



NATO Foundation
Defense College



BALKAN PERSPECTIVES 2020 *The Fight for a Timely Inclusion*

Rome, the 28th of September 2020



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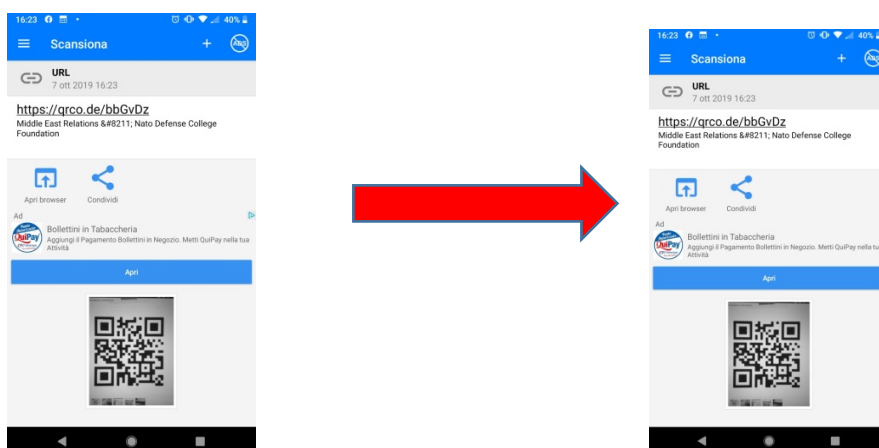


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BALKAN PERSPECTIVES 2020 *The Fight for a Timely Inclusion*

High-Level Conference

*Organised by the **NATO Defense College Foundation**
In co-operation with the **NATO Public Diplomacy Division**,
the **Balkan Trust for Democracy**, the **European Union** and the **NATO Defense College***

Rome, the 28th of September 2020

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

14,00 - 14,30 Participants Registration

14,30 - 14,45 Welcome Remarks

- **Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo**, President, NATO Defense College Foundation, Rome
- **Stephen J. Mariano**, Dean, NATO Defense College, Rome

14,45 – 15,00

Introductory Remarks

Nicola de Santis, Head, Engagements Section, Public Diplomacy Division, NATO Headquarters, Brussels (Virtual)

15,00 – 16,15

SESSION I WAYS AND MEANS FOR A CREDIBLE INCLUSION

Since the Dayton Agreement the Balkans have been a success story in terms of peace-building and stability. Nevertheless, both domestic difficulties and the constant crises in the international environment affecting the Balkan Six have made the integration path particularly difficult, in addition to a global pandemic with unprecedented effects. The EU presidency is committed to continue negotiations at different levels with Serbia, Montenegro, Albania and North Macedonia. Half of the region is still in a limbo concerning NATO membership. Which are the best paths and instruments towards a credible inclusion? How can we forestall regional enlargement fatigue?

Chair: **Ivan Vejvoda**, Permanent Fellow, Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna

- **Maciej Popowski**, Acting Director-General, Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission, European Union, Brussels (Virtual)
- **Valerie Hopkins**, Financial Times, South-East Europe Correspondent, Budapest
- **Ahmet Evin**, Founding Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Sabancı University, Istanbul
- **Andrea Orizio**, Head of Mission, OSCE Mission to Serbia, Belgrade
- **Laris Gaiser**, Visiting Lecturer, Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, Vienna

Q&A Session

16,15 – 16,45 Coffee/Tea Break

16,45 – 17,00

Question time with:

Damon Wilson, Executive Vice President, Atlantic Council, Washington D.C. (Virtual)

Interviewer: **Andrew Spannaus**, Journalist and Political Commentator, Milan

17,00 – 18,15

SESSION II THE BALKANS' DRIVING FORCES

The Balkans are fighting for their future. The intertwining effects between domestic policies, still hostage to old and new factionalisms, extremely fragile economies and societal tensions towards more freedom, are common to all countries, but there are also present local peculiarities that need a tailored approach. How can societies break the political depression-repression cycle that erodes public confidence and pushes towards emigration and depopulation?

