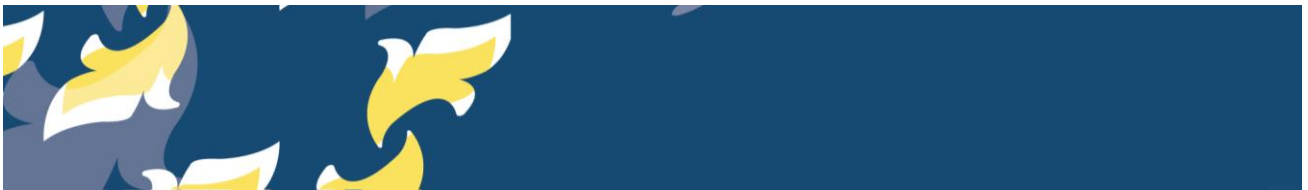


BALKAN PERSPECTIVES
Adapting the partnership and integration paths

Rome, the 16th of May 2019





BALKAN PERSPECTIVES **Adapting the partnership and integration paths**

High-Level Conference

*organised by the **NATO Defense College Foundation**
with the support of the **NATO Public Diplomacy Division** and the **NATO Defense College***

Rome, the 16th of May 2019

Venue: Aula dei Gruppi Parlamentari, Palazzo dei Gruppi Parlamentari, Via di Campo Marzio, 78, Rome

16TH MAY 2019

13,30-14,15 Arrival of participants - Registration

14,15 *Welcome remarks*

- ❑ **Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo**, President, NATO Defense College Foundation, Rome
- ❑ **Chris Whitecross**, Commandant, NATO Defense College, Rome

Opening remarks

Marta Grande, President, Foreign Affairs Committee, Chamber of Deputies, Rome

14,45-16,00

SESSION 1 BALKAN POLITICS ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

Two decades after the arrival of KFOR in Kosovo, the Balkan Six have experienced a long peace that has helped healing many of the scars of the war of dissolution. Regional politics are struggling with the paradox of progress, on the backdrop of the ups and downs along the path towards wider integration. In the region are evident the risks of authoritarian tendencies and foreign manipulation following a trend “less democracy and more political and economic opacity.” How can national societies and governments counter these developments and how can the international community and especially NATO and Partnership for Peace countries assist in an innovative way against hybrid internal and external threats?

Chair: **Haakon Blankenborg**, Director, Western Balkan Section/Section for South East Europe, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oslo

- **Jelena Milić**, Director, Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies, Belgrade
- **Zoran Jolevski**, Former Minister of Defence, Republic of North Macedonia, Skopje
- **Dušan Reljić**, Head of Office, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin

General Discussion

16,00 -16,15 *Coffee break*

16,15 -17,30

SESSION 2 NATO AND EUROPE: THE TORTUOUS INTEGRATION PATH

The prospect of EU/NATO integration remains the main vehicle towards the achievement of regional stability and security. However, the prospective of accession is not sufficient to address all local shortcomings. Montenegro's and Albania's leaderships are put into question, while North Macedonia has to fully overcome the consequences of its past. On the other hand, even if in different ways, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, risk to be an unfinished job. Conditionality and quid pro quo have been two main suasion instruments, but local elites and societies have difficulties in following this approach.

Chair: **Kai Eide**, Former Special Envoy of the Secretary General of the United Nations in Kosovo, Oslo

- **Michel Soula**, Head, Operations Section, Operations Division, NATO HQ, Brussels
- **Maciej Popowski**, Deputy Director General, Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission, Brussels
- **Ivan Vejvoda**, Permanent Fellow, Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna

General discussion

SESSION 3
SYNERGISING PARTNERSHIPS IN LONG-TERM STABILISATION MISSIONS

As clearly shown by the KFOR mission, NATO's longest and yet most successful, the classic military environment is just part of a more multifaceted co-operative security effort. The Balkan Six are clearly affected by regional threats such as organised crime, trafficking of human beings, corruption, energy security supply and terrorism. Some countries are already NATO members, others are involved in the Partnership for Peace or similar programmes, all need to better co-ordinate resources, efforts and to strengthen regional stability.

