of South Slavic nations – goes back to the time of WW I. Then, two concepts were discussed: the Slovenian-Croatian and the Serbian concept. The first anticipated a democratic state and an integration of two equal blocks: the state

composed of Slavs released from Austria-Hungary, and the Serbian state. In the end, the Serbian concept prevailed. According to it, Serbs, Croats and Slovenians were *one nation*. Tito's Yugoslavia tried to repair this problem with the introduction of the constitutional right to self-determination, but again, this "right" was useless, since it was contradicted by the principle of brotherhood and unity that was controlled by the Communist Party, another category of the Yugoslav constitution. So, integration founded on mistaken concepts is no "antidote against temptation of fragmentation".

Some analysts have argued that the EU had something in common with former Yugoslavia, since it too was faced with fragmentation or rather, disintegration. Actually, the EU today is divided into several groups of countries, or – as the official EU documents have it – *united in diversity*. In the EU, we advocate diversity and plurality. One aspect of this enthusiasm is *multiculturalism*, a concept that deserves thorough reflection in the light of substantial presence of immigrants from the South and from the East, in the light of potential cultural conflicts, fears of "a clash of civilizations" (Huntington) and terrorism. A basic item of the reflection agenda should be the question: how durable and how strong binding substance can be diversity?

Let us move 60 years in reverse, to the origins of the European community. This organization was launched to overcome the historic hostility between Germans and the French. The integration of 1957 was founded on common interests, i.e. on the conviction (encouraged by Americans) that, in the future, hostilities between European nations should be avoided by all means. The scenario was repeated in 1990 (in the Paris Charter) and in 2004 (with the Big Bang enlargement of the EU and NATO) when the East and the West came together or rather, when the borders of the West moved quite far to the East.

Today, the EU is facing a new radicalization of the paradoxical principle of *unity in diversity*. A differentiation of the EU into groups of faster and slower development, of inner core and periphery; or, as it has also been defined, formation of coalitions of the willing, can only mean less unity and more differences. Differences do not enjoy a reputation of secure binding material. To integrate the Balkan countries into the EU (and NATO), emphasis should not be on differences and differentiation, but on proximity and identity. Now, we should answer the question: what are the binding materials that would bind and keep together all Europeans and integrate into the Euro-Atlantic community also the Balkan countries.

This task is difficult, since the integration and disintegration processes in the Balkans are contradictory and paradoxical. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, we may, in fact, see tendencies of further fragmentation: as if the new units produced by the dissolution had not yet reached the appropriate size and order. Some countries in the region may be prepared to separate from one system to join another system. Some independent systems might be prepared to merge with other independent systems... Some separation and integration policies may be consequenc-

es of the stagnating, distant and difficult arrangements with the Euro-Atlantic community. Some Balkan politicians do not see integration with the Euro-Atlantic community – that has problems of its own – as realistic, and would rather try other combinations. More questions could be added: what standards for enlargement would be applied, if the EU divides into separate groups? Would the top category be open for new members? Would new members automatically land in the lower category?

So far, we have not answered the essential question about the binding material that should be used (and recommended) to appropriately and effectively *unite*, *not diversify* Europe and possibly the Euro-Atlantic community. In the past, the “materials” have been: socialism, reconciliation of former adversaries, ending the Cold War... Today, the glue should be caring about and defending the external borders of the European system, security, a revision of the political system that would give Europe appropriate leaders, maybe changed to become similar to the American presidential system... In the future, the EU could become – on the outside -more similar to a state, while on the inside, it would develop national identities. European identity does not exclude national/state identity.

As we can see, countries like Great Britain have problems identifying with the values prevailing in the EU. Between unity and diversity, they chose diversity. On the other hand, we see countries like Russia also interested in a differentiated EU. Let me – in this connection – mention the Bucharest NATO summit of 2008. Because at that summit, to humour an influential leader, NATO did not open its door to Georgia and Ukraine... Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Crimea and Donbass have been separated from their original systems. It seems that some Balkan countries could recover from the present turmoil easily, if they were offered a firm Euro-Atlantic perspective.