Chair: **Jan Kickert**, Ambassador of the Republic of Austria to Italy, Rome

- **Arne Sannes Bjørnstad**, Special Representative for the Western Balkans, Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oslo (Virtual)
- **Remzi Lani**, Executive Director, Albanian Media Institute, Tirana
- **Valbona Zeneli**, Chair, George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, Garmisch-Partenkirchen
- **Lubomir Ivanov**, former Permanent Representative of Bulgaria, NATO, Brussels

Q&A Session

18,15 – 18,25

Special Intervention

Michele Risi, Commander, Kosovo Force (KFOR), NATO, Pristina (Virtual)

18,25 – 18,40

Concluding Remarks

Piero Fassino, President, Foreign Affairs Committee, Chamber of Deputies, Rome

END OF THE WORKING DAY

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BALKAN PERSPECTIVES 2020

The Fight for a Timely Inclusion

SPEAKERS' BIOGRAPHIES

WELCOME REMARKS

Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo

President, NATO Defense College Foundation, Rome

After having served at the Italian Embassy in Washington D.C. and as Commercial Counsellor at the Embassy of Italy in Prague, Amb. Minuto-Rizzo worked as Head of the External Relations Office of the EEC from 1981 to 1986. In the next years, his career focussed on Europe and Space Policy. In 1997 he was appointed Diplomatic Counsellor of the Minister of Defence Nino Andreatta, then of his successors Carlo Scognamiglio and Sergio Mattarella. In 2000, Minuto-Rizzo held the position of Italian Ambassador to the Western European Union and to the Political and Security Committee of the EU, of which he was among the founding members. He was Deputy Secretary-General of the Atlantic Alliance between 2001 and 2007. His mandate was mostly carried out in the strategic-political industrial area, in the 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), and "NATO and the Middle East: The Making of a Partnership" (New Academia Publishing, 2018).

Stephen J. Mariano

Dean, NATO Defense College, Rome

Stephen J. Mariano was appointed Dean of the NATO Defense College in January 2019. Prior he was Professor of National Security Studies at the National Defense University's National War College. Dr. Mariano taught military strategy and comparative military systems at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, as well as politics and U.S. foreign policy at the Royal Military College of Canada. Formerly, he was U.S. Army War College Visiting Defense Fellow at Queen's University's Center for International Relations, U.S. Army's Senior Fellow at Harvard University's Weatherhead Center for International Affairs and M.I.T. Seminar XXI Fellow. He acted as Deputy Director of Strategy, Plans, and Assessments at the Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq, where he liaised with the NATO Training Mission in Iraq, and as Military Advisor to NATO's Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan. He also served as Strategic Plans and Policy Officer within NATO's International Military Staff in Brussels and at the U.S. European Command in Stuttgart.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Nicola de Santis

Head, Engagements Section, Public Diplomacy Division, NATO Headquarters, Brussels

Head of the Engagements Section of NATO Public Diplomacy Division since 2019, Nicola de Santis was the Head of the Middle East and North Africa Section of the Political Affairs and Security Policy Division at NATO HQ. In this capacity, he was responsible for developing and promoting NATO policy, political relations, individual practical cooperation programs and better public understanding in Middle Eastern and North African countries - especially those participating in NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and in the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI). He also ensured the coordination with all the other Divisions of NATO's International Staff, International Military Staff and relevant NATO Military Authorities for all aspects of the Alliance cooperation with countries in the Middle East and in North Africa. Prior to that, he was the Head of the MD and ICI Countries Section within the Political Affairs and Security Policy Division.

SESSION I

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 the Smith College in Massachusetts, Macalester College in Minnesota and the University of Sussex in England.

Maciej Popowski

Acting Director-General, Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission, European Union, 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 focussing 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.

Valerie Hopkins

South-East Europe Correspondent, Financial Times, Budapest

Valerie is the Financial Times' South-East Europe correspondent, covering Hungary, Romania, the former Yugoslavia and Albania. Before moving to Budapest, she worked extensively in the Balkans, with the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project and as a freelance journalist. Her writing has appeared in The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Atlantic, Politico, Foreign Policy, Al Jazeera, the Guardian, Reuters, OpenDemocracy, Mother Jones, and more. Valerie has a Master of Arts in Political Journalism from Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, and a B.A. in International Relations (focus on Russian and Post-Soviet Studies) from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Ahmet Evin

Founding Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Sabancı 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.