Chair: **Søren Knudsen**, Faculty Adviser and Danish Senior National Representative, NATO Defense College, Rome

- ❑ **Ahmet Evin**, founding Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Sabanci University, Istanbul
- ❑ **Paul Radu**, Executive Director, Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, Bucharest
- ❑ **Vladan Joksimović**, Head of Secretariat, Regional Anti-corruption Initiative, Sarajevo

General discussion

END OF THE WORKING DAY

Special thanks to Philip Morris International

#WEARENATO



BALKAN PERSPECTIVES

Adapting the partnership and integration paths

SPEAKERS' BIOGRAPHIES

Welcome Remarks

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" (Il Mulino-Arel, 2009); "A political journey without maps, diversity and future in the Greater Middle East" (Rubbettino, 2013); "NATO and the Middle East: The Making of a Partnership" (New Academia Publishing, 2018).

Chris Whitecross

Commandant, NATO Defense College, Rome

Lieutenant General Chris Whitecross enrolled in the Canadian Forces in 1982. Successive postings have taken her to almost every province in Canada, notably at the Canadian Air Division. Commandant Whitecross has, among many other posting, performed the duties of G1/G4 for the Force Engineers at the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR, former Yugoslavia) and was Deputy Chief Of Staff Communications, ISAF HQ, Kabul, Afghanistan.. In February 2015 she was appointed Commander of the Canadian Forces Strategic Response Team on Sexual Misconduct. In June 2015, Lieutenant General Chris Whitecross was appointed Commander, Military Personnel Command.

Opening Remarks

Marta Grande

President, Foreign Affairs Committee, Chamber of Deputies, Rome

After graduating in languages and international trade in the United States, she has obtained two MA in International Relations and in European studies. In 2013 she was elected to the Chamber of Deputies for the Five Star Movement and since then she has been a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee. During the XVII legislature she has been also Secretary to the Standing Committee on Human Rights. She has focused her legislative work on women empowerment, transatlantic relations and BRICS countries. On June 21, 2018 she was elected, as first woman during the republican history, President of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Session 1

Haakon Blankenborg

Director of Western Balkans/South East Europe Section, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, Oslo

Ambassador Blankenborg has been Director of Western Balkans Section/Section for Southeast Europe in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2011. From 2010 to 2011, he was Senior Adviser at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Previously, he served as a member of the Norwegian Parliament from 1981 to 2005 and chaired the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Enlarged Committee on Foreign Affairs from 1993 to 2000. In 2005, he left the Parliament to become Norwegian Ambassador to Serbia and Montenegro. He holds degrees in History and Political Science from the University of Oslo.

Jelena Milić

Director, Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies, Belgrade

Jelena Milić is among the most influential political analysts in Serbia and in the region. 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, a think tank set up by the European Movement in Serbia, 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. Her areas of expertise are:

Serbian security sector reforms; Serbia - EU and Serbia - NATO relations; Russian influence in the Western Balkans; Kosovo; links between non-violent regime changes, transitional justice and security sector reforms.

Zoran Jolevski

Former Minister of Defence, Republic of North Macedonia, Skopje

Former Minister of Defence of the Republic of North Macedonia, previously he served as 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.

Dušan Reljić

Head of Office, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin

Head of the Brussels office of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), since 2013. Dr Reljić works on international relations and security with a specific focus on the EU, NATO and Southeast Europe; democratisation; issues of transition in former socialist countries; nationalism and ethnic strife as well as political communication and media performance in situations of tensions and conflict. Between 2003 and 2013 Dr Reljić was research associate in the SWP division EU External Relations. Previously, he was Researcher and subsequently Head of the Media and Democracy Programme at the Dusseldorf-based European Institute for the Media (EIM) (1996-2003). He has been Senior Editor at Radio Free Europe in Munich, the Foreign Editor of the Belgrade weekly *Vreme*, and Co-Founder of the Beta Press Agency in Belgrade during the critical years of 1991-1993.