Session

CONCLUDING REMARKS



The Sofia Synagogue is the largest on the Balkan Peninsula and the 3 in Europe after Budapest and Amsterdam. Built in 1909 in Vienna which was later destroyed by the Nazis.



by a model of the synagogue



MACIEJ POPOWSKI

SPECIAL INTERVENTION

I think it is clear for everyone that with regard to enlargement policies we are operating in a different contexts such as Brexit, new administrations, populism and we are already in the middle of the debate about the future of Europe.

But still, the Balkans are very high on the agenda. I would even say that Balkans are begging for revenge after a few years of relative calm, at least in people minds. We all know the challenges, nationalist and divisive rhetoric, radicalization, foreign influences (including in the information sphere) and these pose additional challenges. The European leaders discussed on the Balkans, which is quite unusual because usually they spend time discussing about something else, but had a first discussion on the region in eleven years. President Junker, Federica Mogherini and Johannes Hahn are adding additional mile goals basically once a month, and this is correct because we need to be involved, we need to reaffirm the unequivocal support for the European perspective for the Western Balkans and stress the importance of continuing on the reform path, good neighbourhood relations and inclusive regional cooperation initiatives.

The discussion was focused on the dynamics from EU and NATO perspectives and these processes are separated but, at the same time, related. The conditions the counties have to meet in the enlargement process are strict but fair and they need every incentives to tackle the challenging reforms. Our commitment to this process has to remain credible because otherwise we will lose leverage.

EU is committed to the continuation of support based on the fundamental principles – I think nobody is questioning this. The focus is clearly on the rule of law, including security fundamental rights, democratic institutions and public administration reform, as well as on the economic development. The ongoing enlargement process is, first of all, about delivering reforms which more than other things can stabilize the counties. We are not talking about reforms coming from Brussels, they are not imposed but is necessary that these would be implemented because are good for the people. It's a good excuse to say that Brussels has told us to but

it's not always the case. What I mean is that every country needs effective judiciary, effective fight against corruption, functioning public administration and stronger economy.

On security dimension, which is a core topic, I admit that it remains a priority for the enlargement. We all underline the importance of rule of law, fight against organized crime, terrorism, radicalization. All this goes to heart of the fundamentals and to the famous Chapters 23 and 24 dealing with judiciary fundamental rights freedom and security.

Our objective is to ensure that the countries in the Balkans are secured and better equipped themselves to tackle organized crime, terrorism and radicalization. There is also a scope for more engagement and more cooperation between EU and NATO. In EU we have a political framework after all these years of uncertainty and that is the Warsaw Declaration. In particular, point 7 of the Declaration¹ referring to capacity building in the neighbourhood countries and in the Balkans. We take it very seriously, we engage a lot and we already agreed with our partners that we would take Bosnia and Herzegovina as a pilot country. We see how far we can get there and if it works well we will be able to expand it.

I am very happy because it is very badly needed that we combine our efforts and approaches to security, both EU and NATO, and there are opportunities to develop cyber security, hybrid threats or more information exchange. We are both military present in the region. I think this, more than ever, it's not the time for the European Union to withdraw from Bosnia. We must stay and we will consult with NATO.

To conclude, it is now more than ever vital to remain visibly engaged in the region. We need to engage in more public diplomacy, not only in those countries but also in our own countries. Enlargement is not a very popular policy but it is key for our own security as well as for the security of the countries in question.

We have to be very clear in our messaging that enlargement process remains irreplaceable to strengthen the countries of Western Balkans and to help support them in modernization on the path to access to European Union.