Andrea Orizio

Head of Mission, OSCE Mission to Serbia, Belgrade

Ambassador Orizio, an Italian career diplomat, has been heading the OSCE Mission to Serbia since the 1st of October 2016. He arrived in Belgrade from Rome where he served as Balkans Director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation. Between 2013 and 2014, he was Head of the Counter-Terrorism and Organized Crime/G7 Unit at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From 2008 to 2012, he was Deputy Head of Mission at the Italian Embassy to Egypt. Between 2005 and 2008, he served as First Counsellor at the Italian Permanent Delegation to NATO in Brussels. Earlier in his career, he held diplomatic posts in Zagreb as Deputy Head of Mission and Prague, and served on the Africa Desk, the Defence Minister's Diplomatic Counsellor office, the Armaments Authorization and Control Authority. He is a member of the International Institute of Humanitarian Law and “*Cavaliere Ufficiale*” of the “*Ordine al Merito della Repubblica Italiana*”.

Laris Gaiser

Visiting Lecturer, Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, Vienna

Ass. Prof. Laris Gaiser is a member of ITSTIME – Italian Team for Security, Terroristic Issues and Managing Emergencies - at Catholic University of Milan (Italy), visiting professor at Società Italiana per le Organizzazioni Internazionali (SIOSI), Univeristà di Firenze and lecturer at Diplomatic Academy of Vienna. He regularly teaches geopolitics, geo-economy and intelligence issues. Senior Scholar at Centre for the Study of Global Issues at University of Georgia (USA), from 2012 to 2014 he was Vice President, acting President, of Euro Mediterranean University – EMUNI. During the same period the Slovenian

Ministry of foreign affairs appointed Laris Gaiser as member of his Strategic Council. In Slovenia, since 2017, Laris Gaiser is Head of Department of Macroeconomics at Faculty of Law and Economic Science in Ljubljana and teaches security studies at Faculty of Government and European studies at Nova Univerza. He is involved in business and strategic advising activities. Several times he has been appointed as adviser of foreign governments as well as board member of private owned companies. As appreciated columnist Laris Gaiser actively analyses social issues writing for national and foreign newspapers.

QUESTION TIME WITH:

Damon Wilson

Executive Vice President, Atlantic Council, Washington D.C.

Damon Wilson is Executive Vice President of the Atlantic Council. His areas of expertise include NATO, Transatlantic relations, Central and Eastern Europe, and national security issues. From 2007 to 2009, he acted as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for European affairs at the National Security Council. Previously, he served at the US Embassy in Baghdad as Executive Secretary and Chief of Staff and as Director for Central, Eastern, and Northern European affairs at the National Security Council (2004-2006). Between 2001 and 2004, Damon Wilson held the position of Deputy Director of the Private Office of the NATO Secretary General, assisting Lord George Robertson of Port Ellen in his drive to transform the Alliance by enlarging NATO membership, conducting operations beyond Europe, and adapting Allied capabilities to face modern threats. Prior to serving in Brussels, he worked in the US Department of State's Office of European Security and Political Affairs, in the State Department's China desk, and at the US Embassy in Beijing as a presidential management fellow.

Andrew Spannaus

Journalist and Political Commentator, Milan

Andrew Spannaus is a American journalist and political commentator based in Italy, known in particular for his analysis of the populist revolt in the United States and Europe. His commentary on US and international politics appears on Rainews24, Swiss Italian Radio, Aspenia, and various other media outlets. He is the founder of the Transatlantico.info newsletter, which provides news and analysis of geopolitics and economics to institutions and businesses. Spannaus is a Lecturer at the ASERI Graduate School of the Catholic University of Milan, where he teaches a seminar on US economic history. He has studied economic nationalism and the War of 1812. He served as the Chairman of the Milan Foreign Press Association from 2017 to 2020.

SESSION II

Jan Kickert

Ambassador of the Republic of Austria to Italy, Rome

Ambassador Jan Kickert became Head of the Austrian Embassy in Rome in July 2020. Prior to his appointment, he acted as Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations (2015-2020). Since November 2011, he was Director General for Political Affairs at the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From 2009 to 2011, Amb. Kickert served as Austrian Ambassador to Croatia. Since 2005, he also served

in a number of other Government positions at the Cabinet of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, with two years as Deputy Head of the Cabinet (2007-2009). In the autumn of 2004, he acted as the Personal Representative to Kosovo of Javier Solana, the European Union's High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy. Prior to that, from 1999 to 2000, he was political adviser to the UN Special Representative to Kosovo.