Session 2

Kai Eide

Former Special Envoy of the Secretary General of the United Nations in Kosovo, Oslo

Kai Eide is a retired Norwegian diplomat and writer. He was Norway's Ambassador to the OSCE (1998-2002), NATO (2002-2006) and Sweden (2014-2017), UN Representative to the International Conference

on Former Yugoslavia (1993-95), Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General to Bosnia-Herzegovina (1997-98) to Afghanistan (2008-2010), to Kosovo (2005) and author of “Power Struggle over Afghanistan” (2011). Ambassador Eide was State Secretary responsible for foreign and security policies in the Office of the Norwegian Prime Minister during 1989 and 1990. He also served as Special Adviser to the CEO of the Norwegian oil company STATOIL before re-entering the Norwegian Foreign Service. During his carrier, Ambassador Eide has written extensively on foreign policy issues, primarily on Balkan affairs.

Michel Soula

Head, Operations Section, Operations Division, NATO HQ, Brussels

Michel Soula is responsible for NATO’s current Operations at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, namely maritime operations and Kosovo. He also dealt with NATO’s operation in Libya. Beforehand, he held the position of Deputy Director in the Private Office of the NATO Secretary General, working with Javier Solana and Lord George Robertson. A French civil servant, Michel Soula was seconded to the French Foreign Service where he held various positions, notably in relation to chemical and biological weapons control and disarmament.

Maciej Popowski

Deputy Director General, Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission, Brussels

Ambassador Popowski is a Polish diplomat with 25 years of professional experience. He was Director for EU affairs at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the time of Poland's accession negotiations. In 2001-2008 he was Deputy Head of the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Poland to the European Union. In 2003-2008 he was Poland’s first Permanent Representative in the EU’s Political and Security Committee. He then joined the European Commission as Director of DG Development focusing on policy coherence, aid effectiveness, financing, relations with other donors and public information. In 2009 he was seconded from the European Commission to become Head of Cabinet of Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament. From 2011 until 2015 he was Deputy Secretary-General of the European External Action Service.

Ivan Vejvoda

Permanent Fellow, Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna

Before joining the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna as 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. During the mid-1990s, Vejvoda held various academic posts in the United States and in the U.K., including Smith College in Massachusetts, Macalester College in Minnesota and the University of Sussex in England.

Session 3

Søren Knudsen

Faculty Adviser and Danish Senior National Representative, NATO Defense College, Rome

Col. Knudsen joined the Danish Army in 1979. After his conscript service with Zealand Life Regiment (infantry), he served in various assignments in combat supply battalions. More recently, Colonel Knudsen has served as a Defence Attaché in Croatia charged with regional affairs and as a Military Advisor / Defence Attaché at the Royal Danish Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, focusing on the Danish Peace & Stabilization Program for the Horn of Africa. In 1997, Col. Knudsen was the Commanding Officer of the Danish Contingent during "Operation ALBA" in Albania. In 2006, he acted as the Head of the CIMIC Branch (CJ-9) in the Headquarters of Coalition Task Force Aegis (later NATO RC(S)) in Kandahar, Afghanistan. From October 2011 to May 2012, he served as the Deputy Commander of NATO Rule Of Law Field Support Mission in Afghanistan. He was also awarded the Order of the Trefoil of the Republic of Croatia, the Presidential Medal of the Republic of Albania for Distinguished Civil Service, a Bronze Star Medal by the President of the United States, the Medal for Distinguished Service by the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Albania and the Military Commemorative Medal by the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Serbia. He has a Testimony of Distinguished Service by the Chief of Defence of the Republic of France.

Ahmet O. Evin

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

Professor Evin had received his B.A. and PhD degrees at the Columbia University. He is currently founding Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Professor Emeritus at Sabancı University, serving as Senior Scholar and Board Member of the Istanbul Policy Center. He has previously taught at Harvard, New York University, the 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.

Paul Radu

Executive Director, Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, Bucharest

Paul Radu is the Director and Co-Founder of the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project and Co-Creator of the Investigative Dashboard concept, of Visual Investigative Scenarios visualisation software and Co-Founder of RISE Project (a platform for investigative reporters and hackers in Romania). Holder of various fellowships, he is the recipient of numerous awards, including the 2004 Knight International Journalism Award and the 2007 Investigative Reporters and Editors Award, the Global Shining Light Award, the Tom Renner Investigative Reporters and Editors Award, the 2011 Daniel Pearl Award for Outstanding International Investigative Reporting and a 2015 European Press Prize. Paul is an Ashoka Global Fellow, a Board Member of the Global Investigative Journalism Network and a juror for a number of global awards including the Allard Prize and the Data Journalism Awards. Mr Radu worked at the Panama Papers, the Russian and the Azerbaijani Laundromat and the Troika Laundromat.