1 "If our neighbours are more stable, we are more secure. That is all the more relevant today, in light of the arc of instability beyond our borders. We are united in solidarity against terrorism, which represents an immediate and direct threat to our nations and the international community. We are ready to do more to help our partners provide for their own security, defend against terrorism, and build resilience against attack." The Warsaw declaration on Transatlantic Security, 8-9 July 2016



VINCENZO AMENDOLA

FINAL REMARKS

As you know Italy, this year, the Minister of Foreign Affairs together with Prime Minister, will lead the so-called Western Balkans Berlin Process negotiations with the European Union. The Summit will be held in Trieste and we are working a lot with the Commission to sum the gaps and on many projects coming from years. I would like to be clear: this is not a pretty diplomatic and bureaucratic negotiation. We are supporter because we had a vision that is not just related to the commercial trade agreement we have with the region.

First of all, the word enlargement. Enlargement after the Brexit, after what we are living in terms of unbalance between integration and disintegration within the 28 countries of EU, is a problem of reform of the democratic institutions we have in Europe, a problem of decision making process that is not based on postponing declaration after declaration. In this framework, related to the external one, the word enlargement is still related to the rhetoric of the European necessity or we have to shift? We think, after the Rome Declaration¹, that in reopening the negotiations among the European Union, after the Brexit, that was a result of long standing delay political and social process within the EU, nowadays, the word enlargement is the most useless word to use.

It is a problem of unity, of finding a new vision for the European dimension, that is geopolitical and not just bureaucratic, that is in terms of strengthening our alliance as Europeans, finding a new path of concrete form of integration and democratic institutions, and give sense to the fact that this alliance is a global player. For us the enlargement process – as it was organized from Thessaloniki 2003 – and after ten years when the success was just Croatia, in 2013, is not business as usual. It is not possible for the 28 as well as for the six Balkan countries.

¹ On the day proclaimed as the EU's 60th anniversary, with the Union looking weaker than ever, EU leaders adopted the Rome Declaration and gave a ten-year horizon for the project of the founding fathers to be reset.

We are speaking about the south-east dimension that should be united together with a new geopolitical foreign policy, meaning external borders to integrate in new alliances, and try to give after Rome, passing the Summit of Trieste, a new possibility. Last year, the so-called Berlin Process Summit was one day after the Brexit, and the general reaction was against the disengagement; the best answer was unity.

However, unity nowadays, is a part of a new request to the European history that we have to take in place. Is a question of enlarging the geopolitical vision, unity of the alliance, trying to expand our possibility in terms of controlled borders and in terms of security. Is not business as usual for us and for the Western Balkans. I would criticize and at the same time support what Federica Mogherini and Johann Hahn did for the crisis of FYROM in the last days, engagement that each of us has for the democratic crisis we are living around the six countries in the Balkans.

The main problem we have, it is that the main message is not clear, that the vision that geopolitical unity is our ambition as Europeans, not just as Western Balkans; the public opinion we are losing among the six members could become a democratic process and problem for the resilience of the states. You have spoken about the influence of the actors in the region, Russia, China with investments, infrastructures, energy supply, economic set up that it's not passive by any declaration or chapter, and many more actors moving around this market, but we know that in the same moment we are denouncing a new influence game. It is not only the influence from abroad in the region, it is also that the crisis of political process gives fuel to nationalist and rhetoric populism to use anti-European to get new identity within the fragile states.

I do not want just to denounce that there is a cross match of global factors that are entering this region and having different positions, is also the problem of lack of ambition from our side and from the Balkan side to the EU could create much more difficulties and divisions as we have seen in the recent past of the last NATO member Montenegro. All the new threats, security, terrorism, foreign fighters in the Middle East are clear. Problem of security and engaging the mechanism after 20 years of the date on balance security plan, after the 1991 war in Kosovo, is part of the discussion. It is just an unbalance between integration and disintegration, or probably is an issue of finding a new balance between integration and the emerging of nationalisms – or better a form of political identity that is looking far away from common unity planning of the future of our alliance. In this sense, the public opinion is the most important element that we have to look at, and it is important the youths leaving the region looking for new reality and possibility abroad. Between the enlargement *fatigue* what we have to use from Rome Declaration that opened space and gave the possibility of differentiation in terms of ambition to reform the mechanism of European Union, is not a way to close the door to the enlargement but is a possibility because it opens the way for a reform of the Union mechanisms giving some new ambitions, like the common defense.