Arne Sannes Bjørnstad

Special Representative for Western Balkans, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oslo

He joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as desk officer (legal affairs) in the Shipping Department in 1990. After postings to Ankara (1994- 97), Rabat (1997) and Paris (1998-2001), he was Coordinator for Norway's Foreign Policy and Justice/Home Affairs cooperation with the European Union 2001-2003. From February 2003 through September 2006 he was Senior Adviser at the Office of the Prime Minister and Secretary to the Government Security Council. Minister Counsellor for European and Economic Affairs at the Norwegian Embassy in London 2006-08, then Deputy Head of Mission in London 2008-11. Senior Adviser attached to the Foreign Service Control Unit from 2011, becoming Inspector General of the Foreign Service in 2013. Ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway to the Republic of Serbia from September 2015, to the Republic of Montenegro from November 2015 and to the Republic of North Macedonia from December 2015.

Remzi Lani

Executive Director, Albanian Media Institute, Tirana

Remzi Lani is the Executive Director of the Albanian Media Institute. He has a long career in journalism, and he is author of articles on Balkan affairs for different local and foreign papers and magazines such as *El Mundo* (Madrid), *The Guardian* (London), *Quimera* (Barcelona), *The International Spectator* (Rome), etc. Lani has been also an expert for the International Commission on the Balkans (Amato Commission). He is member of the Board of OSIFE (Open Society Foundation for Europe), of the Steering Committee of GFMD (Global Forum for Media Development) and of the European Council of Foreign Relations. He has been working on media projects in Africa, Central Asia and the Balkans. Collaborator of the Aspen Institute (Berlin), CESPI (Rome), Center for International and Strategic Studies (Washington), Carter Center (Atlanta), Hellenic Foundation (Athens), CIDOB (Barcelona) in different projects on Balkan issues.

Valbona Zeneli

Chair, George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, Garmisch-Partenkirchen

Dr. Zeneli joined the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in August 2011 as a professor of national security studies. She is also Chair of the Strategic Initiatives Department. Previously, she served as the Black Sea and Eurasia Program Director and Deputy Director for the Central and South-East Europe program. Valbona Zeneli is member of the teaching faculty for the Program in Applied Security Studies (PASS), the Program on Countering Narcotics and Illicit Trafficking (CNIT), the Program on Cyber Security Studies (PCSS), the Senior Executive Seminar (SES) and the Seminar on Regional Security (SRS). From 2003-2005, Dr. Zeneli has served as chief of protocol and later economic adviser to the Albanian Prime Minister. Prior to that, she worked as adviser to the Minister of Economy of Albania from 2002-2003. Dr. Zeneli holds a Doctor of science degree (PhD) in political economy

from the University of Studies “Aldo Moro”, Bari, Italy (2011), as well as a postgraduate studies degree on international marketing from Georgetown University, Washington D.C (2006).

Lubomir Ivanov

Former Permanent Representative of Bulgaria, NATO, Brussels

Bulgarian Permanent Representative to FAO, Ambassador Lubomir Ivanov has been Chairman of the FAO Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters between 2015 and 2017. He has a long-standing career in international and Euro-Atlantic organisations. In 1995 he worked with security organisations as Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Bulgaria to Belgium, Luxembourg and the Mission of Bulgaria to WEU (Western European Union) and NATO. Between 1998 and 2001 he was the Deputy Director of the NATO and Security Issues Directorate at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sofia. Lubomir Ivanov has been leading the negotiation for the accession of Bulgaria to NATO between 2001 and 2004. After that experience, he has been appointed as Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to NATO from 2004 to 2009. Between 2012 and 2016 he ran his first mandate as Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to FAO. Since May 2017 Ambassador Ivanov is Ambassador-at-Large on security matters.