Vladan Joksimović

Head of Secretariat, Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative, Sarajevo

Mr Joksimović was selected Head of Secretariat at the 24th RAI Steering Group Meeting held in Belgrade on December 5, 2016. He graduated from Law Faculty, University of Belgrade and he also completed the Diplomatic Academy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Faculty of Political Science, University of Belgrade. Prior to joining Regional Anti-corruption Initiative, Mr Joksimović worked at the Anti-corruption Agency of Serbia as a Deputy Director. During his professional career, he shortly served as Adviser to the Director of the Office for Human Rights and Minority Rights, Republic of Serbia and as a Legal and Human Rights Adviser to the Council of Europe National Office in Belgrade. He also has years of experience as legal expert in the civil sector and was a Member of the Steering Board of the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights from 2012 to 2015.



BALKAN PERSPECTIVES

Adapting the partnership and integration paths

BACKGROUND POLICY PAPER

When the European leaders made the solemn commitment of enlarging the Union towards the Western Balkans at the Thessaloniki EU Council in 2003, the general mood about the region was rather positive. Politicians, diplomats and analysts thought that the Western Balkans would have joined NATO and the EU within 15 years, following the same path of Central Europe and the Baltics which at that time had closed almost all the negotiating chapters and were waiting for joining formally the Union on the 1st of May 2004.

After the fall of Communism in Central Europe in 1989 and of the USSR in 1991, the Visegrad Group and the Baltic countries embarked a long process of reforms in order to achieve first NATO membership and then the accession to the EU. Conditionality was key to make the process work. The EU spurred candidates to boost reforms, sometimes hard to swallow, offering incentives in exchange. Until few years ago, this scheme was seen as the benchmark for the Western Balkans.

Sixteen years after the Thessaloniki Council, only Croatia has joined the EU. Confidence about the future of the Western Balkans is not so bright anymore. Democratisation and economic growth have not spread across the peninsula at the required pace.

There was a surplus of enthusiasm in the script written in Greece in 2003. Some chapters must be re-thought. Not those concerning security, anyway. Croatia, Albania and Montenegro have joined NATO, allowing the Alliance to reach the goal of closing the Adriatic coastline. The peacekeeping mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, now run by the EU, secured peace and transfer of expertise to achieve the goal of unifying the then three ethnic armies of the country, a legacy of the 1992-1995 war. In Kosovo, KFOR represents a fundamental guarantee for stability, in a land still full of uncertainties and with a high circulation of illegal weapons.

Fostering economic stability and democracy, two themes closely linked, is far from being an accomplished mission. The Balkan Six lag behind. The global crisis depressed the region and revealed structural problems and social inequalities that the pre-crisis growth rate somehow hid. Experts and regional leaders thought that growth, one way or another, would have delivered benefits to everyone and everywhere and this was an illusion. Today the Balkans' picture shows that common features are: unsustainable economies and unemployment, too low wages, infrastructural weaknesses and a growing migration trend among talented and educated young people.

There is a regression also on the sphere of rule of law, press freedom and other relevant democratic standards. It is given by the combination between the local way to illiberal democracy, social frustration due to the crisis and disappointment for the unfulfilled promises made by the EU.

The scenario is not encouraging, but saying that the Balkan Six are becoming a failed region or Europe's black hole would be a mistake. The region needs objectively longer time, compared to that needed by Central Europe and the Baltics, or Romania and Bulgaria. In addition to the legacy of the Cold War, the Western Balkans suffered a hot conflict too in the last part of the 20th century. Albania did not, but it had the toughest Communist regime ever seen in Europe on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain.

However, time must not become an excuse. Local leaderships must be more responsible and accountable to their own publics. They should find a balance between short-term consensus building and enact reforms that can create conditions to attract more investments, provide jobs, secure workers' rights, strengthen democracy and pluralism.