I want to be very clear, the declaration of the Junker Commission that this is not time for enlargement anymore, probably was not the most appropriate because of history, Brexit, the new balance of power among the global actors, are changing history dramatically. Indeed, the enlargement should reopen the window for European reforms and strengthening on the global narrative.

The window of opportunities we are trying to open after Rome and Trieste is based on two main words and goals: the overcoming of new disputes, after the Dayton Agreement, and the boost of negotiations in order to prevent some closures that we have among the countries. Closures in terms of tariffs, visa regime, understanding among the leaderships.

We are going to use, together with the Commission, this way of working and secondly using the word connectivity. Connectivity is one basic road to overcome the closing of national agenda; it means planning like we are doing, with European funds on projects of infrastructures, connections, energy projects – which are the biggest issues for the Western Balkans together with Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, that are already in the Union.

Thus, the goal of overcoming diplomatic disputes and connectivity in terms of infrastructures, energy, the Mediterranean dimension of the Western Balkans that was cancelled from the European narrative in the last funds projections, could be a possibility to give speed to the negotiation among the states and the Commission and the European Union. Interconnectivity means also human interconnectivity, as we are doing in Trieste, investing in human capacity, civil society investing and business forums, investing in the youth energy and capability in the region between education and work experience. What we have to do is creating mechanism on common work; Italy and Serbia, for example, are sharing, thanks to OSCE, mechanisms of anti-criminality and anti-corruption software in terms of action. There are possibilities of sharing mechanisms of action in terms of intervening against the criminality that is one of the transnational factor that works very well in the Balkan region, avoiding barriers and borders.

Our works for the enlargement process after the Rome Declaration, it is not just a question to speed up the bureaucratic negotiations, is a question to enlarge the vision and the ambition of the European Union, its geopolitical attitude and also the possibility to work in the Euro-Atlantic identity to become a player that has larger alliances, larger possibilities and also gives sense to the words that we put in the declaration of a social Europe progressive possibility for our people.

SPEAKERS' BIOGRAPHIES

WELCOME REMARKS

Ambassador Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo

President, NATO Defense College Foundation, Rome

A strong focus on strategic outlook in complex issues. High level contacts and negotiations. Special attention on countries of strategic relevance i.e. the Gulf region. Frequent Public Diplomacy activities to discuss policies and open issues. He held the position of Deputy Secretary General of the Atlantic Alliance, between 2001 and 2007. His mandate was mostly carried out in the strategic- political-industrial area, in relations with sensitive countries such as those in the Gulf and the Southern Mediterranean. He is the author of the books: "The road to Kabul", publisher Il Mulino-Arel (2009) and "A political journey without maps, diversity and future in the Greater Middle East". (Rubbettino 2013).

František Mičánek

Dean, NATO Defense College, Rome

František Mičánek (Brigadier General Ret) was appointed Dean of the NATO Defense College (NDC) in September 2016. Previously, in the years 1988-2005 he acted in various command and staff positions within air defense units, up to commander of the air defense missile regiment, and later, in position of the Chief of the Army Air Defense Forces. Since 2006 to 2009 he acted as Deputy Director of the MoD Force Planning Division. In 2009-2011 he worked as a mentor at the NATO Defense College, Rome. In 2011 he was appointed Director of the MoD Force Planning Division. Since September 2013 he is employed in the position of a head of the Center for Security and Military- strategic Studies of the University of Defense in Brno.