SPECIAL INTERVENTION

Michele Risi

Commander, Kosovo Force (KFOR), NATO, Pristina

Major General Risi has been the Defence Advisor to the Italian Permanent Representative to the North Atlantic Council since 21 July 2016. Before being assigned to NATO, he was the Commander of the Julia Alpine Brigade and the Multi-National Land Forces Command located in Udine, Italy. While deployed with the Julia Brigade in 2015, he was also the Commander of the Train and Advise Command-West (TAAC-West) Operation Resolute Support, Herat, Afghanistan. A career Mountain Infantry Officer (Alpini), Major General Risi has served in key leadership positions at the tactical, operational and strategic levels of the Italian military, NATO and the United Nations including posts as Commander of ITALFOR XVII and RC-Capital Battle Group 3, Operation ISAF in Afghanistan (2008); Chief Plans of the Strategic Military Cell - Department for Peace Keeping Operations, New York - during the Lebanese crisis of 2006; Chief of Staff of the Kabul Multinational Brigade (2005), Operation ISAF in Afghanistan.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Piero Fassino

President, Foreign Affairs Committee, Chamber of Deputies, Rome

Piero Fassino is the President of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Italian Chamber of Deputies. Elected for the first time in 1994, re-elected in all the following legislatures until 2011 - when he became mayor of Turin (2011-2016) - and elected again to Parliament in 2018. Currently he is also a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and Vice-President of the Political Commission, President of the Italy-France friendship section of the Inter Parliamentary Union. Under-Secretary of State for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1996-1998 in the PM Prodi government) and, in the same

period, Under-Secretary for European Union Policies to the Prime Minister; Minister of Foreign Trade (1998-2000 in the PM D'Alema government); Minister of Justice (2000-2001 in the PM Amato government). From 1991 to 1996 he held the role of International Secretary of the PDS, leading it in the joining to the Socialist International and in the foundation of the European Socialist Party. From 2016 to March 2020, President of the Socialist Group and spokesman for the Mediterranean at the Congress of Local Authorities of the Council of Europe.



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POLICY BACKGROUND PAPER

Almost thirty years have passed since the outbreak of the wars that ultimately led to the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the collapse of Albania's communist regime. While the NATO integration process in the Balkan region has constantly advanced throughout this period, securing Slovenia, Albania, Croatia and Montenegro's membership, the pace of the European enlargement has been slower. Only Slovenia and Croatia are members of the European Union. Ljubljana joined in 2004, Zagreb in 2013. Serbia and Montenegro have embarked accession talks, but many chapters are still open, and it is taking longer than predicted. Albania and North Macedonia are due to start accession talks, after the EU Council gave the green light in March 2020. Being optimistic, the process will last at least ten years. As for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, they lag behind: EU accession talks are not on the horizon.

The Western Balkans are facing troubled times. The very fragile economic scenario is forcing a growing number of young talented people to leave, seeking better opportunities in Western Europe. This is devastating in terms of social-economic sustainability. Catching up with the rest of Europe becomes even more difficult.

Beside this, a concerning trend of democratic backsliding jeopardizes the future of the region. Respect for the rule of law, media pluralism, separation of powers and administrative decentralization are worsening throughout the region, especially in Serbia, Montenegro and Albania, as highlighted by independent research centres.

The migrant crisis is another potential disrupting factor. The Western Balkans do not have financial and technical resources to cope with the flow of people, mostly coming from the Middle East, who cross the region heading to Western Europe. This trend is exacerbating political disputes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, currently the bottleneck of the Balkan Route, and can further complicate the situation in the whole region.

Geopolitical projections try to carve the region, too, threatening that EU stabilizing role, once undisputed. Russia and Turkey are exerting influence mixing soft power, investments in infrastructures and energy, political pressure and hybrid means, a Moscow's special skill. China is emerging as a game-changer, turning the region into a relevant hub for the Belt and Road Initiative through massive infrastructural investments. Last, but not least, the USA are back, claiming a strong role in the Serbia-Kosovo talks (led by the EU in the last ten years), after years of low-profile. The US re-engagement is a chance for the European perspective, yet Washington and Brussels must find a way to develop a balanced and coherent action. Competitive attitudes are hampering cooperation.