The EU stimulus is still crucial to achieve such outcomes. However, Brussels must change approach because conditionality no longer works as it used to. An example is the issue of Kosovo. The EU mediation led to the so-called "Normalisation Agreements" in 2013. Serbia partly dismantled its parallel structures in northern Kosovo, while Kosovo promised self-government for the Serbian minority. In exchange, the EU opened accession talks with Serbia and signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement with Kosovo. It should have been the beginning of a wide dialogue aimed at finding a comprehensive solution about the Kosovo status. Unfortunately, while progress has been achieved in 2017 on a wide range of technical issues with some political content, both elites still balk at making substantial steps. Serbia has a path for accession, but is wary to start the more difficult chapters of the EU *acquis*. The Haradinaj government is near a very much needed visa liberalisation, but still does not accomplish its indispensable fight against corruption. Belgrade is not ready to recognise Kosovo, but

wants to normalise; Pristina wants unfettered control over its territory, but does not want to give the Kosovo-Serbs a large autonomy.

As a result, the two countries are entangled again on the hypothesis of land swap, so far rejected by the EU, which could have very negative repercussions for the entire Balkan area.

Despite being a successful story for the EU conditionality strategy, the historic deal on the naming dispute between Greece and Macedonia, now North Macedonia, shows a critical weakness. Athens and Skopje struck a reasonable agreement, but they were unable to explain to their civil societies its historic importance. People look tired, as the last elections turnout shows. In North Macedonia, the path towards Euro-Atlantic integration, finally unlocked, seems not to ignite a new wave of enthusiasm in the country. This can depend on the fact that the EU conditionality is based too much on deals with governments and too little on the necessity of involving the civil society in integration processes. Brussels should take this into account, when and if it will re-formulate conditionality.

A stronger civil society could effectively pressure political elites to adopt reforms and keep the Euro-Atlantic horizon close. After all, NATO is still the main desired security provider in the region, while the EU largely remains the main investor. Yet, old and new actors, with new political offers, are gaining influence. The West must find a way to re-energise its action in the peninsula to win the battle in the Western Balkans.

Matteo Tacconi is Chief Analyst of the Balkan region at the NATO Defense College Foundation. Journalist and researcher, he covers the Balkans for a wide range of media networks. He worked as electoral observer for the OSCE/ODIHR in Albania, North Macedonia, Russia, Georgia and Ukraine.



BALKAN PERSPECTIVES

Adapting the partnership and integration paths

CONCEPT

KFOR, now entering its second decade, has been the longest and the most successful stabilisation mission of NATO since the end of the Cold War. Yet, while peace is a tangible benefit for the Balkans, Euro-Atlantic integration and NATO partnerships have to face complex regional and national politics.

A quick look at the area shows the current conundrum: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Kosovo risk to be an unfinished job; two NATO members – Albania and Montenegro – are experiencing some rough political moment and North Macedonia has to face the nitty gritty of overcoming past legacies. Cooperative security has been essential in tackling FYROM's last transitional crisis, but regional realities require a more multifaceted approach to confront consolidated problems like organised crime, trafficking of human beings, corruption, energy security supply and terrorism.

The conference is structured into three panels.

The first panel outlines the setbacks facing the Balkans in terms of democratic and economic progress, as well as in terms of hybrid internal and external threats. It further discusses how regional societies and governments, assisted by the international community's tools – among the others, by NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) -, could deal with such challenges.

The second one aims at addressing the Balkan scenario from the wider perspective of EU/NATO integration, which remains the main vehicle towards the achievement of a regional balance, even though the accession prospect does not seem sufficient to address all local shortcomings.

The third discusses the need to better coordinate common resources and efforts to address regional challenges and strengthen the stability and security of the area.

The NATO Defense College Foundation (NDCF) was established in 2011. It grew out from a common intuition of the President Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo and the NATO Defense College top decision makers. They understood the value of a non-profit NGO that could work beyond usual institutional outreach, training, communication and scientific research activities.

While the tradition of stability and well-being is embodied by the principles of the Washington Charter, the triple upheavals of the fall of the Soviet Union, the global economic crisis and the Arab Revolutions required a more focussed, agile and innovative approach.

Therefore the NDCF strives at considering relevant issues not only in a descriptive or prescriptive way, but catching the sense of events and the essential vectors of future developments. In a word: **Charting ahead.**

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