Valerio Cartocci

NDCF Analyst

Valerio Cartocci is a research fellow in Historical-Social Sciences and History of International Relations. He has taught History of the International System and History of Italian Foreign Policy at the Department of Political and Social Sciences at the University of Florence. His research interests relate to Italian foreign policy in the 1990s, with particular reference to Italian action towards the dissolution process of Yugoslavia.

SESSION 1

Yannis Alexis Zepos

Former Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens

Former Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he is currently Chairman of the Board of the “Citizens Movement for an Open Society” and a Special Advisor to the “ELIAMEP” think tank. During his career, he served in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at the Department for Balkan, Central and Eastern European Political Affairs and at the Department for Western European Political Affairs. He also served as Director of the Diplomatic Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs (2002-2004). Throughout his career, he was appointed for several missions in Cairo, Lisbon, Greece, Madrid, Chicago, Brussels and New Dehli.

Ivan Vejvoda

Permanent Fellow, Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna

Before joining the IWM as a Permanent Fellow in 2017, **Ivan** Vejvoda was Senior Vice President for Programs at the German Marshall Fund (GMF) of the United States. From 2003 until 2010, he served as Executive Director of GMF’s Balkan Trust for Democracy, a project dedicated to strengthening democratic institutions in South-Eastern Europe. Vejvoda came to GMF in 2003 after distinguished service in the Serbian government as a senior advisor on foreign policy and European integration to Prime Ministers Zoran Djindjic and Zoran Zivkovic. Prior to that, he served as Executive Director of the Belgrade-based Fund for an Open Society from 1998 to 2002. During the mid-1990s, Vejvoda held various academic posts in the United States and the U.K., including at Smith College in Massachusetts and Macalester College in Minnesota, and the University of Sussex in England.

Angelina Eichhorst

Director for Western Europe, Western Balkans and Turkey, European External Action Service, Brussels

She currently serves as Director for Western Europe, Western Balkans and Turkey at the European External Action Service. Since 1996 she has served with the European Union in Brussels, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, where she was EU Am-

bassador from 2011 to 2015. From 1989 to 1996 she worked in Egypt, Somalia and New York with the private sector, the United Nations, research institutes and non-governmental organisations.

Savo Kentera

President, Atlantic Council of Montenegro, Podgorica

He is the President of the Atlantic Council of Montenegro based in Podgorica. He was elected as Vice-president of the Atlantic Treaty Association at the General Assembly held in Berlin in 2008. Mr. Kentera has been President of the Atlantic Council since 2008, and is a Visiting Fellow at Harvard Kennedy School, UK Defense Academy and at the King's College in London. Before joining the Atlantic Council, he directed the Center for International Relations of Montenegro. He directs also an annual intensive educational program in international security for foreign policy professionals of the region. His fields of interest are international relations, security studies and terrorism in particular.

SESSION 2

Benoît d'Aboville

Vice President, Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique, Paris

Vice-President of the "Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique" in Paris, former Ambassador, Permanent Representative to NATO (2000-2005) and Senior Auditor at the French National Audit Court (2005-2011). During his diplomatic career, he has been posted in Washington, Moscow, Geneva, Madrid (CSCE) and New York. Since 2014, he was member of the Board and Vice President of the "Institute of International Humanitarian Law" in San Remo and Geneva, and chairman of the editorial board of "Revue de la Defense Nationale".

Ahmet O. Evin

Founding Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Sabanci University, Istanbul

He had received his B.A. and Ph.D. degrees at the Columbia University. He is currently founding Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Professor Emeritus at Sabanci University, serving as Senior Scholar and Board Member of Istanbul Policy Center. He has previously taught at Harvard, NYU, University of Pennsylvania (where he was director of the Middle East Center), the University of Hamburg and Bilkent University (heading the Political Science department). He has authored and edited several volumes on politics, culture, and development.