In sum, the Western Balkans are trapped in a limbo, that cannot last too long. It is primarily up to the EU, the first lender, the first trade partner, the first political partner for the Western Balkans, to end it. The 27-nations union must re-energize its strategy for the Western Balkans and act more resolutely as a democracy provider. Addressing more seriously issues like the rule of law, minority rights, transparency in the administrative field and fight against corruption is vital to improve the political scenario in the Western Balkans but also to develop a better economic environment, that would slow down the drain of young talents and reduce social inequalities.

The economic downturn caused by the Covid-19 pandemic could accelerate them. According to a recent World Bank study, more than 400.000 people could fall into poverty, while the shares of the middle and upper classes could shrink substantially, between 2 and 10% depending on the country and the length of the crisis.

The EU simply does not lead: it is against its nature. Soft power and dialogue are and will be the tools to reignite the European perspective in the Western Balkans, where people are still attached to the European perspective, but a new and clear political impetus is required. Differently from the Commission, that throughout the years has demonstrated its long-term commitment for the region despite facing very tough challenges (Eurozone crisis, Brexit and more recently the post-pandemic reconstruction), the member states' initiative for a timely inclusion of the Balkan Six has been unsteady. The enlargement fatigue came out after the EU historic expansion in 2004 is still a big rock on the road.

The new methodology for enlargement, devised under France's impulse, could clear the path. Previously based on a chapter-by-chapter approach, the mechanism focusses now on six clusters, and the first one, "Fundamentals, including rule of law", gives the enlargement process a much stronger political dimension, proving EU's concern for the ongoing democratic backsliding. Will it be effective? It is a two-sided story. Western Balkans leaders must show a genuine will to make reforms, so far extremely weak.

On the other hand, the EU member states must support the Commission in developing the new strategy, showing that it is not just on paper.

Matteo Tacconi, *NDCF, Western Balkans Chief Analyst*

Matteo Tacconi is an Italian professional journalist. Since 2005, he has been covering the Balkans and Central Europe for a wide range of printed and online magazines. He reports for radio-tv networks, too, especially for the Swiss public broadcaster in Italian language (RSI). He is a regular NDCF contributor, producing analysis on the Western Balkans political and diplomatic affairs in the framework of the Strategic Balkans project. Over the years, he has taken part to several OSCE electoral observation missions in the Western Balkans and in the former USSR countries as a short-term observer. As a journalist, he is currently involved in a long-term project investigating political, cultural, historical and social issues shaping the Adriatic identity.



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CONCEPT

In 2020 two important anniversaries will be remembered in all Balkan capitals: exactly 25 years ago the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed (ending the long cycle of the wars of Yugoslav dissolution) and 16 years ago EUFOR Operation Althea was launched in Bosnia and Herzegovina, relaying the previous NATO-led SFOR (Stabilization Force).

In less than ten years, two Balkan countries are already in the EU (2013); since 2009 two others have been negotiating the different chapters, while two are entering framework accession negotiations. The actual EU presidency is committed to continue negotiations at different levels with Serbia, Montenegro, Albania and North Macedonia. In the last 11 years four countries became NATO members (Montenegro and North Macedonia being the latest). Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo remain two of the most complex issues in the agenda, but one should recognize that after Dayton war ravages have been quietly healed and military deployment drastically reduced from a full field army to a brigade between both countries (approx. 4.100 soldiers). Compared to the Balkans during the last two centuries, this is an unprecedented positive situation.

Nevertheless, both domestic difficulties (democracy erosion, organised crime, corruption, economic and environmental unsustainability, possible terrorism) and the constant crises in the international environment affecting the Balkan Six have made the integration path particularly difficult, in addition to a global pandemic with unprecedented effects.

THE NATO FOUNDATION

The NATO Defense College Foundation, the only existing think-tank bearing the name of the Alliance, was established in Rome in 2011. It grew out from a common intuition of the President Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo and the NATO Defense College top decision makers who understood the value of a non-profit NGO that could work beyond usual and institutional outreach, training, communication and scientific research activities.

The principles stated in the preamble to the Washington Treaty of 1949 are our heritage.

Our mission is to promote the culture of stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area and in NATO partner nations.

Our aim is to meet the highest standards in contributing to public debate and future deliberations on strategic, security and geopolitical issues.

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

CONTACTS

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