Jelena Milic

Director, Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies, Belgrade

She is Director of the Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies in Belgrade and she

is among the most influential political analysts in Serbia and the region of the Western Balkans. She worked as a political analyst and researcher for the International Crisis Group and the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia. Member of the Forum for International Relations, an invitation only think tank, she maintains, as well, an OP/ED column in a leading Serbian daily newspaper, and a blog on one of the most frequently visited online portal in Serbia. Her areas of expertise are: Serbian security sector reform; Serbia – EU relations; Serbia – NATO relations; Russian influence in the Western Balkans; Kosovo; links between non-violent regime changes, transitional justice and security sector reforms.

SESSION 3

Sorin Ducaru

Assistant Secretary General for Emerging Challenges, NATO HQ, Brussels

In his current capacity, Ambassador Sorin Ducaru is responsible for providing support to the North-Atlantic Council and for advising the Secretary General on the evolution of emerging security challenges and their potential impact on NATO's security. To that purpose, he leads the Emerging Security Challenges Division of the NATO International Staff. Ambassador Ducaru previously served as Romania's Permanent Representative to the North Atlantic Council (September 2006 – September 2013), and from November 2011 he was the Dean of the North Atlantic Council. From 2001 to 2006, he served as Romania's Ambassador to the United States of America and in 2000–2001, was the Permanent Representative of Romania to the United Nations, in New York.

Louise Shelley

Director of the Terrorism, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center

Her areas of interests cover the fields of human trafficking, transnational crime and terrorism with a particular focus on the former Soviet Union, illicit financial flows and money laundering. She is a recipient of many awards including Fulbright, Rockefeller, Guggenheim and others. Her most recent books include *Dirty Entanglements: Corruption, Crime and Terrorism* (Cambridge 2014) and *Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective* (Cambridge 2010).

Gordana Delić

Director, Balkan Trust for Democracy, Belgrade

She is the Director of the Balkan Trust for Democracy, a project of the German Marshall fund of the United States. Ms Delić has the knowledge of both non-governmental and governmental sectors in the Balkans as well as the knowledge of international donor strategies, programs, procedures and operations in the central, eastern, and southern Europe regions. Prior to her employment at the Balkan Trust for Democracy, Delić worked at Freedom House Serbia. Her international

experience includes six years of work on different democracy development programs in Slovakia.

Paul Radu

Executive Director, Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, Bucharest

He is Executive Director of the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, co-creator of the Investigative Dashboard concept and co-founder of the platform RISE Project. He has held a number of fellowships, including the Alfred Friendly Press Fellowship (2001), the Milena Jesenska Press Fellowship (2002), the Rosalyn Carter Fellowship for Mental Health Journalism (2007), the Knight International Journalism fellowship as well as a 2009-2010 Stanford Knight Journalism Fellowship. He won several awards including the Knight International Journalism Award and the Investigative Reporters and Editors Award, the Global Shining Light Award, the Tom Renner Investigative Reporters and Editors Award, the Daniel Pearl Award for Outstanding International Investigative Reporting and the 2015 European Press Prize.

Florian Qehaja

Executive Director, Kosovar Centre for Security Studies, Pristina

He is the co-founder and Executive Director of the Kosovar Center for Security Studies – KCSS (Pristina). He serves as an international consultant on security issues cooperating with leading international governmental and non-governmental organisations. Currently he works as a special advisor for the Countering Violent Extremism strategy to the Director of Peacebuilding and Human Rights Programme of Columbia University, where he attended a post-doct (SIPA). As a Fulbright Scholar he is a doctor of science on security studies from the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana. He has graduated at the University of Sussex (United Kingdom) in Contemporary European Studies (MA) as an OSI/Chevening grantee whereas, he obtained Bachelor's Degree in Law at the University of Pristina.

SESSION 4

Zoran Jolevski

Minister of Defence, Government of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Skopje

Current Minister of Defense of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, he was ambassador to the United States from March 2007 until June 2014. After serving in various capacities in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs -from 1988 until 1999- he founded the Ohrid Institute for Economic Strategies and International Affairs (Skopje). He worked as Vice Chairman of the UN/ECE Committee on Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development (2005-2007), as well as a Member of Team of Specialists on Internet Enterprise Development at UN/ECE (1999-2003). He has also authored two books and several articles.

Goran Svilanović

Secretary General, Regional Cooperation Council, Sarajevo

He took office as the Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council on 1st January 2013. As Serbian diplomat and politician, he previously was Coordinator of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (2008-2012). In November 2004, he became Chairman of Working Table I (democratization and human rights) of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, where he remained until the end of 2007. From 2000 to 2004, Mr Svilanović was Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which was renamed to Serbia and Montenegro in 2003. Between 2000 and 2007, he was a Member of Parliament. Mr Svilanovic has therefore worked with a number of organizations and committees, such as the Centre for Antiwar Action (1995-1999), the International Commission on the Balkans (2004-2006) and the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (2007-2008).

Dimitrij Rupel

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ljubljana

Founder of the Slovenian Democratic Party, Dimitrij Rupel joined the Government and became first Slovenian Foreign Minister (1990-1993). Then, he served as Mayor of Ljubljana and Ambassador to Washington. He was re-elected Foreign Minister from 2000 till 2008, and was responsible for Slovenian memberships in EU and NATO. In 2005, he was Chairman in office of the OSCE. In 2008 he was in charge of General Affairs and External Relations Council of the EU. Minister Rupel has published several literary and academic books – on literature, politics and foreign relations. He teaches at the European Faculty of Law (Ljubljana, Nova Gorica) and the Faculty of State and European Studies (Kranj).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Vincenzo Amendola

Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy

He is the current Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. From 2009 to 2014, he has been member of the National Secretariat of the Democratic Party, covering several positions such as Coordinator of Regional Conference of the Democratic Party Secretaries in 2009, PD leader in III Commission for Foreign and Community Affairs in 2013 and Delegate to the Foreign and European Affairs and Relations with the European Socialist Party in 2014.



BALKAN NETWORKS AND STABILITY

CONNECTING CO-OPERATIVE AND HUMAN SECURITY

HIGH LEVEL SEMINAR

*Co-organised by the NATO Defense College Foundation
and the PASP Division of NATO
in co-operation with the NATO Defense College*

ROME, 6TH - 7TH APRIL 2017

Venue: Centro Congressi Roma Eventi -Piazza di Spagna, Via Alibert, 5/a, Rome

- 14,00-15,00 Arrival of participants - Registration
15,00 Welcome remarks
- **Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo**, President, NATO Defense College Foundation, Rome
 - **František Mi ánek**, Dean, NATO Defense College, Rome

Session 1

BALKAN POLITICS ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

After the migrations' shock, the Balkan region has been substantially left to its own in facing enduring challenges: strategic tensions, organized crime, terrorism, potential disintegration and political polarisation. What will be the internal evolution of the countries in the area? How can the region re-network to increase democratic resilience, regional co-ordination and interaction with international institutions like UN, NATO, EU and OSCE?

- 15,15-16,45 Chair: Alessandro Politi, Director, NATO Defense College Foundation, Rome
- **Yannis-Alexis Zepos**, former Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens
 - **Ivan Vejvoda**, Permanent Fellow, Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna
 - **Angelina Eichhorst**, Director for Western Europe, Western Balkans and Turkey, European External Action Service, Brussels
 - **Savo Kentera**, President, Atlantic Council of Montenegro, Podgorica

Q&A

Session 2

THE REGION AND ITS NEAR ACTORS

The illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia has added further strain on the Balkans, putting them in the unenviable position of a contested zone of influence. What is the real extent of Moscow's activities and how can the region's member states keep a reasonable and sovereign course of integration? Other important external actors?

17,15-18,45

Chair: Benoit d'Aboville, Vice President, Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique, Paris

- **Ahmet Evin**, founding Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Sabanci University, Istanbul
- **Tomasz Orłowski**, Ambassador, Embassy of Poland, Rome
- **Yordan Bozhilov**, President of Sofia Security Forum, Sofia
- **Haakon Blankenborg**, Director Of Western Balkans Section/ Section for South East Europe, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, Oslo

Q&A

Session 3

SECURITY VERSUS ILLEGAL NETWORKS AND TRAFFICKING

In 1991 the Yugoslav dissolution wars showed to policy makers that security was no more an affair of states and soldiers, but also of militias, criminal networks, small arms proliferation, illegal trafficking and terrorist groups. How can NATO co-operative security and EU collaboration, after the Aegean precedent, be meaningfully developed in the region? Important elements for the revision of the Strategic Concept of NATO?

10,00-11,30 Chair: Sorin Ducaru, Assistant Secretary General for Emerging Challenges, NATO HQ, Brussels

- **Louise Shelley**, Director, Terrorism, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center Fairfax, Arlington
- **Gordana Delic**, Director, Balkan Trust for Democracy, Belgrade
- **Paul Radu**, Executive Director, Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, Bucharest
- **Florian Qehaja**, Executive Director, Kosovar Centre for Security Studies, Pristina

Q&A

Session 4

THE PATH TO INTEGRATION

The EU has regularly updated its negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, FYROM, Montenegro and Serbia in view of an increased integration. At the same time NATO countries are completing the ratification process for Montenegro, while continuing talks with other countries. How can an overall integration dynamic be pursued and carried on with Euro-sceptic electorates and a deterioration of the conditions in the area?

12,00-13,30

Chair: Zoran Jolevski, Minister of Defence, Government of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Skopje

- **Goran Svilanovic**, Secretary General, Regional Cooperation Council, Sarajevo
- **Arian Starova**, President, Atlantic Council, Tirana
- **Brooke Smith-Windsor**, Deputy Head Research Division, NATO Defense College, Rome
- **Dimitrij Rupel**, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ljubljana

Q&A

CONCLUDING REMARKS

- **Maciej Popowski**, Deputy Director General, Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, Brussels
- **Vincenzo Amendola**, Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy



Archaeological Museum of Macedonia and Bridge of the Civilizations in downtown of Skopje





The security and stability of Western Balkans, already affected by still unsolved internal problems, has been put severely to test by the consequences of the humanitarian tragedies or the difficult living conditions throughout Europe. In addition, the ongoing massive wave of migrants has essentially left the Balkans to their own devices. Immediate answers have been characterised by measures restricting the freedom circulation of travellers and by divisive political discourses.

The lull in the migration flows adds to a set of enduring challenges for the region: strategic tensions between Russia on the one hand and EU and NATO on the other, organized crime, terrorism and potential further political disintegration and polarisation. The non-state actors that emerged during the Yugoslav dissolution wars are still present and sometimes even more powerful than in the past.

On the other hand, the Balkan region is of strategic importance to the entire continent, it is of a primary importance both to the European Union and the Alliance. We see that the process of integration and reforms is at risk, that Russia is trying to expand its influence, that terrorism may proliferate.

This view is largely shared and therefore we are encouraged to launch a project giving the Balkan region the visibility it deserves at this point in time. Following this context, the conference is structured into four panels. The first panel discusses on how these troubled countries can be reconnected in a common political discourse and security network within a multilateral context. The second panel will not only sketch the existing regional security landscape marked by criminal networks, small arms proliferation, illegal trafficking and terrorist groups, but also see how NATO and EU as security providers can better combine initiatives, resources and operations in order to blunt and neutralise these challenges.

The third panel considers Russia's influence, the different national positions and the options in order to deal and negotiate jointly and effectively vis-à-vis the comeback of this geopolitical actor. The last panel will conduct a critical evaluation of NATO's integration activities and of European enlargement plans in order to take into account the changing political climate within member countries and to plot a new Euro-Atlantic common course.

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